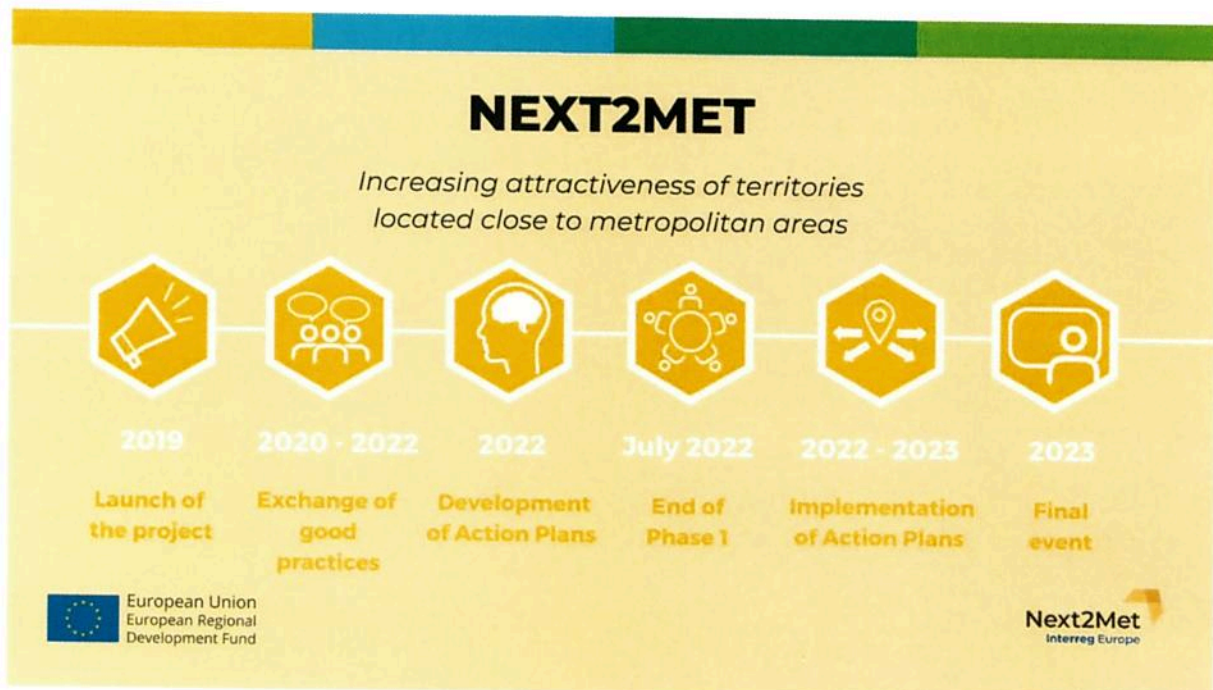


## Next 2 Met | Interreg Europe

Increasing attractiveness of Next2Met regions with soft digitalisation measures

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## Project and Policy Context



**Next2Met** is an innovative interregional exchange project, co-financed by the Interreg Europe programme, which aims at increasing attractiveness - for knowledge, opportunities, and capital - of territories located close to metropolitan areas.

These areas are confronted with a lack of tools and critical mass of research, development, and innovation, and therefore struggle with keeping experienced small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as highly qualified people in the region.

In this context, Next2Met worked for the improvement of policy instruments through interregional learning processes in **6 different regions**, focusing on **soft digitalisation measures** applied to a variety of sectors such as health care, transport, tourism, and public administration, among others.

These actions, nurtured by the good practices exchange that took place between partners throughout the project's lifetime, are linked to a broader European policy

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context, which is constantly developing in response to major challenges and crises, as the COVID-19 pandemic.

By improving services and products with the use of technology and digitalisation measures, Next2Met contributes to the **digital and green transition**, helping the territories in reaching the Green Deal objectives. Furthermore, the project also addresses the following key goals identified in the European Commission's Communication [“Digital Compass: The European Way for the Digital Decade”](#), which sets out digital ambitions for the next decade:

- a digitally skilled population and highly skilled digital professionals;
- secure and sustainable digital infrastructures;
- digital transformation of businesses;
- digitalisation of public services.

