

Activity E.1.1. Capitalisation of previous projects

Contents of the report: The report aims at analysing previous projects (from different programmes). The report reviews these projects and summarises the main learning that the ORIGINN project partners consider of relevance for the instruments

A report authored by:

Partnership of the ORIGINN project

Prešov Self – Governing Region, Slovakia (activity coordinator)

Introduction

In recent times, the disparity between the development of rural and urban areas in the EU has been growing, resulting in an uneven distribution of economic opportunities in these regions. In rural areas, more traditional forms of industry and business prevail, as opposed to urban centers where there is a concentration of high technological advancement and Industry 4.0. This leads to greater economic potential in cities and also a higher rate of job opportunities in urban areas. In light of these facts, it's noticeable that rural inhabitants are leaving their homes and migrating to cities, resulting in depopulation of rural regions. The agri-food sector, key one in rural areas, is the most significant one when addressing this challenge, for it often has a predominant presence in those territories, and – compared to companies in metropolises – those in rural lands tend to be more backwards when considering elements of industrial transition. Aware of this, strategies (including S3) and policies in most EU countries and regions now tackle this domain, including the development of rural areas through industrial transition and innovation, often with an emphasis in the agri-food sector, given its relevance.

ORIGINN addresses a key challenge in rural areas in EU territories: in front of urban areas, industries (especially agri-food, often the predominant one) tend to be more traditional, less innovative, and behind in terms of industrial transition, offering less economic possibilities for these territories, but also social, for they are less able to provide sound employment opportunities. This has led to other externalities in these areas in the last decades: lower economic prospects leading to depopulation and scarce investment to foster the development of these territories, not just economically, but also in terms of sustainable development. ORIGINN tackles policies that aim at providing solutions to the aforementioned challenges. The primary objective is to foster industrial transition policies (focus in agri-food, key in these areas) – in the scope of the regional S3 of the involved territories – based on innovation projects, and the generation of economic and social opportunities.

Project identification

Name: Supporting eco-innovation to reduce food waste and promote a better resource efficient economy

[ECOWASTE 4 FOOD | Interreg Europe](#)

Acronym: Ecowaste4food

Period: 1/2017 – 12/2020

Keywords: waste, food, wastage, innovation, ecology, efficiency

Partners: Catalonia, through the Waste Agency of Catalonia (ARC); France (Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur Region); Britain (Devon County Council), Poland (Wielkopolska Region), Italy (City of Ferrara), Greece (Region of Western Macedonia) and Finland (Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia)

Target topic: The objective is to deal with the recurrent loss of up to 30% of the European agricultural production that is not consumed -not to mention the waste associated with an increasingly unbalanced diet- and also show that food waste can be managed to contribute to an efficient economy respectful with the environment and an adequate use of resources.

Introduction to the project (summary)

The Waste Agency of Catalonia, along with seven other European partners, is involved in the project ECOWASTE4FOOD, which aims to achieve changes in European policies for the reduction and management of food waste. In Catalonia, 262,000 tonnes of food are wasted every year, a figure that corresponds to 7% of households purchasing, restaurants and shops. These 262,000 tonnes represent that each Catalan throws away every year about 35 kilos of food that could be consumed, a figure that equates to throw the food need during 25 days, or feeding more than half a million people. These figures correspond to 6.3% of municipal waste generated in Catalonia. In economic terms, the loss is 112 euros per inhabitant per year. In Catalonia, the figure is 841 million euros annually. Most of this waste (58%) occurs in homes, followed by supermarkets (16%), hotels (12%), retail trade (9%), catering (4%) and local markets (1%)

Main learnings of the project (good practices, reports, etc.) You can include links.

Food waste has reached such a high volume in developed countries that it has become a new resource to be used in the circular economy. This has given rise to a new sector of the economy - the Bioeconomy. The project aims to reduce food waste within the food manufacturing sector, in services such as restaurants and canteens, but also household consumption. The output of the project was local action plans focusing on food waste reduction policies. The project also offers several pilot projects. For example, the need for a course of study at Seinajoki University of Applied Sciences ([Circular economy Curriculum](#)) was identified, a collaboration to reduce waste in meat processing at Atria ([Reducing waste material in a pig slaughterhouse](#)), selling surplus food portions in restaurants through the ResQ app ([ResQ Club](#)), community sharing of surplus food through the Olio app ([Aplikácia Olio](#)), tracking personal consumption through the FrigOK app that tracks the date of food consumption in the home ([FrigOK \(virtual fridge\)](#)) and other interesting practices.

Project identification

Name: **Strengthening regional innovation policies to build sustainable food chains**

Acronym: [Food Chains 4EU](#)

Period: from 1 Jan 2017 to 31 Dec 2021

Keywords:

Partners: Province of Flevoland (NL), Aeres Group Foundation re Aeres UAS (NL), Horizon Flevoland (NL), Euro Perspectives Foundation (BG) University of Food Technologies (BG), Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (IT), Emilia-Romagna Region - Directorate General for Agriculture Hunting and Fisheries (IT), Maramures County Council (RO), Oldham metropolitan Borough Council (UK), The Manchester Metropolitan University (UK)

Target topic: Research and innovation

Introduction to the project (summary)

The growing European population has ever-higher expectations related to food quality and sustainability in terms of processing, packaging, storage, waste reduction, distribution and retail. Innovation plays a key role in meeting these needs and fostering sustainable food chains fit for the future.

