DIGITAL REGIONS Action Plan template

Partner: CIEBI







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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"The Portuguese government launched a set of initiatives focusing on digitising the economy, including the national strategy Industry 4.0 Programme. The initiative's central theme is to provide SMEs and industrial companies with the knowledge and resources to drive the digital transformation. This programme brings together actions to foster digitalisation of SMEs via technology upgrades, productive innovation and training and re-skilling"

A state of the art has been established to identify the current stakes that DIGITAL REGIONS has to tackle and to better understand companies' needs and challenges related to Industry 4.0 or digital transformation. In this context a macro-analysis and micro-analysis were performed by each partner of the project in order to identify current gaps, needs and opportunities related to its regional and national innovation policy.

Thus, the selection of this action is the result of a series of learning and experience activities between DIGITAL REGIONS project partners and the contributions received from the Regional Stakeholder Group constituted of relevant stakeholders from the Centro region innovation ecosystem.

Main source of inspiration for this Action Plan came from the Good Practices "**Digital Innovation Hub Slovenia** and **Co-Learning Lab** shared by the project partners University of Ljubljana and Hof University of Applied Science, respectively.

The overall objective of the action is to influence and improve public policies at local and regional level to tackle challenges of digital transformation and lack of qualified staff and digital competences within the companies, with the main focus on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

To address these challenges, the following activities will be developed:

I. Diagnosis on digital skills training needs in micro and SMEs and development of training plan for the strengthening of workers' digital skills.

Initially, in order to go deeper and update the data collected through the regional assessment carried out during the first phase of the project, CIEBI will carry out a questionnaire to identify digital skills training needs and main challenges of micro and SMEs regarding the digital transformation and Industry 4.0.

II. Organisation of a workshop involving relevant players such as Clusters, players of PTCentroDiH's consortium, business managers, academia, digital experts and other interested public and private sector organizations.

The workshop will be funded by own resources of CIEBI and, if needed, other actors involved in the action. The aim of the workshop is to analyze and discuss in more depth the results of the questionnaire and collect inputs from the speakers and





participating players for the elaboration of recommendations to be proposed for the next Regional Operational Programme (ROP).

This action plan intends to improve policy management regarding the future ROP 2021-2027, by preparing a report of recommendations/suggestions on digital strategy, digital skills training needs, modernisation of business models and production processes of SMEs to be delivered to the managing authority of the ROP, so that the suggestions can be properly evaluated and CIEBI could (effectively) have an opportunity to improve the next Regional Operational Programme (ROP):

- Recommendations for adapting support instruments to specific training needs in digital skills, based on results of the questionnaire submitted to companies
- Recommendations on improving communication and promotion of funding opportunities and incentive systems addressed to companies, in order to raise their awareness
- Recommendations for the definition of specific criteria for incentive systems to support digital strategy's development and implementation, in order to tackle the challenges related to Industry 4.0/digital transformation
- Recommendations to improve the methodology on monitoring/evaluating investment measures

Since the content of the recommendations is not known (as it will result from the activities to be developed), it is not yet possible to identify the specific objective/priority to which they refer. It is assumed that this will be done in the text of the recommendations to be developed.

Given that the recommendations will concern less the text of the Operational Programme than its management, the verification of their adoption will take place over the period 2021-2027.

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¹ <u>Monitoring progress in national initiatives on digitising industry: Country Report Portugal (2019)</u>





2 GENERAL INFORMATION

• Project: DIGITAL REGIONS

Partner organisation: CIEBI. Business and innovation Centre of Beira Interior

Country: Portugal

• NUTS2 region: Centro

Contact person: Paulo Costa

Email: info@ciebi-bic.com

o Phone number: +351 275319150

3 POLICY CONTEXT

The Action Plan aims to impact:	
X Investment for Growth and Jobs programme	
☐ European Territorial Cooperation programme	
☐ Other regional development policy instrument	

Name and reference of the policy instrument addressed: Regional Operational Programme 2021-2027

The Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020 was the instrument initially addressed to the DIGITAL REGIONS, which is currently in its final phase of execution.

For that reason, the recommendations that will result from the activities to be developed under this action plan aim to influence the new Regional Operational Programme for the programming period 2021-2027.

