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### International Exchange Seminar, LAP's , Policy Recommendations and EIS Interregional Learning Workshop

In this issue you can read about the International Exchange Seminar held in Reggio Emilia in March 2019. Each partners Local Action Plan (LAP) is presented, as well as Policy Recommendations. You can also read about the cooperation between the Compete In and EIS Project Partners, stakeholders and regional actors during the EIS Interregional Learning Workshop #9 in Bologna in October 2019.

### Next step - Phase 2

Now all Partners are working in their territories to implement LAP's actions and to influence their Policy Instrument: Phase 2 started in April 2019 and will end in March 2021.

Project meetings and Partners interactions will continue into phase 2 to support each other and share common issues. At the end of 2020 Partners will then meet in a final event that will give them the chance to benchmark and illustrate their results while disseminating lessons learned in the 5 year Project to a wider audience.

# SMEs and territories attractiveness and competitiveness: Which strategies and policies?



This was the title for the International Exchange Seminar held last 13th March 2019 in Reggio Emilia. The seminar, realized within the project **Compete In**, offered all European partners the opportunity to deepen international trends and reflections on attractiveness and internationalization processes as well as to connect local actions developed by the various partner territories. In the morning Partners and Stakeholders took part into a plenary session with key note speakers, while in the afternoon three working groups were organized, focusing on the three issues tackled by the project (attractiveness, internationalisation and territorial partnerships). Which are the elements of competitiveness for companies and territories? Who are the competitors? How can local institutions and actors support companies on international routes? Which role do infra-structural and non-infrastructural connections and relationships play? And how to create the necessary culture and skills for internationality and innovation? These are some of the questions that the seminar and the working groups addressed through the keynote speakers' presentations and the project partners' contributions in the finalization of their Local Action Plans on internationalization and innovation.

## Several key note speeches have been included into the seminar:

- Enabling factors for internationalisation of territories by Dr Brian Jones, Leeds Beckett University
- Compete With? Strengths for attractiveness by Prof. Ronald Wall, University of Witwatersrand Johannesburg
- Internationalisation of territories for internationalizing SMEs by Luigi Mercuri, FDI Center - Director Institutional Relations & Corporate Partnerships
- Connecting territories to support competitiveness and development by Maurizio Maresca, University of Udine
- Education, training and culture for internationalization by Marco Iezzi, Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research

The questions addressed by the key note speeches have been selected according to main goals and topics of project partners' LAPs. In particular, the Interregional Exchange Seminar focused on following key issues for internationalisation:

- enabling factors allowing a territory to enhance policies and initiatives for internationalisation (ref. Enabling Factors and Policy Guidelines deliverables) - the enabling factors considered resulted from Compete In exchange of experiences and International experiences mapped through the International Best Practice Review;
- factors a territory should consider to define strategies for attracting foreign investments from abroad and build synergies at local and international level in terms of strategic industries, countries and corridors (theory on FDI Competitor cities, steps to define which sectors to specialize and diversify, analysis of sectoral strengths of competitors, the importance of geographical analysis of partners - hot spot analysis – analysis of sectorial strength and sectorial growth);
- examples on how a city/local authority can define tools/ process of analysis on these factors, leveraging on exchanges and international relations already in place (educational & vocational exchange, cluster and industrial partnerships, shared R&D programs, infrastructural projects, M&A facilitation, lobbying & advocacy, supply chain matchmaking, creating or supporting bilateral / multilateral business platforms or events, financial tools and facilitation; having an integrated presentation of different tools, experiences and measures a city/regional government can design to support territorial cooperation for internationalisation processes;



- role of infrastructures (soft and hard) in supporting internationalisation, attractiveness and partnerships in Europe and toward third countries (how territories should define strategies according to European corridors or international initiatives - Belt and road initiative);

- role of initiatives and activities in educational fields in supporting internationalisation processes at high education and university level (vocational training, Erasmus programme, exchange of students, joint research programs among universities and links with SMEs and companies).

Moreover, each partner had the opportunity to exchange main challenges and constraints about LAP definition and implementation with other project partners and keynote speakers in the working groups, where project partners discussed with a thematic key note speaker and could get suggestions and insight about their own LAP and strategies to implement in the next phase.

In particular, the working groups were organised according to the three leverages of Compete in project: Working group 1: Attractiveness of territories (Mentoring with Ronald Wall); Working group 2: Territorial Partnership (Mentoring with Maurizio Maresca); Working group 3: Internationalization of territories (Mentoring with Luigi Mercuri).

Some common issues raised from the three working groups are: the importance to keep the engagement of the local stakeholders in the actions and measures taken, to get continuous and updated feedbacks about rationale and effectiveness; the relevance to enhance coordination and sharing of goals and initiatives at territorial level in order to boost the impact and make effective the efforts, the importance to have statistical and qualitative data to re-think policies and actions and effectively

implement and monitor activities and results; the relevance to build up culture and knowledge about institutions, technical actors, SMEs to address challenge of internationalisation and attractiveness; to build up partnerships not just with similar territories/cities (competitors) but also with “complementary” partners/territories/actors to enhance “specialised competences”.

## Local Action Plan Reggio Emilia: Internationalisation between culture and innovation



Culture, SMEs, Young generation, Innovation, Internationalisation and attractiveness. These are the key words from Reggio Emilia Local action plan.