The aim of the FoodChains 4 Europe project is to improve the implementation of regional policies that stimulate the delivery of innovation to create sustainable food chains in five participating regions: Flevoland (NL), Plovdiv/Sofia (BG), Emilia-Romagna (IT), Maramures (RO) and Greater Manchester (UK)

These regions all have large food sectors that provide social and economic benefits for their citizens. However, each region recognises that the only way to remain competitive is to improve the sustainability of this sector. This requires innovation in all stages and aspects of the food chain. FoodChains 4 Europe will focus on innovation that contributes to the environmental sustainability of the food chain whilst contributing to social sustainability through increased access to high quality food. The consortium will support food sector businesses to deliver these innovations, both on financial and technological aspects

In order to achieve this, regional authorities and universities will partner in each region and work with other regional stakeholders to share and exchange their expertise in food innovation during a series of peer reviews and interregional learning activities.

Based on this exchange, each region will develop and implement an action plan that enables regional businesses to deliver sustainable innovations in the food chain. The sustainable innovations will be developed with support of the European programmes for Growth and Jobs in the participating regions. Indeed, the regional and national Managing Authorities of the programmes are heavily involved in all activities of this project.

Main learnings of the project (good practices, reports, etc.) You can include links.

During 2017-2019, the project partners and experts from the project regions shared their expertise in food innovation through a series of peer reviews and inter-regional learning activities. Four Inter-regional Workshops have been organized in UK (June 2019), Romania (November 2018), Italy (November 2017) and Bulgaria (May 2017), focusing on innovation and sustainability of the food chains, in order to promote and encourage the access to quality food all around Europe. The food chains' evaluation in the project regions has been carried out through Five Peer Reviews held in Emilia-Romagna (IT) - February 2019, Maramures (RO) - November 2018, Flevoland (NL) - July 2018, Varna (BG) - May 2018 and Greater Manchester (UK) - Jan-Feb 2018. In the 6th semester of the project, based on inter-regional exchange of experiences, peer review recommendations, knowledge gained during the learning workshops and stakeholder activities, each partner has developed an Action Plan that will enable regional businesses to deliver sustainable innovations in the food chain.

Good Practices practices identified within Food Chains 4 Europe project are successful initiatives in innovating the food chains from the project regions which have potential interest to other regions.

Dutch Edamame – soy bean for human consumption - <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/dutch-edamame-soy-bean-for-human-consumption>

Food challenge - Eat like a Pioneer - <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/food-challenge-eat-like-a-pioneer>

Flevofood Association – a regional network association - <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/flevofood-association-a-regional-network-association>

Smarter Green Retailing - <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/smarter-green-retailing>

'Recipe for Success' food business development programme - <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/recipe-for-success-food-business-development-programme>

Harmonisation of analytical methods for monitoring food quality and safety in the food chain - <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/harmonisation-of-analytical-methods-for-monitoring-food-quality-and-safety-in-the-food-chain>

Support the food chain innovation through integrated approach - <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/support-the-food-chain-innovation-through-integrated-approach>.

Project identification

Name: EUropean REgions of GAstronomy building resilience and creating economic growth

Acronym: EUREGA

Period: 1 June 2018 - 31 May 2022

Keywords: *gastronomic uniqueness, standardized, mass produced food, cultural asset, necessary tool to boost sustainable products and services. Regional economic growth*

- Partners: 1. Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2. Province of Noord-Brabant, 3. ProAgria Pohjois-Savo (since 1.1.2020 ProAgria Eastern Finland), 4. PRODECA Catalan Export Agency, 5. Northern and Western Regional Assembly, Ireland, 5. Development Agency of South Aegean Region –READ, 6. Sibiu County Council, 7. Hajdú-Bihar County Government

Target topic: SME competitiveness

Introduction to the project (summary)

Gastronomy, local and regional food heritage is a common European cultural heritage, and as such also a major economic asset. Regional agro-food value chains can have a serious positive impact on local development. They also generate cooperation between various sectors including agriculture, tourism, hospitality, education etc. One way of materializing such cooperation is the growing trend of food related tourism. EUREGA's main objective is to have food, food habits and gastronomy included and recognised in EU, regional and national strategies and policies. These should be seen both as a cultural asset and strong element in regional cultural identity and as a necessary tool to boost sustainable products and services. EUREGA should create stronger and more resilient regions by protecting and stimulating gastronomy as part of their cultural heritage and also by identifying new opportunities for economic development

Main learnings of the project (good practices, reports, etc.) You can include links.

