

PURE COSMOS Study Visit hosted by Welsh Government on behalf of Pure Cosmos Project

Date: 20-21 September

Venue: Welsh Government Office – Merthyr Tydfil

Attendance: Partners and associates from PURE COSMOS project

Background to PURE COSMOS (Public authorities Role Enhancing Competitiveness of SMEs)

This is a 5 year interregional cooperation project that focuses on the role public authorities can play in enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs. PURE COSMOS aims to support the growth and development of SMEs by focusing on policies that support the needs of SMEs, and promote the administrative modernisation of the public services. It aims to have a concrete and measurable impact on Structural Funds Growth and Jobs policies and programmes (ERDF and ESF) e.g. change in the management and/or strategic focus of the policy instrument.

The project will improve Regional policies through the involvement of stakeholders and regional experts to share common solutions identify innovative new projects and enhance governance. This will be done by:

- ✓ analysing partners' plans through **peer reviews**
- ✓ identifying **good practices (new solutions and ideas) from other regions or countries and bringing back ideas** that will improve these plans and support the competitiveness of businesses
- ✓ exploring them further through **study visits**
- ✓ importing good practice solutions through special **workshops and regional action plans**.

Through this approach it is expected that the project will advance services for SMEs, such as e-payment tools, one stop shop, “digital by default” models, and digital-skill support. Governance will also be improved through IT administrative solutions, regional legislation review and simplifying and launching of new business calls.

Why this is important

SMEs are the backbone of our regional economic growth and the goal is to look at how we facilitate SME innovation and accelerate the implementation of policies and initiatives that will favour that. In Birmingham for example 98% of the total population of businesses are SMEs and 90% of these are micro businesses, so we need to look at how we enhance access to financial and direct business / technical support to enable them to function effectively at local, national and international levels to grow and/ or gain competitive advantage.

Who is involved in PURE COSMOS

The Lead partner is Municipality of Genoa (Italy) with project partners from Municipality of Florence (Italy); Hajdu-Bihar County Government (Hungary); Development Bank of Saxony-Anhalt (Germany); Birmingham City Council (UK); Development Agency of Eastern Thessaloniki's Local Authorities (Greece); Usti region (Czech); Government of Catalonia (Spain)

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The project is now in the process of arranging Study Visits to help all partners explore good practices in respective regions and countries that can enhance the learning and support development of new solutions and development of regional action plans to improve the competitiveness of SMEs.

Following the involvement of a Welsh Expert in recently held Peer Reviews last year colleagues from across Europe recognised that the Welsh Government's good practices was one that they wanted to explore further. This study visits will provide colleagues from the UK and Europe to explore further the Welsh

Government's E-Compliance System which enables funding and grants to be issued to beneficiaries using an end to end digital model.

The Welsh Government Study Visit in Merthyr Tydfil includes partners and associates from the UK, Spain, Greece, Italy and Germany.

PHOTO OF WELSH GOVERNMENT AND EU COLLEAGUES



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