The managing authority of the ROP is the Centro Regional Coordination and Development Commission.





4 ACTION

4.1 BACKGROUND

DIGITAL REGIONS is an EU Interreg funded project bringing together 8 European regions, with the objective to increase rate SMEs from manufacturing sector cooperating with other innovation actors in the participant regions to implement I4.0 solutions by 2023 as a result of improved innovation policies.

DIGITAL REGIONS aims to benefit all stakeholders in each region's innovation ecosystem, i.e. innovation policy makers, SMEs that use 14.0 solutions, suppliers of 14.0 services, universities and innovation centres.

The involvement of regional stakeholders

The selection of this action is the result of a learning process among the partners and the regional stakeholder group constituted of relevant stakeholders from the Centro region innovation ecosystem who have been involved in the interregional learning process as well as in the regional interaction among all stakeholders to ensure the proper articulation and follow-up of the Action Plan.

In this sense, Regional Stakeholder meetings were carried out to dicuss the Regional Context Analysis and receive contributions and suggestions on the good practices shared by the project partners and identified those considered most relevant and with better implementation potential in our region, bearing in mind the definition and elaboration of the Action Plan.

Main source of inspiration for this Action Plan came from the Good Practices "**Digital Innovation Hub Slovenia** and **Co-Learning Lab** shared by the project partners University of Ljubljana and Hof University of Applied Science, respectively.

The Centro Regional Coordination and Development Commission (CCDR-C), as managing authority of the policy instrument addressed, participated actively and accompanied the whole process.

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

Specific features of Centro region

Innovation Profile: According to the 2021 edition of the Regional Innovation Scoreboard, the Centro (PT16) is classified as a Moderate innovator; innovation performance has increased over time (8%).





The Regional economy is rather diversified encompassing both low technology level industrial sectors, and some medium and high-tech sectors such as health services, biotechnology, telecommunications, new materials (particularly the moulds industry), Information and Communication Technology and renewable energies. It is worth mentioning the strong Regional potential of indigenous resources for the production of renewable energy using water, wind, solar, geothermal, biomass, biogas and bio fuels.

The tertiary sector is the most important contributor to the Regional gross value added (GVA) with a relative weight of 66.9% (2018) but the secondary sector still plays a very relevant role in the Regional economy with 29.6% of Regional GVA. The primary sector accounts for 3.5% of Regional GVA.

A state of the art has been established to identify the current stakes that DIGITAL REGIONS has to tackle and to better understand companies' needs and challenges related to Industry 4.0 or digital transformation.

Thus, a macro-analysis and micro-analysis were performed by each partner of the project in order to identify current gaps and opportunities related to its regional and national innovation policy. The analysis in each region followed a commonly agreed methodology to ensure an objective comparison of the results from the individual regions.

As part of the process, CIEBI carried out a regional assessment to identify what are the main challenges and opportunities from SMEs regarding the digital transformation and Industry 4.0

The questionnaire helped us to better understand the needs and challenges of SMEs in our region related to the uptake of Industry 4.0 technologies and whether they use existing SME support mechanism or where addition services to SMEs are required in the future.

CIEBI received 35 replies to the questionnaire. Feedback came mainly from different business sectors: agrifood, mold making, special tooling and plastic industries, health, mechanical engineering, software providers, digital marketing, app and video game development, graphic design, cybersecurity, among others. Most of the responses came from Micro enterprises (37%)

Main conclusions within Centro Region are:

- Challenges in relation to 14.0/digital transformation: The majority of companies encounter challenges (69%) related to Industry 4.0 or the digital transformation. The main challenges are: Insufficient funds, lack of a digital strategy and lack of qualified staff and competences within the companies.
- Digital Strategy: the majority of companies do not have a digital strategy yet.





- Lack of Awareness of support and benefits of digital transformation: The majority of companies (65%) does not know about any regional or national facilities/initiatives/ecosystems to support the company regarding the challenges connected to Industry 4.0/digital transformation.
- ▶ Awareness of funding: Most companies (66%) are not aware of any funding programmes. But for those who are, the fact that applications are considered too complicated (35%) is one of the main reasons for companies not to participate in funding programmes.
- ▶ Facilities, Initiatives & Ecosystems: The majority of companies (65%) does not know about supporting facilities/initiatives/ecosystems.