The project managed to set regional gastronomy on EU national and regional level. The Project made a cookbook which included Lessons for building resilience and creating economic growth through gastronomy: A total of 24 case study examples illustrating specific examples of good practices were submitted by the project partners. The following teams were recognized in the good practices Well-being, Education, Heritage / Tradition, SME Support, Sustainability Linking Urban and Rural, The link to these projects are: <https://projects2014-2020.interregeurope.eu/eurega/good-practices/>. – Well-being – illustrate how introducing a health aspect to the development of local gastronomy and tourism can enhance the participating region's efforts. Partners utilize this aspect as a selling point for local products and for attracting visitors. *Policy recommendation: Health counselling* and advice provided by health professionals is an effective way of overcoming food-related health issues, therefore access to these services should not be determined by one's circumstances, but should be provided in a form of a social service in schools and workplaces. *Education* as a means to inform and raise awareness of local food resources, rural production, heritage and health conscious living. The incorporation of food related health education into school curricula would strongly contribute to raising a health-conscious next generation. *Heritage and Tradition* – telling the story behind a region's food or production process – not only to highlight the specialty of the region, but also to make food for visitors more valuable, to promote a particular region through traditional food. As traditional foods and dishes prove to be effective ways of gaining visibility to regions, labelling local products produced by local SMEs more effectively could contribute to promoting a particular region. Local and regional SMEs can be strengthened through making assistance for establishing competitive business models available for SMEs. *Sustainability* within development through gastronomy – supports short supply chains, good quality local production and thereby also on supporting local producers and small businesses, establishing an environmentally friendly and economically resilient model while preserving heritage and traditional ways of production. *Local, regional and national strategies should put local producers into the foreground by regulations favourable to them.* Link urban and rural areas of particular regions through consuming locally produced foods throughout a whole region. Improved cooperation between urban and rural areas is essential.

Project identification

Name: **Development of food industry SME competitiveness for better potentials in growth**

Acronym: **FRIDGE**

Period: **1 Aug 2019 to 31 Jul 2023**

Keywords: **SME competitiveness; food; drink; cooperation; capacity building**

Partners: TCDA Tolna County Development Agency Nonprofit Public Benefit Ltd. (Hungary); Harghita County Council (Romania); niversity of Western Macedonia (Greece); Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia (Finland); Competence Center for Nutrition (Germany); Economic Council of East-Flanders (Belgium)

Target topic: The FRIDGE project seeks to increase food industry SME competitiveness by providing relevant actors with information about productivity, market reach and capacity building.

Introduction to the project (summary)

The FRIDGE project focused on SME competitiveness in European food and drink industries. The food and drink sector is the biggest employer in the EU and the largest sector in manufacturing. 99% of the companies (285,000 businesses) are SMEs, accounting for 62,8% of the total employment in the sector but only 48,1% of the value added and 49,4% of the total turnover (based on FoodDrinkEurope data). Increasing input costs diminish turnover which results in the sector losing its competitive edge in terms of profitability. With a partnership drawn from across the quadruple helix, the objective of the FRIDGE project was to use interregional policy learning, promotion of good practices and leveraging interregional experience exchange to support the food and drink sector to be able to keep its position in the world market through the improvement of public policies.

Main learnings of the project (good practices, reports, etc.) You can include links.

The [FRIDGE Handbook](#) was published in June 2022. It combines the knowledge gathered throughout the thirty-six months of active cooperation between the project partners and compress it into a comprehensive and easy-to-understand form. It is also available in three partner languages ([Dutch](#), [Hungarian](#) and [Romanian](#)). As outlined in the handbook, the partners have gained a better understanding of the state of the Food Industry SMEs in their regions via three (3) thematic studies and two (2) speciality group studies carried out in each region. In addition, nineteen [Good Practices](#) were identified that offer solutions for strengthening and improving the competitiveness of Food Industry SMEs. Good practices include models, networks and platforms for cooperation, targeted investment models, branding, incubators, academies, and sustainable intensification. All six partners created [Regional Action Plans](#) that include new development activities based on the lesson learned from the project and which have or will lead to improved regional policies.

Project identification

Name: Save Rural Retail

Acronym: SARURE

Period: 1 Jun 2018- 30 Nov 2022

Keywords: rural shops, depopulation, SMEs survival, innovation, social cohesion, territorial cohesion

Partners:

Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Services of Teruel
Regional Government of Aragon
Region of Western Macedonia
Regional Council of South Karelia
Municipality of Söderhamn
Municipal District Burgenlandkreis
Sligo County Council
Local Action Group Association "South Warmia"
University of Western Macedonia

Target topic:

SMEs competitiveness

Introduction to the project (summary)

When in a rural depopulated area the last local shop closes, the territory dies. *SARURE* wants to find feasible solutions to make rural shops to survive. Local Shops supply the population and are a social hub, contribute to the quality of local life, encourage the population to stay and are a prerequisite for the development of other diversification activities. Also, SMEs and micro SMEs' weight in terms of employment is very significant in demographically fragile rural areas. However, even if retail shops are a basic service in sparsely populated areas, their existence is not inevitable. Small villages need shops to survive but small rural shops need also a minimum number of customers to survive.

The final aim of the *SARURE* Project is to improve the partner regions policies in force supporting retail SMEs towards survival, innovation and overall competitiveness. Given the fact that today European regions from the diverse latitudes face the issue, Interreg Europe is deemed an excellent area to exchange on successful experiences and policies.

Main learnings of the project (good practices, reports, etc.)

