



Minutes of meeting

Meeting	"ATM for SMEs" project 1 st partner meeting
Date	24 November 2021

Video recording of the meeting is available on the following link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wBR5OH2yF-80AxOqmYOWqs1fGc4p5x4H/view?usp=sharing>

The Lead Partner welcomes the participants. All 9 partners participated at the event, total number of participants: 32.

Agenda of the kick-off:

- Administrative info
- Regional assessment – LP's presentation
- EMN presentation
- FEA educational activities (video)
- Break
- Regional initiatives – partners' presentations
- Discussion
- Outlook: relation between regional initiatives and policy change

Administrative updates: at the moment, there are no actual tasks regarding the project administration. The request for change regarding the continuation of the project was approved on 7 October. The latest application form can be found on iOLF in the "Document center". The next reporting is due in September 2022.

Regional assessment / impact analysis of the COVID-19 effect in local economy and MSME landscape: the LP outlined that this exercise will be completed on 2 levels:

- **high-level analysis:** using available data sources (EUROSTAT, OECD, SAFE project etc.) to prepare a comparative analysis on the level of the participating regions/countries. This task is being done by the LP. Scope of this analysis:
 - creating a framework for further investigation
 - providing insights to micro, small enterprises landscape



- o showing how initiatives react to the trends and changes in the economic environment & demands from SMEs

There are some preliminary results available (charts concerning employment, economy, COVID-19 measures, SME sentiment and expectations) but the LP is continuing the data collection till the end of the year, and the final analysis will be presented at the 2nd meeting (February/March 2022).

The partners discussed the results of the SAFE survey, conducted by the European Commission in 2020, regarding how COVID-19 affected SMEs business activities and access to finance.

Link to the SAFE project publication:

https://ec.europa.eu/growth/access-finance-smes/data-and-surveys-safe_en

- **Regional analysis:** The partners will have to elaborate on a couple of questions regarding the regional impact of the pandemics, relying on local studies, analyses, and experiences of MFIs and policy makers. The template for this exercise was already sent out by the LP. The deadline of the regional impact analysis is 31 Dec 2021.

EMN presentation: Marie Vial from EMN presented about their core activity, the comprehensive study regarding the role of microfinance within the context of COVID-19 recovery efforts.

Objectives of the study:

- Understand the role of Managing authorities and microfinance institutions (MFIs) in the context of COVID-19 recovery initiatives adopted at the EU and national level
- Analyse and assess the tools and initiatives used by the project partners to answer to the financial needs of MSMEs from the beginning of the pandemic
- Support the diffusion of these initiatives to raise awareness on key role of microfinance to support MSMEs during the pandemic

Out of the 24 regional initiatives elaborated and presented by the partners at the project meetings, the EMN team will choose 8 cases, which are reflecting: Implementation of EU measures at the local, regional and national level / New initiatives implemented by Managing authorities / Measures, new policy and products developed by microfinance institutions.

The study will also include policy recommendations to EU institutions .

EMN is planning to finalize the study around June 2022, and the final version can be presented at the 4th meeting in Budapest, September 2022.



Regional initiatives – partners' presentations: the regional partners presented the local initiatives – responses to the COVID-19 situation, in the field of MSME support. The presented initiatives all included a financial instrument – typically a loan product with simplified conditions and easier access.

The following initiatives were presented – further information is available in the ppt slides attached, and regional mapping templates filled out by the partners.

LP: Resiliency package from FEA

PP2: Interest-free restart quick loan programme (EDIOP-9.1.1-21)

PP3: Burgos initiatives – Sodebur and ICE

PP4: Corona-19 emergency aid programme I and II, EU REACT Programme I and II, SOS Mentoring

PP5: Extension of 'Zala Innovative Employment Pact' (ZIEP) and Loan moratorium

PP6: Sardinian Enterprises Emergency Fund, ESF Microcredit for tourism sector

PP7: Public call for T 100093 - small value aid under Directive 1407

PP9: Financial instruments implemented under ROP WŚ 2014-2020, measure 2.6 Loan for SMEs

Following the presentations, the partners discussed the main points, similarities and differences between the financial instruments and the possibilities of combining them with other business support services.

Outlook: relation between regional initiatives and policy change

The LP highlighted that the regional initiatives mapped by the partners and discussed during the project meetings are important part in the exchange of experiences process, which leads to policy improvement – which is the most important outcome of the project.

The regional initiative templates filled out by partners are not necessarily part of the formal policy improvement, but studying what other partners bring as good examples can inspire the policy change.

When reporting the policy change, we'll have to fill out the questionnaire on iOLF, and we'll be asked to describe how the learning in the project influenced the policy change. Here is the point where the pool of regional initiatives can play a very important role.