



**EXTRA-SMEs**  
**NEWSLETTER**  
**VOL 5**

**INSIDE  
THIS  
ISSUE**

**PG. 2**

EXTRA-SMEs Best Practice in  
Regione Liguria

EXTRA-SMEs Best Practice in  
Greece

**PG. 3**

EXTRA-SMEs Best Practices in  
Romania

**PG. 5**

Liguria Region 4<sup>th</sup> Stakeholders  
Meeting

**PG. 6**

4th EXTRA-SMEs regional  
stakeholders meeting in  
Greece

**PG. 7**

Project to identify  
opportunities from Marine  
plastic waste - Blue Circular  
Economy at EU Regiostars  
2020



# EXTRA-SMEs Project

Dear reader,

This is the fifth edition of the Newsletter series of the EXTRA-SMEs project that aims to improve the implementation of policy instruments for the participating regions by promoting: (a) simpler and improved administrative processes and solutions, and (b) measures and improvements in favour of extraversion, internationalization and competitiveness.

In the following pages, you will find material on the overall context and objectives of the project, as well as information on the latest developments and events, and on the upcoming ones.

Stay up to date with EXTRA-SMEs news through the project website, social media, thematic events, and future newsletters.

The EXTRA-SMEs project team

## EXTRA-SMEs Best Practice in Regione Liguria

The creation of guidelines explaining the bureaucratic and administrative procedures needed to start an aquaculture business, constitutes the most recent best practice as regards aquaculture in Italy.



(Source: <http://www.liguriacontributi.it/>)

The aforementioned document, includes guidelines for the selection of the species, the identification of the territory as well as the adoption of measures to increase international production and confront foreign competition.

Despite the rapid developments and progress observed during the previous years, aquaculture encounters many difficulties due to an increasingly competitive food market, technical problems and high production risk, bureaucratic delays to obtain the planned permits and a defective communication with consumers and the public sector.

In order to clarify some of these aspects, Liguria Region issued a specific Regional Law which regulates the activity of mariculture, carrying out multiple functions such as:

- A useful reference tool for Municipalities and Port Authorities in the context of reorganization, rationalization and restructuring of ports and Liguria landings
- A reference document for potential subjects interested in realizing new aquaculture production realities in Liguria
- A useful cognitive tool for the public sector to learn about currently existing activities in Liguria, information on the health issues regarding aquaculture products, the protection of the environment and the welfare of farmed animals and, more generally, the initiatives of the Liguria Region aimed at the discipline and control of this specific productive sector.

The practical guideline is principally funded by Regional Funds; a part of the activities has been financed by the EU structural funds Fesr and Feamp. The guide is the fruit of a

long and participative process involving companies and local stakeholders, listening to their needs and confronting barriers.

### Potential for transfer

This good practice has a considerably high potential for transferring, being easy to use, helpful and practical. The guideline is distributed by regional offices to all interested stakeholders or future entrepreneurs, in order to circumvent a relatively long process that it takes to acquire the necessary information to obtain a project license and to build up or start a new SME. These processes are quite common across European regions, knowledge and lessons learnt can be transferred to all regions investing in aquaculture.

## EXTRA-SMEs Best Practice in Greece

In Greece, a Protocol on seafood through ASC certification in aquaculture has been established, and published recently as a best practice within the EXTRA-SMEs project.

The two aquaculture facilities in Greece, operated by Nireus, have become certified to the ASC's new Seabass, Seabream, and Meagre Standard on June 5, 2019.

The Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) is an international non-profit organization that maintains a policy on farmed seafood thus maintaining sustainable aquaculture.



(Source: <http://www.nireus.com/>)

It offers a strict certification and marking scheme for safe and responsible aquaculture suppliers ensuring consumers that the seafood they buy is environmentally friendly and socially responsible.



The ASC standards resulted from the WWF-initiated Aquaculture Dialogues, a multi-stakeholder series of dialogues, taking place for over a decade and involving about 2,000 scientists, NGOs, industry participants and other stakeholders. The ASC has standards for the 12 species, namely: abalone, bivalves,

freshwater trout, pangasius, salmon, seriola and cobia, shrimp, and tilapia.



