



UNIVERSITY OF
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ΠΑΝΗΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΠΑΤΡΩΝ

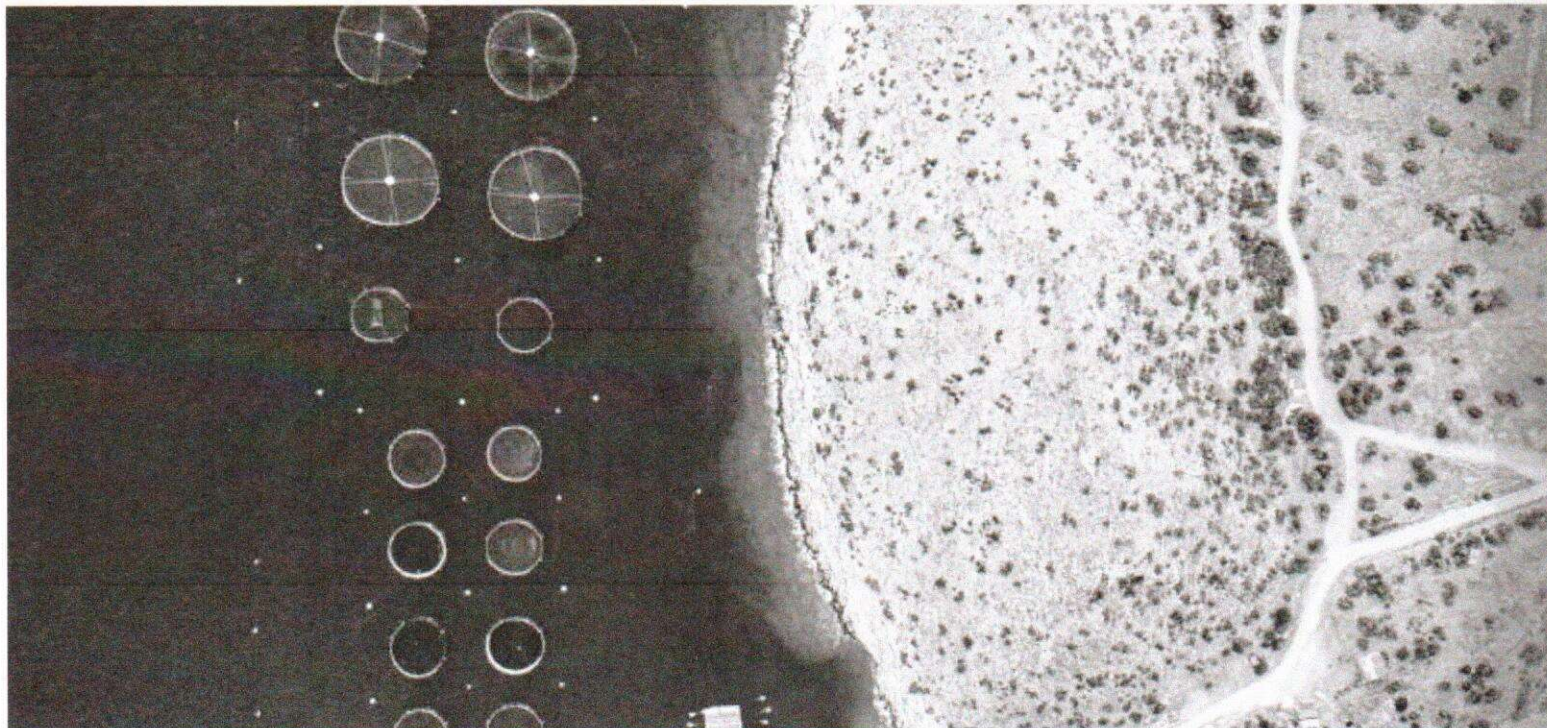
EXTRA-SMEs
Interreg Europe

ACTION PLAN FOR THE REGION OF WESTERN GREECE

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Prepared by:

University of Patras



EXTRA-SMEs - Improving policies to boost SME competitiveness and extraversion in EU coastal and rural areas where aquaculture is a driver of the regional economy

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Abbreviations

EU	European Union
NSRF	National Strategic Reference Framework
O.P.	Operational Programme
PO	Policy Objective
PP	Programming Perion
SME	Small and Medium sized Enterprises

Introduction

The University of Patras, in particular the "Distributed Systems & Telematics Laboratory" is participating in the EXTRA-SMEs project, which primarily aims to achieve the expansion of rural and coastal aquaculture SMEs in wider markets for the promotion of their products, through simpler and improved administrative processes, and innovative technologies, by supporting public authorities and assist them to join forces and exchange experiences in order to a) simplify administration, b) expand in new markets, c) introduce innovative value-added product solutions, d) up-skill personnel and e) contribute to resolving conflicts between stakeholder groups. The EXTRA-SMEs consortium brings together the following 9 partners from 8 regions in 7 different EU countries and the project's overall goal is to improve the implementation of participating regions' policy instruments related to the SME competitiveness across the value chain of coastal and rural regional economies with a strong aquaculture component. The project aims to identify and promote experiences and practices for simpler, improved administrative processes, internationalization, and expansion to broader markets, as well as engaging in innovation processes that will act as drivers for the creation of jobs.

