



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

Efficient
support services
portfolios
for SMEs



ACTION PLAN
INSTITUTE FOR BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS
OF CASTILLA Y LEÓN (ICE)
- SPAIN -

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PART I – GENERAL INFORMATION

Project: **PGI00087 ESSPO; Efficient support services portfolios for SMEs**

Partner: ICE – Institute for Business Competitiveness of Castilla y León (Spain)

Territory concerned: Castilla y León Region

Country: Spain

NUTS2 region: ES 41 Castilla y León

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PART II – POLICY CONTEXT

The Action Plan aims to impact:

- Investment for Growth and Jobs program
- European Territorial Cooperation program
- Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument(s) addressed:

“2014-2020 ERDF Operational Program of Castilla y León”. OE. 3.1.1; OE 3.1.2; OE 3.2.1; OE 3.4.1; OE 3.4.2

Further details on the policy context and the way the action plan should contribute to improve the policy instruments:

The objective of this Action Plan is to improve the competitiveness of the small and medium-sized enterprises in the autonomous community of Castilla y León under the frame of the ERDF Operational Program.

PART III – DETAILS OF THE ACTIONS ENVISAGED

INTERREGIONAL POLICY LEARNINGS

This Action Plan is based in the learnings derive from:

1. The **peer review** done in the region by partners from Hameln-Pyrmont (Germany), which summarized in three subjects the main emphases of the priority 3 of the Operational Programme ERDF 2014-2020:
 - Support of entrepreneurship
 - Support of innovation
 - Support of growth and consolidation/investment

The **Peer Review** detected the need of a strong presence of support offers and a regular and closer contact with the local players, in a region which is one of the largest in Europe with nine provinces and 2249 municipalities in a space of 95000 km² and with 2.5 million inhabitants, a sparsely populated region, with a low level of entrepreneurial spirit, risk-shy nature and aged population.

2. Project partners **good practices**:

- **Knowledge and technology transfer for SMEs in large rural areas** from Weserbergland+ addressing the issue of reaching large number of SMEs with tailor made qualified counseling services for knowledge and technology transfer preparing them for application for ERDF grants. Transferrable aspects: tailored assistance to companies focused on development of project concept and initiation of cooperation with research institutions which increases their capacities to apply and absorb ICE financial instruments. Support dedicated to companies operating in large rural areas facing similar issues as Castill y Leon. (More information here: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/1161/knowledge-and-technology-transfer-for-smes-in-large-rural-areas/>)
- **INNOVA and Technological Barneteguis**, from Tecnalia project partner. It is a training program under Innobideak Strategy from the Economic Development and Competitiveness Department of the Basque Government. Transferrable aspects: We are transferring the structure of the Barneteguis and its specific model of “learn by doing” in Centrateg Program (training 15 participants in a specific area, working groups, expertise assessment to boost later their companies). (More information here: <http://www.spri.eus/euskadinnova/es/portada-euskadiinnova/index.aspx>)
- **BSR Stars**, provided by EURADA, is a flagship of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region that aims to strengthen competitiveness and economic growth by linking strong research environments, clusters and Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) networks to create globally leading innovation partnerships.

Transferrable aspects: the organization of forums focused on the issue of digital transformation and the development of tech companies in rural areas (opportunities, challenges, solutions, best practices, recommendations) (More information here: <http://www.nordregio.org/publications/inclusive-digitalization-in-the-baltic-sea-region-an-instrument-for-growth-and-development-in-declining-rural-areas-2/>)

- **Bind 4.0 Initiative**, from the Economic Development and Competitiveness Department of the Basque Government and Spri Group, the Business Development Agency of the Basque Government, provided by Tecnalía Project Partner. Initiative to develop Industry 4.0 solutions through an acceleration program between star ups and top level organizations.
Transferrable aspects: the support of the collaboration between start-ups and the major industrial players, the collaboration model (public-private) and the training/mentoring (More information here: <https://bind40.com/>)
 - **BPI France**: Provided by Eurada. The good practice it's the experience of the BPI France with Innovfin, a financing instrument for innovative SME's from the European Union under Horizon 2020 Financial Instruments and the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) set up in the framework of the investment program for Europe.
Transferrable aspects: The products they have, the aids they offer to companies and the requirements and procedures they use are interesting regarding the improving of ICE financial calls. (More information here: <https://www.bpifrance.fr/Toutes-nos-solutions/Prets/Prets-sans-garantie/Pret-Innovation-FEI>)
 - **The Economic Developer's University**: Presented by Centre Val de Loire partners. The Economic Developer's University, in Centre-Val de Loire Region, is an innovation support network that works with innovation intermediaries, trying to provide the ecosystem with an effective governance (More information here: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/980/the-economic-developer-s-university-in-centre-val-de-loire-region/>)
Transferrable aspects: the formalization by an agreement between the network management team and each intermediary member and the mapping of the services provided by the intermediaries, are ideas to improve the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Network of Castilla y León (REDEI).
 - Basque Science, Technology and Innovation Network.GP provided by Tecnalía. Transferrable aspects: The data base of the network as a suggestion of improvement of REDEI network (More information here: http://www.euskadi.eus/web01-a2lehiar/es/contenidos/registro/reg_agentes_rvcti/es_def/index.shtml)
3. **Stakeholder group meetings**: Their collaboration detecting needs, analyzing the context of the region, connecting the different agents of the innovation ecosystem, making proposals about new contents of training actions, and about the content in the diagnostics, motivating companies to participate in trainings and financial calls. All this information has been heard and it has been added to this action plan.

