NICHE – an EU funded project with 7 EU Region has successfully started
Kick of meeting took place in Timisoara in May 2016
Assessment of the innovation level of the food sector in the NICHE regions
Good practices in NICHE partner Regions
Launch conference in Letterkenny in September 2016
Brokerage Event in the Food Sector in Ireland in September 2016

The food sector worldwide is faced with major challenges that arise from changes in the sector’s economic and non-economic environments. The availability of safe, sustainable and healthy food has taken a new and pressing dimension in the light of an ever-growing global population and increasing environmental and sustainability concerns. Based on that vision, 7 EU partner Regions have established a common international project called NICHE. It commenced on April 1st, 2016 and its lead partner is the Regional Development Agency of West Region Romania.

By working together the NICHE partnership aims, by 2019 and through the improvement of existing policies, achieve an average 15 % increase in the adoption of research and innovation solutions by food sector companies in their regions to give response to the demand of this sector identified as high-potential sector for their smart growth.

The project will establish ecosystems that will last beyond the NICHE’s lifecycle and where involved stakeholders will benefit of a more effective and productive way of collaboration.

http://www.interregeurope.eu/niche/

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Kickoff meeting in Timisoara, May 12, 2016

During the kickoff meeting of the NICHE project submitted information on the NICHE project partners, and in particular, the situation in the food sector. The important elements of the discussion were: the identification and determination of local groups of recipients relevant to the project, the creation of interregional innovation system, mutual communication, discussion about monitoring methodology, presentation of good practices in the partner regions, communication and dissemination of information about the project, as well as project management. It was also established date of the launch conference connected to a site visit and interregional workshop.

Assessment of the innovation level of the food sector in the NICHE regions

Currently NICHE partners are performing an evaluation of the actual situation of the food sector in their regions, focusing on innovation policies and the level of innovation in the food companies. The evaluation will provide a clear picture of the food sector at the level of the partner regions in order to position it and compare it at regional and European level.

The assessment has two purposes:

- to identify those aspects to be addressed and improved within the innovation policies with focus on the food sector through NICHE
- to determine the level of innovation in the food companies and to foster the increase in the adoption of research and innovation solutions by these companies

140 companies in the food sector at the level of NICHE regions are being assessed in terms of innovation performance, using a tool provided by Improve Academy (https://www.improve-innovation.eu/)
Good practices in NICHE partner regions

One of the aim of NICHE project is to exchange knowledge and experiences within project partners which a common component in their economies is a food industry. The output of activities in NICHE project was to prepare a collection of examples of good practices including relevant information about state of innovation in companies. This description brings together all important stakeholders involved into exploring innovation approach i.e. research centres, universities, enterprises, policy makers, innovation agencies and final consumers at both regional and interregional level. By researching these Good Practice’s, it will assist to improve the regional policies supporting the introduction of innovation into the regional food value changes.


NICHE: Launch conference in Letterkenny

September 27th-28th, 2016

On 27th and 28th September NICHE will held its Launch Conference in Donegal. This meeting will initiate officially first site visit and first interregional workshop. The main focus of conference 'Innovation in Food - Driving Local & Regional Enterprises' will raise awareness about driving food innovation at national and interregional level. Perspectives and good practices will be presented by representatives of National Initiative to Drive Innovation in Food in Ireland, IMP³rove European Innovation Management Academy, Letterkenny Institute of Technology, Island Seafood (Atlantic Treasures), Donegal Food Coast Initiative, Kinnegar Brewing, AlgAran Seaweed Products. These case studies will present how food sector play a great role in regions’ economic development and its potential and it will be a great chance to exchange knowledge and experience from food businesses. People attending the conference also go the opportunity to explore and discuss a range Good Practice case studies each of the partner regions.

Brokerage Event in the Food Sector in Ireland, September 28th, 2016

Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) based at the Local Enterprise Office Donegal is hosting a free brokerage event on Wednesday 28th September 2016. The event is being organised together with EEN partners in Northern Ireland, Estonia, Finland, Romania, Crete and Poland and will be attended by food businesses from these regions.
The ambition of the event is to allow businesses and those supporting the food sector to learn about what works well in developing innovation in the food value chain.