Digitalisation processes and investments have been accelerated by the COVID-19 crisis which brought about a complete shift of perspective and made clear the necessity to foster digital development in numerous sectors. New trends and the use of digital tools in people's daily lives as well as in businesses' operations have emerged in this period and served as useful material and sources of inspiration for the project. As a reaction to the changes brought by the COVID-19 pandemic on society and the way we live and work, the project has oriented its focus towards certain dimensions, already enclosed in its initial approach of “soft digitalisation”, such as 360° quality of life, multilocality and hybrid work, citizen participation and inclusion. The connection with citizens and their involvement in territorial development through bottom-up and participative initiatives has been further considered by the Next2Met project because of their relevance in the present context and at European policy level.

In fact, a human-centred perspective is at the core of the European Commission's vision for Europe's digital transformation by 2030. In this regard, on 26 January 2022, the Commission proposed an inter-institutional solemn [declaration](#) on digital rights and principles for the digital decade, which includes a specific point on citizens' participation in the democratic process at all levels and underlines the importance of citizens' control over their own data.

Indeed, the Next2Met project has been able to adapt to this new context and ultimately benefit from it, by fostering the exchange of good practices among its

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partner regions and beyond and further implementing digitalisation measures that improve people's lives and increase regional attraction.

## Action Plan

This document is aimed at providing details on how the lessons learnt from the cooperation will be exploited in order to improve the policy instrument tackled within the selected region. It specifies the nature of the actions to be implemented, their timeframe, the players involved, the costs (if any) and funding sources (if any). If the same policy instrument is addressed by several partners, only one Action Plan is required.

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## I. General Information

Project	NEXT2MET
Partner organisation	WITENO GmbH
Other partner organisations involved (if relevant)	Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Regional Authority
Country	Germany
NUTS2 region	DE80 - Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

## Contact details

Name and surname	Jennifer Billowie
Email address	billowie@witeno.de
Phone number	+49 3834 550 109

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## II. Policy Context

The Action Plan aims to impact

- Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
- European Territorial Cooperation programme
- **Other regional development policy instrument/s**

Name of the policy instrument addressed

**Digital Agenda MV**

**and**

**Regional innovation strategy for smart specialization of the land Mecklenburg-Vorpommern - 2021-2027**

### III. Details of the Actions Envisaged

#### ACTION 1

**Title:** Internationalisation concept for the network Digital MV in the focused topic of Digital Health as first step (pioneer) in internationalizing the Digital MV

##### 1. Background

The “House of Digitalisation” of our Austrian partners and the Remote Working Hubs in Ireland are good examples for MV’s network “Digital MV” with its 6 regional Digital Innovation Centers. While the Austrian partners are rather regionally active, supporting internationalisation of their regional SMEs through the economic agency “ecoplus”, the Irish partners have discussed the business case of internationalising their Remote Working Hubs, their regional community gathering places. This idea, as well as the international cooperation in the project Next2Met, have inspired the strong wish to internationalise the network “Digital MV”, to support SMEs as seen in ecoplus and to internationalise MV’s regional Digital Innovation Centers as it was discussed in EMRA, Ireland.

At the moment, there are no elements of internationalisation included in the Digital Agenda MV, the network is connected only regionally and all information is only accessible in the German language. The potential of internationalisation of digitalisation efforts for MV is however enormous, as connecting across borders can increase the attractiveness of MV beyond the land’s borders and can attract work force to the rural, next-to-metropolitan area MV.

##### 2. Action

While having the communication with the responsible entity for the Digital Agenda MV (until 2021 Ministry for Energy, Infrastructure and Digitalisation MV), we plan to identify the sectors most in need of internationalisation, as well as the most promising sectors for international endeavours. This is especially important as the network “Digital MV”, centrally coordinated by the Ministry of Energy, Infrastructure and Digitalisation of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and decentrally by 6 regional Digital Innovation Centers, is aiming to increase digital competence in MV and to connect research and economy for a higher innovation potential. In order to present the knowledge, capital and potential of MV’s digital sector, regional SMEs as well as the