In view of the results of the survey, it is crucial to improve communication strategy as information on existing support instruments does not seem to be reaching out the companies, at least those who participated in the questionnaire.

State of the art on digitalisation

While the digitalisation of public administration and large companies is well advanced in Portugal, SMEs and micro-enterprises are lagging behind this trend. To address the issue, the Portuguese government launched initiatives focusing on digitising the economy, including the national strategy **Industry 4.0 Programme**. This programme brings together actions to foster digitisation of SMEs via technology upgrades, productive innovation and training and re-skilling.

"Indústria 4.0 is the Portuguese strategy to develop industry in the digital area. Launched In January 2017, the aim is to put Portugal at the forefront of the 4th Industrial Revolution by focusing on 3 axes: **digitalisation**, **innovation and training**.

The initiative's central theme is to provide SMEs and industrial companies with the knowledge and resources to drive the digital transformation.

Furthermore, special attention to the training of human resources – at young age and as life long learning – is employed as a way to prepare a new generation for new jobs. The initiative also prioritises the retraining of workers as well as the creation of new jobs". ¹

"The world we live increasingly relies on digital technologies, so it is important that everyone has the competences to deal with this new reality. The new practices tend to be based online, and users normally interact with them through electronic





devices. In the case of the active population, learning, productivity and competitiveness are also increasingly dependent on digital factors, meaning that there is a growing need for digital competences in many different professions.

It is in this context that the **Portugal INCoDe.2030** initiative addresses the concept of digital competences in a broad manner. It includes the notion of digital literacy (i.e. the ability to access digital media and ICTs, understand and critically assess contents, and communicate effectively), as well as the production of new knowledge through research, which involves processing information, and communicating, interacting with and producing digital content.

The concept of digital competences is also linked to the use of digital technologies to design new solutions for different types of problems, the integration of interdisciplinary knowledge and data analysis, intensive use of artificial intelligence, the use of advanced instrumentation and communication networks and mobile systems, and the development and programming of cyber-physical systems. This involves hardware and software and extends the concept of ICT to electronics, automation and robotics.

The aim of the **National Digital Competences Initiative**, **Portugal INCoDe.2030**, is to position Portugal at the top of European digital competences ranking by overcoming **three big challenges**". ²

generalise digital literacy, with a view to the full exercise of citizenship and inclusion in a society with increasingly more digital practices, where many social interactions happen on the internet and are increasingly mediated by electronic devices.

stimulate employability
and professional training
and specialisation in digital
technologies and applications, in order to
respond to the increasing demand of the
market and to promote the qualifications
needed for employment in a higher valueadded economy.

ensure strong participation in international R&D networks and the production of new knowledge in digital areas.

¹https://ati.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020-06/DTM Ind%C3%BAstria%204 PT.pdf

² https://www.incode2030.gov.pt/sites/default/files/incode2030_en.pdf





4.2 KNOWLEDGE APPLIED FROM DIGITAL REGIONS

Partner good practice/experience (please, detail: good practice name, short description and location)

How this good practice/experience has contributed to the actions developed in your Action Plan (detail any transfers, full or partial of good practice)

Digital Innovation Hub Slovenia

The Good Practice Slovenian Digital Innovation Hub described and presented in the Digital Regions project has served as inspiration for our actions. The DIH Slovenia is a central national one-stop-shop to provide, connect and support knowledge, business and technology expertise, technologies, experimental and pilot environments, best practises, methodologies and other activities necessary to fully enable Slovene Industry in building digital competencies, innovation models and processes, support their digital transformation and raise their competitive advantages based on digital.

The aim of the operation is to become a single entry point for digitalisation and digital transformation, in particular through the following activities:

- Creating a digital ecosystem
- Direct support to SMEs (mentoring)
- Integration at national and

Common goals of this good practice with the activities to be developed under this Action Plan:

- Promotion of digitalisation;
- Overcoming the barriers to digital transformation;
- Support SMEs;
- Increasing the number of companies involved in global value chains;
- Raising the competitiveness of economy.

