

# SMEOrigin

## Newsletter

Issue 3 / August 2024



Dear reader,

Welcome to the third edition of the newsletter series of the [SMEOrigin project](#), which aims to make a difference in one of the most special industries in the European Union and worldwide – the food industry.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> semester of the project **marked a milestone** – the successful completion of Step 1: Identification and Analysis and the launch of Step 2: Policy improvement and transfer. In other words, **the exchange of experience process is as intensive as it could be** and it is now time to **transfer [good practices](#), fostering policy improvements and boosting food SME competitiveness.**

In this newsletter you will find helpful information and a lot of inspiration about **Innovation and Digitalization in the food sector**. You will also see colorful photos of world-known **festivals boosting regional economy**. Links to useful documents prepared by the Consortium are also available, including our [Strategic Toolkit](#) and [Project Presentation](#) with results and latest achievements.

Feel free to contact us if you need to learn more or them or to share your ideas and proposals with the partnership!

**The SMEOrigin project team**

***SMEOrigin aims to improve  
regional development policies  
to increase the  
competitiveness of food  
SMEs specialized in  
geographical indication.***



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## Third interregional meeting – Stara Zagora, Bulgaria



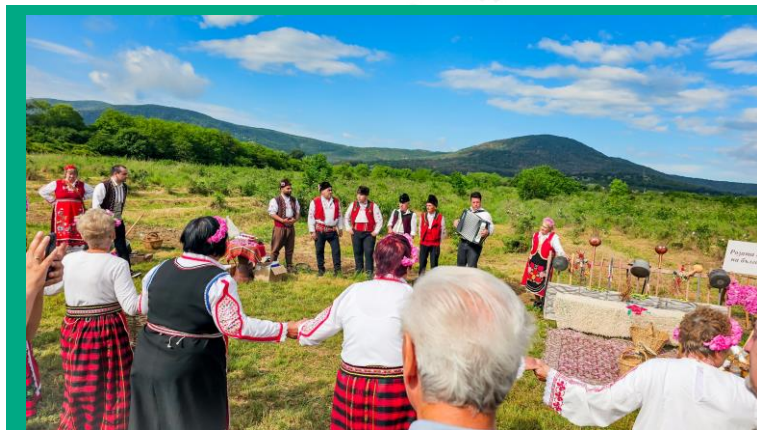
The **third interregional meeting** of the SMEOrigin project took place in the region of **Stara Zagora, Bulgaria, on 29 – 30 May 2024**. It focused on innovation and digitalization of food production, as well as authentic and cultural ways to boost food SMEs.

The event brought together more than 30 partners from across Europe and local stakeholders. What impressed guests the most were the **innovative research activities on functional foods** and **precision farming** (dairy products and aquaponics) and the [colorful traditions related to rose and rose oil production](#).

Partners made study visits to the **Center for Aquaponics** in the Trakia University, witnessing [sustainable, low-waste, scientific-based production of fish and crops at one facility](#).

Earlier, they were challenged in a sensory evaluation experiment with a new product based on Bulgarian yogurt and aloe vera.

Check the full information about the event on the [SMEOrigin website](#).



### The thing that **stole the show**

The colorful Ritual Rose Harvesting, an event within the framework of the world-famous Festival of Rose in the town of Kazanlak. Partners witnessed the labor-intensive process of rose harvesting, a practice that is still entirely manual.



# POLICY IMPROVEMENT

## Strategic Toolkit

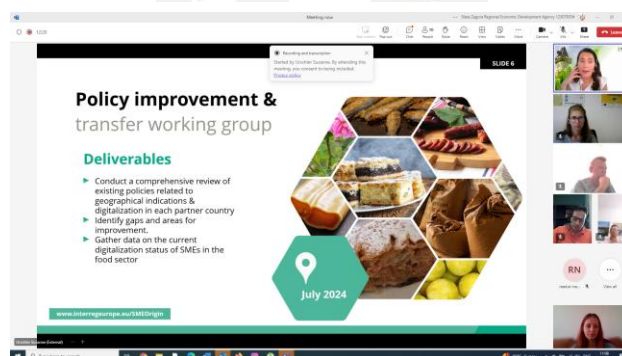
The 3<sup>RD</sup> Interregional partnership meeting marked the transition to the active phase of the project – **Policy Improvement and transfer**. It was launched by presenting the Strategic Toolkit – a cornerstone document produced in semesters 1-3 to serve as a compass for future developments. The Toolkit was presented by Dr. Konstantinos Antonopoulos from the University of Patras.

The Strategic Toolkit focuses on all major topics Food SMEs are encountering – like regulations, market analysis, marketing and PR, quality control, financial resources, etc. It contains 11 chapters with analysis, state of play and recommendations.

Download the full [STRATEGIC TOOLKIT](#).



## Policy Improvement and Transfer Working Group



The Policy Improvement and Transfer Working Group was formed during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Interregional event, where it held its first workshop in the opportunities for Good Practice transfer. The core group consists of one expert of each project partner and also stakeholders and external experts.

Its first official meeting was organized as a workshop in Stara Zagora, Bulgaria. All participants in the Interregional conference were divided into groups of 3-4 people, each including one member of the working group. They were asked to work on one or two topics from the Strategic Toolkit and determine the practices with the highest potential and highest need for transfer.

The group held another meeting in July 2024 to elaborate further on the methodology for Good Practice transfer.

