Dear reader,

Our third SMART EUROPE newsletter focuses on sustainable tourism and local development, which is for several partners a targeted sector for innovation and job creation. You can read about their good practices in this newsletter and there is also news about the progress of our peer reviews.

The first peer review was held in Flevoland and as the responsible politician I was impressed by their observations and recommendations!

Corresponding with the theme of the newsletter, from the side of Flevoland we can proudly announce that Almere, the largest city of Flevoland, has won the competition to organise the next Floriade in 2022. The Floriade is the World Horticultural Expo, that takes place in the Netherlands every 10 years.

Almere has won the competition with the concept “Growing Green Cities” jointly developed by Almere and the province of Flevoland. The plan consists of extending the city of Almere into a lake by building a 45 ha artificial peninsula covered in gardens. A city that produces food and energy, cleans its own water, recycles waste and holds a great biodiversity. Besides the expected economic boost of € 360 M of direct investments in the area, I consider it a special opportunity that the Floriade stimulates cooperation between the horticultural sector, science, business life and the city for the coming 10 years.

The Expo is preceded by “The making of” during which national and international best practices in the field of Growing Green Cities can be brought together. Flevoland and Almere will be a living lab where innovations in the field of feeding, greening and energizing the city can be tested on large scale. We will cooperate with Green City UK and Italia, Cité Verte and many other international partners.

The Floriade will leave a permanent park for culture, nature and recreation in Almere and remains to attract tourists after the exhibition has ended. On the pictures you can see an impression what it is going to be like in 2022. Though still far away, I hope you’ll come to visit us!

Best regards,

Jan-Nico Appelman
Chair of the SMART EUROPE Monitoring Board
The profound changes that are transforming economic systems, and their inter-relations at international level involve profound consequences for local development in terms of new opportunities. The new scenario paves the way for the formulation and evaluation of new theories and applied analysis, compared to conventional models. In this context, the development of technological innovations creates key activities that allow the enterprises to reach and maintain a successful position on national and international markets, enhancing both local and national competitiveness and economic development. Recently various trends have favoured innovation in rural areas. There is, for instance, an increasing relationship between natural resources and innovation boosted by the growing strategic importance of sustainable technologies that rely on rural resources such as crop-based energy, wind and wave power. These technologies bring new resources to rural areas and also create a renewed political interest in their role in the wider economy.

At the same time, these areas are also facing a brand new opportunity concerning tourism: sustainable tourism in fact makes possible a tourism with a low impact on the environment and local culture, while helping to generate future employment for local people. The aim of sustainable tourism is to ensure that development brings a positive experience for local people, tourism companies and the tourists themselves. A key driver for employment and growth is, of course, the extent to which innovation as a creative force is embedded in the national/regional/local economy and through the particular sectors which dominate or are emerging in rural economies. Some processes are contributing towards the diversification of rural economies, reducing the economic reliance on mainstream agricultural primary production and promoting the non-farm economy and alternative forms of farm-related business. The growth potential of many rural areas is now more strongly linked to a range of new development opportunities, particularly in the secondary or tertiary sectors, many of which are a response to demands from urban consumers.

In this third issue of the SMART EUROPE newsletter, we try to deepen this topic presenting three different good practices:
- an experience on rural local development in Hungary (Észak-Alföld region), where policy focuses on the improvement of governance and economic structures;
- a project for promoting tourism in a minor resort in Romania (Maramures County) to obtain a higher rate of profit and an increase in local employment;
- an example of well-organized touristic offer in Spain (Avila County) based on the natural, cultural and gastronomic local resources.

**Thematic focus. Sustainable tourism and local development to create new innovative based jobs**

**Sustainable tourism is the way to meet the need of tourists and to preserve and improve future opportunities for innovative regions**
In Észak-Alföld a number of small villages are suffering from the high unemployment rate. These are multiple disadvantaged small communities where the lack of jobs and lack of entrepreneurship led to a community where many people are living on allowances.

In 1996 the municipality of Túristvándi was in a situation when the economical directions had to be decided upon. As the village is owner of the only functioning water-mill in the country, moving towards tourism seemed to be a good idea, and the village is rather successful in this, as it is the 14th in the region regarding the number of nights spent today, while in 1996 there was no remarkable tourism at all.

Around 2006 the village started thinking about new solutions, to overcome the difficulties of low tax incomes and the lack of support to small settlements, and the idea was to focus on sustainable developments in that sense that they did not require central funding, the running of which depends only on the village itself.