Produced by each region, the action plan is a document providing details on how the lessons learnt from the cooperation will be implemented in order to improve the policy instrument tackled within that region. The minimum information to be provided per action includes the way the action is linked to the project, the nature of the activities to be implemented, their timeframe, the stakeholders involved, the costs and funding sources.

General information

Objectives and main issues addressed

More than 90% of businesses in EXTRA-SMEs regions are inland and coastal SMEs operating across and around the aquaculture value chain, contributing to growth and creation of jobs. Along the chain, these economic operators are characterized by systematic weaknesses in reaching international markets and exporting their products. To this end, EXTRA-SMEs will support public authorities to join forces and exchange experiences in a) administrative simplification, b) expansion in new markets, c) innovative value-added product solutions, d) personnel up skilling, and e) resolution of stakeholders' conflicts of interests.

EXTRA-SMEs will support the project partners exchange experiences and implement targeted aquaculture policy actions to:

- Simplify and reduce regions' administrative constraints
- Provide support for improved quality and diversification of SMEs' products
- Assist SMEs' innovation efforts to deliver value-added product solutions
- Facilitate personnel up skilling
- Work to resolve spatial planning conflicts and conflicts of interests

The project contributes towards the achievement of the EU2020 strategy for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth, and particularly the flagship initiative "An industrial policy for the globalization era", and the European Union's (EU) Blue Growth Strategy. EXTRA-SMEs puts forward actions to support the strategic aquaculture value chain sector of partners' regions, promoting the right conditions to foster competitiveness.

Overall, the project works on improving policies for helping SMEs along the value chain to operate beyond borders and integrate into global value chains, and for fostering the commercialization of innovative products. EXTRA-SMEs aims to actively support entrepreneurship development and capacity building as a building block for business creation and growth. The project partners will exchange experiences and practices, to improve regional policies that a) respond to the key challenges that obstruct businesses on their path to growth, and b) support enterprises to create new or use existing market opportunities.

Activities and results

EXTRA-SMEs brings together 8 regions from 7 countries to achieve expansion of rural and coastal SMEs in wider markets for the promotion of their products through simpler and improved administrative processes and innovative technologies. The project centers on the sharing of experiences, good practices and initiatives of SME competitiveness and extraversion to promote innovative solutions. The project will enable the participating regions to reach their targets in terms of internationalization and expansion in new markets by adopting simplified administrative and licensing practices, up-skilling public services' staff and managing stakeholders' conflicts of interest to achieve a competitive and extravert outlook for the aquaculture sector.

Project activities include:

- Analyzing the needs of EXTRA-SMEs regions in SMEs competitiveness and expansion to broader markets
- Evaluation and analysis of existing policies, plans, and criteria for SMEs competitiveness in the key sectors
- Analysis of the factors (barriers and enablers) that influence businesses in key EXTRA-SMEs sectors to get involved in contracts and consortiums that foster competitiveness
- Development of thematic studies and analyses reports on territorial needs and pathways for the improvement of SMEs internationalization
- Development of action plans to improve the addressed policy instruments, benefiting managing authorities and beneficiaries
- Promotion of 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
- Implementation of workshops, study visits, and policy learning events for enhancing interregional learning and capacity building
- Development of transferable tools & resources to promote benchmarking and policy learning, and transfer knowledge and lessons learnt beyond the partnership

EXTRA-SMEs will improve 8 policy instruments, targeting to achieve:

- Engagement of 80 public authorities considering the integration of EXTRA-SMEs policy recommendations
- Increase the capacity of 200 staff of public administrations to effectively implement policies on SMEs entrepreneurial development, internationalization, and extraversion
- Simplification in administrative procedures and regulations for aquaculture adopted
- Increase visibility for relevant EU labels among aquaculture SMEs
- Reduction on stakeholder conflicts of interests and increase cooperation across value chain
- Raise awareness for the economic potential of the EXTRA SMEs sector and new products and embrace new processes to improve EXTRA SMEs extraversion
- Reinforcement of 14 million euros of investments to support projects on the modernization of the wider



network of aquaculture SMEs.

