

## Stakeholders about INTRA, an Interreg Europe project

On September 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> the policy-makers and stakeholders of internationalization from INTRA project partners' regions of Abruzzo (Italy), East Slovenia (Slovenia), Extremadura (Spain) and North East Planning Region (Bulgaria) have participated at the second round study visit to West Midlands (Great Britain). Within the first round of study visits the project partners have already identified good practices that were presented to the regional stakeholders, who have then selected which practices should be further investigated in order to transfer them to their own regions.

The study visit took place in Coventry at the Technocentre of the Coventry University Enterprises Ltd. and at Birmingham Chambers of Commerce, where the representatives of 4 regions gained further insight into 11 good practices covering the fields of international trade and e-commerce advisers, regional partnerships and support to SMEs in internationalization and global growth.

During the event the stakeholders of the INTRA project shared their thoughts on the impact the project has had on their work thus far.



*Athos Capriotti, University of Teramo (Italy):* Project INTRA, Interreg Europe project, provides us great opportunities to gather knowledge from other EU regions. Here in Coventry, we are particularly looking at good practices that can help us improve our projects, strategies and models for SME support in internationalization. The pool of companies we have in Abruzzo is ready to implement the identified solutions in our region.



*Simona Šarotar Žižek, University of Maribor, (Slovenia):* It is important to stress that INTRA is highly relevant not only for policy makers, but also for SMEs themselves. Through INTRA good practices SMEs can find suggestions how to improve their own internationalization process. This way INTRA good practices, collected from various EU regions, are directly helping SMEs optimize internationalization, creating immediate economic impact and benefits.



*Baldomero Nieto Pérez, Chamber of Commerce of Badajoz (Spain):* By exchanging experience with other EU regions, we can compare what we do with what other similar entities are doing and how they approach the challenges they are faced with. In this respect INTRA allows us to explore good practices of other EU regions and see what we can incorporate into our work in order to better support the internationalization of our SMEs.



*David Hope, Coventry City Council, UK:* If we compare our region with other parts of England, I'd say we're doing rather well in Coventry. This study visit, where other EU regions have come to examine our selected good practices, is a compliment and confirmation that we are doing at least some things right. However, we realize that we are still able to improve our policies. For this purpose projects such as INTRA give us great opportunities to

learn from other regions of the EU and improve the design of our projects, strategies and models for supporting our regional businesses. This has become even more important, since we are facing budget cuts, and want to make every pound go as far as it can.

Sometimes we see other regions doing things really similar to what we are doing, which we see as a confirmation that we are doing it well, but we are more interested in cases where we see differences. In different countries there are different roles of the private sector, there are different ways to involve the stakeholders and by exchanging such experience we can improve our own way of doing things.

Even more importantly, as we are also running an innovation support programme, we see that the products we help our companies develop have a great export potential, therefore, both we as a region as well as the SMEs directly, would greatly benefit, if there would be individual tailor made support for the internationalization of our businesses.



INTRA 2<sup>nd</sup> round study visit to West Midlands