Main objective is to identify tools and ways to increase visibility and international relations of Reggio system. To achieve this goal, a "targeted" and integrated offer of production excellence, territorial, historical and cultural values and distinctive competences, able to enhance the whole system and to represent the individual and specific identities are needed. Moreover, Local institutional and non-institutional actors' international relations must be capitalized. Different levels of internationalisation (Local authorities, SMEs, universities, R&I centres) are a competitive advantage that nevertheless needs a **new approach in the governance of different actions**.

Examples of cooperation are already well tested, but, although positive experiences, Reggio Emilia wants to bring it to a **new level**: a shared and strategic practice is needed. Moreover, we need to **involve companies and businesses** and get a strong commitment on shared projects and actions. The challenge is to **find effective tools and framework** able to give value to each experience, defining a common strategic framework fostering synergies between actors and activities

and increasing integration, using distinctive competences of the territory as strategic focus for strategic actions jointly implemented. **Facilitating coordination and networking** among the several actors is a key point.

**Following these premises, Reggio Emilia LAP main actions are:**

- **Reggio for competitiveness: to enforce local governance for improving internationalization of territory and enhancing SMES competitiveness.** The action foresees the formalization of the Local Stakeholder Group (LSG) of Compete In through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding under the direction of the Municipality. Members of LSG are: Municipality, Chamber of Commerce, Business Associations (Unindustria, CNA, Legacoop Emilia Ovest), Research centers (CRPA, Reggio Children, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia), E35 Foundation for international Projects, Reggio Emilia for Innovation, STU Reggiane Spa.

• **Culture for internationalisation and innovation – To enforce culture of internationalisation and innovation improving “enabling conditions” toward international dimension and exchange of experience.** The value of building up a culture oriented to innovation, entrepreneurship and internationalisation has been considered a key point: Enterprises “protagonist and leader” to define projects, tools and experiences for internationalization, attraction and partnerships - Enterprises as testimonials speaking to other enterprises to share experiences about internationalization processes. The action aims to strengthen the culture of internationalization and the ability of companies to develop actions and paths of internationalization and innovation, leveraging on the exchange of experiences with other companies that have already undertaken similar paths, but also through meetings for deepening knowledge on experiences / opportunities / critical issues related to geographical areas, tools.

Two strands of activity are foreseen:

**Activity 1: Integrated territorial planning and projects towards two pilot countries**

**Activity 2: Storytelling of business cases related to experiences (in the field of internationalization and innovation), which can lead to cases of success and “failure”.**

• **To increase young people exposition to international and innovative experience.** Reggio Emilia LSG has proposed to work for building up a “culture for internationalisation and innovation” starting from the youngest generation. Main objectives are: - Strengthen the culture of internationalization and innovation of young people, with the aim of changing the approach and attitude towards innovation and internationalization by investing in new generations - Define and develop integrated territorial actions to increase young people's exposure and interest in innovation and the involvement of young people in international initiatives- The action will address students participating in the Erasmus + program, High schools students, University students with an annual calendar of training activities, hands-on visits and meetings aimed at learning more about places of innovation and internationalization of Reggio Emilia.

• **Analysing the attractiveness of Reggio Emilia internationally** - Local authorities and territories have linked their policies and initiatives to Smart Specialization strategy without having defined statistical research and objective analysis about it. The action intends to provide Reggio Emilia with reference to measure the attractiveness of Reggio Emilia territory :Analyse and evaluate the international positioning of Reggio Emilia, through analysis and statistical data of direct investments from abroad - Strengthen the actions of the territory capable of attracting economic resources and social and human capital to make the territory more attractive and interesting at international level.

• **Leveraging on Innovation Park as asset to attract social capital and resources.** To emerge and compete on the international scene Reggio Emilia has chosen to innovate its economic, social and cultural model by focusing on the attraction of knowledge, research and innovation and on the exchange of talents, experiences and relationships. Central point of this development strategy is the Innovation Park as a driving force to promote Reggio in an increasingly international dimension, increasing its visibility and making its reputation grow. This will be achieved through the following projects: definition of communication, marketing and promotion tools of the Innovation Park designed as complementary to the activities and planning of local stakeholders - positioning of the Innovation Park at the centre of the international relations of local actors through the definition of a visit format for delegations, stakeholders and companies from abroad. The format, built on the basis of the needs of the various actors involved, will be structured in a flexible and modular way according to the different targets.

• **Reinforcing the attractiveness of Reggio Emilia at an international level - Edu-Research-Business Week.** The main inspiration comes from the WBHS that organises each year the Wakefield Business Week. Reggio Emilia LSG inspired by British experience proposed to integrate EDU and research activities and sectors. Vit Empreende experience in working in order to mix start ups and traditional companies, investors and university, general public was also fundamental as inspiration. The Edu-Research-Business Week is conceived as a showcase of Reggio Emilia excellences and practices: an exhibition and networking event in which to present the production system, research and local innovation by leveraging the main drivers of territorial development (mechanics / mechatronics, education, environment / energy, agrifood) and codesign new project.

#### Local stakeholders/actors involved in LAP:

Municipality of Reggio Emilia, E35 Foundation for international project, Chamber of Commerce, Business association, CAN, Legacoop Emilia Ovest, Unindustria Reggio Emilia, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Reggio Children, CRPA – center for research on animal production, REI – Reggio Emilia Innovazione, STU Reggiane Spa, Emilia Romagna Region

## Local Action Plan IVACE: Entrepreneurship internationalization tool /Valencia region internationalization council



The Compete in project provides the possibility to tackle common challenges, share best practices and different approaches among partner regions. IVACE primary expectation from the exchange of experience has been to learn from others, share and contribute ideas. We all face similar problems and offer solutions adapted to the peculiarities of the local administrative and business environment in an increasingly globalized world.

