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PROJECT AT A GLANCE

INNOGROW will play an important role in supporting the modernisation of existing rural SMEs and the proliferation of innovative start-ups through policies that promote the adoption of technology and business model innovation by rural SMEs



Dear reader,

Welcome to the first edition of Newsletter series of the INNOGROW project!

INNOGROW is a European project funded by the INTERREG Europe Programme that aims to support the modernisation of existing rural economy SMEs and the proliferation of innovative start-ups through policies that promote the adoption of technology and business model innovation by SMEs in rural areas.

In the following pages, you will find an editorial describing the overall context and objectives of the project as well as interesting information on the latest developments and upcoming events.

The INNOGROW Newsletters will be published on a 6-months basis. Through our project website and this periodic newsletter, we will keep you informed about our progress and key outcomes.

The INNOGROW project team!



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

The INNOGROW project

The "Regional policies for innovation driven competitiveness and growth of rural SMEs – INNOGROW" project aims to improve partners' policies on rural economy SMEs competitiveness as regards the integration of new production technologies and business models that lead to innovative products. The project will promote the adoption of innovation by rural economy SMEs, through sharing practices / experiences between regions and actors relevant to rural economy SMEs competitiveness and integrating lessons learnt into regional policies and action plans.

Rural economy SMEs need to remain globally competitive by adopting innovative solutions, new business models and modernisation approaches that will lead to increases in productivity and access to new markets. Territorial capacity building and policy innovation involving all regional actors are critical factors for promoting the

diffusion of innovations, to maintain and strengthen SMEs' competitiveness and consequently regions' growth. Regions in rural areas can play an important role in the modernisation of existing SMEs and the proliferation of innovative start-ups, providing incentives to promote the adoption of technological innovations, such as organic farming, functional food, crop resistance systems, selective breeding and feeding processes to boost livestock resistance to local conditions. At the management level, incentives need to be

provided for mixed production of crops and livestock products, and new business models and coalitions that lead to innovative business ideas.

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Project objectives

The project aims to:

- Increase the capacity of regional administrations to effectively implement SMEs competitiveness policies, stimulating the adoption of innovative production processes and technologies by rural economy SMEs.
- Develop and offer innovation support services to rural economy SMEs to promote adoption of innovation.
- Unlock regional/national investments on promoting innovative technologies and on establishing start-ups relying on new business models.
- Improve the implementation of SMEs competitiveness policies, promoting horizontal and vertical cooperation among SMEs in rural areas for the

production and commercialization of products.

- Raise awareness among policy makers on the influence of regional policy measures on innovation adoption by rural economy SMEs.



EXPECTED RESULTS

- Enhanced innovation support services for over 5% of rural economy SMEs in partners' regions.
- Improved horizontal & vertical cooperation among SMEs in rural areas for products commercialisation.
- Increased capacity of 200 staff of public administrations to effectively implement policies, stimulating innovation adoption by rural economy SMEs.
- 10 million of Euros of investments unlocked to promote innovative technologies & new business models.

Project activities

INNOGROW brings together 9 partners from 8 countries, involving the managing authorities & regional bodies influencing regional and national policy instruments, to promote the adoption of technology and business model innovations by rural economy SMEs. To boost SMEs' competitiveness and foster rural development, the project includes a wide range of activities, focusing on promoting the interregional learning process and the exchange of experience among regional authorities. Project activities include:

- Investigation of innovative technologies' impact on rural economy SMEs competitiveness and productivity.
- Identification of successful new business models for rural economy SMEs.
- Evaluation and analysis of existing policies and strategies related to the promotion of innovation in rural economy SMEs.
- Analysis of the factors (barriers and enablers) that influence rural economy SMEs to adopt innovation.
- Promoting public dialogue and consultation process to build consensus and ensure the successful implementation of regional action plans, through the support and participation of key regional stakeholders.
- Fostering interregional learning and capacity building through workshops, study visits, and policy learning events.
- Development of transferable tools & resources to promote benchmarking and policy learning, and transfer knowledge and lessons learnt beyond the partnership.
- Joint development of action plans to promote the improvement of the policy instruments addressed by the project.
- Increasing awareness, promoting and disseminating the project results and knowledge beyond the partnership.

PROJECT PARTNERS



Region of Thessaly (GR)



Lombardy Foundation for the Environment – FLA (IT)



Zemgale Planning Region (LV)



The University of Newcastle upon Tyne (UK)



Stara Zagora Regional Economic Development Agency (BG)



Regional Development Agency of the Pardubice Region (CZ)



Chamber of Commerce of Molise (IT)



Regional Development Agency of Gorenjska, BSC Business Support Centre Ltd., Kranj (SI)



Pannon Novum West-Transdanubian Regional Innovation Non-Profit Ltd (BG)



The project will be implemented in two stages. Starting from the year 2016 until 2019, the implementation of the project plan will take place, aiming at achieving improvements in the tackled area. These improvements will, in the second phase of the project from 2019 to 2021, be tested within participating target groups: small and medium-sized enterprises and policy makers, to promote entrepreneurship and competitiveness in rural areas.

Kick-off meeting

The INNOGROW kick-off meeting was held on 3rd and 4th May 2016, in Larissa, Thessaly, Greece, marking the beginning of the five-year INTERREG Europe funded project. Sixteen participants from all nine project partners participated in the event. Region of Thessaly, as the organisation managing the project, orchestrated the meeting.

More than 18 sessions were organised to discuss the challenges of the workplan and to fix the roadmap for the manifold activities of the project. Participants delivered presentations in each session, addressing all aspects of the activities described in the INNOGROW Application Form. Discussion at the end of each session helped the consortium partners achieve a common understanding of the key issues and shape an action list of the work to be completed during the first semester of the project.



The meeting was also an occasion for the project counterparts to discuss and share their experience in the implementation of regional policies to stimulate the adoption of innovative technologies among rural economy SMEs and support the proliferation of innovative start-ups, connected with rural-specific activities.

The fruits of the meeting have been documented in a twelve-page report with detailed minutes of the sessions, action lists and summaries of results.

Upcoming events – Regional stakeholder meetings

Project activity A2.1 includes the organisation of regional stakeholders meetings between partners and the key players that decide on policy issues in the INNOGROW regions, with the aim to receive input for the specific measures and incentives to be planned to support the adoption of innovation by rural economy SMEs in their regions. All partners (excluding the University of Newcastle upon Tyne) will organise one regional stakeholder meeting (per semester) in their own region, and deliver summary reports on the experience gathered and conclusions reached. The purpose of regional stakeholders meetings is to receive input from and ensure the active involvement of stakeholders groups in the implementation of regional action plans. During the meetings, partners will mostly have the opportunity to identify issues to be tackled at the action plans implementation phase (project phase 2), as well as to ensure the involvement of the specific stakeholders' organisations in the preparation of the action plans. For example, the managing authorities of the policy instruments will provide input on their areas' policy priorities, the research institutions on the new research outcomes as regards innovation in rural economy SMEs, and the chambers of commerce on the sector's challenges and priorities.

For more information about forthcoming regional stakeholder meetings, please visit our website: www.interregeurope.eu/innogrow

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