4. **TF1 “Network and communication” findings regarding the network operation:** The findings of the interregional policy learning have been incorporated into the action plan including mainly ideas on how to improve the availability of SME support in areas away from the region capital through enhanced networking among regional actors.

ACTION 1: IMPROVE REGIONAL SUPPORT IN SME'S TO INCREASE THEIR PARTICIPATION IN CALLS FOR BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS

ESSPO LESSONS LEARNT APPLIED IN THE ACTION

Lesson learnt	Source of the lesson
1. Detecting needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders proposals Recommendations from the peer review done by partners from Hameln Pymont (Germany) (17-19 October 2016)
2. Gathering information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basque Science, Technology and Innovation Network
3. Supporting closer to local players	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendations from the peer review done by partners from Hameln Pymont (Germany) (17-19 October 2016) Task Force findings from TF1 Network and communication held in Segovia, 16/05/2018: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> territorial proximity (effective way to approach companies in areas from outside of the region/country capital is to involve local authorities in implementation/ local BSOs “prescribers” in design and implementation of the scheme/programme)
4. Acting in rural areas, identifying companies which operate there	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BSR Stars “Effectively Digitalizing Rural Areas In The Baltic Sea Region” provided by EURADA. Recommendations from the peer review done by partners from Hameln Pymont (Germany) (17-19 October 2016) GP Knowledge and technology transfer for SMEs in large rural areas
5. Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Economic Developer’s University, in Centre-Val de Loire Region Task Force findings from TF1 Network and communication held in Tartu, 7/06/2017:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strategic level public support for companies' needs, clustered problems of companies ○ Increase know-how exchange between the ecosystem players ○ More effort for "teambuilding" between intermediaries
6. Creating synergies between Centr@tec Program and funding calls of ERDF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stakeholders proposals
7. Innovating in contents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stakeholders proposals
8. Network thematic and territorial structuring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● INNOVA-Technological Barneteguis from SPRI (Spain)
9. Financing innovation networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bind 4.0 Initiative, Economic Development and Competitiveness Department of the Basque Government and Spri Group
10. Improving procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Innovfin. BPIfrance good practice operating in Centre Val de Loire provided by Eurada,

DESCRIPTION

As a result of all the Information it was proposed as main action of this Plan, **Improve regional support in SME's to increase their participation in calls for business competitiveness.**

In order to get this, ICE is going to develop the next steps trough 3 different ways. 1 and 2 are programs directly related with the aim of the action plan. Both are necessary to have results on the third one, which is financed by the Policy Instrument Operational Program addressed to ESSPO Project: "2014-2020 ERDF Operational Program of Castilla y León".

1. CENTR@TEC PROGRAM.

Centr@tec Program was launched in 2017 as set of Advanced Innovation Services for SME's.

It is a transversal program that impacts on the three aims of the ERDF priority 3. As a result of the evaluation of the first edition of Centr@tec Program, taking into account suggestions purposed in the peer review made in the frame of ESSPO Project, a second edition (from May 2018) is going to improve and increase the number of training actions and companies supported, especially in rural areas, with the aim of acting on specific areas with depopulation problems and a lack of entrepreneurship. Suggestions of the peer review were focused on the characteristics of the region, a large and sparsely populated region, giving

relevance of the importance of **being closer with the local players**, and having a **stronger presence of the support offers on the spot, using the existing innovation infrastructure** that also could support the entrepreneurial spirit. ICE is working in rural areas through different initiatives such as:

- CRECEER Project (Interreg POCTEP): Creation of business cooperation networks in the cross-border rural environments in the sectors agro-food (gourmet) and tourism.
- Economic Dynamization Plan of Mining Municipalities of Castilla y León 2016-2020: 81 municipalities, with actions to promote productive activity and employment for the socio-economic revitalization of the mining basins.
- Economic and Geographic Dynamization Plan of Soria: to promote the economic activity and employment, the establishment of an attractive environment that facilitates the sustainable and balanced development of this territory and the improvement of the living conditions of the population.

