



## Exchange of Experience Seminar

Barcelona - 31 May 2017

### Report

#### **Rationale**

*Policy learning and interregional exchange of experience are at the heart of the Interreg Europe programme. They are the means through which the projects strive to achieve policy changes.*

*The objectives of the seminar were to remind the second call lead partners of the programme's recommendations on the learning process and to exchange about the experience of first call projects.*

*Target group: lead partners of second call projects*

*Number of participants: 90*

*Number of projects represented: 62*

#### **Useful links:**

- [Presentations of the day](#)
- [Pictures of the event](#)

#### **1. Introduction**

The seminar kicked off with a short welcoming speech by **Erwin Siweris**, director of the Interreg Europe Joint Secretariat.



The first part of the seminar was dedicated to an introductory presentation on the programme vision on policy learning. **Nicolas Singer**, Head of Unit projects and platforms, summarised the main outcomes of a [study](#) carried out in 2012 on the exchange of experience processes. He explained that no magic recipe exists to make the learning process a success, but that many different factors have an impact on the way projects organise their exchange of experience activities: number of partners, topic addressed and history of the partnership. Yet, certain key elements should always be taken into account (multidimensional learning, quality of the activities, integrated approach).



## 2. Learning process: the projects' practices

Three projects approved under the first call for proposals were invited to present their experience on the way they organise their learning process: HERICOAST, S34Growth, SIE.

**HERICOAST** project approach is divided into 3 steps:

1. Partners focus on identification and analysis of their heritage and territorial situation.
2. The exchange of experience and good practices within heritage management.
3. The development of regional action plans through participatory involvement of stakeholders.

The exchange of experience is done via:

- Development of a methodological framework to assess their heritage and territorial situation
- 5 workshops combined with field visits aimed at facilitating exchange and practical learning on good practice within heritage management
- Organising of workshop in 2 Marinescape Forum Events.
- Regional activities on analysis of heritage, sharing knowledge and production of regional action plans
- Participation in European events to increase dialogue with civil society, academia and policymakers outside the partnership
- Use of the Policy Learning Platform (PLP).

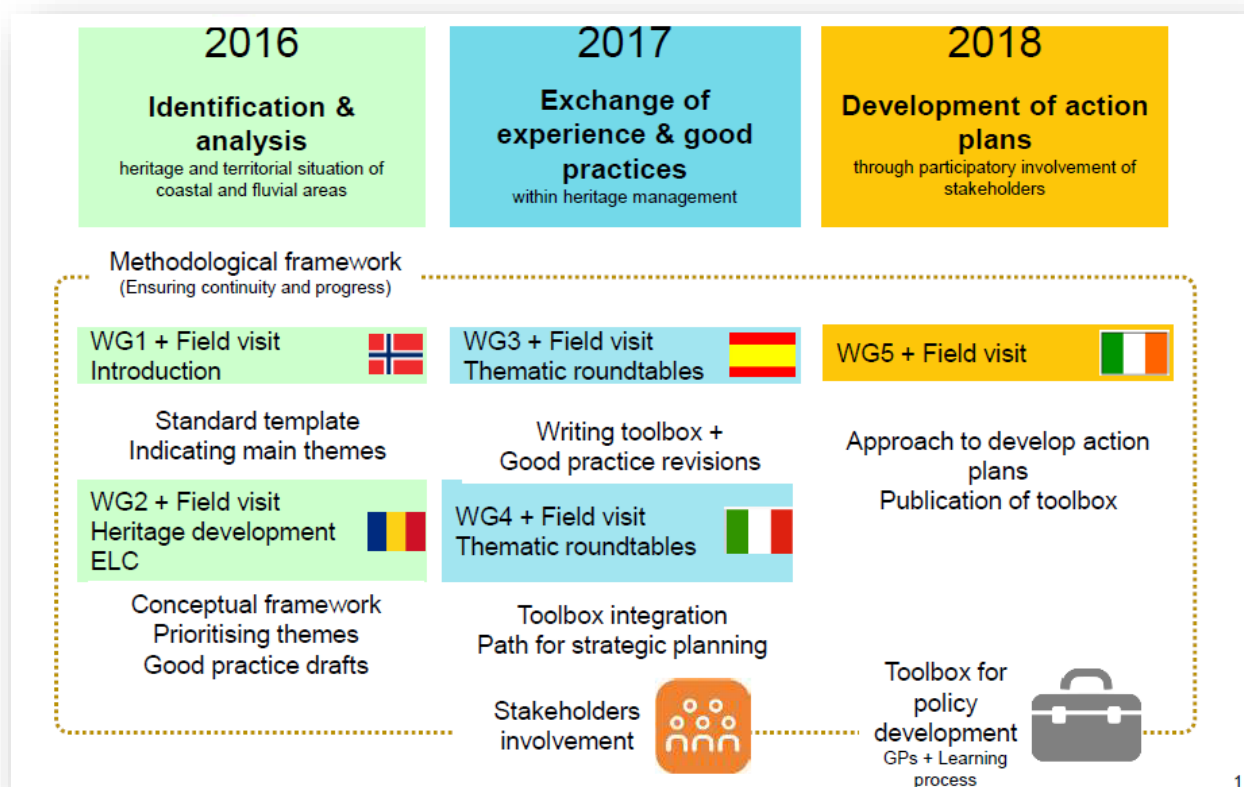
The identified good practices and the practical learning process will both feed into a joint development of a toolbox for policy development. To promote learning amongst regional groups of stakeholders, partners will maintain active dialogue in order to transmit knowledge and experience. Given specific themes, partners can invite key stakeholders to participate in workshops to share their expertise. The sharing of experience with stakeholders is vital in development of regional action plans.