The two best practices selected respond to the needs of the Valencia region for the promotion and consolidation of entrepreneurship / internationalization (after TRIIP and ecoach best practice proposed by Gavle) and the efficiency of the regions internationalization strategy (after the Emilia Romagna Go Global programme).

With regard to the **internationalization council (Action 1)**, we seek a new perspective on strategy formulation and execution. Emilia Romagna is performing very well, one of the leading export areas in Europe with a very competitive industrial sector.

The main goal of this action is to increase effectiveness and efficiency in the design of the annual internationalization strategy managed by Direction General of Internationalization and conducted jointly with IVACE.

The Valencia public bodies must provide the best possible support for Valencia's international economic activities and opportunities and companies must have a clearer understanding of the commercial services they can expect. This requires a strong prioritisation based on market potentials and delivering added value.

We are confident that improved procedures will lead to greater efficiency and better use of human and financial resources. The commitment of the regional Ministry of Economy and the active participation of sector associations and entities supporting internationalization are of fundamental importance.

Regarding the **entrepreneurship/internationalization strategy (Action 2)**, the objective is to provide advice and a self-evaluation tool for an overview of the different functional areas of the company. It will facilitate the identification of market opportunities abroad, performance and resources allocation, providing support of management tools to boost their market access implementation. In this context, the user will be able to determine who can provide support at each stage of the process of exporting goods and services.

Entrepreneurship is a powerful driver of economic growth: it creates new companies and jobs, opens up new markets, and nurtures new skills and capabilities. Furthermore, entrepreneurship makes economies more competitive and innovative and is crucial in achieving the objectives of several European sectorial policies. Commercialising new ideas improves productivity and creates wealth. Without the jobs from new firms, average net employment growth would be negative. New companies, especially SMEs, represent the most important source of new employment.

The general approach of the implementation of the practice is to create an environment where entrepreneurs can flourish and grow covering some of the detected entrepreneurs needs, access to finance and support in the crucial phases of the business lifecycle and their growth.

The environment of start-ups support has been consolidating in recent years in the Valencian Community. Proof of this is the Valencia tech city initiative (<http://vlctechcity.com/>), a website that brings together a large number of stakeholders, proposals and activities. Both public and private actors offer solutions and support to new innovative companies and more generally to entrepreneurs.

We believe that local development agencies are key players. On the other hand, the support of business incubators, European centres of innovative companies CEEIs and other entities will be active to give an impulse to the area of internationalization adapted to the needs of new micro-enterprises.

IVACE, under the mandate of the Directorate General of Internationalization, will lead the internationalization component, as it is the public body responsible for assisting the Valencia companies to do business abroad.



## Local Action Plan Wielkopolska

The LAP for Wielkopolska provides for the implementation of 2 actions:

1. Information and consultation meetings on foreign markets - an additional offer of support for entrepreneurs - beneficiaries of the "Gospodarna Wielkopolska" project.
2. Conducting stationary basic training for Wielkopolska local government units in the field of investor service.

The Action 1 is inspired by the lessons learnt from the transfer workshops on Project Partners good practices XPANDE (Spanish programme from Valencia) and TRIIP (Swedish project from Gävle), in particular their elements of consulting for companies. Main objectives of the Action are to gather feedback on the experiences, plans and needs of enterprises related to foreign expansion, inform Wielkopolska entrepreneurs about conditions of running business activity on given markets and provide consultations for companies regarding export strategies.

The Action 1, which addresses to Regional Operational Programme's "Gospodarna Wielkopolska" project, will consist in conducting a survey (preliminary phase) and organising information and consultation meetings for beneficiaries of the "Gospodarna Wielkopolska" project, enterprises selected for participation in regional stands of the Wielkopolska Region at trade fairs around the world (main phase).

The Plan expects preparation of survey report and organisation of at least 2 information and consultation meetings in 2020 as results of the Action 1.

The Action 2 is inspired by lessons learnt from the International Best Practice Review and International Exchange Seminar in Reggio Emilia, in particular elements related to increasing the investment attractiveness of countries and regions. Main objectives of the Action are to improve the quality of the process of providing administrative services essential for investor service in local government and increase the investment attractiveness of the region and Wielkopolska local governments.

The Action 2, which is based on new project launched and implemented by the Self-Government of the Wielkopolska Region, consists of a series of training sessions for representatives of Wielkopolska local government units (employees dealing with investor service and management staff) regarding, among others, basics of the investor service in local government, management of strategic economic development, investment promotion on the Internet, preparation of promotional materials and territorial marketing.

It is expected that thanks to the Action 2 employees and management staff of Wielkopolska local government units will gain professional training in the area of investor service. The project will also influence the development of a network of contacts between units of Wielkopolska local governments dealing with investor service.

All members of local stakeholders group were asked to take part in the survey (Action 1). Local government units are essential actors in the implementation of Action 2.



## Local Action Plan Upper Silesia Region: Internationalization of SMEs in Upper Silesia Region

The main goal of the Local Action Plan is to improve the regional support for SMEs and whole regional economy by shifting knowledge and skills of all stakeholders being involved in the process of internationalization and to create market-driven services to help companies in their transition from local economy oriented enterprises into global ones.

