

Welcome

 **SMART
EUROPE**

ISSUE N.1

Welcome SMART EUROPE!

Dear reader,

As chairman of the Monitoring Board of SMART EUROPE I am happy to present you the very first newsletter. I am convinced that SMART EUROPE is working on a very relevant subject. Innovation is a key issue for economic development, from local up to European level (and beyond). But the link to job creation is not always firmly established. Being both a politician and an entrepreneur I can see how important it is to relate innovation to employment. In SMART EUROPE we will identify ways to make sure that innovative activities also lead to more work in our regions.

I already had the occasion to meet with the enthusiastic project team during the kick-off meeting in Bologna and I am looking forward to work together with both project partners and the stakeholders in their networks in the coming three years. Please, don't hesitate to contact me if you have any ideas or comments on the project!

Best regards,



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Interreg IVC



INTERREG IVC provides funding for interregional cooperation across Europe. The overall objective of the programme is to improve the effectiveness of regional policies and instruments. The areas of support are innovation and the knowledge economy, environment and risk prevention. Thus, the programme aims to contribute to the economic modernisation and competitiveness of Europe.

A project funded by INTERREG IVC builds on the exchange of experiences among partners who are ideally responsible for the development of their local and regional policies. Typical tools for exchange of experience are networking activities such as thematic workshops, seminars, conferences, surveys, and study visits. Project partners cooperate to identify and transfer good practices.

What is SMART EUROPE?

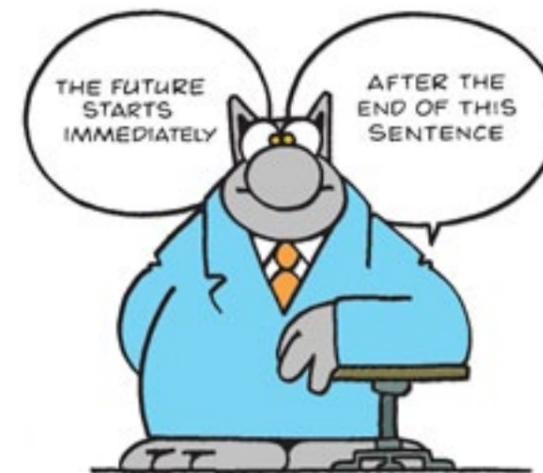
In the last years the European Commission dedicated great effort to increase the employment rates in the European Union accordingly with the Lisbon Strategy. Nevertheless the recent economic crisis resulted in significant job loss in all EU countries and also in the reduction of funding available to the EU Regions to boost employment opportunities. Many regions have built their economic development strategies on promoting innovation as a driver of economic growth, however these innovation support schemes are not always designed with job creation as a primary objective.

By considering these conditions, the INTERREG IVC project SMART EUROPE is based on the concept that smart and targeted regional policies and interventions can be designed to boost the employment directly in the regional innovation-based sectors. With this aim, a consortium of 13 partners, representing 11 EU regions, will exchange policies and instruments for identifying and supporting the main regional economic actors that can generate job opportunities in the innovation based sectors of their economy.

SMART EUROPE will support decision makers to improve their strategies with the aim of incorporating the creation of employment as an additional key feature of their activities.

In support of this overall purpose, the project activities will address the following sub-objectives:

- Collecting and exchange of good practices and possible policy improvements in the field using a Peer Review methodology;
- Setting up of the SMART EUROPE Toolkit, a customized package of policy instruments and measures to facilitate the creation of innovation-based jobs;
- Development of concrete implementation plans for each partner region to achieve the main objective;
- Dissemination of the tested measures towards other interested EU Regions.



Partnership

Province of Flevoland

Lead Partner

www.flevoland.nl

Assembly of European Regions

www.aer.eu

Manchester Metropolitan University

www.mmu.ac.uk

Veneto Region

www.regione.veneto.it

Veneto Innovazione

www.venetoinnovazione.it

Province of Bologna

www.provincia.bologna.it

Észak Alföld Regional Development Agency

www.eszakalfold.hu

Maramures County Council

www.cjmaramures.ro

Almi Foretagspartner Mitt AB

www.almi.se/mitt

Patras Science Park S.A.

www.psp.org.gr

The Baltic Institute of Finland

www.baltic.org

Avila County Council

www.diputacionavila.es

Sor – Trondelag County Authority

www.stfk.no

Collecting good practices and organizing peer reviews

In SMART Europe project partner regions work together to develop smart regional strategies on innovation-based employment opportunities.