**Linde Egberts**, University of Amsterdam, explained how in HERICOAST the lead partner adopts a facilitating role rather than a leading role in the learning activities to ensure that the other partners actively contribute.





Diagram 1: HERICOAST learning process



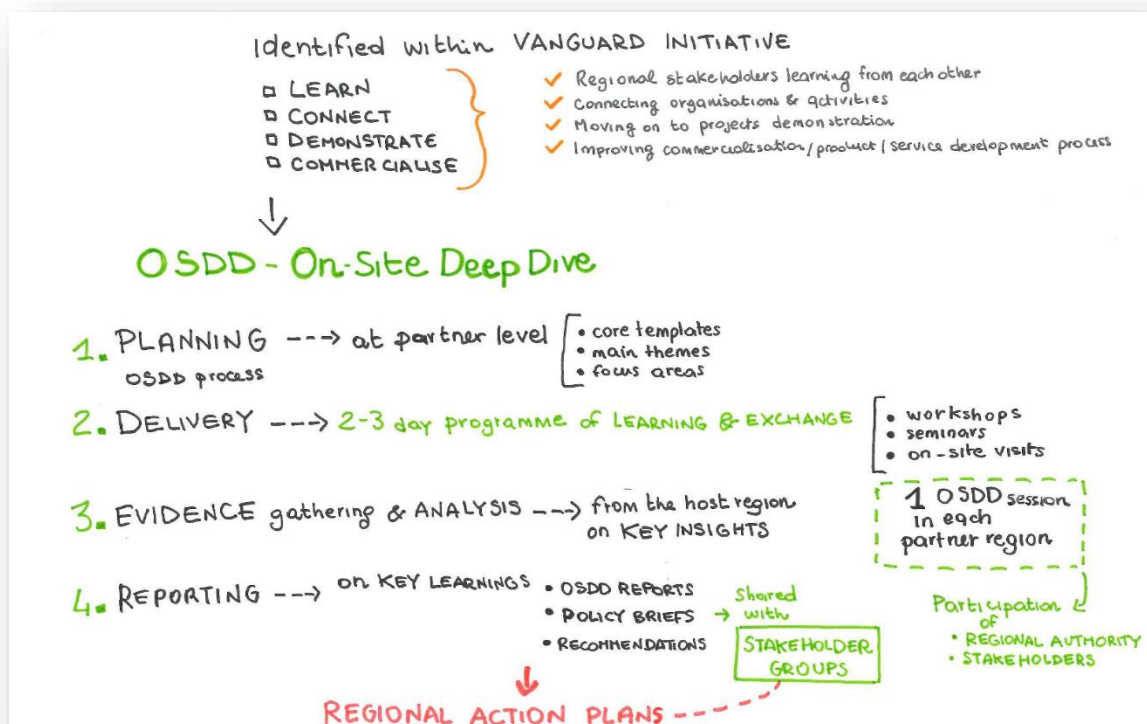
**S34Growth** project builds on the methodology (learn, connect, demonstrate, commercialise) identified within the Vanguard Initiative (VI), which consists of regional stakeholders learning from each other, connecting the organisations and activities, and moving on to demonstration projects with the ultimate goal of improving commercialisation and product and service development processes. In particular, the partners will focus on the 2nd and 3rd stages of the VI based common methodology – connect and demonstrate.

The main activities of interregional learning and exchange of experience will be based on On-Site Deep Dive (OSDD) visits to S34Growth partner regions, where each partner takes the host role once and prepares a 2-3 day programme of learning (e.g. workshops, seminars, on-site visits, roundtable discussions) in accordance with the targeted learning objectives from the other partner regions' policy instruments (in line with intended Action Plans). There will be 10 OSDDs over the lifetime of S34Growth, one in each partner region.