**Following actions are planned:**

- 1. Regional Export Platform,**
- 2. Internationalisation Academy.**

### **1. Regional Export Platform**

The main goal of the activity is to establish peer-to-peer and synergic network of regional stakeholders (public and private) involved in internationalization process of the Silesia Region. The network system called "Regional Export Platform" should be non-profit entity established by equal partners to foster internationalisation activity both by the SMEs themselves and public institutions.

Activities planned:

A. Screening Analysis - aimed at:

- mapping of internationalization competences of regional stakeholders,
- mapping of export services available,
- mapping of training and counselling services;

B. Data base – including:

- regional Business Support Institutions dealing with internationalization,
- regional institutions/companies dealing with internationalization,
- regional experts dealing with internationalization,
- export/imports contacts;

C. Regional Export Portal – providing for instance:

- mission,
- stakeholder information
- accessible funds,
- accessible trainings,
- foreign markets information (custom, trade barriers, etc.),
- FDI information,
- counselling service.

The action is based on interregional exchange of experience with Partners within the project. Main inspiration derives from following best practices:

- Wakefield Bondholders Scheme – effective local cooperation network (of regional authorities and international stakeholders) for development and promotion of regional economy, integrated branding, marketing and promotion,
- VIT Empreende/Expande – network of institutions with various key competences, as ecosystem supporting exchange of knowledge, innovation, integrated vision on international field,
- ICT Meta Cluster – international partnerships in 4 main fields: searching of relevant SMEs, adaptation of product and services, development of services supporting export, systemic support for business development.

## 2. Internationalization Academy

The main goal of the Internationalization Academy is meeting educational and informational needs of regional SMEs and institutions involved in the process of internationalization. It is expected to increase the level of their knowledge and competences in the field of international expansion of regional businesses.

### Activities planned:

The Academy is aimed at providing up-to-date information/ data/ knowledge in the field of internationalization and business export competences. Its programme will be adjusted to the current needs of the regional stakeholders and SMEs, for which special trainings, courses, workshops, coaching/ mentoring programmes, counselling services or informational meetings are going to be offered, for example concerning export oriented business models or export consortia models.

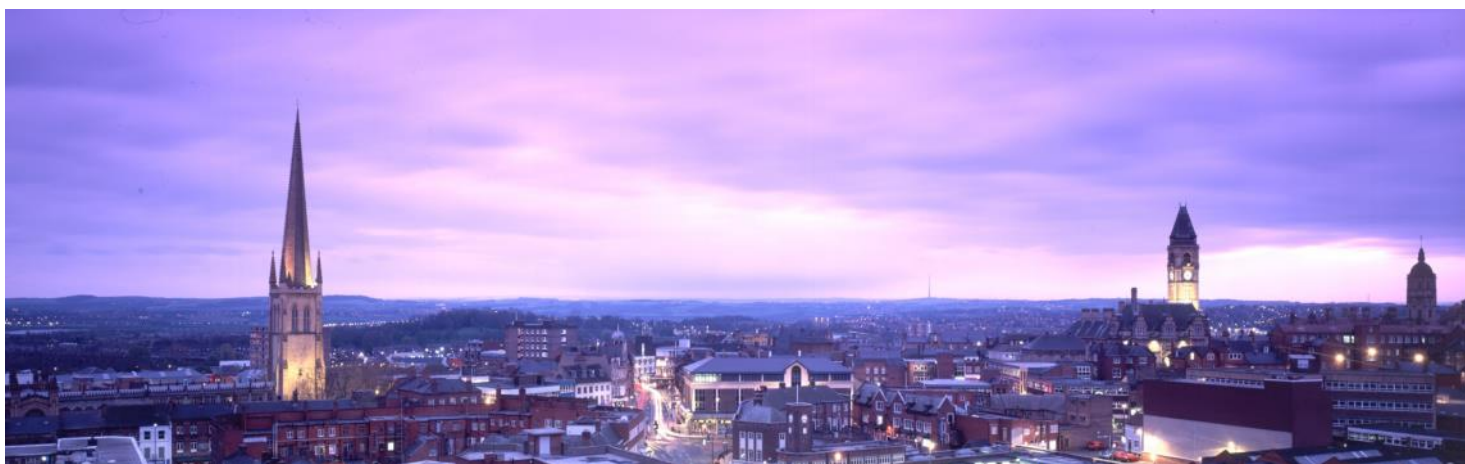
The action is based on interregional exchange of experience with Partners within the project. Main inspiration derives from following best practices:

- Wakefield Bondholder Scheme – regular networking meetings on investing, education, which give opportunity for exchange of experience, gaining of knowledge on export, media, business models, financing, culture,
- VIT Empreende/Expande – educational programmes with support by representatives of regional self-government, academic and entrepreneurs, which ensure holistic support for SMEs,
- ICT Meta Cluster/TRIIP – methodology of selection of beneficiaries and provision of dedicated support (mentoring/ coaching/training programmes) and its evaluation.

All those ideas were inspirational and gave the basis for concept of Local Action Plan.