Rural MultiServices in Aragón (Spain), <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/rural-multiservices-in-aragon-spain>

Electronic Commerce Platform for the retail associated in the small town of Binéfar-Spain, <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/electronic-commerce-platform-for-the-retail-associated-in-the-small-town-of-binefar-spain>

Breakfast of South Warmia, <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/breakfast-of-south-warmia>

Web- and social network based distribution channels - Local Food Nodes and REKO, <https://projects2014-2020.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/3115/web-and-social-network-based-distribution-channels-local-food-nodes-and-reko/>

Funding Programme Village Community Shops, <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/funding-programme-village-community-shops>

PAED (Programme for Direct Support for Businesses), <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/paed-programme-for-direct-support-for-businesses>

KaakonKantri – Communicational platform for promoting EARDF funding possibilities, <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/kaakonkantri-communicational-platform-for-promoting-eardf-funding-possibilities>

Commercial Revitalization through Fairs, <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/commercial-revitalization-through-fairs>

Financial program for Rural Development of SME's, <https://projects2014-2020.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/4317/financial-program-for-rural-development-of-sme-s/>

Retail Support Programme - Sligo City, <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/retail-support-programme-sligo-city>

“Hand-Made Saale-Unstrut” – promotion of hand-made regional products from Burgenlandkreis, <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/hand-made-saale-unstrut-promotion-of-hand-made-regional-products-from-burgenlandkreis>

Establishment of direct marketer association for regional products in Burgenlandkreis, <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/establishment-of-direct-marketer-association-for-regional-products-in-burgenlandkreis>

Project identification

Name: STRategies for Regional INnovative Food Clusters

Acronym: STRING

Period: 01.01.2017-30.06.2021

Keywords:

Partners: Province of North Brabant, Southern Agricultural and Horticultural Organisation (ZLTO), Emilia- Romagna Region-Directorate General For Agriculture, Hunting and Fisheries, Research Centre for Animal Production, Municipality of Debrecen, University of Debrecen, Institute for Business Competitiveness of Castilla y Leon, Vitartis, Food Industry Cluster of Castilla and Leon, The Association of Small Medium Sized Enterprises of Covasna County, Aria Alsace (Regional Association for Food Industries in Alsace).

Target topic: Research and innovation

Introduction to the project (summary)

Food industry, perceived as traditional, is in fact a challenging driver for innovation and growth today. STRING unifies regions sharing the ambition to improve the innovation capacity of their food clusters, enabling them to meet the increasingly diversified needs and the growing demand for larger quantities of food. These clusters are often impeded in their development and thus fail to efficiently support the innovation eco-system and hinder the partners' access to new markets. The shared bottlenecks of agro-food innovation eco-systems –often rooted in the malfunctioning of policy instruments– urge partners to work on solutions adaptable to specific regional contexts.

Main learnings of the project (good practices, reports, etc.) You can include links.

[Agri Meets Design \(AGMD\) - Designer approach to redefine or possible solve problems in agrifood](#)

[LIB: stimulate innovation on farm level](#)

[Innovative Food Cluster for the food innovation](#)

[Innovative Generation Training program for supporting the new startups and small business creation](#)

[Food industry roundtable-discussion](#)

[How Derecskei Gyümölcsös \(Derecske Orchard\) contributes to public life?](#)

[High Technology Network: the CRPA LAB research unit](#)

[From Productive Districts to Technological Districts](#)

[Operational groups for innovation in the agri-food sector](#)

[Geographical indication \(GI\) products: competitive advantages](#)

[Circular BioEconomy Regional WG of the Castilla y León Entrepreneurship and Inno. Network \(REDEI\)](#)

[Call for improving company's competitiveness through clusters support](#)

[ICE Rural Competitiveness](#)

[Engage Food – Local development Platforms](#)

[InnovationCamps](#)

[Future Food Innovation \(FFI\)](#)

Project identification

Name: **Improving policies to boost SME competitiveness and extraversion in EU coastal and rural areas where aquaculture is a driver of the regional economy**

Acronym: **EXTRA-SMEs**

Period: **1 Jun 2018 to 31 May 2023**

Keywords: **SME competitiveness; coastal; rural; aquaculture; jobs; value-chain; cooperation; capacity building**

Partners: Region of Peloponnese (EL); Liguria Region (IT); Northern Chamber of Commerce in Szczecin (PL); Bucharest-Ilfov Regional Development Agency (RO); Lapland University of Applied Sciences (FL); University of Patras (EL); Western Development; Commission (IE); Liguria Cluster for Marine Technologies (IT)

Target topic: To achieve expansion of rural and coastal SMEs in wider markets for the promotion of their products, through simpler and improved administrative processes, and innovative technologies.

Introduction to the project (summary)

More than 90% of businesses in EXTRA-SMEs regions are inland and coastal SMEs operating across and around the aquaculture value chain, contributing to growth and creation of jobs. Along the chain, these economic operators are characterised by systematic weaknesses in reaching international markets and exporting their products. The project is focused on aquaculture SMEs and regional value chains with the aim of boosting innovation in production systems, supply channels and administrative processes. EXTRASMEs vision was to set the conditions for better access of EU aquaculture products to new and international markets. To this end, EXTRA-SMEs supported public authorities to join forces and exchange experiences in a) administrative simplification, b) expansion in new markets, c) innovative value-added product solutions, d) personnel up skilling, and e) resolution of stakeholders' conflicts of interests.

