Regional Actions To Innovate Operational Programmes

The fourth newsletter of Ratio Project covers the activities and progress of the partners in the project, from October 2017 to March 2018

Project Partners

Regional Development Agency of Ustio Region, PLC (CZ)
Aufbauwerk Region Leipzig GmbH (DE)
Aragonese Federation of Municipalities, Regions and Provinces, FAMCP (ES)
Business Confederation of Aragon, CREA (ES)
Cork Chamber of Commerce (IE)
Regional Association of Lazio Municipalities—ANCI Lazio (IT)
Vidzeme Planning Region (LV)
Foundation in Support of Local Democracy Malopolska Institute of Local Government and Administration (PL)
Municipality of Vila Pouca de Aguiar (PT)
RATIO - Regional Actions To Innovate Operational Programmes

The «Regional Actions To Innovate Operational Programmes» RATIO project, approved by the Monitoring Committee of the European territorial cooperation programme Interreg Europe in February 2016, is funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The project started on the 1st of April 2016 and will last for two years in the first phase and other two years in the second phase.

RATIO assembles 9 partners from 8 EU Member States to improve the regional innovation policies in European rural areas.

The overall objective of RATIO project is to improve regional policies and programmes supporting the delivery of innovation, and their implementation. This must be done by creating effective Ecosystems of innovation through the real transfer of the best practices identified, and thanks to the multidimensional aspect of learning (from individual/ organisational exchange to a regional and EU level learning approach). The exchange of experiences among regional actors will be followed by the transfer of the lesson learned to the regional programmes. Important is to mention that the target group are the politicians, public officials dealing with innovation managements and regional business supporting organizations, and as direct beneficiaries of the project are staff and the organizations of RATIO who are involved in designing and delivering the mentioned policies.

As a result the citizens and groups impacted by those policies will benefit from improved policies implementation and better governance.

Ratio understands the importance of the learning outcomes that need to be more effectively transferred and embedded in each partner region in order to lead to policy change, as well as put more emphasis on the demand (SMEs) side to clearly identify the real needs of potential end users.

Step 1
- Analysis of different partners’ situation and identification of valuable experiences and practices

Step 2
- Interregional Policy learning.

Step 3:
- ACTION PLANS: transfer of knowledge and practices strategy for improving regional innovation delivery policies.
STUDY VISIT AND ISC TO IRELAND

On 3 October 2017 at Skibbereen and on 4 October 2017 at Cork, the 4th Interregional Steering Committee of the RATIO project took place. At the meeting, the partners discussed the progress of action plans of regions, and the report on the conclusions of IHC tool use. Then the Overviews of Local Enterprise Office, the Macroom Enterprise Centre and the Enterprise Ireland's supports were put on the agenda.

In the afternoon, the participants visited the innovative companies at Skibbereen: the Ludgate Hub, the Spearline and the West Cork Distillers.

The next day, at the Cork Chamber premises, the overview of RATIO’s 3rd Semester (technical and financial management reporting of Semester 3’s activities), the communication issues and the Overview of Skillnets took place. The study visit was very interesting and the ISC meeting was successful.
The event was launched at the hosts' premises, FSLD MILGA in Krakow on 12 and 13 December 2017, with a short tour and familiarization with the program and organization of both working days. The program continued with an interesting visit to the Krakow Technology Park, where a lecture on start-ups and support for innovation in the Malopolska Region was prepared for the participants, as well as a presentation on the emergence and current state of the technology park, followed by a tour of selected technological incubator compartments, data center and coloring studio. Another point of the program was a tour of the kitchen incubator in the village of Zakrzów, about 40 km from Krakow, the first of its kind founded in Poland, which was created by subsidized reconstruction of the devastated building of the former school. Incubated companies are particularly successful in the production of syrups, jams and regional delicacies, under the trade mark used, however, the sale of cheeses and honey from other suppliers from the region is supported. Besides production and sales, trainings are organized in the incubator and there are various conferences and social events of a smaller nature, which are also provided with excellent catering. The afternoon part was completed by representatives of all partner organizations of the RATIO project on the state of the creation of regional action plans, on the identified main problems / barriers of business and the proposed ways of solving them.