network “Digital MV” itself (with its Digital Innovation Centers) need to increase their focus on international endeavours. Such internationalisation of the network needs to be supported by the policy “Digital Agenda MV”, which constitutes the basis of financing for activities within the network. Therefore, our activities are aiming to develop and include a new strategy concept: “internationalization” with recommendations for specific actions into the Digital Agenda MV. This Policy Change is planned to be developed based on the learnings from phase 1 activities, i.e. analyses (e.g. via LinkedIn) and meetings with stakeholders within the network “Digital MV”. For building up and strengthening international connections of MV’s Digital Innovation Centers and SMEs in the field of digitalisation, e.g. internationalising regional workshops, we have deduced from our phase 1 activities that focusing on the thematic topic of “Digital Health” supports the Digital MV best for two reasons: On the one hand, Digital Health is a topic of strength in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern’s Digital MV thanks to the two very active University Medicines in Greifswald and Rostock. On the other hand, focusing on one topic gives us the opportunity to create a strong, focused effect of our internationalization strategy concept, which can in later implementation (after the Policy Change) have a stronger impact than a broad, diverse approach with less working time dedicated in the single topics. As the Digital Innovation Center Greifswald is the organizer of MV’s Digital Health Hub, based in Greifswald in cooperation with the University Medicine Greifswald, and as the Digital Innovation Center Greifswald is the DIC with the ability to plan the internationalization of the Digital MV, we can create recommendations for actions for a new priority in the Digital Agenda MV, as “pioneer” priority for internationalization in the Digital MV. Upon discussion with the partners the Digital Health Hub may constitute furthermore the platform for the implementation of the recommended actions.

Our activities in phase 1 have focused on analyses and research of needs and potential.

As a first step we have exchanged with the Next2Met-partners from Austria, Ireland and Finland on their innovation hubs and “House of Digitalisation”. The exchange has already resulted in learnings regarding internationalisation and network coordination/ management, which we can use to improve and internationalise MV’s network “Digital MV”.

First exchanges with regional SMEs working in the field of digitalisation and the University Medicine’s digital officer have uncovered needs and potential in the field of digitalisation in MV, with one of the wishes being the establishment of support structures by neutral coordinators (e.g. Digital Innovation Centers) to connect regional SMEs across borders.

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In order to increase internationalisation in the network “Digital MV” we plan to further analyse and determine MV’s digital sectors with the highest needs and/ or potential for internationalisation efforts. Those sectors not identified by us can later follow the trend or be inspired throughout sectoral exchanges. Therefore, it is important for us to connect not only internationally, but also regionally as part of internationalisation activities.

In order to identify the most promising sectors in Phase 1 we plan to analyse needs and potential on the online platform LinkedIn (surveys, analyses, exchanges), where we have free access to analyses of interaction and where we can analyse on an international level in order to prepare the Policy Change and future Phase-2-activities and monitoring indicators for a more international network Digital MV. In the implementation phase (phase 2) of the project, we plan to have international events (workshops, study visits) organised via LinkedIn, in which we can find out facts about other regions’ actors’ needs and find matches of interest and offer. Resulting from the experience gathered in the events and in the communication channel on LinkedIn, we will be able to communicate to the MA more specific requirements for internationalisation and its coordination in the Digital Agenda MV.

### 3. Players involved

The process involves the **Regional Authority Mecklenburg-Vorpommern**, i.e. Managing Authority of the Digital Agenda MV (until 2021: Ministry of Energy, Infrastructure and Digitalisation, as of 2022: **Ministry of the Interior, Building and Digitalisation**) as coordinator of digitalisation efforts in MV and author of the Digital Agenda MV. Furthermore, **regional SMEs** are involved with their wishes and needs for not only their own business – but also for an increased attractiveness of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern from their business point of view. The **Digital Innovation Centers** in MV are involved as regional coordinators of the network “Digital MV”. The **Next2Met-partners** are involved as providers of good practices and inspiration. **Regional experts such as agencies for regional economic development** are involved to provide expertise on the necessary regional development.