(Source: <http://www.nireus.com/>)

Two aquaculture facilities, run by Nireus, in Greece have accredited to the ASC's new Seabass, Seabream, and Meagre Level on 5 June 2019. The program was extended in response to stakeholder demand for an ASC standard for seabass, seabream and meagre, which customers in European markets have historically enjoyed. The new standard is based on a combination of measures from the current multi-stakeholder standards of ASC and additional metrics developed to resolve the unique impacts of seabass, seabream, and meagre in agriculture.

This practice is related to Activity "A3.2 Interregional workshop on promoting relevant EU labels" of the EXTRA-SMEs project.

### Evidence of success and transferability

The Global Review of the ASC's Standard finds that most ASC-certified farms successfully meet various criteria that might delay the process, yet in long term they have an added value to the levels and quality of production. Furthermore, outweighing costs over time with respect to environmental and social values brings longer term economic benefits.

These benefits allow the transferability of knowledge and expertise to other organizations. The innovative scheme that is implemented by ACS, is the third-party certification system, meaning that certification of farms and product suppliers are done by independent certifiers. Certifiers are accredited and monitored by an independent accreditation organisation, Assurance Services International. This ensures the program is robust, credible and meets best practice guidelines for standard-setting organisations as set out by ISEAL Alliance and United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Certified farms are subject to an annual surveillance audits including a risk analysis, focusing on the farms improvement plan/s and on a sample of the standard requirements.

## EXTRA-SMEs Best Practices in Romania

Three best practices have been identified by the Regional Development Agency Bucharest-Ilfov within the EXTRA-SMEs project.

### TAPAS initiative

The TAPAS initiative worked to support member states to establish a coherent and efficient regulatory framework aimed at sustainable growth in aquaculture.



The initiative introduces a decision support system for the development and implementation of coastal and marine spatial planning was put in place enabling less costly, more transparent and more efficient licensing.

### Objectives of the initiative:

- Secure sustainable development and growth of aquaculture through improved management of fish farms.
- Simplify administrative, regulatory and licensing procedures.
- Support the development and implementation of sustainable development and growth of aquaculture through coordinated spatial planning.
- Enhance the competitiveness of sustainable EU aquaculture.
- Promote a level playing field for EU operators by exploiting their competitive advantages.

- Support member states to improve their aquaculture strategies and effectively use EU and national funding sources.
- Use TAPAS case studies to encourage the development of best practices leading to an improved perception and image of aquaculture.

The main beneficiaries were producers and fisheries and aquaculture industry representatives but also decision makers in the field (regulators and licensing authorities).

The project was developed in an international partnership and was funded by the European Commission under H2020-EU.3.2. The overall budget was € 6.918.512,50.



(Source: <http://tapas-h2020.eu/>)

The main output of the TAPAS project is the Aquaculture Toolbox. It provides tools and guidance to support the planning and licensing of aquaculture in Europe and it can be used by planners to guide the sustainable development of the aquaculture industry in Europe.

The TAPAS toolbox is a great example and can offer some learning opportunities to other European regions as the aquaculture sector is in a continuous expansion globally and the industry face similar challenges and have common needs in the aquaculture sector.

Furthermore, license applicants in the industry can benefit from modelling tools and guidance that will support their licensing application and guide them in developing their activities to operate within environmental boundaries.

## Blue Career Centre Romania – training opportunities for marine fisheries and aquaculture sectors

The best practice identified by ADR-BI via the Blue Centre Romania is a regional training platform for dialogue between business stakeholders, training institutions, research organizations, in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.



The Blue Career Centre Romania was established within the MENTOR project – a partnership comprised of 7 partners from 4 countries, that aimed to support businesses in finding the right staff with proper qualifications and to provide prospects for young jobseekers in key Blue sectors: maritime transport (shipping, ports, ship-repairs and shipbuilding), cruise and nautical tourism, aquaculture and offshore oil and gas.



The project was developed to address mismatches between training/academic qualifications and identify practical experience needed by the fisheries and aquaculture industries. Hence, it can be considered a common effort to close the skills gap, tackle unemployment and make “blue careers” more attractive to the young people of Europe.

These objectives were achieved through the establishment of a Blue Career Centre Secretariat in Cyprus and representatives in Greece, Bulgaria and Romania. Included development of re-training schemes for blue professionals in the maritime sector, aquaculture and offshore oil and gas, development of e-learning courses, mentoring and career guidance to students, organizing Blue Career Fairs, balancing the demand and supply of maritime, aquaculture, cruise tourism and offshore oil and gas professionals.