Main learnings of the project (good practices, reports, etc.) You can include links.

During this 5-year project, the EXTRA-SMEs partners carried out [a range of activities](#) including: Comparative research on regulatory frameworks of aquaculture operations; Market, products and processes research; Identifying Good Practices, and: Mapping of drivers and obstacles to international commerce. A [Good Practice Guide](#) was developed and 13 [Good Practices](#) were included on the project website, 3 of which were approved for the Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform. Thirteen [Policy Briefs](#) were also developed. Through interregional collaboration, EXTRA-SMEs developed an EU-wide repository of stakeholders to increase coordination capacities and Regional [Action Plans](#) which include interventions and measures for the uptake of project results in the partner regions. This helped to create added value for stakeholders along the aquaculture value chain resulting from: Increasing aquaculture policy & management capacity through measures affecting supply and demand; Increasing local/regional socio-environmental sustainability; Greater market potential and optimized distribution networks as a result of implementing state of the art infrastructure supporting inputs & services, production, transport & processing and marketing.

Project identification

Name: Innovation-driven agri-food sectors for a European industrial renaissance

Acronym: Agri Renaissance

Period: 1 June 2018 – 31 May 2022

Keywords: **agri-food sector**, policy and funding instruments.

Partners: 5 regions

La Rioja Spain, Calabria Italy, Mazovia Poland, Centro Region Portugal, Lithuania.

1. Government of La Rioja, 2. Association for Research, Development and Innovation of the Agri-Food sector (CTIC-CITA), 3. National Paying Agency under the Ministry of Agriculture, the Republic of Lithuania, 4. Mazovia Development Agency Plc, 5. Mazowieckie Voivodeship/Office of the Marshal of the Mazowieckie Voivodeship in Warsaw, 6. Calabria Region, 7. ANIMAFORUM- Association for the Development of Agro-industry

Target topic:

Research and innovation,

Introduction to the project (summary)

The **agri-food sector** has great potential to contribute to regional economic growth and the industrial renaissance of the EU. However, its complexity, the limited innovation and the fragmentation of the R&I resources call for a tailored combination of **policy and funding instruments**. Interregional cooperation based on RIS3 can enable the creation of value chains throughout the EU as well as the generation of synergies in the regions so as to prevent duplication in investment. The **overall objective** of AgriRenaissance is to improve regional development policies and programmes under the Investment for Growth and Jobs goal in order to increase R&I resources and capacities of the agri-food sector, stimulate collaboration and foster its hybridization.

Main learnings of the project (good practices, reports, etc.) You can include links.

Link to the good practices: <https://projects2014-2020.interregeurope.eu/agrirenaissance/good-practices/>

New investments funds and support to R&D is important to help the agri -food sector to develop and be sustainable. To be active in international networks and learn from each other. The funding instruments can be more effective as shown in many of the good examples from the project. The results are presented in a YouTube movie via this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wly57k1xOrw>

Project identification

Name: REGIONAL Strategies 4 FOOD 4.0 Revolution

<https://projects2014-2020.interregeurope.eu/regions4food/>

Acronym: regions4food

Period: 1june 2018 – 31may 2023

Keywords Data, key asset, food industry, new economic technologies

- **Partners:** 7 regions - Andalusia government, Pays De Loire, Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences, ART-ER Stock Joint Consortium (until 30/04/2019 ASTER Stock Joint Consortium), South Transdanubia Regional Innovation Agency, Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Province Limburg, Pazardzhik Regional Administration

Target topic: Data has become a key asset for the food industry which is leading to innovations in technology and the development of new tools and skills. However, the large volume and diverse nature of food value chains data and actors call for specific integration and management procedures to make the most of new economic opportunities based on

Introduction to the project (summary)

7 action plans to **improve policy instruments** selected by project partners according to their relevance in terms of better exploiting ICT's potential and deliver innovation to food industry and hence, smart progress and growth.

- **Support capacity-building** at all levels, that is, staff, organizational and regional but also beyond the partnership considering most project partners are members of the S3P Agri-food on Traceability and Big Data.
- **Reinforcing cooperation between research and business** sectors and therefore, to improve the economic exploitation of R&D results.
- **Delivering strategic guidelines** for new programming period.

Main learnings of the project (good practices, reports, etc.) You can include links.

According to EU strategy the 7 regions joined forces to learn and to set strategic policy recommendation to inspire their own regional politicians' and other European regions to inspire designs of policies and actions for digitalisation of the agri-food sector. The partners worked by using exchange of experience approach and learned from each other. 2 methodologies were developed. The first was a guide for identification of barriers, needs, relations capital and good practices related to agri-food. The other a guide to create data and technologies catalogue in the agri-food sector. 29 good practices were published, 13 were recognized by the Interreg policy learning platform. The project gives the following policy recommendations: 1- Create a legal framework for data availability, management, analysis and sharing. 2 – Create innovation ecosystems around Europe, promote cluster coordinate existing ones and promote co-design. 3 – Increase of public and private investments. 4-Promote ICT- technology bot soft and hardware in the agri-food sector by ICT companies and enhance digital infrastructure across Europe. 5- Develop multidisciplinary research, training and create new professional profiles on innovation. 6- Increase communication and awareness in the agri-food sector. Check the following link were the result are presented in more detail.