- Incentivize investments, outwards-looking entrepreneurship, address limited access to finance, lack of knowledge and inability to expand in wider markets
- Consensus building among the wider aquaculture sector, the workforce, and citizens, to support measures for SMEs internationalization operating locally (over 1000 individuals)

Operational Programme of Western Greece 2014-2020

The preparation of the Five-Year Operational Programme 2014-2020 for the Region of Western Greece is foreseen by the decision of the Minister of Internal Affairs 35829/22.9.2014 (Government Gazette 264 of B/6.10 2014) on «Content, structure, submission, drafting, audit and evaluation bodies, the process of preparation, monitoring and evaluation of the 5-year Operational Programmes of Local Government Organizations for the period 2014-2020». The Five-Year Operational Programmes have a unified structure, structure and logic that governs all the administrative and geographical sub-divisions of the region and include: a) Strategic Plan, b) Operational Plan, c) Five-Year Action Plan and Financial Program and d) Performance and Monitoring Indicators.

The Strategic Plan:

- depicts the characteristics of the region's geography, the characteristics of the region itself and its legal people, as organizations, and evaluates the current situation.
- defines the development vision of the region and the guiding principles that should govern how the region operates and how regional affairs are managed.
- defines the strategy of the region in order to achieve its vision.

The Operation Plan:

- identifies the development priorities under which the Five-Year Operational Programme is structured, taking into account national (sectoral and regional) development priorities and spatial planning tools and promoting macro-regional strategy. The region's development priorities are set out in the form of axes which further specialize in measures.
- specifies each measure to its objectives. In order to achieve the objectives of each measure, each agency is responsible for drafting action plans. The actions may be project categories or large projects or repetitive functions of departments and bodies.
- defines actions of transnational significance and promoting interregional and interdisciplinary partnerships, while safeguarding the principles of multilevel governance.

The Five-Year Action Plan and Financial Program:

- groups and monitors actions to achieve the objectives of each measure.
- prioritizes, plans actions and sets timetable for their implementation.
- links the actions to financial resources and a relevant planning form is completed.
- records the total resources available per source of funding and the conditions of abstraction as calculated during the period of preparation of the business plan.
- summarizes the operating and investment costs of the program activities for each five-year period.
- creates the program financial tables for each year and source of funding.

Performance and Monitoring Indicators:

Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators are used to monitor the Five-Year Operational Programme, which are divided into Input, Output and Outcome Indicators. Indicators are used to quantify goals to make them measurable. Each Indicator is assigned a target value for each action.

Operational Programme of Western Greece 2021-2027 (currently under consultation)

The design of the implementation framework of the new Programming Period (PP) 2021-2027 for the Member States of the EU is being carried out at a critical juncture of unprecedented health, economic and social situation at national, European, and global level. Since the end of 2019, most countries worldwide are facing the COVID-19 pandemic, the most serious health crisis of the last hundred years. The crisis is testing the resilience of the health systems of even the most advanced and resilient nations, while at the same time provoking the deepest annual economic downturn since World War II.

At the same time, the planning of PP 2021-2027 coincides with the completion of the O.P. Western Greece 2014-2020, which presents significant results with added value from its implementation, while identifying a number of problems and lessons learned from the experience of the outgoing PP. These problems are mainly related to a series of institutional, managerial, and organizational problems that have broadly determined the pace of implementation of all Greek Operational Programs for the NSRF 2014-2020.

The new O.P. Western Greece 2021-2027 is planned as a Program of the NSRF 2021 - 2027 and is part of the programming framework of the period, as determined by the issuance of the reformed Regulations of the European Structural and Investment Funds (GRNET) and specializes in the strategic choices of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF 2021-2027) and the instructions provided by the National Management Authority for the formulation of the new Programs.

Planning of the O.P. Western Greece 2021-2027

- PO.1: A more competitive and smarter Europe through the promotion of innovative and smart economic transformation and regional digital connectivity.
- PO.2: A greener, low-carbon, transition to a clean zero-carbon economy and a resilient Europe, through the promotion of clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investments, cyclical economy, adaptation to climate change, and risk prevention and management and sustainable urban mobility.
- PO.3: A more interconnected Europe through mobility enhancement.
- PO.4: A more social and inclusive Europe through the implementation of the Pillar of Social Rights.
- PO.5: A Europe closer to its citizens through the promotion of sustainable and integrated development of all territorial types and local initiatives.