The process underpinning the project has 4 stages:

1. **Planning:** this covers 3 core elements, determining the Phase(s) of the methodology (Connect and /or Demonstrate); planning for the On-site Deep Dive (OSDD); and planning at the partner level in line with focus areas of policy instrument and the anticipated issues for the regional Action Plan.
2. **Delivery:** following the Planning stage, the host region will deliver a 2-3 day programme of a wide range of activities and learning (in accordance with the requests from the partner regions).
3. **Evidence Gathering and Analysis:** this includes tasks and analysis from the host region concerning key insights into the OSDD. For each partner region, an update report will be drafted concerning how the OSDD is supporting the regional policy instrument and predicted importance for the Regional Action Plan.
4. **Reporting:** Each project partner will generate a learning and reflection log for each OSDD in line with policy instrument objectives and feedback from regional stakeholder groups. By the end of Phase 1, this will transform into a Regional Action Plan, ready for Phase 2 delivery.

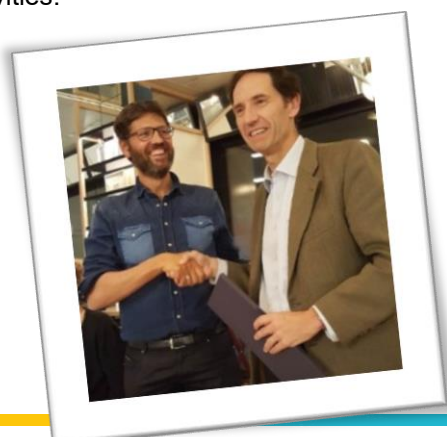
**Diagram 2: S34Growth learning process**



**Esa Kokkonen**, director of the Baltic Institute of Finland showed the *On-Site Deep Dive* approach adopted by S34Growth, a full immersion on the context of each partner with study visits, meeting with the local stakeholders and joint reports.



The “best stakeholder award” is a successful practice to enhance the participation of local organisations to the project’s activities.



### “Best stakeholder award”

Mr. José Ignacio Azumendi  
 Director General, Basque Energy Cluster  
 OSDD Basque Country, 16-18 May 2017