### Local stakeholders/actors involved

1. Marshal's Office of Silesian Voivodeship – Managing Authority, implementing projects including Internationalization Academy,
2. Upper Silesia Fund - implementing projects including Internationalization Academy,
3. Chamber of Commerce Exporters and Importers in Mysłowice – responsible for setting and running of Regional Export Platform,
4. Silesian Centre of Entrepreneurship – Regional Intermediate Body of Regional Operational Programme within Measure 3.5,
5. Upper Silesian Agency for Entrepreneurship and Development - monitoring of running the Silesian Local Action Plan for Internationalization and member of Regional Export Platform,
6. Members of Regional Export Platform:
  - regional supporting institutions,
  - regional SMEs.



## Local Action Plan Leeds Beckett University:

# INVESTMENT FOR GROWTH AND JOBS PROGRAMME: Unlocking the Growth Potential of Businesses in Key Economic Sectors — ESIF Strategy 2014-2020

**Action 1 : Identify and utilise an online platform for SME businesses to network, share information, access information to increase sales and grow through internationalisation actions.**

A suitable platform will be identified by a LSG user group – similar to the tool outlined in the TRIIP best practice.

The user group will:

- Identify what helpful technology is already out there for SMEs.
- Shape the adoption of the tool to overcome potential challenges of use, barriers, terminology
- Raise awareness of the tool to develop regional SMEs' best practices
- Provide support and monitor impact
- Produce case studies

Ultimately online platform will increase SME participation rates in internationalisation. Giving businesses a tool which allows easier access to support and mentoring methodologies which already exist in our region will unlock their growth potential.

**Action 2 : Contribute to the development of strong ecosystem for the region that enables SME to access mentoring and support**

- Deepen business support to Wakefield SMEs by making expert advice and mentoring available via our business centres and network

- Facilitated sessions by our academic expert Dr Martina Topic with external experts from regional partners
- Investigate presence of 'export ambassadors' – partly run by LCRLEP to combine a mentoring and business development angle
- Promote at the Wakefield UBC to disseminate mentoring, support and internationalisation opportunities to Wakefield businesses

Applied Good Practice:

1. TRIIP project emphasises mentoring support as a complement to the other tools
2. VIT Empreende project collaborates with key stakeholders to provide businesses with access to information that can contribute to their growth.

Expected Results:

- More SMEs accessing help and gaining positive experience / growth / export activity as a result of this ecosystem
- Using Wakefield Business Week to encourage SMEs to access the support systems available, promote export, innovation and growth and get the internationalisation conversation flowing.
- Small cohort of businesses attend facilitated sessions



### Action 3 : Develop a project / mechanism for linking university knowledge and talent to SME businesses

- Academic to scope and design a diagnostic to address the skilled resources SMEs need to internationalise successfully, identifying barriers to university knowledge and talent.
- Feedback to policy makers SME business needs and requirements from this action and the impact future policy decisions could make.
- Inform businesses about the funded projects available which often will enable access to skilled graduates and why business relevant
- Potentially identify student work placement opportunities within SMEs to improve internationalisation and link talent

#### Applied Good Practice:

VIT Emprende project providing information on university projects and student and graduate opportunities for SME businesses.

#### Expected results:

- Clearer picture of what SMEs requirements, gaps and future needs are.
- Information disseminated to SMEs about current opportunities and integration within Wakefield region.

# Local Action Plan Gävle: To improve the support system and strengthen the capacity for internationalisation in SMEs in order to increase the number of international SMEs



Gävle is a dynamic, growing city situated by the Baltic Sea. It is the logistic hub of central Sweden, close to the international airport Arlanda and the Stockholm metropolitan area. A historical city of shipping and commerce within steel, forestry and pulp and paper. Gävle is the regional capital of Gävleborg, one of Sweden's strongest export regions. It holds an important public sector and companies from all lines of business, from production to service industry, commerce and tourism.

Policy addressed:

*Investment for Growth and Jobs programme, NUTS 2: North Central Sweden, Thematic goal 3: Strengthen the competitiveness of small and medium sized companies*

Although one of Sweden's strongest export regions in value, the number of international companies is one of the lowest – only 20% compared to 40% of the strongest region. The Compete In project is supporting the process of strengthening the support system to SME internationalization through three actions and 11 activities:

## Action 1 – The Regional Export Centre

Set up with the inspiration from the *Export advisory service for SMEs* from Wielkopolska region, *Silesian Investors and Exporters Assistance Center* from GAPR and *ERGO – Emilia Romagna Go Global* from ERVET, Emilia Romagna region.

- development of a collaboration platform between organizations supporting SME internationalization
- mapping, packaging & information about what is on offer to SMEs
- inspirational and learning workshops/seminars for SMEs and the regional support system
- running of a framework program: Business Development Cheques for Internationalization
- development of a follow-up model for the Internationalization work

## Action 2 – Support to innovative start-ups

Further development of our own (FPX) *TRIIP-project (The Regional Innovation Internationalisation Project)* and *VIT Empreende* from IVACE, Valencia region.

- development of support for the internationalisation of innovative start-ups and the international network of the regional incubator Movexum
- set up of a network of innovation and internationalisation in the region

## Action 3 – University of Gävle contribution to SME internationalisation

Inspired by the *Higher education support to internationalisation processes* from Reggio Emilia.

- mapping of the research and education networks and activities at the University of Gävle and how it can contribute to the internationalization of SMEs and the region
- mapping of international students (focus Master in Business Administration) at the University of Gävle and creating joint activities with the Regional Export Centre in order to link students with SMEs

Together we will increase the number of international companies in Gävle/Gävleborg!