https://projects2014-2020.interregeurope.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/tx_tevprojects/library/file_1640007363.pdf

Project identification

Name: Enhancing SME competitiveness and sustainability in the organic sector

Acronym: SME-ORGANICS

Period: 01.04.2016 – 31.03.2021

Keywords: SME, competitiveness, regional policy, organic farming

Partners: Department of Rural Development, Environment and Local Administration of the Government of Navarra (ES), Association Interprofessionnelle BIO regionale (FR), Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari (IT), Puglia Region Managing Authority (IT), North-West Regional Development Agency (RO), Lodzkie Marshall's Office (PL), Seinäjoki University (FIN), Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (CH), IFOAM EU (BG), Union the Chambers of Commerce (IT), Institute for Agri-Food Technology and Infrastructure of Navarra (ES)

Target topic: SME competitiveness

Introduction to the project (summary)

The project aims at supporting SMEs in improving their performance in order to enforce the growth capacity of the entire organic regional sector in regional, national and international markets. The interregional learning process will take place around four areas:

- i) production and processing;
- ii) commercialization and marketing;
- iii) training and advice;
- iv) organic value chain efficiency and governance.

Main learnings of the project (good practices, reports, etc.) You can include links.

Lessons Learnt: through different regions Organic Farming is viable, importance of establishing alliances to be stronger, consumer reasons to prefer or avoid organic products, excellent examples of cooperation between consumers to fill the shopping basket with organic food in direct relationship with the producers, importance of training and advice in all levels of the organic value chain, interest of young entrepreneurs in the organic sector, also linked to rural development of some areas, importance of the involvement of Administrations in the promotion of organic products with instruments such as Public Procurement, Organic fairs etc, the threat of the arrival of non-EU organic products at too low prices and limitations such the high bureaucratization in the EU, importance of innovating in the promotion of products through marketing, social networks and new technologies, role of interprofessional associations, importance of consumers trust (certification, labelling), bio diversity of Organic SMEs and of multitude possibilities to enhance competitiveness for each case.

Project good practices available <https://projects2014-2020.interregeurope.eu/smeorganics/good-practices/>. The Organic Action Plan from each partner, the Policy Briefs from each partner, Media Appearances of each semester, Newsletters of the project, Information and presentations of each field visit (eight in total), SME-Organics Press Kit and Kick off Meeting and the Presentations of Kick off available <https://projects2014-2020.interregeurope.eu/smeorganics/library/>

Project identification

Name: **Regional policies for innovation driven competitiveness and growth of rural SME-s**

Acronym: **INNOGROW**

Period: **01.04.2016 – 31.03.2021**

Keywords: **SME, competitiveness, regional policy**

Partners: Region of Thessaly (GR), Lombardy Foundation for the Environment (IT), Zemgale planning region (LV), The University of Newcastle upon Tyne (UK), Stara Zagora Regional Economic Development Agency (BU), Regional Development Agency of the Pardubice Region (CZ), Chamber of Commerce of Molise (IT), Regional Development Agency of Gorenjska (SL), Pannon Novum West Transdanubian Regional Innovation Non Profit (HU)

Target topic: SME competitiveness

Introduction to the project (summary)

Rural economy SMEs face challenges in adopting innovation to increase their competitiveness. Regional policies need to correspondingly support the diffusion of innovative solutions and new business models that will lead to increases in productivity and access to new markets. INNOGROW regions are called to play an important role in supporting the modernisation of their existing rural SMEs and the proliferation of innovative start-ups. INNOGROW brings together 9 partners from 8 countries, involving the managing authorities & regional bodies influencing regional and national policy instruments, to exchange experiences & practices, and to improve their capacity on implementing policies that promote the adoption of technology and business model innovations by rural economy SMEs, to boost their competitiveness.

Main learnings of the project (good practices, reports, etc.) You can include links.

“Good Practice Guide on new business models” aim is to inform policy makers about the existing and potential benefits of new business models for rural SMEs, and to promote the improvement of own policy instruments’ implementation. - https://projects2014-2020.interregeurope.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/tx_tevprojects/library/file_1567498329.pdf The Domus Area is like a hub of Innovation for the rural area where it is located. As a hub it is a complex of different activities focusing on Health, Wellness, Medicine, Hospitality, Agro Tourism and Novel crops Official Plants. <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/domus-area> “Jobs” main objective is to facilitate access to finance for micro and small enterprises, farmers, self-employed persons, craftsmen and others who develop or start a business on the territory of the country and reduce their "exclusivity" from the financial services market. <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/the-microfinance-institution-jobs>. Policy recommendation report includes 25 recommendations, proposing a mix of regulatory, financial, and educational measures that can accelerate rural SMEs’ innovation capacity and competitiveness. https://projects2014-2020.interregeurope.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/tx_tevprojects/library/file_1567498542.pdf

Project identification

Name: RuralGrowth - increasing competitiveness of SMEs in the rural visitor economy sector

Acronym: RuralGrowth (RG)

Period: from 1 Apr 2016 to 30 Sep 2020

Keywords: rural businesses, visitor economy

Partners: Hungary (lead partner), Netherlands, Finland, Italy, Spain, Romania and the Great Britain

Target topic: SME-s competitiveness in tourism sector

Introduction to the project (summary)

RG aims at improving policies related to SME development through fostering the uptake of green innovative solutions. It stimulates SME innovation support schemes and provides efficient capacity development for the private players of rural visitor economies. The outputs are linked to the development of SME innovation support schemes (new product development, branding and education programmes). Beneficiaries are the visitor economy related SME's.