This good practice was considered one of the most relevant by some members of the project's regional stakeholder group involved in a creation of a DIH in the Centro Region of Portugal, **PTCentroDiH**, that has many points in common with the Slovenian Digital Innovation Hub.

PTCentroDiH is a regional and transversal hub whose primary objective is to contribute to the digital transformation and modernization of the business, governmental and human fabric of the Central Region.

PTCentroDiH works as a one-stop shop and was recognized by the Portuguese Government as a Digital Innovation Hub, allowing its candidacy to be recognized as EDiH (European Digital Innovation Hub) supported by the Digital Europe Programme.





EU level

- Promotion of digitization
- Overcoming the barriers to digital transformation
- Increasing the number of companies involved in global value chains
- Raising the competitiveness of economy.

Co-Learning Lab

This good practice was described and presented by the project partner from Germany - Hof University of Applied Science, located in Hof, Bavaria.

The <u>CO-LEARNING LAB</u> intendeds to give medium-sized companies in the region a jump-start for their digital transformation. By upskilling employees with regards to digital processes and digital solutions medium-sized companies can gain more efficiency and competitiveness.

In 2017 Hof University and IZK presented the idea to interested companies in the Kronach region since the funding was specifically aimed at that region.

Common goals of this good practice with the activities to be developed under this Action Plan:

- Give SMEs a boost for their digital transformation by upskilling employees with regard digital processes and solutions.
- Using methods such as workshops to provide companies with an accessible introduction to the world of digitalisation.
- In order to prepare the workshops, the organisers collect the questions previously posed by the companies in order to answer them in corresponding thematic blocks during the workshop. We will use this methodology in one of the activities of this action plan, the questionnaire to identify digital skills training needs and main challenges of micro and SMEs regarding the digital transformation and Industry 4.0.





4.3 ACTION DESCRIPTION

The overall objective of the action is to influence and improve public policies at local and regional level to tackle challenges of digital transformation and lack of qualified staff and digital competences within the companies, with the main focus on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

In order to become more competitive, companies will have to invest in the qualification of human resources and in the acquisition of digital technologies. To take advantage of the opportunities provided by funding programmes, in terms of digitalisation, it is crucial to define a clear strategy to communicate the instruments available to support the digital transition of regional SMEs and to be aware of the specific areas where they need support.

To address these challenges, the following activities will be developed:

I. Diagnosis on digital skills training needs in micro and SMEs and development of training plan for the strengthening of workers' digital skills.

Initially, in order to go deeper and update the data collected through the regional assessment carried out during the first phase of the project, CIEBI will carry out a questionnaire to identify digital skills training needs and main challenges of micro and SMEs regarding the digital transformation and Industry 4.0.

II. Organisation of a workshop involving relevant players such as Clusters, players of PTCentroDiH's consortium, business managers, academia, digital experts and other interested public and private sector organizations.

The aim of the workshop is to analyze and discuss in more depth the results of the questionnaire and collect inputs from the speakers and participating players, in order to prepare a report of recommendations/suggestions on digital strategy, digital skills training needs, modernisation of business models and production processes of SMEs to be delivered to the managing authority, so that the suggestions can be properly evaluated and CIEBI could (effectively) have an opportunity to improve and influence the policy instrument addressed.

This work will be done with the support and collaboration of some relevant players from the Centro region innovation ecosystem that participate in the regional stakeholder group in the first phase of the project and are part of the PTCentroDiH's consortium, as well as Municipalities, Clusters, academia, business managers, digital experts and other public and private players.





The PTCentroDiH is a regional and transversal hub that is highly focused on promoting the digitalisation of the entities of the Centro's Region in order to foster its innovation and competitiveness.

In order to ensure its aim of supporting the digital transformation of the stakeholders from the Centro Region of Portugal, the consortium of PTCentroDiH includes the Region's Clusters, Universities, Polytechnic Institutes, as well some of the leading regional R&D Centres. The consortium of PTCentroDiH is, therefore, in a leading position to identify the main technological needs and demands of the Region's stakeholders and provide suitable services in "Test before invest", "Skills and training", "Support to find investment", and "Innovation ecosystem and networking".