Taking a look at the local economy, the village has 20M HUF of income every month, and this has been the case for some years, however the expenses show some structural disparities, as even those people living on social allowances leave their lands unattended, buying basic food supplies in supermarkets. Thus the question was raised if the village is wealthy enough to spend a huge amount of money a year on products it could also produce. On the other hand there is almost 7000 nights spent there by tourists, counting the amount of their food consumption to be 10 months of the village’s, leads up to 150M HUF spent in such a way.

The solution of Túristvándi is to build a sustainable operating business system on the idea of producing the fruits, vegetables and the meat in the village, and not take it from supermarkets (many cases owned by foreign companies) or abroad.

Local producers and entrepreneurs were identified who produce – or would produce – such goods, that could be supplied to consumers by direct selling on the local market. In order to find out the available degree of self-supporting, the local demand and supply was analyzed, and the municipality has established a non-profit entity, that has “social agreement” both with the producers and consumers. On the one hand the agreement guarantees the takeover of goods, on the other hand the entity delivers it to the consumers, at pre-determined prices. The non-profit entity defines a much lower margin rate on “consumer price” than the usual dealer margins are, so in that way the producer gets more for its products, and the customer will not pay more than in the nearby store. The local vendors has no extra stand fee for the market, however the non-local has to pay for the market place.

With this practice, the money stays in the village, and supports the local market and local development.

How does the Municipality of Túristvándi face the unemployment problem? Which solutions have been found?

In Túristvándi the unemployment rate was really high, which was partly determined by geographical location and economical environment of the settlement. The lack of education and obsolete expertise highly contributed to this problem as well. Hence the settlement firstly created a governmental-owned company in order to improve the skill indicators and then we started to provide services supporting creation, operation and development of companies with offering information, accounting and taxation consultancy,
electronic administration. First of all the development of touristic services is significant in the last 16 years. In this area operation of vocational trainings and consultancy is needed to the development, as these activities give assistance to local people. The government set out the self-supporting program of Túristvándi under my guidance which concentrates on two main areas: food production built on local needs and utilization of agricultural spin-off as energy. In the implementation of this the government undertakes the tasks which aren’t worth to implement by companies or rather they can support the project realization like mother spawn production both in the area of plant production and stock-raising, initiation of marketing conditions, that is to say the construction of physical space where trade can come off until supply of scales and packers which are necessary to marketing. The local people’s roles are to product and process food, implement relevant innovations and set up companies.

Could you explain in brief the good practice adopted and the objectives prefixed please?

The aim was to create a program which pays its way without state or governmental financial funding aiming operation in the long run. There is a really important aspect as well to mainly focus on local resources and react to the local needs. It motivates intergeneration small enterprises which result in further employment beyond initial self-employment in Túristvándi.

Which results and outputs the practice has realised achieved? In particular, which are the main success factors? Have they in part resolved the unemployment problem?

There are significant results in the field of rural hospitality like more than 200 bed places and 7000 night spent by visitors. The food production started up, hereby local people gains supplementary income, but the year of 2013 will be the first year when we can feel the impact of the program in the field of employment.

Which critical factors, weaknesses or difficulties have you encountered during the implementation of the practices?

We have to emphasis the building of community and the shaping of attitude. We have to find people who can become the engine of these development processes. One of the important things is their persistent training. Our program’s weakness is the lack of motivation of local people and the lack of assets of Túristvándi, therefore there are no possibilities without development funding. Fragmentation of the implementing developments occurs, namely that there are no interdisciplinary funding where stakeholders in economic life can work for mutual goals together in a same time in order to implement innovations which are differentiated but they are created for a mutual aim. In regard to the temporal implementation it is a huge problem that innovations secede from each other.

Which key factors could support the success and transferability of the practice? Is there a strategy to foster the creation of new jobs?

The model has to be built on local will, local people. Settlements, areas have to analyze their own needs, facilities, possibilities and have to coordinate them in order to be local actions for local needs. In this way it can contribute to local employment and the development of local economy. Naturally it is needed to reconcile special facilities on the level of areas and it is highly important that the synergy between innovations can motivate the development of local economy. With this object it has to find local people who can achieve the program, it is necessary to train them and naturally it is important to prepare local decision makers.

Magdolna Lakatosné Síra
In charge of the district office of Fehérgyarmat
Former Mayor of Túristvándi
The province of Avila is located in the Southern part of Castilla y Leon Region, over 110 km far from Madrid. It is a province with elderly population in rural areas, integrated by 248 municipalities. It has three main areas, the plateau in the North, the Mountains in the South and the World Heritage Capital City in the centre. The main resource of the province is the Tourism, based on the natural, cultural and gastronomy resources. Furthermore, considering the close 5 million inhabitants of Madrid, Avila province is a destination for inside tourism, mainly at weekends with short stays.