Main learnings of the project (good practices, reports, etc.) You can include links.

[Visit Savonlinna](#) (Finland) as public service to local companies and business associated to promote their services.

[The Renaissance Week](#) (Spain) as a historical festival. This practice has a high potential of transferability because it is based on local resources, bottom up approach and always unique personality of the event.

[A weekly activities program](#) (Finland) was compiled to offer visitors and locals interesting activities in Savonlinna. The aim of the program was to attract visitors and lengthen their stay as well as the tourism season.

In addition, several good practices for promoting tourism business during and after the pandemic

Project identification

Name: Investing in Renewable Energies for Agriculture

Acronym: AgroREs

Period: 1 Aug 2019 to 31 Jul 2023

Keywords: low-carbon economy; renewable energy; agriculture; rural; cooperation; capacity building

Partners: Extremadura Energy Agency, AGENEX (Spain); Lubelskie Voivodeship (Poland); Devon County Council (UK); Regional Council of North Karelia (Finland); Bucharest-Ilfov Regional Development Agency (Romania); ARSIAL (Italy); Institute of Technology, Sligo (Ireland); Northern and Western Regional Assembly (Ireland).

Target topic: The main objective was to develop measures that encourage the production and use of Renewable Energy in the agricultural and rural sector. AgroREs aimed to support this sector by solving its energy needs in a sustainable, economic viable and socially responsible way.

Introduction to the project (summary)

The AgroRES project sought to raise awareness of the benefits of investing in renewable energy in agriculture, such as gaining independence from external energy supplies and contributing to more sustainable energy production. In addition to identifying opportunities in the sector, the project promoted public dialogue in order to overcome previously identified barriers and challenges. As a result of the project, the partner regions have designed action plans that support the integration of Renewable Energy technologies that are best suited for each agricultural and rural area.

Main learnings of the project (good practices, reports, etc.) You can include links.

The AgroRES partners identified [70 good practices](#) (22 included on the project website and 14 approved for the Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform) and published a [good practices guide](#) for disseminating good practices to wider audience interested in advancing renewable energy. Project Good Practices are based on multiple renewable energy sources including solar, wind, wood, biomass, effluents and feed waste (for biogas) and combined sources. Other Good Practices relate to cooperative approaches and schemes for renewable energy production and use. The partners have compiled [7 regional self-assessment documents](#) on the potential of renewable energy in their region and each region has produced an [Action Plan](#) to support renewable energy in agricultural and rural areas in their region. The Help Desk foreseen in the [Action Plan of ARSIAL](#) is now active. This Help Desk will support communities in rural areas in the establishment of CERs (renewable energy communities) by providing a technical, financial and administrative assistance service.

Project identification

Name: Enhancing the Entrepreneurship of SMEs in Circular Economy of the Agri-Food Chain

Acronym: SinCE-AFC

Period: 4th call – 2014-2020

Keywords: agrifood, circular economy, green economy.

Partners: ANATOLIKI organisation for local development (EL), Regional Development Fund – Central Macedonia, City of Bologna, Hadju-Bihar County (HU), Donegal County (IE), Marshall Office of Wielkopolska (PL), South Muntenia Regional Development Agency (RO), Devnya Municipality (BG).

Target topic: Fostering the competitiveness of SMEs in the agrifood sector by preventing fraud in the sector, enhancing the quality standards, and fostering authenticity as a key added-value.

Introduction to the project (summary)

Circular economy is a new approach of economic development models. It provides the potential to use one's waste as resource input to others productive chain thus offering a longer life cycle of the products and a more environmentally friendly business approach. This regenerative system is of high priority in the EU. SinCE-AFC is being developed along with the on-going EU action plan for Circular Economy and the respective National Circular Economy Action Plans across the EU countries. Although the principles of circular economy are already applied by many large industries, SMEs, which represent the 99% of the businesses sector, still remain uninvolved due to lack of motivation and support. Thus, the regional SMEs policies improvement towards a more regenerative economy is of high importance. SinCE-AFC aims at involving SMEs of the Agri-Food chain in circular economy through the promotion of the appropriate managing and financial horizontal mechanisms. All the Agri-Food agents committed to production, processing, packaging, distribution and final consumption are expected to operate in a coordinated way to better adapt to circular economy. This objective will be achieved via the intense collaboration and interregional exchange of experience of 9 partners representing 7 Regions from 7 EU countries. The partnership's tasks will focus on the investigation of efficient practices, via interregional thematic learning events, study visits, import workshops, stakeholders' meetings and consultation processes, of how the relevant policy instruments can be improved in order to assist SMEs to enter circular economy. The core results will be depicted in a joint study reflecting the related regulatory framework and good practices at regional and EU level.

The project will promote innovation, derive knowledge and develop close collaboration with the Interreg Europe Learning Platform as well as with the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform and the RIS3 Platform Group.

