



Javna ustanova Regionalna
RAZVOJNA AGENCIJA
KARLOVAČKE ŽUPANIJE

PEER Review - Final Report, Karlovac, 12th-13th February 2020.



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1. Background to the peer review

The Regional development Agency formally applied to the Interreg Europe Peer to peer call in June 2019 taking into account its role and the necessity on the regional and local level to support the business climate and competitiveness of the SMEs through entrepreneurial support institutions.

The Public Institution Regional Development Agency of the County of Karlovac (JURRA KŽ) has as main objective the facilitation of the coordination and promotion of regional development at the local (regional) government. The Karlovac County Development Agency is the certified Regional Coordinator by the Ministry of regional development and European Funds (MRRFEU), assists and provides project preparation with guidance and in accordance with the strategy priorities; prepares and organizes activities and education for strengthening human resources. JURRA KŽ offers technical and expert assistance to the shareholders (county, towns, municipalities and regional and local public institutions and organizations). The Agency with its activities encourages joint development projects with units of local and regional governments and through interregional and cross-border cooperation.

JURRA KŽ together with the County of Karlovac, Technical school in Karlovac and Rijeka applied during 2019 a project for the establishment of regional centers of competence in vocational education with the main aim of strengthening entrepreneurial potential and enhancing the culture of entrepreneurship from young ages and to strengthen stronger relationships between the private sector, higher education institutions and public research organizations and somehow act as entrepreneurial incubator. The project has been approved and is already starting to be implemented from 2020.

In the latest Karlovac County Development Strategy 2016-2020 +, the vision of Karlovac County is: *"A county with a developed entrepreneurial climate and economy, quality human resources, sustainable development and quality living."*

By improving the entrepreneurial infrastructure and strengthening entrepreneurial support institutions, encouraging start-up companies and fostering modernization of



technological capacities, the County provides the premises for developed entrepreneurial climate and economy as stated in its strategy.

At the regional and local level, the lack of co-ordination among different economy and business supporting institutions results also with a weak visibility of their actions and interventions. An additional problem is the status of entrepreneurship in Croatian society and a general weak connection of entrepreneurial skills and promotion of entrepreneurship in general. The details of the status and needs are closely described in the thematic background document of the peer review.

2.- Participants from Karlovac County in the Peer review

JURRA KŽ is interested in enhancing and boosting the co-operation among the institutional business infrastructure and services in the County of Karlovac according to the national and European general priorities and including all the regional and local related institutions and administration.

Therefore to the Peer review, apart from the county level and regional economic institutions, all local administrations (5 towns), related to economy/business were invited to participate. The Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Croatia was also informed several times about this peer review.

The following representatives participated in the Peer review organized in Karlovac 12-13th February 2020:

NAME	INSTITUTION
Željko Fanjak	County Department for Economy
Marina Grčić	Dept for EU Funds, Karlovac
Vesna Vinovrški	Dept for Economy, Karlovac
Brigita Palajsa-Škarjak	County Chamber of Commerce



Nikolina Škrinjar	County Chamber of Commerce
Viktor Smolić	Town of Slunj, EU funds dept
Željko Jerečić	Commercial and Catering School Karlovac
Ratko Božić	Electroindustrial and Crafts School, Rijeka
Ivana Spudić	Croatian Chamber of Trade and Crafts, Karlovac
Ivan Janković	Technical School Karlovac, Director
Krunoslav Kralj	JURRA, Deputy Director
Ana Kučinić	JURRA
Livio Biščan	JURRA
Eva Sobotik-Pavan	JURRA

From the Interreg programme and key expert following persons participated in the peer review:

Name	Institution
Paweł Szeremet	Head of Innovation and Smart Specializations Unitat Marshal's Office of the Westpomeranian Region, Poland.
Nuria Macia	Executive Manager at Creacció (Osona/Catalonia, Spain).
Michele Colavito	Project Manager at Agency for Territorial Cohesion, Italy.
Thorsten Kohlisch	Interreg Europe Policy Platform, Project manager
Rene Tonnisson	Interreg Europe Policy Platform, SME Competitiveness



Luc Schmerber	Interreg Europe Policy Platform, Thematic expert, SME Competitiveness
Mart Veliste	Interreg Europe Policy Platform, Thematic expert, SME Competitiveness
Laurentiu David	Interreg Europe Programme, Policy Officer

Dr. Szépvölgyi Ákos, Managing Director of Central Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency, Hungary. Partner in Interreg Europe 2LIFES, RuralSMEs, CRE:HUB projects also participated on Skype conference, 12th February.