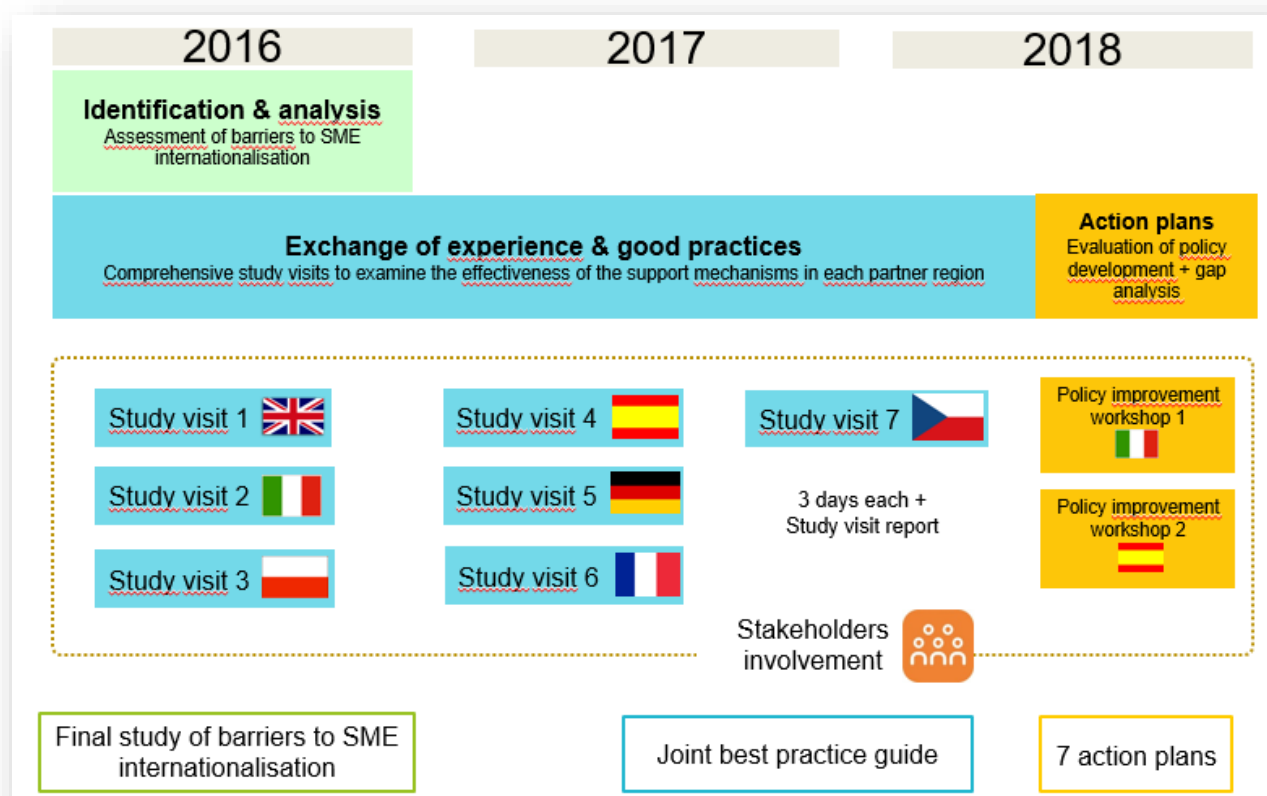


**SIE** project approach follows a logical sequence:

1. Assessment of barriers to SME internationalisation in the partner regions and comparisons to identify common trends and issues
2. Critical examination of the content of existing regional policies
3. Comprehensive study visits to examine the effectiveness of the implementation of policies (support mechanisms) in each partner region
4. Evaluations of policy development & implementation techniques in each region and gap analysis based on study visits
5. Joint best practice guide with case studies from partner regions (based on examples seen during study visits)
6. Development of regional action plans with recommendations for policy improvement including identification of opportunities to apply best practice from partner regions to tackle barriers identified at the outset.

The participation of the local stakeholder groups is essential for the successful implementation of the project. Each project partner recognises the valuable insight that these stakeholders have both in terms of the development and the implementation sides of regional policies. Local stakeholders will form an integral part of hosting study visits in their own partner region to explain how the policies are shaped and operate on the ground. These cross-sector representatives will include business support organisations, SMEs and representatives of MAs. Key members of stakeholder groups will also attend study visits in partner regions to learn from best practice in policy implementation across Europe.

**Diagram 3: SIE learning process**



**Steve Samson**, Kent County Council, incisively gave some suggestions on how to make the learning process successful, deriving from the experience of **SIE** (e.g. ensure regular communication, share good and bad practices, and adapt the project to the partners' needs, simple ideas can be the best).



### 3. Tell us your way: the methodology, the tools, and the people

Organised in groups, participants discussed their methodology for exchanging experience, the activities planned for it and the involvement of the local stakeholder groups.

Starting from the graphic representation of their learning process (annex 1), they focussed on the most promising and the most challenging experience in their project. Peer reviews are one of the most successful tools to exchange, but it is not always easy to organise it due to the high amount of human resources needed from partners. Engaging stakeholder is a challenge for most of the projects. Some promising experiences were highlighted: “Swot of the swot” (in peer groups, partners make a SWOT analysis of the SWOT of each partner’s territory) and “make the story together”.





The last part of the seminar zoomed in the involvement of stakeholders in the project's activities. To do so, a "role play" game was prepared with the following scenario: the first meeting of the local stakeholder group of the FLIP-FLOP project<sup>1</sup>. A JS member played the project main partner while three workshop participants played the role of the stakeholders. Most of the stakeholders present expressed their reluctance to participate in the project, each of them for different reasons (e.g. lack of time, lack of expected benefits). Finally, the Managing Authority who was invited did not even come to the meeting. After the role play, participants were asked to find suitable arguments to the project partner so he can keep the stakeholders engaged in the project.



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<sup>1</sup> To prepare this section of the agenda inspiration was taken from the approved project **School Chance** which aims to explicitly incorporate children' independent mobility into regional policies



**Table 1: Main Outcomes of the role play**

Stakeholders	Difficulty encountered	Possible solutions
The managing authority	Not attending the meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Find convincing arguments to <i>inspire</i> them (showing them a future scenario where they have found solutions to their problems, thanks to the project)</li> <li>▪ Offer them an opportunity to share their good practices</li> <li>▪ Offer for a bilateral meeting in case they do not come to the meeting</li> </ul>
The NGO	Their interest is not fully in line with the focus of the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Find out if other partners in the project sharing practices that can be of interest to the NGO (and let them attend a possible study visit to that partner)</li> <li>▪ Create sub-groups of stakeholders that are particularly interested in specific topics within the project</li> </ul>
The University	Interested, but the person involved has no time and there are budget cuts in the institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Optimise the stakeholder activities by using existing meetings in the region. One point dedicated to the project could then be added to this meeting without the need of setting up additional meetings</li> <li>▪ Be specific on the benefits the university may gain at the end</li> <li>▪ One project partner explained that they were using their own funds as seed-funding for financing the staff costs of their stakeholders</li> </ul>
The Cluster	Doesn't see the interest in participating, unless it is possible to make all the companies of the cluster participate in all project events (and the Cluster being part of the steering committee of the project)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Explain the steering committee is restricted to project partners and would not be of interest to the cluster companies</li> <li>▪ Confirm cluster members are welcome to all stakeholder meetings</li> <li>▪ Ask Cluster to take care of dissemination activities in the region</li> <li>▪ Allow a few companies to take part in relevant interregional events</li> </ul>





## Annex 1 - Most promising and most challenging experience identified by second call projects