As a first activity, partners collect good practices on existing policies, actions and instruments in relation to creating employment opportunities in innovation-based jobs. The Catalogue of Good Practices provides the experience base that will be used during the Peer Reviews. A total of 11 Peer Reviews will take place, one in each partner region.

What is a “peer review”?

SMART Europe Peer Review Methodology helps regions to improve their policies in boosting employment in the sector of their “innovation anchor”. It is an adaptation of the peer review methodology of the Assembly of European Regions (AER), developed directly to use it during the SMART Europe project, when assessing different regions’ innovation anchors.

Partners are allocated into groups of 3 to 4 that enable experts to work closely together during the implementation of the project. Each partner hosts a peer review, which means that a team of 10 to 15 experts from the partner regions in their groups visits the host region for a week. These experts are all regional politicians or innovation managers working in regional administrations or dealing with employment strategies in different European countries. The host sends detailed information about the most important data of the region to the experts prior to the peer review – enabling them to have a first idea about the main characteristics of the partner they are about to visit and give recommendations to.

During the peer review, the host region organizes interviews, study trips and workshops, in order to show its putative innovation anchor, as well as good practices in the field of innovation-based job creation. The aim of the visit is to identify current strengths and weaknesses in the host

region’s innovation and employment policies and to make specific recommendations for improving policy design and delivery. Interviews with politicians let the experts have an idea about the political background, will, as well as the opportunities in the host region. This enables them to give feedbacks and recommendations after the visit tailor-made to the region’s needs. After the visit the review team prepares a Report with a series of recommendations on how to improve the region’s relevant policies. Based on the feedbacks of the experts, the host region prepares its “Action Plan”, about the possible implementation of the recommendations and identified other good practices in their regional policies.



Innovation-based jobs: the challenge is now

Last decade has been featured by the emergence of new and pressing challenges: ageing population, climate change and globalisation were on top of the list. The Lisbon Strategy set ambitious targets and suggested a range of tools to push growth in a healthy economy, pursuing “more and better jobs” while making the economy greener and more innovative. Time reverted the optimism of the early Lisbon days, and economic slowdown brought about dramatic increases in unemployment, and in the worst cases recession, in many member states.

New impetus to sort out of the crisis has been given by the adoption on March 2010 of the **Europe 2020 Strategy**. The EU has recognised that **employment and innovation**, together with education, social inclusion and climate/energy are the objectives that will have to be chased in the coming years. On one side, the EU wants to strengthen the integration of EU policies and to ensure greater impact for citizens and businesses, by means of implementing a renewed generation of policy programmes, such as the Common Strategic Framework and Horizon 2020. On the other side, national and regional authorities are called to **design smart policies with clear investment priorities**, committing themselves to meet Europe’s growth and jobs targets for 2020. The flagship initiative “Innovation Union”

consolidates the role of innovation as the engine of growth in Europe in the future and lays down the rational for action, pointing out eco-innovation, design and creativity as examples of fertile sectors to stimulate the creation of innovation-based jobs.

According to a forecast¹ made by CEDEFOP, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, the trend for the coming years reveals new jobs will be in knowledge- and skill-intensive occupations, such as high level managerial and technical jobs. Currently, 38.5% of total EU employment is in knowledge-intensive services and this percentage is on the increase, as routine and low-skilled jobs are going to be replaced mainly by new technologies and innovative jobs. Having these in mind, regional authorities have already started reorienting the use of structural funds in the direction of creating favourable conditions for innovation, education and research, encouraging R&D and knowledge-intensive investment. The challenge now is to merge the experiences already made with the next financial schemes and the smart specialisation strategies that each region will define and implement in the coming years.

(1) Cedefop. Skill supply and demand in Europe: medium-term forecast up to 2020. Luxembourg: Publications Office, 2010

INNOVATION ANCHOR:

SMART Europe is based on the notion that smart and targeted regional policies and interventions can in fact be designed in order to boost employment directly in the different innovation based sectors in a region, thus creating maximum employment growth within

the sectors that contribute most to the regional economy. Depending on the region these can be for instance a multinational company, a cluster, a university or a specific economic sector, or a combination of those. In the context of this project these driving actors of regional employment in innovation based jobs are labeled “innovation anchors”.



Good practices from...



North West of England 10,000 Small Businesses

10,000 Small Businesses is a premier private sector business growth programme funded by the Goldman Sachs Foundation and delivered in the North West by Manchester Metropolitan University. It is designed to unlock the economic and job creation potential of small businesses and social enterprises operating in the United Kingdom. The programme is based on the broadly held view of leading experts that greater access to a combination of education and business support services best address barriers to growth.