### 4. Timeframe

We try to establish a Policy Change in the Digital Agenda MV in the following steps:

Semester 6: Study visits, meetings and ongoing discussions with the Austrian partner ecoplus, the Finnish partner Päijät-Häme and the Irish partner EMRA to clarify more details about their good practices of the “House of Digitalisation” as well as CoWorking Hubs in Ireland. Also, organising and hosting a local study visit in

Greifswald with Next2Met-partners EMRA and Päijät-Häme to discuss the local good practices and possibilities to internationalise the Digital MV.

## PHASE 2

### Semester 7:

- 1 workshop on internationalisation needs and things to consider in Digital MV, topic “Digital Health”

### Semester 8:

- Creation of a written suggestion for the Digital Agenda MV based on workshop results
- Inclusion of a new priority in the topic of Digital Health as first concept for internationalising in the Digital Agenda MV (responsible body: Ministry of the Interior, Building and Digitalisation of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern)

## 5. Costs

Costs are necessary for the Project Manager to organise and implement the workshops, which are covered by the Phase 2 lump sum.

## 6. Funding sources

No additional funding is needed as the costs can be covered by the budget of the Digital Innovation Centers.

## 7. Monitoring and indicators

Based on learnings from phase 1 we will work on the creation of a strong, focused Policy Change for internationalisation of the Digital MV in the topic of Digital Health as first concept for internationalising a focus-topic of the Digital MV. We will ask for topic-specific needs of stakeholders in a workshop and create a written suggestion of a strategy concept with recommendations for specific actions, being in constant

exchange with the Ministry of Interior, Building and Digitalisation as coordinator of the Digital MV as well as the 6 Digital Innovation Centers in MV (DIC).

- participation in international projects (1 per year)
- 1 workshop on internationalisation needs and things to consider in Digital MV
- Creation of a written suggestion for the Digital Agenda MV based on workshop results
- Inclusion of a description of internationalisation efforts in the Digital Agenda MV

## ACTION 2

**Title:** Including the Digital Innovation Room into the RIS 2021-2027

### 1. Background

The RIS is guiding the land of MV in the priorities of research, development and innovation, horizontal strategic fields and thematic topics. The "Regional Innovation Strategy for Intelligent Specialization of the land of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern 2021-2027" was agreed upon on 15.10.2020. It describes an analysis of the status quo in MV on innovation capacity and performance, bottlenecks in innovation and digitalisation and many other topics. Digitalisation is a major topic along with the need to increase the competitiveness of MV's economy sector.

The Digital Innovation Region is mentioned in the RIS as a strategic action field to master the industrial change. With Digitalisation efforts the land aims to tackle challenges in regional development. Regions and enterprises are facing enormous challenges in topics such as development of infrastructure, research and development, process- and product innovation, education and work qualifications. Measures are planned by the land government, such as measures for qualifying workers, the development of Digital Innovation Centers and a Digital Innovation Network as well as topic-oriented centres of competency.

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The focus of this strategy field is supporting the digital transformation of SMEs, digital start-ups, supporting new, innovative ideas for business models and smart specialisation. The Digital Innovation Region is to provide a platform for joint exchange on goods, products, services, ideas and knowledge. This has a positive effect on attractiveness of our region by connecting and thus driving innovation.

## 2. Action

The Digital Innovation Region MV was included into the RIS for the years 2021-2027, which was agreed upon on 15 October 2020 ("Regionale Innovationsstrategie für Intelligente Spezialisierung des Landes Mecklenburg-Vorpommern 2021-2027"). The policy instrument has been modified with inspiration by the project exchanges with the Austrian partners even from the preparation stage of the Next2Met project.

During the entire process of the RIS-development, the digitalisation department remained in close contact with the coordinators of the RIS in the Ministry of Economy, Work and Health of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (MV), introducing the information and experience from the Austrian partners to the coordinators.

The first exchanges with the Austrian partners happened in preparation of the project Next2Met. During the Policy Learning Event organised by the Austrian partners on 14 May 2020 P6 followed the information of the Austrian partners and asked additional questions. The experiences of the Austrian partners were an inspiration for the Digital Innovation Region MV to be developed in its invaluable format and to be taken into the RIS. The digitalisation department was consulting the plans with the representatives of the Digitalisation Centers, the advisory board on digitalisation (seated by experts in digitalisation throughout MV) and other digitalisation experts and advisors. Thanks to the inclusion into the RIS, the financing of the Digital Innovation Region has been secured beyond 2022, guaranteeing a safety of the work for the DICs' staff.

