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## Malta Enterprise builds momentum on EU projects

ME announces new FOSO-POCO project as RELOS3 moves to the second phase and Innova Foster is successfully completed

Malta Enterprise is leading a new project titled FOSO-POCO (Fostering Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystems Post-COVID19), together with project partners Tartu City Government and Cork Local Council. The project started this month, runs until February 2022 and is co-funded by the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME), under the COSME programme.

The project aims to improve the understanding of social entrepreneurship in the regions of Cork (Ireland), Tartu (Estonia) and Malta.

This will be achieved by identifying and involving relevant stakeholders, and using best practices and expert involvement to address existing gaps in the respective ecosystems.

It aims to establish local frameworks to assist social enterprises in a post-COVID economy, in order to further the economic development and create jobs in these regions. It also serves to assist promising social enterprises in piloting, pitching and internationalising their products or services, through the networks



Participants in RELOS3 at Emmen, the Netherlands, in September 2018.

of the project partners in Ireland, Estonia and Malta.

Particular attention will be given to social enterprises involved in providing a service or product in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The project has three specific objectives:

1. Create better understanding of social entrepreneurship locally; identify and involve the relevant stakeholders, use best practices and expert involvement to address existing gaps in the ecosystem;
2. Establishing a local framework to assist social enterprises

in a post-COVID economy, which hopefully results in furthering the economic development and creating jobs; and

3. Assisting promising social enterprises in piloting, pitching and internationalising their product or services through the networks of the project partners.

### RELOS3 enters its second phase

Malta Enterprise is also involved in Interreg Europe's project 'RELOS3', which focuses on improving the deployment of the country's Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3) in a local context by actively involving local authorities.

Smart specialisation is an EU-led, innovative approach, which aims to boost growth and jobs in Europe by enabling each region to identify and develop its own competitive advantages. Through its bottom-up approach, smart specialisation brings together local authorities, academia, business spheres and the civil society, working for the implementation of long-term growth strategies supported by EU funds.

The six project partners are the Economic Development Agency of Sabadell (Spain); Tartu City Government (Estonia); Metropolitan City of Bologna (Italy); Local Authority of Emmen (Netherlands); Wielkopolska Regional Authority (Poland), and Malta Enterprise. All

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## CLASSIFIED NEWS



Representatives of the various partners of Innova Foster in Cork, Ireland, in November 2017 (left) and in Oldham, the UK, in June 2018.



## Fostering interregional collaborations

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are strongly linked to supporting and fostering advanced manufacturing and ICT sectors in their respective regions.

The project consists of two stages. The first phase, now complete, consisted of studying, and contrasting, the partners' strategies, which has demonstrated the importance of the role of local authorities' involvement in RIS3 strategies implementation and relevance on competitiveness and innovation.

During this first phase, the partners have undertaken capacity-building activities for

policy-makers, practitioners and relevant stakeholders, as well as interregional learning exchanges between the various partners and their stakeholders.

This culminated in an overarching study, including a collection of good practices, as well as partners' individual local action plans. These local action plans have identified gaps in the deployment of local smart specialisation and put forward various proposals for improvement in each partner region.

The project is currently in its second phase. In this phase, the corporation follows the implementation of the proposed actions and measures the impact till the project comes to an end in December 2021.

For more information about the project, visit: [www.interreg-europe.eu/relos3/](http://www.interreg-europe.eu/relos3/)

### Innova Foster wrapped up in September 2020

Malta Enterprise also announced that Interreg Europe's 'Innova Foster' project, which started in January 2017, has recently come to a successful close. This has been marked by an online closing conference in September 2020, in which the various partners (Cork City Council in Ireland, Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council in the UK, Tartu City Government in

Estonia, Torun Regional Development Agency in Poland, Scientific Research Centre Bistra Ptuj in Slovenia, INCYDE Foundation in Spain and Malta Enterprise) were congratulated for their effective execution of this project.

The project's goal was to leverage scalable, high-potential start-ups through engagement in the innovation process, in order to bolster their role as regional and industry innovation providers. Part of the project involved the corporation holding stakeholder consultations and participating in multiple interregional visits.

A local action plan, the result of close collaboration with local key stakeholders, served to identify

and address the main challenges of the local start-up ecosystem. Malta Enterprise devised various actions and recommendations based on the other partnering countries' best practices.

Through the project, Malta Enterprise supported the creation of the national Start-up Foundation (SUM), improved the corporation's incentives for start-ups and organised the national Startup Café.

The project has also facilitated new collaborations between the corporation and other project partners.

For more information about the project, visit: [www.interreg-europe.eu/innovafoster/](http://www.interreg-europe.eu/innovafoster/).