The main beneficiaries of this practice are employees in the maritime and aquaculture sectors, people that wanted to work in the mentioned sectors, students. The successful operation of the Blue Career Centres for the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea will set an example and model for all other sub-sea basins so that in the near future

we can have policies towards an European Network of Blue Career Centres that will bring together all the stakeholders of the European Marine, Fisheries and Aquaculture sectors and Maritime Clusters in the common effort to close the skills gap, tackle unemployment and make “blue careers” more attractive to the young people of Europe.

The practice encourages the improvement of knowledge and capacity building of professionals. Young job seekers in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors can have a real impact and increase the competitiveness of the domain. In the long-term this practice could inspire other public European entities to support trainings and life-long learning in aquaculture and try to achieve Policy change.

### Fishermen collaboration scheme in Corabia

ADR-BI has identified that 170 fishermen and the local municipality in the Olt County and the city of Corabia have collaborated as a synergy in order to improve selling conditions for fresh fish in the region.

The city of Corabia, located on the banks of the Danube, has more than 170 small scale fishermen. Although the city’s fisheries sector has traditionally been sensibly profitable, most of fishermen were incapable to sell their catch locally due to a lack of a physical fish market. Confronted with the challenges of long marketing chains and difficulties accessing other markets in the region, fishermen have seen their livelihoods decline gravely.



(Source: <http://alexisphoenix.org/>)

The Olt Fisheries Association asked the local municipality to support them in planning a local fish market to sell their catch. Construction of a building for the market with facilities meeting European standards soon followed, allowing

fishermen to sell their catch directly. More than 1.200 kg of fish per day is now being sold here including species such as: wels catfish, northern pike and zander. The local market also serves as a handling area and auction, including for the neighbouring villages. The latter scheme makes conditions favourable for the fishermen, the producers in fisheries and aquaculture sectors and the local community.

The project received funding from the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) in the form of a FLAG grant.

The value of this practice is that local fish markets can be a solution for many fishermen in areas where they are unable to access other markets and want to shorten supply chains. It illustrates how good collaboration between the fisheries and aquaculture sectors and public stakeholders can benefit a local community.

Moreover, this collaborative scheme is an example of how the FLAG can act as a catalyst to reinforce the relationship between local fishermen and public authorities, in order to create the necessary synergies to empower and increase the competitiveness of the fishermen. Even though this is a smaller initiative, it could, in the future, inspire and encourage other public European entities to support local producers and try to achieve Policy change.

## LIGURIA REGION 4<sup>th</sup> Stakeholders Meeting



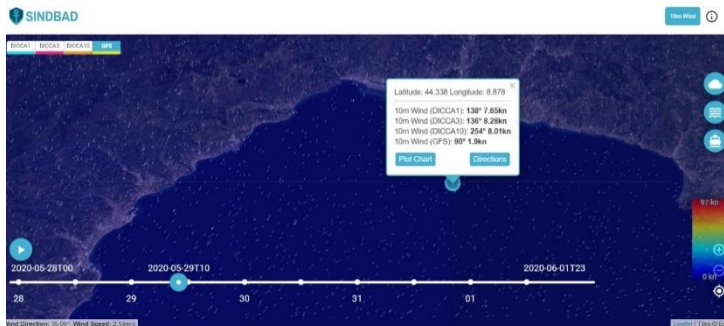
During EXTRA-SMEs' fourth semester, Regione Liguria organized virtually the 4<sup>th</sup> stakeholders meeting, with representatives of three technology oriented SMEs working on an ERDF ROP project, namely SINDBAD.



More information on SINDBAD project:  
<https://www.sindbad-liguria.it/>

The SINDBAD project, which was completed in 2020, focuses on Sea Situational Awareness systems. Its objective is to provide operational information on the present and future status of weather and sea conditions, providing adequate support to sea workers at all levels during their activities.

In particular, the project created a free online platform, which provides constant and up-to-date sea and weather forecast contributing to the diffusion of high-level forecasts, crucial for the safety of navigation for all types of boats.



Source: <https://www.sindbad-liguria.it/Mapviewer2/#/portale>

After a short presentation of both projects, the three SMEs presented various cases where the application was used providing high level forecast reports in the Tyrrhenian and Mediterranean Sea.

Apparently, a synergy between EXTRA-SMEs and SINDBAD, could potentially generate both short-term and long-term advantages for aquaculture SMEs.