Centr@tec Program will take advantage of the synergies generated with these existing initiatives to have more presence in rural areas where local municipalities have created operational relations with companies. Training actions and diagnostics from the program will be done in the action areas of CRECEER in municipalities of the provinces of Ávila, León, Salamanca and Zamora. The same situation with the Economic Dynamization Plan of Mining Municipalities, which is working in some areas of León and Palencia. And concretely, in the province of Soria, which has and specific Plan because of the idiosyncrasy of the province. Thanks to these three initiatives the needs detected through our ESSPO stakeholder group will be addressed especially “How might we complement Centr@tec Program with funding calls from ICE?” through actions covering all the territory of Castilla y León.

The objective is continuing with the second edition of the program addressing the needs/barriers founded in the first edition and increasing the number of companies supported in rural areas. In the first one, 145 SMEs were assessed in Centr@tec through diagnostics and implementation plans (51 in innovation, 34 in ICTs, 41 in Industry 4.0 and 19 Technology –Based entrepreneurs) and 134 training actions were done also. From the first edition to the second one it has been a relevant increase of the budget (from 1.3 to 2 million euros) because of the success of the program, the large number of participants and the interest they have shown in the program through specific surveys, that shows the quality of the program. ESSPO inspirations mentioned in “Interregional policy learnings” in point 4 are helping to improve the program.

In the second edition, the aim is opening the program to companies, being more flexible on the structure of the actions, and supporting 265 SMEs in 2018-2019 through diagnostics on Innovation in Processes and Products/Services, Incorporation of ICT technologies and Digital Marketing, Immersion in 4.0 technologies and Technical Feasibility Studies for Technology-Based Entrepreneurs. In this second edition it has been included in the diagnostics a second phase of advice from the technological centers to carry out the implementation plan (identification of necessary costs and financial options, mainly through ICE financial calls). The objective is to provide the assistance scheme focused on generating quality projects which improves the participation of the companies in the financial calls (ERDF Funds). To that end Centr@tec Program serves to stimulate and motivate companies, providing them a detailed explanation of the most appropriated calls for that project. ESSPO good practices are a source of inspiration to improve the network as it is mentioned in “Interregional policy learnings” in points 2, 4 and 10.

The aim is also to implement 235 training actions through demonstration meetings and training workshops on technologies and innovations and in regional innovations forums as it is mentioned in “Interregional policy le

arnings” in point 8. These actions will help with the consolidation of SME’s and the possibility of growing because of investment they could do.

The six Technological Centers of the Region are in charge of executing these actions, they are members of the ESSPO stakeholder group. Other members of the stakeholder group will disseminate the program and the actions of the program to the companies.

The technological centers are distributed geographically throughout CYL, covering all wide region, acting in the nine provinces, supporting SMEs and micro companies, approaching training and supporting advanced services to rural areas. The Program is financed by regional resources.

2. ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION NETWORK (REDEI)

The Entrepreneurship and Innovation Network (REDEI) emerges in a context of good collaboration between universities, companies, foundations, technological centers and public administration, in a very big, sparsely populated region, with a low level of entrepreneurial spirit in the region, as our peer review detected. Stakeholders needs and suggestions have been taken into account to analyze the context of the region and proposals have been collected to cover new thematic in the network. REDEI started working in October 2016 when was launched the Entrepreneurship, Innovation and self-employment Strategy of Castilla y León 2016-2020, and its ongoing now.

The objective in this Action Plan is to consolidate REDEI to generate a community open to entrepreneurship, talent and innovation through public-private partnerships, the strengthening of inter-sectoral relations, the interconnection of its partners to generate new value projects and the inclusion of innovation as a driver for any kind of entrepreneurship. REDEI is also a driver to disseminate ICE financial calls among their participants in order to stimulate company’s participation. The aim will be to increase the number of participants/members in the network (106 in April 2018) and the number of actions. The network is structured in five working groups in charge of: Entrepreneurship, Industry 4.0, Bioeconomy, Innovation and Transfer, and European Projects. From the beginning of REDEI up to now, it have been developed the different working groups. Three of them were constituted in 2017 (Entrepreneurship, Industry 4.0 and Bioeconomy) and the other two are going to be constituted in a short time. In territorial dimension ESSPO project is supporting the growing of the network with the collaborations of the stakeholder group, stablishing contacts between the members of REDEI and attracting new ones thanks to the meetings and communications events of the project. In the interregional dimension ESSPO has triggered the process of thematic focusing network activities, including creation of working groups as it is mentioned in “Interregional policy learnings” in point 8.