10,000 Small Businesses is targeted at small businesses and social enterprises with clear ambitions to expand. The project started in March 2011 and will run for 5 years.

The first cohort worked with 25 companies and created 100 jobs.

The goal of the programme is to equip participants with tools to help them overcome a range of obstacles and lay the foundation for long-term sustainable growth and job creation in their communities.

Participants receive approximately 100 hours of high quality, practically-focused business and management curriculum; receive comprehensive, one-on-one business advisory services that help business owners develop and implement tailored growth plans; complete the programme with a personalised growth plan tailored to their business; and are provided with access to technical assistance and mentors to help business owners focus on their most critical business issues and increase capacity.

More information at: <http://www.10ksbnw.co.uk/>



Veneto M31 – High-tech incubator

M31 designs and develops enterprises through the application of the “open innovation” model by means of which the know-how of the company and its partners is shared to power new market, enterprise and culture scenarios. The start-ups growing in M31 ecosystem explore Medical and Bio-Technologies, Semiconductor and Clean-Technologies, ICTs.

The mission of the incubator is to:

- Implement a collaborative network between the best research centres, companies, inventors and investors;
- Supply engineering services at the frontier of the state of the art;
- Leverage upon an open innovation model to exploit the know-how of partner companies;
- Identify excellence centres and recruit top graduates worldwide on the projects;
- Share the entrepreneurial risk with the customer.

Partners participate in the new businesses from the very beginning.

For each new idea and business proposition M31 defines:

- The business plan;
- The development strategy of the relevant new company;
- The suitable alliances with academic centres of excellence that can be of help for this particular venture;
- The necessary intellectual property strategy and its practical implementation by applying for all relevant patents.

The new company is incorporated when the team is complete and when investors manifest interest. The compensation for M31 activities is in the form of royalties. It supports its budget also with:

- Services provided to companies in which it invests;
- Sale of investments;
- Engineering services to third parties.

More information at: <http://www.m31.com/>

Spotlight

SMART EUROPE kick-off in Bologna

SMART EUROPE kicked off in Bologna (Italy) on January 26th, 2012, and it will end on December 2014. “Its main purpose is to overcome the critical moment all the partners are facing, upgrading their local policies for the benefit of the SMEs and the unemployed” said Mr. Graziano Prantoni, Councillor for the Department of Business and Tourism of the host partner, Province of Bologna.



Building on Mini Europe successful experience, SMART EUROPE has been assessed one of the best proposals among more than 300 projects. The valuable element the project brings along is the strong anchorage to the local innovation drivers and to the regional policies for economic development and employment.

The partner regions will work together to develop smart regional strategies on innovation-based employment opportunities. Each partner region will develop an implementation plan for the customized package of policy instruments and measures devised during the project period.

Exchanging, sharing and transferring policy experiences, knowledge and good practices will be at the heart of the project: “How to make regions learn reciprocally is the key challenge: losing the specialized knowledge which each of them owns would be a pity. Therefore, we must take SMART EUROPE as an opportunity for enhancing the role of the Regions in a strategic matter such innovation-based jobs, especially in times of austerity”, said Mr. Jan-Nico Appelman, deputy Queen’s Commissioner, Flevoland Province, in quality of Chairman of the SMART EUROPE Monitoring Board.

Smart Cafés: friendly approach to stakeholders

Interactive and dynamic workshops designed to set up a living network of collaborative dialogue around the main project topics are going to be held in 11 regions in Europe in the coming weeks. The aim of the Smart Cafés is to raise the awareness of the SMART EUROPE project at regional level and to involve the relevant regional stakeholders since the beginning. The participants are expected to put on the table the main issues at stake and to give concrete suggestions at policy and operational level.

Disseminating SMART EUROPE in Avila

A meeting with the Industry and Innovation General Directorate of the Junta de Castilla y Leon Regional Government was held in Avila on March 6th, 2012. The meeting was a first approach to the topic in order to involve the Regional Authority as one of the main stakeholders in the project development.

The representatives showed up a high interest on this initiative and agreed on the need of agreeing on the upcoming activities as well as on their participation in main milestones, as the 2013 conference in Avila and the peer review process.



Coming soon...

“Seminar on SMART EUROPE Good Practices”

Tampere-Finland
March 28th 2012

“Smart Cafés”

SMART EUROPE partner regions
April-June 2012

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Peer review: mutual learning and more
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Follow us on SMART EUROPE website

<http://smart-europe.eu>

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INTERREG IVC
INNOVATION & ENVIRONMENT
REGIONS OF EUROPE SHARING SOLUTIONS

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