3.- Analysis of the challenges of the peer review and recommendations

During the two days of the peer review, all participants had the opportunity to present the institutions they represent and their interest in the education and the challenges they face in the area of SME competitiveness and development of entrepreneurial climate.

After an introduction of the Interreg Europe programme and the policy learning platform, the coordinator of the review, JURRA, presented shortly the contents of the thematic background document for Karlovac County.

Among the main challenges existing in the region are:

- The need to strengthen capacity and collaboration among entrepreneurial support institutions, technical assistance, internal coordination.
- The creation of partnerships among ESI and other important stakeholders in the EU, networking possibilities.
- Weak connection of entrepreneurial skills and promotion of entrepreneurship. Promotion actions, participation in international fairs and projects....



- Stimulation of creation of companies and start-ups, boosting the entrepreneurship at regional level.
- Cross-sector collaboration, specially education and business
- Centralized process, complicated administration
- Closeness to Zagreb -all businesses/innovators move to Zagreb, skilled people emigrate. Need to strengthen the relation between regional and national level, participative process.

Having in mind the outlined challenges, and after thoroughly exchange of views and deep considerations among all the peer experts and participants, several recommendations can be extracted as guidelines to implement:

- To work on an integrated approach for improving the entrepreneurial climate in the region and foresee the next generation of entrepreneurs, specially having in mind the Regional center of competence in Karlovac and the connection with secondary schools.
- Linking with the business sector could be successful by introducing speed-dating, informal and quick meetings afterwork with the education and research community.
- Integrated initiatives such as co-working areas, study visits will contribute to the strategical approach of this priority for boosting entrepreneurship.
- The creation of a body for supporting and networking of the SMEs and the interregional linking of business-supporting institutions from other regional administrations from other Counties would facilitate the communication with the national level. The regularly exchange and mobility of staff will also be an added value to the new approach.
- For the promotion of the SMEs a continuous and stable promotion of activities and initiatives on international and national level could be reinforced with joining of networks as EURADA and others.



4.- Conclusion and follow-up activities

The 2-days Peer review was for all the participants from the Karlovac County very useful, especially because of the structure of the workshops and the opportunity for discussion with experts from Europe and the Interreg Europe programme. We are aware of the extraordinary opportunity we were given with the participation in the peer review and the different institutions participating in it are prove of this.

As a wrap up of all issues discussed during the meeting we would outline some of them that can be immediately approach with the given recommendations:

- Find new ways to reinforce the linking with the SMEs-Business sector by organizing informal and speed encounters, personalized approach for each SMEs.
- Linking with other counties and municipalities and a coordinated approach towards the national authorities presenting common challenges and needs.
- The need to look for opportunities given because of the closeness to Zagreb/Rijeka, bigger urban centers that can also enable a better promotion.
- To foster the mobility of staff as a learning and practical tool that can also improve the networking with other regions and companies.
- Joining international network such as EURADA, study visits...

As immediate actions according to these recommendations, JURRA KŽ is planning, together with other participants in the review, to analyze the possibilities of participating international business platform for improving the business climate and competence on the whole in Karlovac County.

Another immediate or short-term action would be to organize a meeting or study visit to the Hungarian Innovation Agency, which showed to have very good recommendation during the skype meeting held during the meeting in Karlovac.



The Regional development Agency of Karlovac County is very thankful for the implementation of this peer review 12th and 13th February 2020 and wishes to specially thank to the Interreg Europe, Peer review program and its coordinators the valuable assistance given during the whole process. We wish also to express our great appreciation to all the experts participating in the meetings and to the new acquaintances made during the project, we are very grateful for the many ideas, recommendations and interest from all participating!



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Annex 1.



Day 1 meeting



Day 2 meeting



Link to press, news:

<https://youtu.be/M8wdxTD8ZtY>

<https://www.ra-kazup.hr/završena-dvodnevna-radionica-u-sklopu-projekta-tehnicke-pomoci-programa-interreg-europe-peer-review/>



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