In this context, the vast knowledge about the local economic and innovation ecosystem, the close linkages with local stakeholders and the experience in providing this type of services, are a few of the differentiating factors of PTCentroDiH's consortium.





Main specific Value brought by this objectives action into the region	Players involved
- To promote digital transformation of companies at regional level, especially SMEs - To address challenges of lack of qualified staff and digital competences, specially focused on SMEs. - Contribute to increasing the basic and advanced digital capacities of companies and workers Contribute to increasing the level of digitalisation and innovation around core competences and digital skills	CIEBI - Business and innovation Centre of Beira Interior as the entity promoting this action plan is involved in the following activities: Monitoring of the action plan implementation Use own business and entrepreneurship networking to mobilise participants in the questionnaire and at the workshop Discussing and exchange experience on the results of the implementation Report with recommendations/suggesti ons for improvement of the next Regional Operational Programme (ROP) 2021- 2027. Other players involved: Clusters, entities of PTCentroDiH's consortium, Municipalities, academia, digital experts and other public and private players.





4.4 TIMEFRAME AND FUNDING

Project/Action Investment Line/Funding Source + Amount (please state each source of funding)	For	Funding Decision	Project Start Date / Finish date	
The funding sources for the monitoring of Action Plan implementation will be funded by DIGITAL REGIONS project. The action will be funded by CIEBI own sources and, if needed, other actors involved in the action.	N/A	N/A	Start Date: August 2022 Finish date: July 2023	





4.5 WORKPLAN

WP	Tasks
Work Package 1: Management	Task 1.1 Monitor the action plan implementation
	Task 1.2 Elaborate reports on progress
	Task 2.1 Questionnaire development
Work Package 2: Diagnosis on digital	Task 2.2 Campaign to disseminate the questionnaire among companies
skills training needs in micro and SMEs	Task 2.3 Data gathering and analysis
and development of training plan for the strengthening of workers' digital kills.	Task 2.4 Development of training plan, where will be listed the main digital skills training needs based on results of the questionnaire submitted to companies, that will be presented and discussed at the workshop
Work Package 3: Recommendations on digital strategy, digital skills training	Task 3.1 Workshop Organisation
needs, modernisation of business models and production processes of companies	Task 3.2 Development of recommendations on digital strategy, digital skills training needs, modernisation of business models and production processes of companies





4.6 BUDGET BREAKDOWN FOR THE ACTION

Category of funding	Expenditure Amount
Salaries	7.700,00
Overheads (i.e. calculated at x 15% of staff costs)	1.155,00
Travel & Subsistence	150,00
External expertise	4.995,00
Building/renovation / refurbishment	
Equipment	
TOTAL	14.000,00





4.7 IMPACT EXPECTED

4.7.1 Impact on the policy instrument addressed

This action plan intends to improve policy management regarding the next programming period 2021-2027, by providing a report with a list of recommendations to be delivered to the managing authority of the ROP, so that the suggestions can be properly evaluated and CIEBI could (effectively) have an opportunity to improve the policy instrument addressed:

- Recommendations for adapting support instruments to specific training needs in digital skills, based on results of the questionnaire submitted to companies
- Recommendations on improving communication and promotion of funding opportunities and incentive systems addressed to companies, in order to raise their awareness
- Recommendations for the definition of specific criteria for incentive systems to support digital strategy's development and implementation, in order to tackle the challenges related to Industry 4.0/digital transformation
- Recommendations to improve the methodology on monitoring/evaluating investment measures

Regarding how we plan to ensure the adoption of the recommendations, it is important to stress that the Centro Regional Coordination and Development Commission (CCDR-C), as managing authority of the policy instrument addressed, has been involved in the project activities from the beginning, and its validation/official endorsement of the Action Plan reflects its interest in the themes identified for the development of recommendations.

On the other hand, they often launch consultations in the framework of the ROP addressed to relevant actors of the Innovation Ecosystem. CIEBI as one of the main local and regional actors is often invited to participate in the process and send its specific recommendations and inputs related to innovation, digitalisation, Industry 4.0/digital transformation.

These consultations are requested during different stages of the preparation and implementation of the OP.





4.7.2 Specific impact on the region

The digital transition represents an opportunity to improve productivity levels, enhancing innovation and reduce the costs of business processes.

