**PRESS RELEASE**

**8th October 2018, Kamnik-Litija, Slovenia**

**Building human resource capacity and local skills required for professional network management in rural environments**

Partners and stakeholders of P-IRIS project which is focusing on **rural areas’ innovation systems** attended 5th Study Visit in **Kamnik and Litija (Slovenia)** on 2nd and 3rd October 2018. The first part of the Study Visit focused on good practices on **building human resource capacity and local skills required for professional network management in rural environments**. Second part of the Study Visit focused on approaches and methodologies for developing Action Plans, which is a core deliverable of P-IRIS project to improve policies in rural areas’ innovation systems.

Study Visit was organised by Slovenian partner Development Centre of the Heart of Slovenia, which is an organisation which has been leading, co-ordinating and connecting development projects of the rural area since 2000. Development Centre presented during the Study Visit three good practices of business support systems and organisations in the Heart of Slovenia, which offered an in-depth overview of open innovation environment of the Heart of Slovenia.

Partners and stakeholders from **Croatia, Finland, Italy, Norway, Slovenia** and **Spain** first learned about **KIKŠTARTER,** co-working business centre for startups and potential entrepreneurs from Kamnik. **Rok Slapar**, CEO of Vigoshop.si presented success story of a local high-growth company that succeeded due to a strong network support from local community and Kikštarter. Second good practice was visited in the premises of **KATAPULT and Dewesoft**. Katapult is an enterprise accelerator, primarily intended for businesses with a physical product which helps entrepreneurs in industrialization to accelerate the growth of their businesses. Katapult offers three main high-quality pillars of support and network: supportive environment that helps companies gain profitably; offers start-ups, micro, small and medium-sized businesses access to all the necessary support services to carry out their activities; and offers trainings for individuals and SMEs with the aim of increasing their competitiveness in the labour market. Third good practice was presented in **Development village Velika Preska**, as a micro development model and the case of local innovation support. **Jože Kos** - founding leader presented a village support system as synergistic networking and visionary entrepreneurship.

Lessons learned were discussed among partners during the second day of P-IRIS Study Visit. Consortium continued the work with the emphasis on approaches and methodologies for developing Action Plans and P-IRIS Toolbox. Toolbox will be used when finalizing individual Action Plans by each partner. Before concluding this Study Visit partners gathered and summarized all lessons learned from all Study Visits. The next study visit will be organized in correlation with Phase One Final Event by Poliedra, and will take place in June 2019 in Italy.

**More information about the P-IRIS project:**

<https://www.interregeurope.eu/p-iris/>