More than one hundred members are involved in REDEI, the main agents of the ecosystem of entrepreneurship and innovation that come from public sector (national, regional and local administration), science and innovation (universities, clusters, and technological centers), companies (SMEs, Big Companies, Self-Employment. Entrepreneurs), international and national networks (APTE (Association of Science and Technology Parks of Spain), Enterprise Europe Network, ERIAFF, ECSO, ERRIN, EURADA, Regional Development Agencies Forum (RDAs), ERANET, S3P on Industrial Modernization, among others) financial shuttle and other facilitators (Foundations, associations). Establishing stakeholder group of ESSPO project constituted by members of REDEI helped to integrate the network members based on new approach which was inspired by ESSPO Partners networking experiences regarding specific territorial and thematic activities and structure of the network.

REDEI started working in October 2016 when was launched the Entrepreneurship, Innovation and self-employment Strategy of Castilla y León 2016-2020, and its ongoing now. REDEI is financed by regional resources.

3. REGIONAL FINANCIAL CALLS FOR BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS

Due to the financial crisis and the co-financing problems of the public authorities there weren't available calls to apply for ERDF funds (Operational Program 2014-2020). It was in the middle of 2016 when the first calls were available. Our peer review detected and highlighted among our weaknesses and threats the importance that this delay could effect on SMEs, as well as the existence of a very short application deadlines for SMEs. Both aspects have been trying to be solved in different ways. Regarding to deadlines, new financial calls are going to be opened from the publication of the call up to the end of the grant or up to the publication of a new one that substitute the last one, and related to new ones, modifications in the old calls are going to be introduced, trying to stimulate SMEs and improving the conditions to access to the grant. Those needs have been detected through the support provided to companies and the demands identified in the ESSPO Stakeholder meetings.

New calls are being modified since June 2018. Changes are being done and new calls are being presented since June in different areas of the region, covering all the provinces (a total of 11 events). Those calls are non-repayable grants co-financed by ERDF. Modifications are going to be done progressively (2018 and 2019). It's detailed here the calls and the changes that have been inspired by lessons learnt from ESSPO project, previously mentioned.

Calls:

- Investment projects:
- 1. Company creation. Proposal for entrepreneurs to promote the creation of new companies, creation of employment or self-employment. Under thematic objective 3.1.2 of the Castilla y León Operational Program. 8.100.000€ available from 2018-2020.

New conditions:

- Modifications in the amounts of the projects, from 10.000 to 200.000€ of investment.
- New sectors included: ice production, hotel accommodation, restaurants with premises exclusively for restaurant, wholesale and retail trade and practically all services without limitation of inhabitants, including professional activities in strictly business or professional premises.
- Is included the possibility to give 50% of the budget in advance
- All the documentation: online

- 2. Investments projects in SMEs. Proposal to finance investment projects in SMEs. Under thematic objective 3.4.1. of the Castilla y León Operational Program. 14.000.000€ available from 2018-2020.

New conditions:

- Modifications in the amounts of the projects, from 30.000 to 150.000€ of investment.

- New sectors included: hotel accommodation without distinction of stars, rural tourism and active tourism, camping, tourist lodges, restaurants, major and minor trade and sector services provided to companies without limitation of inhabitants, logistics platforms, collection and recovery of waste, auxiliary services to industry, and the construction inputs are included.
 - It has been reduced the level of own resources needed.
- R&D+I Projects:
1. Innovation in SMEs. Proposal to encourage innovation in the technological field of SMEs in Castilla y León, with the aim of improving their competitiveness. Under thematic objective 3.4.1. of the Castilla y León Operational Program. 1.600.000€ available from 2018-2020.

New conditions:

- Includes assessment costs for product designs, organization, Industry 4.0 management and transfer systems, lean manufacturing, technological surveillance and competitive intelligent.
- It has been increased the amount of the grant (75% eligible costs)

ICE is in charge of the modifications to include in the new calls. As a result of all the information collected during the ESSPO project the support of SMEs in the region is being improved. Regional Financial Calls are financing by ERDF Funds.

COMMITMENT

This Action plan has been developed by ICE – Institute for Business Competitiveness of Castilla y León, who commit themselves implement the actions envisioned within their respective capabilities

Date: 03th of September 2019

NAME OF THE ORGANISATION(S): ICE – INSTITUTE FOR BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS OF CASTILLA Y LEÓN

Signatures of the relevant organisation(s):



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