How is Avila County Tourism? and how does face the problems linked with limited at weekends? Which initiatives or services have been offered to the tourists?

The inside tourism is an alternative tourism to the world known coast tourist of “sunny & beach”. Our offer is based on the natural, cultural and gastronomy resources, offering to the tourist a wide range of activities to do in our county, in a mix between urban cosy city and wonderful landscapes, jointly with the amazing gastronomy based on tradition and local products, therefore the offer are integrated packages for enjoying relaxing days in our county.

The visits are concentrated on weekends, and some seasons, so one of the first goals is to overcome that seasonality offering complementary activities and offers towards different tourist profile including green friendly options like dark sky, flora festival, controlled hunting, etc...

The Rural Houses Net was an initiative born in Avila County Council to keep old houses at little municipalities like old priest, old schools, old doctor houses, at the same time to become a way to get incomes for the municipality and create rural jobs. In the mid nineties were 13 houses, providing assessment on refurbish management, nowadays they are over 800, along these years this public-private collaboration create owners associations and the initiative turned into private and has positioned Avila county as the 1st reference in number of facilities. The challenge is to go from the quantity to quality, looking for a visitor willing to spend more overnights, and duly training to the staff.

On the other hand the Gredos Mountains Centres built up by the regional authority are few interpretation centres located at the main natural gates of Gredos Mountains Regional Park, protected by law, in order to facilitate the knowledge about the fragile ecosystem, the local flora and fauna, so, looking for the complicity of the visitor to preserve the natural landscape. Complementary activities have been carried out as Tree Adventure Park for avoiding uncontrolled damages risk to the tress, and facilitating accessible entertainment even for disable people.

Could you explain in brief the good practices adopted and the objectives prefixed?

The outputs are a wide net of rural houses, then restaurants and outdoor activities from a environmental friendly point of view, according with local traditions, rural people and resources in a balance between tourist needs and resources sustainability. So a sustainability from a triple vision: Economical, Environmental and Socio-Cultural. The destination has been highlighted as a key facto of tourism sales.

New jobs have been created in the rural areas, regarding rural houses, mainly rural female jobs apart from the indirect coming from the refurbish works done by local little enterprises. The interpretation centres and outdoor activities have created new jobs as well. Mostly all the around activities: maintenance, catering, cleaning, ....and other services.
Which critical factors, weaknesses or difficulties have you encountered during the implementation of the practices?

Concerning the weaknesses have been identified in some cases the lack of involvement from some entrepreneurs in terms of looking for the tourist through a proactive position rather than a reactive waiting for the tourist to come. Besides, a lack of knowledge on new technologies, mainly due to the elderly profile of some entrepreneurs.

The lack of innovation to be applied to the tourism sector, is one of the main weaknesses and therefore challenged in the coming future, how to get an innovative approach to offer something different into the market.

The fact to be a short-stay destination has become in a success factor in the current crisis scenario, since this sector has been affected but in a lower proportion than others, few jobs have been destroyed.

Which key factors could support the success and transferability of the practices? Is there a strategy to foster the creation of new jobs?

The key factor is the working groups created by the new tourism management, in terms of involvement of the different stakeholders within the sector, public or private, as common voice, common interest shared to foster the an inside tourism of quality, in this way all the associations related to tourism are represented working jointly facing similar issues and towards the same goal.

Another key factor is the web site, as a tool for bilateral relationship, for the tourist as a way to get all they need: how to get, where to sleep, restaurants, festivities, routes,..... at the same time is a way to offer the services by the enterprises. In the end it might be the tool for most of the trades.

Training of the staff: quality standards, language skills, rational use of energy, effective marketing.
Maramures: Development of Suior Tourism Center

Suior Tourism Center is situated in a very picturesque mountain area, at 18 km from Baia Mare. In addition to winter tourism infrastructure existing previously in the area, several summer tourism and business tourism facilities were developed in the last couple of years. The most important problem tackled was attracting tourists from Romania and abroad and accommodating them for longer periods all year, in order to obtain a higher rate of profit and employment and maintaining the jobs created all year long.

How Maramures County does foster the touristic offer? Which initiatives or services have been offered to the tourists?