The following stakeholders contributed to the development and will implement the Local Action Plan (LAP) together with the municipality of Gävle and Region Gävleborg:

*ALMI Business Partner, Business Sweden, Chamber of Commerce of Central Sweden, EEN – Enterprise Europe Network, University of Gävle, Movexum – regional incubator, SEK – Swedish Export Credit Corporation, EKN – Swedish Export Credit Guarantee Board*

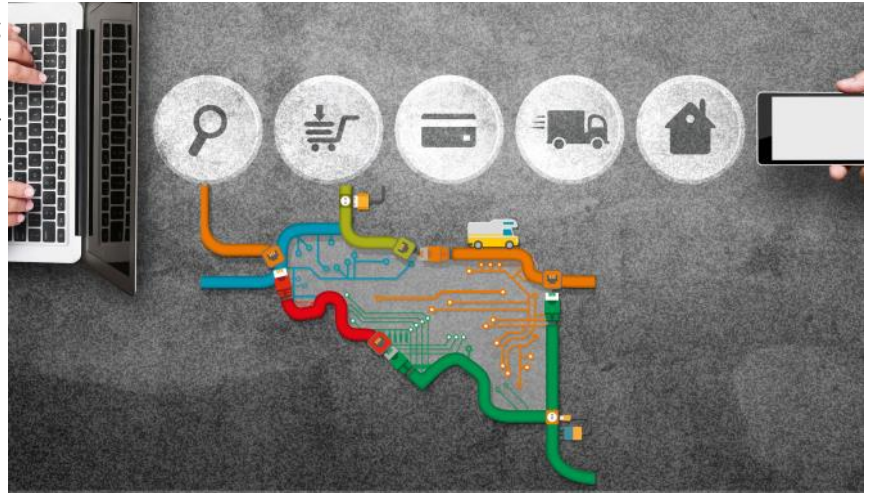
## Local Action Plan ART-ER:

### Cross-border e-commerce for SMEs

**Emilia-Romagna Local Action Plan** aims at broadening the range of regional tools supporting the internationalization of SMEs through the implementation of actions facilitating cross-border e-commerce for SMEs, integrated with operations and programmes at the national level.

It addresses the following SMEs **needs**:

- Digital skills
- Capacity to invest in digital marketing
- Ability to choose the right digital suppliers and partners
- Partnerships with marketplaces, e-commerce platforms and e-tailers
- Reaching critical mass through aggregations



**Policy tools concerned:** ERDF Regional Operational Plan 2014-2020 - Axis 3 Competitiveness and attractiveness of the productive system; Regional Plan for Productive Activities (RPPA) 2012 – 2015 Operational Programme 4 - Internationalisation of the productive system.

**Lessons learned from:** *XPANDE digital initiative implemented by IVACE and the Chamber of Commerce of Valencia in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce of Spain.* The goal is to draw inspiration from it and go further. Therefore, not only supporting SMEs in designing digital marketing campaigns and co-financing the costs thereof, allowing SMEs to promote their products to potential buyers on foreign markets, but addressing the full range of technical and consulting services needed by SMEs to exploit successfully the potential of cross-border e-commerce. The set-up of a new regional measure is envisaged. Such measure, coordinated with aid at the national level, as it is the case of *XPANDE digital*, will offer SMEs the opportunity to exploit the development potential of one of the fastest growing international trade segments, cross-border sales through digital channels.

Emilia-Romagna LAP foreseen 3 actions:

**1. Introduction of new eligible expenditures under the 2019 regional call for systemic promotional projects:** launch of the regional call 4.1 RPPA for systemic promotional projects, with the introduction of new categories of expenditure based on the Xpande Digital initiative and on inputs from the National Trade Agency, to support collective investments by SMEs in digital marketing.

**2. Definition of a new regional measure/action supporting digital exports of regional SMEs in coordination with national level support measures:** drafting of an agreement with the Italian National Trade Agency (ICE) covering training of SMEs in digital marketing, definition of eligible expenditures for the new regional measure/support action and how regional SMEs could benefit from existing agreements between ICE and the major marketplaces, e-commerce platforms and e-tailers operating in the most important foreign markets.

**3. Implementation and evaluation of the new regional measure/action supporting digital exports of single and/or networks of regional SMEs:** launch of new measure/support action

by Emilia-Romagna Regional Government, monitoring and evaluation.

**Expected impact:**

- maximize the opportunities for regional SMEs
- minimize the costs of investments for Regional SMEs in digital marketing actions – which represent a major and constant part of the costs entailed by e-commerce - as they could benefit from collective digital marketing investments covered by ICE.

**Actors and local stakeholders involved:**

**1. ART-ER**

- technical support for the implementation actions, monitoring and reporting
- liaising with Local Stakeholder Group Member organisations
- technical relations with ICE, NETCOMM, Polytechnic of Milan, Chamber of Commerce of Valencia

**2. Emilia-Romagna Region – Service for Attractiveness and Internationalisation – Directorate General Knowledge Economy, Labour and Businesses**

- guidance and coordination of actions implementation
- coordinating Local Stakeholder Group Member organisations
- institutional relations with ICE, NETCOMM, Polytechnic of Milan, Chamber of Commerce of Valencia;
- liaising and coordinating with ERDF 2014 – 2020 Managing Authority

- 3. Local stakeholders:** Confindustria Emilia-Romagna, CNA Emilia-Romagna; Confartigianato Imprese Emilia-Romagna; Legacoop Emilia-Romagna; Confcooperative Emilia-Romagna; Association of Chambers of Commerce of Emilia-Romagna
- technical inputs and representance of SMEs;
  - feedbacks on the technical specifications of the new measures;
  - spreading information to and supporting SMEs in the application stage;
  - supporting the evaluation of results.