A first pilot action as regards the latter could be the establishment of a direct contact between SINDBAD portal and the local SMEs involved in EXTRA-SMEs project.

Embarking on the post-Covid-19 era, and should the future situation allows it, a seminar with local SMEs will be organized, in order to present the SINDBAD portal. The scope of this seminar is to receive immediate and practical feedback from

local SMEs on the use of the sea, wind and weather forecasts on aquaculture foreseen by SINDBAD. Furthermore, such a seminar will encourage the generation and exchange of innovative ideas for a possible new development of the functionalities of the SINDBAD portal in order to provide aquaculture SMEs with more elaborate operational functions, such as numerical modelization of smaller boats for example.

Stay tuned for more updates...

## 4<sup>th</sup> EXTRA-SMEs regional stakeholders meeting in Greece

The 4th stakeholder meeting in Greece, due to the COVID-19 restrictions, took place online using Skype for Business on Friday 25/9/2020.



One presentation was delivered by Mr. Christos Bouras, Professor of the University of Patras and Scientific Director of the project, who made an introduction to the project and presented the agenda of the meeting.

In total, 2 presentations were delivered by invited speakers.

The first one of them was delivered by Mr. Manolis Tsapakis, (Research Director of the Institute of Oceanography, Hellenic Center for Marine Research), who presented measures towards a healthy environment and sustainable aquaculture, as the rapid development of aquaculture requires the sustainable use of resources and the least impact on the environment. The second presentation was delivered by Mr. Ioannis Karakasis, (Professor in the Department of Biology, University of Crete), who thoroughly presented the current conflicts of interest and conflict resolution in the aquaculture sector and provided several good practices for reducing the intensity of conflicts.



After the end of the presentations, a discussion between the participants followed, regarding the conflicts of interest/conflict resolution in the aquaculture sector. The attendees discussed the topics risen by the presentations and agreed that it is crucial to manage aquaculture based on the scientific data produced, always in cooperation with research institutes so to ensure the protection of the environment.

## Project to identify opportunities from Marine plastic waste - Blue Circular Economy at EU Regiostars 2020

The Public Choice Award in Regiostars 2020 for Blue Circular Economy, was won by “Time is Now for Change” project, based in the cities of Alytus (Lithuania) and Elk (Poland) aiming at working with and supporting at-risk youth in their shared border region.

Winners were announced on the evening of 14 October at an award ceremony as part of EU Regions Week.



The aim of the project was outlined by Siv Marina Flø Grimstad, Associate Professor in the Department of International Business at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU):

*“Through the Blue Circular Economy Project, we are driving innovation by bringing together a wide range of experts and stakeholders to solve a problem that persists in even the most remote parts of Europe and the Arctic region. By connecting researchers, NGOs, and municipalities with the public, we are developing and delivering novel solutions which turn marine plastic waste – fishing gear – into a resource for new businesses.”*

*“The remote areas that we are focusing on often lack the infrastructure and expertise to make a positive change. By identifying and developing the multi-level clusters in the west of Ireland and north-west Norway...we hope that with our project we will produce a sustainable solution [to the problems posed by waste fishing gear] in these Arctic areas.”*



## EXTRA-SMEs and COVID-19 challenges

As expected, most interregional cooperation projects – including EXTRA-SMEs – are dealing with the challenges the COVID-19 preventive measures have put in place, affecting work plans and delaying the implementation of the scheduled activities.

The EXTRA-SMEs consortium, in close collaboration with the Joint Secretariat officers, is examining and implementing risk mitigation measures, to ensure the smooth and successful implementation of the project amid the pandemic.

## Follow the project on social media



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<https://www.linkedin.com/in/extra-smes-project-280329174/>



<https://www.twitter.com/ExtraSmes>

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## About us

EXTRA-SMEs is co-funded by INTERREG Europe / European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)



## The EXTRA-SMEs Partnership



Region of Peloponnese (EL)



Liguria Region (IT)



Northern Chamber of Commerce in  
Szczecin (PL)



Bucharest-Ilfov Regional Development  
Agency (RO)



Lapland University of Applied Sciences  
(FI)



University of Patras (EL)



Western Development Commission (IE)



Liguria Cluster for Marine Technologies  
(IT)



Public Institution National Regions  
Development Agency (LT)