The second day of the program was started by a recapitulation of the realized activities of the project in the 3rd period, including information on submission of the final technical and financial report, and a further progress of the project activities in the 4th period was outlined. A presentation and discussion on the creation of regional action plans followed, and the related discussion of the previous day's partners on the maximum use of proposals for measures for other partners and political leadership in the regions was completed. The partner meeting ended the mutual transmission of information on the events and events visited, with a secure presentation of the RATIO project.

The action has contributed to providing an insight into the further support of innovative firms in rural areas. The partner meeting was focused on sharing ideas for tackling the problems of rural regions (low-skilled labor, inadequate finances / access to finance, poor internet connections), some partners have specific solutions, others are just looking for them. It has been shown that the proposed measures are practically of two kinds: vouchers and microinnovations. The exchange of experience and established conditions for the implementation of the proposed measures has also demonstrated regional differences, both in partner processes and in the approach of the managing authorities themselves.
CEO Aragón hosted the last exchange of experience event of the RATIO project. During this two-days event (8 & 9 March), project partners and stakeholders had time to discuss the Action Plans that were going to be presented to their regional authorities, and to exchange ideas for future implementation.

Besides, as this meeting was the last one of the first phase, several issues were covered in order to close this phase and to successfully start the second phase where partners will monitor the implementation of their action plans by the regional authorities.

Participants also had the opportunity to find out more of the activities and projects of the Network of Southern Sparsely Populated Areas (SSPA) made up by the business associations of Teruel, Soria and Cuenca, three of the most depopulated Spanish regions. This network and RATIO project share a common interest in improving regional programmes and policies on innovation to foster rural SMEs competitiveness.

Also, partners visited the Technological Centre ITAINNOVA and the SME Biocurve, as examples of innovation in SMEs.
STAKEHOLDER GROUP MEETINGS IN PARTNER REGIONS

SPAIN

The 4th stakeholder group meeting in the Aragon Region took place on February 5, 2018 in the premises of the Aragonese Federation of Municipalities, Regions and Provinces, FAMCP. The agenda of this meeting was:
- status of the RATIO project;
- presentation of the Action Plan elaborated by Expert;
- discussion and debate over the developing Action Plan for Aragon;
- presentation of project outputs for semester 4.

The 5th stakeholder group meeting in the Aragon Region was held on March 16, 2018 in the premises of Business Confederation of Aragon, CEOE, with the following agenda:
- status of the RATIO project, finalisation of the Phase 1;
- detail of the concrete actions, steps to follow, budget and time needed ... (political context, good practices to transfer and European strategy);
- deadline to present the Action Plan to Regional Government.

POLAND

The total of 20 stakeholder group meetings took place in the Malopolska Region during the 20 local workshops carried out in the period October - November 2017 in the poviatos that contain rural and urban/rural communes. Detailed information on the meetings is provided on page 11 of this newsletter.

CZECH REPUBLIC

The 4th stakeholder group meeting was held on March 27, 2018 at the Clarion Congress Hotel in Usti nad Labem, with the following agenda:
- Information on the status of the RATIO project
- Information on the preparation of the implementation process of the project "Support to SME Creativity in the Usti Region"
- Discussion and opinions on the proposal of the RATIO Action Plan - to strengthen the innovation capacity of SMEs in the Usti Region
GERMANY

The 4th stakeholder group meeting was held on October 26, 2017 at SMWA, Wilhelm-Buck-Straße 2, Dresden. The invited person was die oberste Landesbehörde des Freistaates Sachsen.

The Department of Economics of the State Ministry is responsible for the promotion of resident and relocated businesses in the Free State of Saxony and is therefore an important partner in the promotion of SMEs.

The first item on the agenda was a short report on the ongoing Project Ratio and presentation of the main aim: Economic policy ideas / recommendations / control directly addressed to political program: Innovation Strategy Saxony.