On page 84 of the RIS 2021-2027 the Digital Innovation Region (DIR) is now mentioned along with the Digital Innovation Centers (DIC) and the Centers of Competency as network nodes of the Digital Innovation Region. The experience from the exchange with the Austrian partners has influenced the process, providing a well-functioning example and therefore providing the regional players in the RIS-development with knowledge and planning security.

## 3. Players involved

- Ministry of Energy, Infrastructure and Digitalisation of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern; Driver of the change due to responsibility for digitalisation topics and the regional construct "Digital Innovation Room"

- Ministry of Economy, Work and Health of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern;  
Responsible for the Regional Innovation Strategy (RIS) 2021-2027

#### 4. Timeframe

2,5 years: Exchange since the preparation phase of Next2Met in spring 2018, policy change achieved on 15 October 2020.

#### 5. Costs

Costs of running the 6 Digital Innovation Centers in MV for 2 years

#### 6. Funding sources



EFRE and ESF funding, via the Ministry of Energy, Infrastructure and Digitalisation MV as coordinator of the Digital Innovation Room MV (could change after reorganisation of the new land government of MV in 2021/22)

#### 7. Monitoring and indicators

The Policy Change is providing a written basis of ongoing, official support for government-supported Digital Innovation Centers in the Digital MV. Thanks to this Policy Change DIC's can plan for long-term activities, offering a long-term perspective for qualified workforce in MV's digital sector. Thanks to this Policy Change, the qualified workforce might not consider other long-term employment in other regions in Germany, where there are many jobs in innovation and digitalisation, such as Berlin or Hamburg. The Digital Innovation Room MV is providing a strong alternative to the close-by metropolises for qualified workforce. Therefore, for the aim of the Next2Met project it will be most interesting to monitor the further staff situation in the Digital MV during phase 2 as indicator of a well-functioning, innovative network of qualified workforce, established as counter-weight to the "magnetic" metropolises of Berlin or Hamburg. As a further indicator of innovation and well-functioning we would like to monitor the number of events organised in the Digital Innovation Centers, as the DIC's are the "antennas" of the regions in MV, being contact points for citizens and SME's in digitalisation topics. Therefore, the DIC's number of events will give us a good indicator of the interest of

society and economy as well as the stability of DICs, as only well-staffed DICs can organise a high number of events on diverse topics in the broad field of digitalisation.

- Number of staff employed in Digital Innovation Centers
- Number of events organised as a result of well-functioning Digital Innovation Centers, working as contact point on digital topics

<b>Date</b>	04. July 2022
<b>Signature</b>	
<b>Stamp of the organisation (if available)</b>	 <b>WITENO GmbH</b> Walther-Rathenau-Str. 49a · 17489 Greifswald Tel.: +49 3834 515-0 · Fax: +49 3834 515-102 www.witeno.de

WITENO GmbH  
Walther-Rathenau-Str. 49a  
17489 Greifswald

Schwerin, 4 July 2022

**letter of endorsement - Interreg Europe-funded project “Next2Met“**

Dear Sir or Madam,

The Ministry for Interior, Building and Digitalisation Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Ministerium für Inneres, Bau und Digitalisierung M-V), as Managing Authority of the Digital Agenda MV, expresses all support to the WITENO GmbH as partner of the Interreg Europe-funded project “Next2Met - Increasing attractiveness of Next2Met regions with soft digitalisation measures”.

The Action Plan results in an important change to increase the attractiveness of Digital MV – the digitalisation network for Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

Our Ministry will be included in the development of the concept for an internationalised Digital MV, focussing on the pioneer role of the Digital Health Hub. We will support the concept, developed together with relevant stakeholders in the region, to be integrated into the Digital Agenda M-V.

Sincerely yours,



Mareike Donath

Allgemeine Datenschutzinformationen:

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