The planning of the O.P. Western Greece 2021-2027 is currently under public consultation (until 15/05/2021) and all stakeholders and citizens can express their views and suggestions. The results of the consultation will be taken into account in the formation of official positions of the Western Greece Region that will be sent to the Ministry of Development.

Contact details

Project	Improving policies to boost SME competitiveness and extraversion in EU coastal and rural areas where aquaculture is a driver of the regional economy – EXTRA-SMEs
Partner organization concerned	University of Patras
Country	Greece
NUTS2 region	Region of Western Greece
Contact Person	Christos J. Bouras
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Policy context

<p>The Action Plan aims to impact:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Investment for Growth and Jobs programme <input type="checkbox"/> European Territorial Cooperation programme <input type="checkbox"/> Other regional development policy instrument
<p>Name of the policy instrument addressed</p>	<p>Operational Programme of Western Greece 2014-2020 and/or Operational Programme of Western Greece 2021-2027</p>
<p>Further details on the policy context and the way the action plan should contribute to improve the policy instruments:</p>	<p>The Action Plan will include specific actions and initiatives to be implemented, the timing of their implementation, the people involved, the costs and funding they will need (if needed) and what improvements they are expected to bring to the policy instrument. The selection of actions was mainly based on interregional learning during Phase 1 of the project, which highlighted the successful approaches undertaken by the participating regions. We also took into account the opinions expressed by the stakeholder representing our policy instrument, who had a continuous involvement in the project activities.</p> <p>Since the O.P. of Western Greece 2014-2020 ended in 2020, we must face the difficulties caused by time constraints and the already decided allocation of funds. The actions envisaged are generally aimed at the public authorities, who will decide to include them in the original policy instrument.</p> <p>Apart from the initial policy instrument and the fact that the new O.P. of Western Greece 2021-2027 is currently under public consultation, our target is to influence this new policy instrument to include actions for the improvement of innovation and entrepreneurship and for the aquaculture sector in general.</p> <p>The action plan is expected to be completed in May 2021 and, after undergoing the approval process by the Interreg Europe Managing Authority, will be sent to the Region of Western Greece and begin monitoring its implementation in June 2021. The end of the monitoring phase and the evaluation of the degree of implementation will be completed in May 2023. Of course, many factors can influence the implementation, such as overall allocation and allocation of business plan money. The monitoring phase will last for 2 years and will record any issues that arise and adjust the action plan to the changes. The extent of the adoption of the AP depends entirely on Western Greece Region. Of course, the action plan is not binding, but the greater the degree of its approval and acceptance by the region, the more likely it is that the proposed actions will be implemented without of course changing the nature of the option.</p>

Details of the actions envisaged

Action 1: Funding of “locally produced, locally consumed” model	
1.Relevance to the project	<p>The “locally produced, locally consumed” model is one of the most simple and efficient models in which the products produced by the local people or firms are sold in local markets (at municipal, regional or national level). With this model, on the one hand the transportation and packaging costs are reduced, and on the other hand products are not damaged in delivery since producers do not have to deliver them over a long distance. This is extremely important in the aquaculture sector.</p> <p>Besides the above, the current COVID crisis has somehow changed the way consumers buy the products. More and more consumers prefer the locally produced products and this action will on the one hand promote this model and on the other hand promote the offered local products.</p> <p>During the stakeholder meetings of the project, it became evident that aquaculture units face problems with product availability, low final product prices and problems in opening new markets managed mainly by Italian merchants, while Turkish aquaculture units are the main competitors in foreign markets due to reduced costs. Therefore, the development and support of the “locally produced, locally consumed” model could be proven beneficial to the aquaculture sector.</p> <p>The main source of inspiration for this Action, was the study visit in Szczecin, Poland and mainly the visit at the Jurassic Salmon aquaculture. During this study visit, it became clear that the first consumer of the salmon products were the locals.</p>
2.Nature of the action	<p>The type of intervention for this action is “implementation of new project”. It involves a call for proposal aiming to develop and fund the “locally produced, locally consumed” model in the aquaculture sector and will be directly financed by the O.P. of Western Greece 2014-2020 (the policy instrument described in the EXTRA-SMEs Application Form).</p> <p>Since the O.P. of Western Greece 2014-2020 is currently at its last phases, it is worth mentioning that the successive O.P. for the period 2021-2027, also targets to support the primary sector as a strong economic and social pillar for the Region. For the new programming period, the promotion of local products and the development of rural areas, are the two most</p>