Our county has been one of the strongest mining areas of Romania, with an industry that has been traditionally oriented towards mining. After the end of the communist period, the mining industry went into decline, and soon our county had been faced with a high rate of unemployment and lack of perspective for new emerging industries. Tourism seemed to be the most natural option to tackle the problems brought about the crash of the mining industry, taking into account the huge natural and cultural heritage of our county: attractive geographical features that sustain both summer and winter dedicated sports, 8 UNESCO wooden churches, a unique burial site: The merry Cemetery of Sapanta, etc. Currently, Maramureș County Council is strongly involved in several transnational initiatives in the field of tourism, in order to sustain the development of a full year tourism offer: competitive winter resort facilities, spa centers, business tourism facilities and different facilities for outdoor sport activities.

Could you explain in brief the good practices adopted and the objectives prefixed please?

Suior Tourism Centre was a former student camp attractively located at the foot of the Gutai mountains, at a height of 668 m, in the middle of a wonderful natural landscape. A considerable private investment has made possible the rehabilitation of this area and transformed it into a modern resort consisting of 3 mini hotels, a restaurant and conference room and several outdoor facilities like a 3600 m ski track, a dedicated relaxation area (Spa, fitness area, tennis ground) and a “floating terrace” with cosy chalets located at an altitude of 1000 m.

The general objective for developing Suior resort was to diversify the tourism offers and facilities and to create an area were business tourism, adventure tourism; summer tourism could complete the existing winter tourism facilities.

Which results and outputs the practice has realised? In particular, which are the main success factors? Have they in part bettered the attendances and have they created new jobs?

After having finished “floating terrace” with cosy chalets located at an altitude of 1000 m at the end of the sky slope, the accommodation capacity has increased by 30% and the service capacity has increased by 150%. A number of 30 new jobs were created and most important the 50 existing jobs are maintained during a period of acute economic crisis.

Which critical factors, weaknesses or difficulties have you encountered during the implementation of the practices?

Unfortunately, our county still faces the problem of accessibility: poor road infrastructure, few air and rail links to Baia Mare, lack of means of transport connecting...
Baia Mare and Baia Sprie towns to Suior Tourism Center and low purchasing power of local population. During the construction of the wooden buildings the transport of the logs was quite a challenge due to the place high altitude of the facility.

Which key factors could support the success and transferability of the practices? Is there a strategy to foster the creation of new jobs?

A key factor for a successful transfer of the good practice is the existence of an area with tourism potential in terms of nature, traditions, tourism attractions, that could be developed with private or public investment.

Cosmin Rohian
Manager of the tourism resort, actively participating since September 2002, and striving to attain high quality tourism services to the benefit of the entire local community.
Hungary / Észak-Alföld

TOURAGE, an INTERREG IVC project, grew out from the idea that beside challenges demographic change can bring also opportunities for the regions. Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in Europe and relatively remote regions have a lot of unexploited and yet widely unknown development potential on this sector. The project seeks to find good practices on developing tourism possibilities for growing segment of elderly travelers.

The overall objective of TOURAGE project is to enhance regional economy by means of senior tourism development and to support active and healthy ageing via exchange of good practices and experiences between partner regions.

Through new economic opportunities partners expect to find also new innovative employment opportunities. New services introduced and developed for elderly travelers can generate new jobs especially in the peripheral regions of TOURAGE.

Results gained in this cooperation will be essential instruments to communicate and disseminate to the rest of Europe to be able to create a “Senior Tourism Model” and also several tools that can be used to improve Regional Senior Tourism Policies.

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Italy / Province of Bologna

IT.A.CÀ, migrants and travellers: Festival of the Responsible Tourism - created to promote a new ethic of tourism, to sensitize the mindset of institutions such as travellers, the tourism industry as well as the actors operating in the field. The festival was designed from the idea that in order to feel responsible tourists, all of us do not need to participate in long and full-planned trips; even the do-it-yourself traveller, who does not like walking trails and feels limited by the group and by the pre-set times, can make as his own values the sense of respect and of relations. The responsible trip starts from home and ends at home.

http://www.festivalitaca.net/

TREKKING BY TRAIN is an initiatives grown in more than 20 - year- edition now, supported by a strong partnership between the Province of Bologna, the public transport company and the Italian Alpine Club of Bologna. The philosophy of sustainable eco - tourism thus the “Trekking by train” consists of reaching the starting point for excursions and long walking by using the public transport . The initiative is made available to thousands of people who increasingly demand to know the Provincial area in an unconventional way, to discover the prosperous natural and cultural landscape.

