NICHE – an EU funded project with 7 EU Region has successfully started

The food sector worldwide is faced with major challenges that arise from changes in the sector’s economic and non-economic environments. The availability of safe, sustainable and healthy food has taken a new and pressing dimension in the light of an ever-growing global population and increasing environmental and sustainability concerns. Based on that vision, 7 EU partner Regions have established a common international project called NICHE. It commenced on April 1st, 2016 and its lead partner is the Regional Development Agency of West Region Romania.

By working together the NICHE partnership aims, by 2019 and through the improvement of existing policies, achieve an average 15% increase in the adoption of research and innovation solutions by food sector companies in their regions to give response to the demand of this sector identified as high-potential sector for their smart growth.

The project will establish ecosystems that will last beyond the NICHE’s lifecycle and where involved stakeholders will benefit of a more effective and productive way of collaboration.
NICHE 1st Staff Exchange in Greece, February 19-21, 2017

NICHE 1st interregional staff exchange was hosted by the Region of Crete (Greece), during February 19th - 21st, 2017.

Stakeholders from the partner regions in Ireland and Estonia had the opportunity to join the learning experience and to have access to in-depth knowledge about the good practices in Crete Region (Greece).


Food businesses in NICHE regions have assessed their innovation management

Free vouchers have been provided by Improve Academy, external partner of NICHE consortium, to evaluate the innovation management of 140 companies in the food sector in NICHE regions, using a proficient benchmarking tool.

The evaluation brought significant added value to the baseline assessment carried out in the first two semesters of the project.

The assessment’s main goals were to increase awareness of the importance of innovation management in companies as well as to support companies in enhancing innovation performance.

Moreover, the businesses evaluated benefitted of extensive feedback with regard to their innovation performance, to their weaknesses and strengths in terms of innovation management, helping them to rethink their innovation strategies. The evaluation included also a benchmarking tool, enabling companies to find out their position within the largest innovation management existing database.

Even though a long and time-absorbing process, entrepreneurs had the chance to discover new perspectives in managing innovation in their companies and it was even more valuable for those companies where an innovation strategy didn't exist.

Here are some testimonials from managers of food companies having been assessed:

“You must think things through if you are answering the questionnaire, and this is a value itself.”

“Improve assessment helped us to diagnose our performance and to further optimize our innovation process”

“The specific methodology, as applied for the first time in the specific SMEs, initially helped them redefine more carefully those factors that largely determine their innovativeness.”
Derry shares "Best Practice” at NICHE 2nd interregional learning event

All seven NICHE partners are looking forward to continuing their work building upon international best practice, after the second interregional learning event and staff exchange visit was hosted by Derry City and Strabane District Council in Derry from March 14th-17th.

The conference heard presentations from partner regions and interregional workshops were held with producers. Study visits took place to the Foodovation Centre and Corndale Farm, producers of Northern Ireland’s first handmade chorizo. The project partners also enjoyed a visit to the award-winning LegenDerry Food Festival, winner of Best Food Event at the recent NI Year of Food and Drink Awards, which was taking place in the city.


NICHE promoted within external events:

NICHE project partners use every opportunity to present the project at a larger scale. They are looking for chances to share ideas, insights and experiences within the project.

- NICHE at ELARD Conference, in Estonia

- NICHE promoted at Innomatch 2016, in Romania

- NICHE presented at ERRIN Bio – WG meeting in Brussels