Main learnings of the project (good practices, reports, etc.) You can include links.

It is possible to watch the videos of some online visits that have some connection with innovation; they can be found here:

<https://projects2014-2020.interregeurope.eu/since-afc/library/>

Additionally, some good practices are interesting, especially for the semester devoted to green innovation; some examples – specific actions/companies:

- <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/slamka-ecological-wheat-straws-made-with-love-for-the-nature>
- <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/dairy-producing-factory-utilizing-the-total-volume-of-by-product-of-cheese-production>
- <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/using-agricultural-by-products-for-energy-production>
- <https://projects2014-2020.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/5823/development-and-market-introduction-of-poultry-organic-fertilizer-pellet-production-technology/>
- <https://projects2014-2020.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/5374/renewable-energy-on-farm/>
-

Project identification

Name: Quality standards and authenticity to foster competitiveness of agrifood SMEs

Acronym: QUALIFY

Period: 4th call – 2014-2020

Keywords: agrifood, quality, authenticity, fraud prevention.

Partners: ANATOLIKI organisation for local development (EL), Regional Development Fund – Central Macedonia, City of Bologna, Hadju-Bihar County (HU), Donegal County (IE), Marshall Office of Wielkopolska (PL), South Muntenia Regional Development Agency (RO), Devnya Municipality (BG).

Target topic: Fostering the competitiveness of SMEs in the agrifood sector by preventing fraud in the sector, enhancing the quality standards, and fostering authenticity as a key added-value.

Introduction to the project (summary)

QUALIFY has been designed to foster the competitiveness of the SMEs in the agrifood sector by tackling a challenge that affects the involved regions and the whole EU (as stated by the European Commission): The improvement of the quality processes of these SMEs.; The fight against the fraud in the sector; The promotion of the authenticity in their products; Overcoming the barriers related to these challenges is to foster the reduction of costs, better chain values, better processes, and better products that will allow the tackled SMEs to grow and be more competitive in the national and international markets, where they need to enlarge their presence in front of larger companies, which are much less challenged by the presented topics. To work in this direction, the project tackles the ERDF funds devoted to increase SMEs competitiveness in 7 EU regions/states which are representative of the EU geographical dimension and which incorporate agrifood and SMEs as core aspects of their respective RIS3. The project aims at ensuring that when the projects funded under these schemes tackle agrifood SMEs they introduce aspects of quality, fraud prevention, and authenticity, which must complement the existing financial and non-financial instruments, enlarging the desired outcome: the growth of these SMEs.

Main learnings of the project (good practices, reports, etc.) You can include links.

While the topic covered by QUALIFY is different than the one addressed by ORIGINN, given that they tackle the same sector, they have some good practices that relate to innovation and which can be interesting to consider (those linked to science and technology innovation):

- <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/my-haccp-tool>
- <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/fooddocs-ai-helps-to-know-and-to-follow-food-safety-rules-easily>
- <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/agrolabs-agrofood-innovation-clusters>
- <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/agroinnoeco>

Project identification

Name: **Policies to develop entrepreneurship and innovative SMEs in rural areas (Rural SMEs)** [Rural SMEs](#) | [Interreg Europe](#)

Acronym: Rural SMEs

Period: 1/2017 – 6/2021

Keywords: rural, SMEs, innovation, agriculture, policy instruments,

Partners: Burgos region – Spain, Tipperary– Ireland, Gorenjska Region – Slovenia, Western Greece, Central Transdanubia Region - Hungary, North West Romania, Ave region - Portugal

Target topic: Overview of policy instruments that are applicable within the EU to support SMEs in rural areas. Improve policies of regional support systems for entrepreneurs through exchange of experiences and identification of good practices

Introduction to the project (summary)

SMEs are the driving force of the European economy and are at the forefront of most of the EU's objectives. But there is a big difference between urban and rural SMEs. But this gap should be seen as a challenge for new opportunities and markets, such as in the areas of energy, environment, green industry, social innovation Rural SMEs represent a great potential for economic growth and innovation. Only 17% of European structural funds are dedicated to supporting SMEs in rural areas (as opposed to 82% in general), just as rural areas struggle with unfavourable demographic trends or lower levels of digital infrastructure. Despite these differences, supporting the development of SMEs in rural areas makes sense in terms of job creation and population stabilisation.

Main learnings of the project (good practices, reports, etc.) You can include links.

The aim of the project was to develop, through a mutual learning process between the project partners, an action plan that will serve to revise the Strategic Plan of the Province of Burgos 2015-2020 in relation to SMEs. The action plan includes the following three actions: 1. Identifying sectoral entrepreneurship opportunities for setting up new companies in rural areas, 2. Promoting the establishment of social economy enterprises in rural areas, 3. Developing a professional network of rural artisans in the province of Burgos. In addition, each measure contains a set of actions to contribute to the achievement of the objective. In the initial phase, it is important to prepare study materials, to gauge interest in entrepreneurial activities and to promote training and mentoring. Training on the social economy will be provided. Resources to support the financing of start-up entrepreneurs will be defined. The last measure is aimed at supporting local artisans, creating a plan of activities to resist them, monitoring their needs, supporting training and marketing activities, fairs and building a network of buyers.