http://trekkingcoltreno.it/

EDUCATIONAL FARMS For over 10- year- now about 60 farms, selected from those of our territory – the Provincial area-, welcome and host schools, families and groups interested in their activities. The Province of Bologna differs from other areas of the region for the number of the participating farms and for its good reputation on the territory where the Province implements the regional program, supporting strongly the promotion of the countryside. Visiting a farm means to discover the local agriculture and the quality of it, getting in touch with all those activities that living in the city has dismissed from our minds: the care of the animals, the creation of a vegetable garden, the preparation of healthy food, the recovery of rural traditions and the discovery of nature and of the area. The educational farms are farms at the disposal of the community, promoting rural tourism in all the different kind of it.

www.provincia.bologna.it/fattoriedidattiche

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Resources

THETRIS, a Central Europe project, fosters the complex development of rural areas, and jointly develop transferable tools and methods that can be implemented in such areas outside the partnership as well. The focus of the project is the sustainable preservation of local churches and sacral monuments in 11 partner regions by developing transnational church route, elaborating joint strategies and testing innovative solutions (including sustainable tourism) to preserve them.

www.thetris.eu
The Veneto Region has been participating for years in the NECSTOUR network (Network of European Regions for a Sustainable and Competitive Tourism), which comprises 28 regions from all over Europe and 30 members representing university and industry. The network works to promote knowledge and good practices with regard to sustainable tourism.

http://www.necstour.eu/necstour/home.page

### The “CycloTourism” Project

The Veneto Region has developed a network of cyclo-touristic routes and circuits which cover the whole regional territory and connect it to the international cyclo-touristic itineraries, offering to tourists and bike-lovers eco-friendly holidays, the discovery of the territory, sports and life outdoors.

http://www.regione.veneto.it/web/turismo/cicloturismo

### Regional Plan for the Development of a Sustainable and Competitive Tourism - Sea and Lake

The objective of the plan is to make the Veneto destinations of the Garda Lake and the seaboard more sustainable from an environmental perspective, encouraging the interested Municipalities in starting the process of registration of the EMAS or ISO 14001 systems and supporting the tour operators in joining the Ecolabel and/or ISO 14001 certification.

http://www.regione.veneto.it/web/turismo/turismo-sostenibile

### Eco.Ri.ve - Ecolabel for the Accommodation Capacity in Veneto

The Veneto Region has launched a study on the environmental quality of the accommodation facilities with a view to supporting and diffusing the use of the Ecolabel. The study has been prepared by the University of Padua Environmental Quality Study Center and has interested the whole regional territory. Moreover, the Study Center has also produced a handbook to guide the tourism businesses in the certification process.

http://www.regione.veneto.it/web/turismo/turismo-sostenibile

### THE NECSTOUR NETWORK

The Veneto Region has been participating for years in the NECSTOUR network (Network of European Regions for a Sustainable and Competitive Tourism), which comprises 28 regions from all over Europe and 30 members representing university and industry. The network works to promote knowledge and good practices with regard to sustainable tourism.

http://www.necstour.eu/necstour/home.page
Flevoland has chosen to boost innovation through cluster development in order to create innovation-based jobs. However, cluster development in a young and thin economy such as Flevoland’s is fundamentally different than in a robust, settled economy of other regions. In Flevoland there is a limited number of international companies and research institutes (public and private). In addition there are no universities in the region, consequently there are no students. On the basis of its nature as a young and dynamic region, created as an overspill for business and inhabitants from other areas of the Netherlands, the Region of Flevoland aims to, through its policies, attract qualified professionals and companies to the region, as well as to create jobs in the innovation based sector for the existing population. As such, we believe a tailored, optimised policy on how clusters can be further developed, as well as closer links between education and the labour market within the region are necessary.

In line with the overall objective of the SMART Europe project, the key focus of the Province of Flevoland during the Peer Review was to assess and boost its policies with regards to employment and innovation, in order to create new jobs and opportunities for this sector. More specifically Flevoland, wished to address some of the particularities, issues and weaknesses it had identified with regards to its cluster development and to optimise its policies in order to contribute to a more knowledge based economy, to create new jobs at a higher education level, to improve the positioning of the local knowledge based institutions and to better connect and match education and the job market within the region.

In order to answer the overall question of how to further develop clusters in Flevoland and how to optimise the regional policy in this respect and boost innovation based jobs, the following sub-questions were drafted:

1. What possibilities does the Peer Team see to effectively shape cluster development in Flevoland?
2. How can the connection between the clusters in Flevoland and regional SMEs be achieved more effectively?
3. What possibilities does the Peer Team see in order to connect the Flevoland clusters with initiatives from other European regions?
4. How can the position of education in the clusters of Flevoland be improved?
5. Are there opportunities to develop other clusters in Flevoland and, if so, what should the role of the regional authorities be?

The focus and the sub-questions developed by the Host Region were used by the Peer Review Team as a starting point in their analysis, and guided research, in order to develop tailor made recommendations.