Miss Dr. Schöne is currently accompanying the revision of the innovation strategy of the Free State of Saxony. In these we can bring the action recommendations gained from the RATIO project into the consultation process. It was voted on the continuation of the innovation strategy, as well as the current processing status discussed.

The 5th stakeholder group meeting was held on February 14, 2018 at the conference room at the Aufbauwerk Region Leipzig GmbH. We invited together with our cooperation partner Neu e.V. international Students of the university of Leipzig, which have a lot of experience in well-known organizations.

The Students studying Energy and environmental technology and are familiar with the topic innovation and SME. Additionally, the network Neu e.V. as a cluster with 75 members from the field of economics, research and political authorities has many experiences in this field.

The students were interested in the project RATIO in the terms of innovative ways how to make SME in rural areas more attractive. So, we introduced the project RATIO first, to come to the action plan later as an important deliverable in the application form.

Our action plan consists of the recommendations we gave for the innovation strategy of the free state of Saxony. These were presented to the students as basis for discussion. In connection we gave an overview about our project and presented the main expected results. We have explained that the RATIO project is embedded in the Interreg Europe priority axis 1: Strengthening research, technological development and innovation, with the specific objective “improving innovation delivery policies.” Thus, this project will contribute to reinforce the innovation culture in the region boosting innovative ecosystems where actors (regional and local authorities and innovation partners) and stakeholders (associations, academia, regional government etc.) can work together in the Action plan to reach the needed policy change for the consolidation of innovative companies in non-metropolitan areas.
IRELAND

The 4th regional stakeholder meeting took place on the 6th February in the Cork Chamber offices. This meeting which was the final stakeholder meeting before the development of the draft project Action Plan was approached as a workshop. The workshop format worked very well with all attendees being divided into 3 groups. Groups were then tasked with a short role-play; as early-stage, rural-based companies, and with the main focus on identifying the challenges to business, and developing recommendations for innovation support policy improvements.

Overall 3 priority areas were identified, these are 1. Collaborations and Clusters, 2. Human Resources and 3. Access to Finance. In brief, it was agreed that entrepreneurs need to participate in business networks that can offer peer support, learning and the opportunity to explore common business challenges for rural based SMEs. Added to this, skills development to focus on innovation, and to underpin the value of networks, advice and mentoring on investor pitching were highlighted. The Cork RATIO Action Plan is being developed based on the strong engagement and participation of our regional stakeholder group.

LATVIA

The stakeholder group meeting in Valmiera was organized by the Vidzeme Planning Region on February 7, 2018. The meeting dealt with the theme how to build and develop a regional business and innovation support system for SMEs. Such a system that will stimulate enterprises to innovate and enhance their competitiveness and to strengthen the economy of the region.

On March 21, 2018 more than 30 entrepreneurs, representatives of business support institutions and experts from the Vidzeme municipalities met in Ungurpils, Aloja Municipality, to get acquainted with the public support instruments and measures for the development of innovative products and services for SMEs. Vidzeme planning region introduced its initiatives and accomplishments for business development in Vidzeme. One of the most important works is the Action Plan for Promoting SMEs in the region, developed by RATIO project, carried out by SIA Ideju Kapitals in cooperation with VPR experts.

The meeting was organized with reference to the suggestion of the stakeholders involved in the project - more actively exchange an information on various business support instruments. RATIO project working group meetings have repeatedly expressed the view that there are separate, largely unrelated instruments of different stages of support in the country that are monitored and developed by different. This time the seminar focused on less well-known support programs that promote research and business innovation activities in companies.
Main project goals, activities and cooperation among European regions were the key issues the project gave on display to the 230 visitors of the Exhibition represented by Czech and international experts and professionals active in the field of innovative entrepreneurship and R&D. This year’s 24th edition of the INNOVATION 2017 was held in Prague from December 5 till December 8 and was organized by the Association of Innovative Entrepreneurship CR (AIE CR) in collaboration with the Committee of National Economy, Agriculture and Transport of the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, and domestic and foreign members and partners of the AIE CR.