**Partners:** ICE (National Trade Agency), NETCOMM (National Consortium of e-commerce operators), Polytechnic of Milan School of Management - Observatory on Digital Export.

# Policy Recommendations – International Learning Seminar Reggio Emilia March 2019

As presented by Dr Brian Jones, Leeds Beckett University

## Recommendations to Policy and Decision Makers

- **Local and municipal authorities** typically play the key leadership role in improving internationalisation.
- Now a much more shared process of ‘networked governance’ with local authorities deepening existing relationships with business associations and universities.
- Specialised knowledge and know-how of these bodies can inform decision making and action on internationalisation.
- Direct overseas linkages often builds on past cultural, political, social and economic ties that shape, inform and open up opportunities.
- **Universities** across the Compete In territories show a range of country and regional specific experience that reflect the local higher education system’s past and current relationships with businesses and the wider regional economy.
- Universities need to ensure that they are better placed at supporting SMEs, and stimulating innovation and problem-solving activity.
- **Business and community associations** typically function as representational bodies or as specialist export agency services.
- Potential to develop collaborative projects between a number of partners; for example, encouraging start-up or micro-SMEs to commence exporting earlier in their development.
- **SMEs** are typically the target community for improving services and support for internationalisation around specific initiatives.
- Opportunity for co-opting individual leaders of specific SMEs that have special skills or know-how to contribute to internationalisation.

## Policy Recommendations for Internationalisation

- 1] Systematic and responsive service (benchmarked, monitored and performance managed) to potential investors seeking to come to the region.
- 2] Readily accessible, strong, modern and resilient infrastructure for the flow of people and goods into and out of the region.
- 3] Resilient and modern digital and advanced ICT infrastructure: digitalisation is a fundamental enabling technology for all sectors and economic activities.
- 4] Good access to, and mobilisation of, STEM skills (particularly ICT skills) to enable SME’ absorptive capacity to develop, consume and adopt innovations as well as attract and anchor FDI.
- 5] Identify and support the development and promotion of supply chain linkages with FDI and between local technology-based SMEs and the local service economy.
- 6] Availability of soft landing and facilitation spaces available for new entrants to the region (set-up offices, virtual offices, brokering local services & suppliers).
- 7] Create mechanisms for regional responses to structural challenges and sectoral changes to reshape local competition.
- 8] Showcase quality of life and “liveability” strengths in the region.
- 9] Mentoring and support for SMEs that are looking to move into new markets, especially internationally, so that their resource base and competency is extended.
- 10] Facilitate and sustain development of business networks to share information, best practice, develop links and exchange knowledge.
- 11] Enhance and develop complementary assets and ecosystems that promote added value and innovation efforts.
- 12] Promote high-tech clustering (or agglomeration) around existing and emerging sectoral and supply chain strengths.
- 13] Stimulate and support institutional engagement and network assets (e.g. trade and technical associations, executive coaching & training) to sustain a culture of learning and open innovation.
- 14] Promote a culture of international linkages and openness (cultural, academic, trade missions, business fairs, and mentoring SME managers to participate).
- 15] Identify and support innovation amongst SMEs and facilitate access to higher education and research institutions that can problem solve and act as a long-term resource for businesses.

## COMPETE IN and EIS: a fruitful cooperation between Interreg Europe projects

Further exchange of views and cooperation between Compete In and EIS Project Partners, stakeholders and regional actors took place during the EIS Interregional Learning Workshop #9 held in Bologna on Wednesday, 30 October 2019.

The Everywhere International SMEs (EIS) project brings together nine partners from seven regions across Europe. The EIS project aims at promoting excellence in regional business support systems for internationalising SMEs by sharing and embedding best practices to enable more SMEs to expand their business across borders.

The Workshop focused on Action Plan progress and capitalising from EU-project learnings; in this context the COMPETE IN Lead Partner and PP7 ART-ER intervened together with EIS Partner Emilia Romagna Region with a joint presentation on the topic: "Different approaches to SMEs internationalisation inside Interreg Europe projects":

- COMPETE IN: a territorial approach for SMEs' internationalization, Saverio Serri, City of Reggio Emilia
- COMPETE IN and EIS: Methodological differences in project management and implementation by ART-ER, Luca Rosselli
- Added value from the parallel participation to EIS and COMPETE IN: how the two Local Action Plans are going to influence Emilia-Romagna Region's tools for SMEs internationalisation by Gianluca Baldoni, Emilia-Romagna Region (Italy)

The Emilia-Romagna Region and the Regional Development Agency, ART-ER, are partners in the Interreg Europe projects - EIS and COMPETE IN. Both initiatives address the objective of improving the regional support system for SME internationalisation.

*"The parallel participation in the two projects has proved very fruitful as it has broadened the range of experiences, policies and measures scrutinised. Emilia-Romagna Region - with the support of its Development Agency - is getting inspiration for designing and implementing Action Plans in both projects."* the Emilia-Romagna Region team explains.