Experts from Sweden, Italy, England, Romania and Norway came to Flevoland for the peer review week. They were presented the facts and figures of Flevoland, were explained why Flevoland chose this specific focus and visited several companies, such as the National Aerospace Laboratory, Geomatics Business Park and a centre for renewable and sustainable energy (ACRRES).

The final report is still in a draft stage, but already we can state that there were different interesting and useful recommendations, for example:

**On strategy level:**
- build upon your success stories to strengthen your strategy
- Re-evaluate your SME support system, since this is the driving force of our young economy
- Develop clear interfaces with regional research centres, universities and businesses
Peer Reviews. First round

- Develop an innovation support system
- Be more pro-active in establishing national and international partnerships
- Monitor the cluster development in terms of economic significance to the regional economy and job creation.

Észak-Alföld Region

The cooperation of the regional triple-helix actors to support new innovative jobs

The regional peer review had a special focus on how the cooperation of the regional triple-helix actors could boost regional economy and support the innovative way of job-creation. The RIS (Regional Innovation Strategy) identifies 3 fields of the region as key sectors: Health, ICT and Food. During the project we have already identified three good practices; one from the field of ICT, another one that deals with Food and Agriculture, and the third one targeting the job-creation possibilities lying in the development of the regional airport of Debrecen. The peer review focused on these good practices as well as the regional triple-helix actors in general.

The most important weaknesses of the region hindering job creation and innovation according to our perceptions are:
- Low level of entrepreneurship
- Low level of foreign direct investment
- Slow adjustment to structural economic change and decline in industry
- Vocational training not always matched to available jobs
- Underdeveloped innovation system
- High levels of outmigration of young people, depopulating and aging township
- Issues with local road and bus infrastructure
- High numbers of flats and estate based housing
- Bureaucratic public procurement system
- Lack of skills in some vocational areas

- High ratio of dependents
We also consider the following threats important to face with:
- Risk that recovery will be slow and decline will continue
- Wages to the East (Romania) are lower and that attracts inward investors
- Structural change may not happen if foreign direct investment is not secured
- Continued or increasing outmigration of young and qualified people
- Delays with infrastructure (road) developments
- Intellectual property developed in the region may not be used to contribute to the region’s sustainable growth
- Disadvantaged social groups are difficult to integrate to the labour market (social net is too strong compared to the low wages).

During the peer week we tried to follow a well-balanced programme (public-private, urban-rural) in order to be able to show the Peer Team all the important aspects of innovation based job creation within our triple-helix model.

We started with a brief introduction of the regional context (Regional Operational Programme, Regional Innovation Strategy etc.), then provided the opportunity to run more targeted interviews with the different actors that are important is this aspect. In the first “round” representatives of the Municipality of Debrecen as well as the Employment Centre of Hajdú-Bihar County spoke about employment issues, the director of the INNOVA Regional Innovation Agency and the representative of the Association of industrial, science, innovation and technology parks in Észak-Alföld region gave a brief insight to the state of the art of innovation.
The next two “rounds” of interviews focused on entrepreneurship (Foundation for Enterprise Development in Hajdú-Bihar County and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Hajdú-Bihar County), and education (University of Debrecen, IT Services Hungary). At the University of Debrecen members of the Peer Team received detailed information about the University as well as the research potential of the region and got an insight to one of the good practices of Észak-Alföld about the “big company-university cooperation”.

Two other study visits were foreseen in the programme: on Wednesday the Peer Team visited Túristvándi, the self-sustaining village – in order to gain information and experiences besides the general context of technical innovation – as well as the Airport Debrecen, which has an important direct and indirect effect on the region’s economy.

The peer week finished with a workshop where all the important regional stakeholders were invited to reflect on the first findings of the Peer Team.

Most of the feedbacks coming from the regional stakeholders were extremely positive about the Peer Review Report. We think that all the findings can be considered somehow in the renewal process of the Regional Innovation Strategy, as well as in the strategic planning of the next EU financial period.