The traditional part of the event consisted of the prize-giving ceremony of the annual competition for the Innovation Award of the Year 2017, held under the auspices of H. E. Miloš Zeman, President of the Czech Republic. The event presented and passed awards to seven successful innovative products.

Detailed information about of the Symposium agenda, Exhibition part and the final results of the Innovation Award of the Year 2017 are available on www.aipcr.cz website.
CONFERENCE “INNOVATION IN MALOPOLSKA RURAL AREAS”
KICKING OFF A SERIES OF 20 LOCAL WORKSHOPS

Meeting of stakeholders of development innovation on rural area in Malopolska - a regional conference under the name „Innovation in Malopolska Rural Areas” took place in Ludzmierz on 27th September. The conference was a part of the project RATIO - Regional Action for Innovation in Operational Programs.

The organizers and participants discussed not only how to better run and better utilize the existing resources and potentials in the modernization processes, but also how to fill the gaps and reduce the development barriers that are still present in the rural areas of Malopolska.

The event was attended by project participants - stakeholders, activists from rural areas of Malopolska, researchers dealing with rural development issues, representatives of the Malopolska Marshal's Office and members of the Malopolska Stakeholders Council of the RATIO project.

The conference was also act as an opening of a cycle of 20 district workshops about innovation and desirable modernization paths of rural areas of Malopolska in search of new solutions, policy tools and instruments that can contribute to the development of innovation in rural areas.

The conference and district workshops has contributed significantly to the development of new proposals and recommendations for the development of an Action Plan for the Development of Innovation in Malopolska. This plan will contribute to the changes in the Regional Innovation Strategy, and will also provide a set of recommendations to local governments wishing to improve the conditions for innovation in their area.

A video from tv, after conference: tvpodhale.info/tv/wydarzenia/Dynamiczny_rozwoj_obszarow_wiejskich_%E2%80%94-19517-1.html
Almost 250 people - stakeholders of innovation development in rural areas - took part in over 60 hours of discussions held during 20 local workshops carried out in the poviats that contain rural and urban/rural communes. The meetings were carried out in October and November 2017.

In order to work on the Action Plan, we wanted to meet with the inhabitants of rural areas, from municipalities often far from Krakow - the capital of the region in which more than 2 million of people live. Reflecting on what innovations are and what to do in order for them to appear/develop, clearly showed that a change in thinking about innovations - and looking at them as useful new solutions - is very much needed. At the same time, it is important to create conditions for the development of innovation, which is a particularly important challenge for local government (including the context of cooperation/facilities for entrepreneurs).

The identified barriers to the development of innovation, different than for the cities, are also a very important challenge for local government, which - in the dialogue with municipalities - has the possibility of a wide range of activities.

The conclusions from the meetings will be used to create the objectives of the Malopolska Action Plan for the Development of Innovation in rural areas.
EXPERIENCE FAIR - A JOURNEY THROUGH PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

April 24 - 25, 2018 in Sofia, Bulgaria

This year we will bring all Interreg Europe projects together to share and exchange experiences in a two-day event on 24-25 April 2018. The event will be organised in Sofia, which is buzzing with activities this spring thanks to the current Bulgarian EU Presidency.

In two days, the projects will have a chance to:

• Exchange experiences and share lessons learned in the projects
• Be inspired, meet and get to know representatives from projects in different stages
• Pool the most effective strategies to mobilise their stakeholders
• Learn about techniques for transferring good practices between regions
• Enhance their approaches to drafting, approving, implementing and monitoring their action plans
• Share their best tips and tricks on project management and communication
• Get concrete ideas for their further cooperation efforts
• Engage in mutual learning

Who should participate:

This event is for Interreg Europe projects only. Projects from all calls (first, second, third) can participate and be part of the event (with up to two participants per project).

For third call projects, a lead partner seminar will take place before the start of this event (24 April morning, a separate agenda and invitation will follow).

Have a look at the programme and practical information to prepare your trip and register now!
Kindly invited to visit
RATIO project website

www.interregeurope.eu/ratio