The expected impact of this Action Plan is to contribute to the increase of the local and regional economic added value, providing the business fabric with greater competitiveness through the improvement of digital competences, re-qualification of human resources with skills for the digital transition and transformation.

Monitoring and indicators

Number of participants in the workshop

Number of companies participating in the diagnosis on digital skills training needs

Number of recommendations for ROP 2021-2027

4.8 MONITORING ACTIVITIES IN PHASE 2

To be concreted in line with the monitoring methodology (under development)





Endorsement of DIGITAL REGIONS Action Plan from **Centro Regional Coordination** and Development Commission (CCDR-C)

On behalf of CCDRC, I would like to confirm our support to the Action Plan developed through the Digital Regions project

We confirm that our organisation has been informed and contributed n the Digital Regions Action Plan		
On behalf of: CCDRC		
Signed:		
Name:	Isabel Damasceno	
Position in Organisation:	President of CCDRC	
Date:	July 5 th , 2022	

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1 - LIST OF MAIN ACTIVITIES AND MEETINGS WITH THE LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

Activity/meeting	Date	Stakeholders involved	Main Outcomes
Regional Stakeholder Group meeting	November 2019	Clusters, University, IAPMEI (governmental agency for economic policies under the supervision of the Ministry of Economy), companies/start-ups, and other entities	The workshop started with a short introduction of the project DIGITAL REGIONS, and then, in a roundtable format the guest speakers discussed on various topics related to Industry 4.0 and digital transformation: Relevant Policies (Strategies and Funding Programmes) supporting SMEs for digital transformation, especially with the funding and implementation of Industry 4.0 technologies
Regional Stakeholder Group meeting	June 2020	Clusters, University, IAPMEI (governmental agency for economic policies under the supervision of the Ministry of Economy), Municipality, CCDRC - Centro Regional Coordination and Development Commission (the body responsible for the policy instrument addressed to the project).	Presentation of results of the macro- analysis and micro-analysis results gathered to date by CIEBI.





Activity/meeting	Date	Stakeholders involved	Main Outcomes
Staff exchanges (Online Programme)	November 2020	IAPMEI (governmental agency for economic policies under the supervision of the Ministry of Economy)	Presentation of the Good Practice – "Industry 4.0 Voucher" and Incentives 4.0 - Financing for Industry 4.0
Staff exchanges (Online Programme)	November 2020	CENTIMFE – Technological Center for Mouldmaking, Special tooling and Plastic Industries	Presentation of the Good Practice (SAMT SUDOE Project) and Presentation of CENTIMFE - industry and relevant initiatives/activities in the field of Industry 4.0/digital transformation
Staff exchanges (Online Programme)	November 2020	Municipality of Fundão	Presentation of the Good Practice «Business and Shared Services Centre of Fundão»
Regional Stakeholder Group meeting	November 2020	Clusters, University, IAPMEI (governmental agency for economic policies under the supervision of the Ministry of Economy), Municipality, CCDRC - Centro Regional Coordination and Development Commission (the body responsible for the policy instrument addressed to the project)	The stakeholders gave their contributions and suggestions on the good practices (resulting from the exchange of experiences and knowledge among the project partners) they consider most relevant and identified those with better implementation potential in view of the definition and elaboration of the Action Plan."





Activity/meeting	Date	Stakeholders involved	Main Outcomes
Regional Stakeholder Group meeting	May 2021	Clusters, University, IAPMEI (governmental agency for economic policies under the supervision of the Ministry of Economy), Municipality, CCDRC - Centro Regional Coordination and Development Commission (the body responsible for the policy instrument addressed to the project)	Discussion on the actions that could be included in the action plan taking as a basis good practices and staff exchanges held by project partners.
Regional Stakeholder Group meeting	October 2021	Clusters, University, IAPMEI (governmental agency for economic policies under the supervision of the Ministry of Economy), Municipality, CCDRC - Centro Regional Coordination and Development Commission (the body responsible for the policy instrument addressed to the project)	The stakeholders gave their contributions and suggestions on the good practices (resulting from the exchange of experiences and knowledge among the project partners), in particular those that could be transferred and integrated into the actions to be defined for the Centro Region Action Plan.