**Province of Bologna**

**New innovative and creative SMEs**

The Province of Bologna decided to focus on the “New Innovative and Creative SMEs” as a key subject for the local Peer Week. Our “peer team” was composed by experts belonging to the Baltic Institute of Finland – Tampere, experts of the Patras Science Park - and by an extra expert representing both Veneto Region and Veneto Innovazione. Their task was to investigate on our territory the “Best practices” related to the creation of innovative and creative SMEs. During the Peer Review activities our peers were looking for the local “anchor of innovation” that could be shared and adopted at European level, influencing local policies and emulated as good example in the creation of new innovation-based jobs. To this extend, the peers have met the key representatives of the local Public Administrations (Province of Bologna, Emilia-Romagna Region, Municipality of Bologna, Cineteca Bologna, the key managers of the Strategic Metropolitan Plan, Chamber of Commerce, Regional development agencies such as Aster and Ervet or representatives of Spinner initiative), Trade Unions (CGIL), Associations (Ascom, Legacoop, CNA, Unindustria) Incubators (we TechOff and AlmaCube) and holders of innovative and creative businesses that have distinguished themselves in the field or that have received recognition and awards (Les Libellules, Phenbiox, BAM Cultural Strategies, Spreaker, Common-I call, Miro Studio, VicoloPagliaCorta).

The interviews carried out as planned in the very intensive program, have enabled the peers to highlight some interesting figures. As the weak points are concerned:
Peer Reviews first round

there is a gap between competence offered and requested; an heavy bureaucratic attitude; an overlapping of tasks managed by different kind of organizations; the lack of openness and interactions between different sectors (SMEs and University); the lack of ICT and managerial skills in SMEs and public sector and above all the difficulty in transforming creativity into businesses. In addition to these, there are also the inability to be -up-to-date with the technological evolution, the unemployment rate in young people – promoters of innovative ideas – and shared at European level the uncertainty fed by the global economic situation.

Despite of the weak points described, the peers have also noted that the local environment in which we act, is very fertile in terms of creativity for both “local attitude” and for the international brands settled in our area where there is a strong manufacturing industry, good quality of products and potentials to combine traditional industry together with new innovative tools.

Indeed, peers have highlighted the strong entrepreneurial attitude and culture together with a very positive and long lasting reputation about our University: these are precisely the two elements where emerges clearly that potential is not yet full developed and consequently used. Furthermore, the coordination among the different kind of innovative initiatives managed by the different bodies interviewed has been very much appreciated, so the relevance of the existing networks and partnerships.

The fertile local environment supporting the development of creativity derives from the very dynamic and fruitful actions promoted and supported by the University, including the creation of spin-off of research, as well as structures offering open innovation spaces and methods while supporting the flow of people (such as “Sala Borsa”). It is necessary to further exploit the theme of creativity as an engine for innovation and, consequently, for the creation of new jobs, even trying to focus on different kind of business that needs differentiated competences and training. Our peers have also noted that our politicians take in a very high consideration the importance of the Brand Bologna., which confirms the usefulness of efforts invested to achieve this important result.

The Peer Week agenda can show a very intensive program with many interviews and meetings planned and, above all, despite the limited time compared to the activities foreseen, the schedule was carried out successfully.

The peers arrived in Bologna in the evening of Monday the 5th of November 2012 at the Hotel reception where a representative of the Province of Bologna was waiting for them to welcome their arrival and for the very first meeting among them, briefly illustrating the agenda and the confirmation about all the interviews planned.

The day after, the 6th of November 2012 the Peer Week has been officially launched with the welcome of Mr. Graziano Prantoni, the Councillor of the Province of Bologna, followed by the descriptive introduction of our area. Following, the description of the regional context by the representatives of Emilia – Romagna Region and Ervet, illustrating the business environment, highlighting the attention of the key stakeholders toward creativity and culture issues as potentials for business. The afternoon has been devoted to visiting two creative companies (Les Libellules and Phenbiox) followed by the visit to the Museum of History and finally the networking dinner.

In the morning of the 7th of November 2012, has been the visit to CGIL (trade union) and to the Chamber of Commerce while the afternoon, at the Province of Bologna has taken place the so called “Big Afternoon” In this session, at our Council hall, the representatives of the
main local Institutions, Associations and key individuals engaged in the development of creativity in the area, have been grouped and interviewed in an “open session”.

In the morning of the 8th of November 2012, the peers have interviewed Mr. Paul Bonaretti, coordinator of the round table “Innovation and Development” of the round table “Innovation and Development” of the Metropolitan Strategic Plan, as well as President of Aster - site visited also to carry out the interviews to managers of “Spinner initiative” and “We Tech Off”. The afternoon peers have visited the Incubator of AlmaCube together with the interviews to the businesses: Spreaker and Comuni – Chiamo.

The final day, the 9th of November 2012, has focused on the presentation of the first results of the Peer Week to the Councillor- Mr. Prantoni for a first debate. Soon after, an off-plan visit to two creative and small businesses that had awarded free spaces by the Municipality of Bologna to settle their businesses.

We have appreciated with great interest the key elements emerged by the peer week activity, based on visiting our area.