They continue: *"The strategic idea behind such parallel participation is to develop and implement two complementary Action Plans that can eventually reinforce each other. This boosts both initiatives to improve the support system."*

Synergies and cross-fertilizing ideas between the two projects have already been exchanged at different levels and occasions. For instance, the Emilia-Romagna Local Stakeholders Groups of both projects comprise the same organisations, so interests expressed by partners in one project helped improving the description of best practices (COMPETE IN) or the peer review process (EIS) and vice versa.

For Compete In Lead Partner taking part into this workshop was not only important for disseminating Compete In contents and activities to a new and wider audience but also to learn

from EIS Partners crucial lessons on a different approach on internationalization: *"while we are more focused on territorial and systemic internationalization policies to support SME's going global, EIS leverages more on support measures and Business Support Organizations' activities and roles in favor of SMEs. The two approaches combined together can improve in many ways SMEs' conditions and abilities to internationalize and add value to regional policies and measures on the topic"* COMPETE IN Lead Partner coordinator commented.

During the session, EIS Partners and Compete In Lead Partner had also the chance to learn more about the following Projects:

- Interreg Europe projects OSS and CRAFTS CODE, student entrepreneurs project, Hilde Hoefnagels, Artesis Plantijn University College Antwerp (Belgium)
- INKREASE, Angelica Laterza, DG Economy of Knowledge, Labor and Enterprise Emilia-Romagna Region (Italy). Topic: Regional Ecosystems for Innovation
- FOODCHAINS4EU and STRING, Fabio Girotti, DG for Agriculture, Hunting and Fisheries, Emilia-Romagna Region, (Italy). Topic: Stimulating the regional innovation eco-systems to create sustainable food chains.
- CESME, Marino Cavallo, the Metropolitan City of Bologna (Italy). Topic: Stimulating the inclusion of SMEs into the circular economy
- RELOS3, Daniele Cencioni, the Metropolitan City of Bologna (Italy). Topic: Discussing Action plan for S3 at local level.

To learn more about EIS Project and its results please visit:

<https://www.interregeurope.eu/eis>.

Do not miss this insight article on GlobalEISTool, a valuable result of EIS Project every SMEs' support system should give a try to! <https://www.interregeurope.eu/eis/news/news-article/4709/a-practitioner-s-tool-for-sme-int-support/>



## IVACE works with ERGO for internationalisation



IVACE presented the two good practices selected in the framework of the European Compete in programme at the GO GLOBAL Internationalisation Congress on 19 November.

This event organized annually by the Spanish Foreign Trade Institute, the Chambers of Commerce of the Valencia Community and IVACE, has a duration of two days.

There were a large number of conferences on topics related to internationalisation, in addition to meetings with the clusters representatives, as well as 24 IVACE delegates abroad and interviews with 50 importers from numerous countries.



The European space was of special interest. Representatives of IVACE innovation, the Centre for Industrial Technological Development (CDTI) and IVACE International presented the support programmes offered by the European Union for the innovation and internationalisation of companies.

Enrique del Castillo, who is the project manager at IVACE, had the opportunity to inform the attendees of the development of the Compete in programme from its inception. The participating regions, the selection procedure of good practices and the two finally chosen in collaboration with the different stakeholders were mentioned.

The first good practice aims at the most efficient coordination of the annual internationalisation plan in collaboration with the sector associations. The selection of target markets and promotion activities is made in agreement with the different actors involved in internationalisation of the Valencia Community. The second includes a tool to support the internationalization of entrepreneurs following the model of the Ecoach de Gävle.

Some 30 people attended the presentations in the European space.



## Where are we and what lies ahead?

Partners have completed Phase 1 and Exchange of Experience activities; three intense years gave all Partners and their Stakeholders plenty of opportunities to meet and learn from each other: they took advantage of every study visit, meeting and transfer workshop to involve their territories and their staff and increase everyone's competences and skills.

The Exchange of Experience activities led to the design of Local Action Plans.

The LAPs specify the content of the actions to be implemented, their time-frame, the players involved, the costs and funding sources; they illustrate policy instruments, local contexts and backgrounds, challenges at local level and how they will be tackled transforming inputs from Partners' good practices and transfer workshops' activities into actions.

The LAPs were presented during Interregional Seminar in Reggio Emilia in March 2019 and were eventually approved by Interreg Europe.

Now all Partners are working in their territories to implement LAP's actions and to influence their Policy Instrument: Phase 2 started in April 2019 and will end in March 2021.

This two year phase will be challenging and will prove Partners capability to keep up with promises!

Project meetings and Partners interactions will continue into phase 2 to support each other and share common issues. At the end of 2020 Partners will then meet in a final event that will give them the chance to benchmark and illustrate their results while dissemination lessons learned in the 5 year Project to a wider audience.

Stay tuned for follow up news on Project website and Facebook page!!



Compete In



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[interregeurope.eu/competein](http://interregeurope.eu/competein)

Keep yourself up to date with the Compete In project by following us on social media, or via our website!



## Project Partners

**COMPETE IN**  
Interreg Europe



Leeds Beckett University

Municipality of Gävle

Wielkopolska region with the seat of the marshal office of the Wielkopolska region in Poznan

Upper Silesian Agency for Entrepreneurship and Development Ltd in Gliwice

Municipality of Reggio Emilia

ART-ER Attractiveness Research Territory (Emilia-Romagna Joint Stock Consortium)

Valencia Entrepreneurship and Competitiveness Institute