## NEW INITIATIVE

### Styrian Food Masterclass 2024



The Styrian Food Masterclass 2024 was launched in May 2024 to support regional foods and SMEs in the region of Styria, Austria. The program was developed by SMEOrigin Lead Partner - [SFG](#).

This Masterclass is a transformative journey that guides 15 SMEs and Start-ups from the inception of an idea to the creation of a market-ready food product prototype. Over the course of six intensive months, these start-ups and established businesses delve into the intricacies of product development, guided by experts who share not only their technical expertise but also their passion for food innovation.

Learn more about it on the SMEOrigin website: [Styrian Food Masterclass](#)

*A Joint Paper on Good Practices will be published soon.*

*Follow the SMEOrigin website:*

<https://www.interregeurope.eu/smeorigin/>

# JOIN THE COMMUNITY

## Platform for exchange of experience

**Platform for exchange of experience aiming at helping SMEs in the food sector** was developed and launched by SMEOrigin project partners in Sem 2. The platform is bringing together European companies, state agencies, NGOs, professional associations, educational institutions and individual experts working in the sector. The main goal of the platform is to facilitate the exchange of experience and feedback (both good practices but also bad practices) between all involved in the sector and contribute both to solving individual and local challenges and developing a better environment for the SMEs across Europe.

### How it works:

1. Stakeholders are invited to fill a template with their BIO, specialization and interests.
2. The information is fed to a database, open to the participants so that they can easily browse and find new contacts of interest. This database will also serve for matchmaking with potential partners and markets in the future.
3. Stakeholders are also invited to participate in the Google group [SMEOrigin - Networking and cooperation](#) and actively exchange experience real-time with other stakeholders
4. A [LinkedIn group](#) is created to serve those active users of LinkedIn who prefer use the network.

### Benefits of joining:

- **Get access to** tens of colleagues, fellow companies, potential partners and administration officials from all parts of Europe and **find helpful know-how and new connections**
- Find **new partners and new markets**
- **Find solutions for your challenges** – someone on the other side of Europe may already have them.
- **Suggest and participate in developing new policies and initiatives for increasing SME competitiveness**

### Start networking now:

- [Fill in the form](#) and share your details, field of work and interests. You will be automatically added to the database of contacts
- [Check the database](#) for relevant contacts, potential partners or clients you want to get in touch
- [Join the Google Group](#) to ask a question or share a proposal with the whole community. If you use LinkedIn, you can join the [LinkedIn group](#) as well
- Or **write directly** to the ones you wish to connect to.

**Participation in the platform is entirely voluntarily and free of any charge. You are free to invite other professionals that may be interested in joining the community.**



*Join the community by  
scanning the QR code*



# WORK AT REGIONAL LEVEL

## Stakeholder meetings, communication and third-party events

During the third semester, project partners continued to work actively in their regions by holding stakeholder meetings, communication campaigns and participation in third-party events aimed at boosting SME competitiveness. If you are willing to join these events and take part in the policy improvement process, contact your local partner (contacts on the last page of this newsletter).

INTERBIO Nouvelle-Aquitaine continues its actions to promote LOCAL & ORGANIC offer to retailers and details in Nouvelle-Aquitaine. For the occasion, a set of POS \* (point-of-sale marketing) dedicated to “PLEASURE AND LOCAL” was developed. The objective is to enable strong identification and additional on-shelf visibility for local and organic products. Shelf stoppers (two possible formats: supermarkets and organic stores), strips, and also gondola head banners are available on request to any member wishing to place them on the shelves.

*(\*) a form of in-store promotion or marketing campaign that takes place at the point a transaction occurs, in order to increase the number of purchases.*



Savonlinna Development Services organized their stakeholder meeting in June on a lake cruise ship in Saimaa. D.O. Saimaa project presented the local SMEs about D.O.Saimaa label and its benefits and how to apply. They also told more about the Saimaa Academy of Gastronomy and how to get involved. Case examples of local entrepreneurs were presented. An informative presentation about the South Savo Food cluster also took place. Local stakeholders including food SME's and experts were invited and they also got a chance for networking in the beautiful settings on a lake cruise. The meeting was also joined by another food-related project “Saimaa lautasella” (Saimaa on your plate) related to European Region of Gastronomy.



# FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES

## 4<sup>th</sup> Interregional Meeting, Savonlinna, Finland

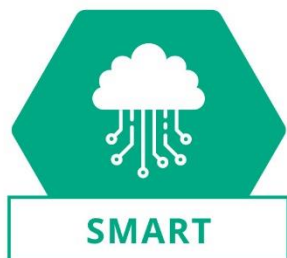


The fourth interregional meeting will take place in the region of Lake Saimaa, Finland in early September 2024.

Follow the SMEOrigin website for the latest news and developments from it!

<https://www.interregeurope.eu/smeorigin>





## GET INVOLVED:

<https://www.interregeurope.eu/smeorigin>

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/SMEOrigin>

**Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/smeorigin/>

**LinkedIn:** <https://www.linkedin.com/company/smeorigin/>

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/SMEOrigin>

## PROJECT PARTNERS:

[Steirische Wirtschaftsförderungsges.m.b.H. \(AT\)](#)

[Stara Zagora Regional Economic Development Agency \(BG\)](#)

[Opolskie Centre for Economy Development/ Opolskie Voivodeship \(PL\)](#)

[Savonlinna Development Services \(FI\)](#)

[University of Patras \(EL\)](#)

[Municipality of Calasparra \(ES\)](#)

[INTERBIO Aquitaine/ Limousin/ Poitou-Charentes \(FR\)](#)