At the same time, the remarks concerning our positive context, supporting and stimulating the creation of innovative and creative SMEs, confirm that our insight point of view, considering this focus as a good practice worth to share, was absolutely true.

The recommendations illustrated will be very useful to act on the weak points that in terms of suggestions about the most appropriate strategies to adopt, will involve us, together with all the main key stakeholders interviewed during the PW.

To this extend, we will arrange a public event, inviting all the stakeholders interviewed, aiming at improving, all together, the development of our area in order to attract the settlement of new innovative and creative businesses with the hope to favour and to increase new jobs opportunities.
Cooperation between Working4Talent and SMART EUROPE

On 30 November 2012 a Letter of Intent was signed between the INTERREG IVC projects Working4Talent and SMART EUROPE. The document serves as a basis to promote a mutual cooperation throughout the projects’ lives.

Both projects are targeting the segments of the economy that have the highest growth potential. But where SMART EUROPE targets at the creation of more innovation based jobs, Working4Talent aims at exchanging and developing policies that help matching talent supply and demand. The approaches of both projects are complementary; without innovation based jobs, no skilled people are needed, but without human talent available, the job vacancies cannot be filled. Therefore, an exchange of experience has an added value for all partners. Shared good practice can be integrated in SMART EUROPE’s peer review cycle and in the workshops/study visits of Working4Talent.

So far Province of Bologna has hosted a peer review in the week of 5-9 November 2012 in which ASTER, partner from Working4Talent, took part. The event focused on how to create more new innovative and creative enterprises, and attracted the participation of strategic local stakeholders (SMEs, Chamber of Commerce, trade Union, etc).

In the framework of Working4Talent, ASTER will invite Province of Bologna to the Workshop titled: “The Talents’ attraction: the key factors”. The event will take place on 13 March 2013 in Bologna and is addressed to Italian and European stakeholders.

Last, SMART EUROPE is organizing the conference “Innovative actions, smart jobs” in Avila on 18 April 2013, titled Fomento San Sebastian, Lead Partner of Working4Talent, is invited to be speaker at the Conference, showing experiences on innovation.

Additional possibilities of collaboration will be identified during the course of the projects.

http://www.w4t.eu/
Spotlight

Photo contest Innovens to be launched April 30th, 2013

Smart Europe launches the Photo Contest “INNOVENS 2013. Innovation through your lens”, to showcase new innovative companies around Europe which can generate job opportunities in the innovation-based sectors of their local economy.

Theme of the competition is to represent possible “smart paths” undertaken by new entrepreneurs to develop innovative ideas and to enter the market.

Contest participants can choose to picture the path of innovative companies in traditional sectors or in rural areas, creative companies, start-ups/spin offs driven by young people, networks among SMEs located in an “innovation lab”, Science Parks, Innovation hubs... just to mention a few.

Photos must be associated to a “smart path story” explaining the message or the reasons behind the picture or the feelings it means to evoke.

Eligibility

The contest is open to professionals and amateurs aged over 18. They have to be nationals of and residing in EU member states, Norway and Switzerland. Croatian citizens will have access to the contest starting July 1st, 2013.

Entry Period

April 30th - September 1st 2013.

How to Enter

Entries must be submitted via the Internet on the http://smart-europe.eu webpage. Participants complete the entry form and upload their photos.

Submissions

Each entrant is limited to a total of 3 photos.

Eligible Photos

- Image data files created with digital cameras. Both color and monochrome images will be accepted.
- File size: Up to 8 MB.
- File format: JPEG/PNG/GIF/JPG, larger than 1200x800 dpi.

Entrants may be requested to provide higher resolution images for publication.

Judging/Announcement of Results

Photos will be published on the INNOVENS Contest Gallery section of the Smart Europe website. 20 entries will be selected by popular vote and among them the best 10 will be selected by a Smart Europe Jury to be published in a Smart Europe publication. Aesthetic quality, creativity and relevance to the theme of the contest will be the criteria used by the Jury to select the 10 best photos and the final winner.

The final results will be announced on the Smart Europe website by November 2013.

Prizes

The top 10 selected photos will be promoted through the Smart Europe communication tools (website, social media and newsletter) and included in the project’s final publications.

The INNOVENS 2013 winner will receive the special Smart Europe Award (a fine art print of the photo and a gift package) and will participate to the final conference in Brussels to present the photo.
CONTENTS OF ISSUE 4:
- Support tools for innovative start-ups
- Good practices from SMART EUROPE
- Flash information from the second round of Peer Reviews
- Innovens 2013: results from the first selection

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