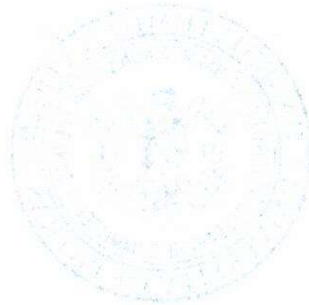
	important links in the chain that can push Western Greece to develop and improve the quality of life. In this sense, the proposed action could also be financed by the O.P. of Western Greece 2021-2027.
3.Stakeholders Involved	The Western Greece Region will be responsible to publishing the relevant call and selecting the final beneficiaries for the development of the “locally produced, locally consumed” model. Beneficiaries are the aquaculture SMEs of the Region which will be funded for developing the model.
4.Timeframe	Publication of call: 2022 Proposals assessment: To be determined Ending date: To be determined
5.Costs	Indicative cost: 200.000,00€ (depending on the number of SMEs financed)
6.Funding sources	The action will be implemented within the framework of the O.P. of Western Greece 2014-2020, which constitutes the targeted policy instrument as identified in the project AF, or its successive operational program for the period 2021-2027, or any other financial framework considered appropriate by the Western Greece Region.
7.Responsible organization	The implementation of this action will be coordinated by the Western Greece Region along with the managing Authority of the O.P. of Western Greece.

Action 2: Funding of traceability actions for local aquaculture products

<p>1.Relevance to the project</p>	<p>The input paper of the Interregional workshop on promoting relevant EU labels (A3.2) clearly states that traceability provides the proof that the product has specific attributes improving the brand's reputation and competitiveness. Moreover, there is a growing movement on buying locally and traceability is the only tool that can prove to consumers that they are purchasing and consuming a product that meets their demands.</p> <p>Traceability systems can help reduce costs by monitoring the costs of activities and limiting the need for excessive inventory of products, parts, or materials. SMEs in particular could benefit from reducing costs and having less waste in their supply chain. The traceability system requires food supply chain owners to be capable of identifying and go through records maintained by the company, the immediate supplier, and customer of an identified food material. Normal processes and records related to purchasing, receiving, and shipping products are sometimes insufficient to fulfil the traceability system requirement.</p> <p>Drawing on inspiration from the above, we have decided to include in our Action Plan a measure to finance traceability actions for local aquaculture products.</p>
<p>2.Nature of the action</p>	<p>The type of intervention for this action is "implementation of new project". It involves a call for proposal aiming to fund traceability actions in the aquaculture sector and will be directly financed by the O.P. of Western Greece 2014-2020 (the policy instrument described in the EXTRA-SMEs Application Form).</p> <p>Since the O.P. of Western Greece 2014-2020 is currently at its last phases, it is worth mentioning that the successive O.P. for the period 2021-2027, also targets to support the primary sector as a strong economic and social pillar for the Region. For the new programming period, the promotion of local products and the development of rural areas, are the two most important links in the chain that can push Western Greece to develop and improve the quality of life. In this sense, the proposed action could also be financed by the O.P. of Western Greece 2021-2027.</p>
<p>3.Stakeholders Involved</p>	<p>The Western Greece Region will be responsible to publishing the relevant call and selecting the final beneficiaries for funding traceability actions. Beneficiaries are the aquaculture SMEs of the Region which will be funded</p>



	for developing traceability systems and adding traceability capabilities to their products.
4. Timeframe	Publication of call: 2022 Proposals assessment: To be determined Ending date: To be determined
5. Costs	Indicative cost: 200.000,00€ (depending on the number of SMEs financed)
6. Funding sources	The action will be implemented within the framework of the O.P. of Western Greece 2014-2020, which constitutes the targeted policy instrument as identified in the project AF, or its successive operational program for the period 2021-2027, or any other financial framework considered appropriate by the Western Greece Region.
7. Responsible organization	The implementation of this action will be coordinated by the Western Greece Region along with the managing Authority of the O.P. of Western Greece.






Organization signatures

The organization below agrees to support and promote the implementation of the actions listed above. The signatory confirms that he has the authority required to do so and that the approval process required by the organization has been successfully completed.

Date	21/9/2021
Organization Name	University of Patras
Name of Legal Representative	Professor Panagiotis Dimopoulos Vice rector for Research and Development
Signature of Legal Representative	
Stamp	



The organization below agrees to support and promote the implementation of the actions listed above. The signatory confirms that he has the authority required to do so and that the approval process required by the organization has been successfully completed.

Date	20/09/2021
Organization Name	Region of Western Greece
Name of Legal Representative	Nektarios Farmakis Governor
Signature of Legal Representative	
Stamp	