

**Interreg  
Europe**



**Co-funded by  
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**InnoCom**

# **Innovating communication targeted to SMEs**

## **HANDBOOK OF GOOD PRACTICES**

**Policy theme:**

**Remove obstacles that keep SMEs from accessing support offered by regional and municipal governments, and to make communications between institutions and SMEs less bureaucratic and more user-friendly.**



UNIVERSITY OF  
**LATVIA**



Région  
**Hauts-de-France**



**Voznesensk**



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Società regionale per lo sviluppo economico dell'Umbria



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## I. Introduction

The objective of the INNOCOM project Handbook of Good Practices (GPs) is to present 15 Good Practices of project partners that have been identified during of the project.

The IE definition of a good practice (GP) provides that *“The good practice is defined as an initiative (e.g., methodology, projects, processes, techniques) undertaken in one of the programmes thematic priorities which has already proved successful, and which has the potential to be transferred to a different geographic area. Proved successful is where the good practice has already provided tangible and measurable results in achieving a specific objective.”*

Therefore, identification, analysis and sharing of Good Practices is a part of the INNOCOM mutual policy learning process to achieve the improvement of policy capacity or capitalization of its partners and regions. In addition, transferring of Good Practices from one partner region to another can be included in the regional action plan if it can result in a policy change.

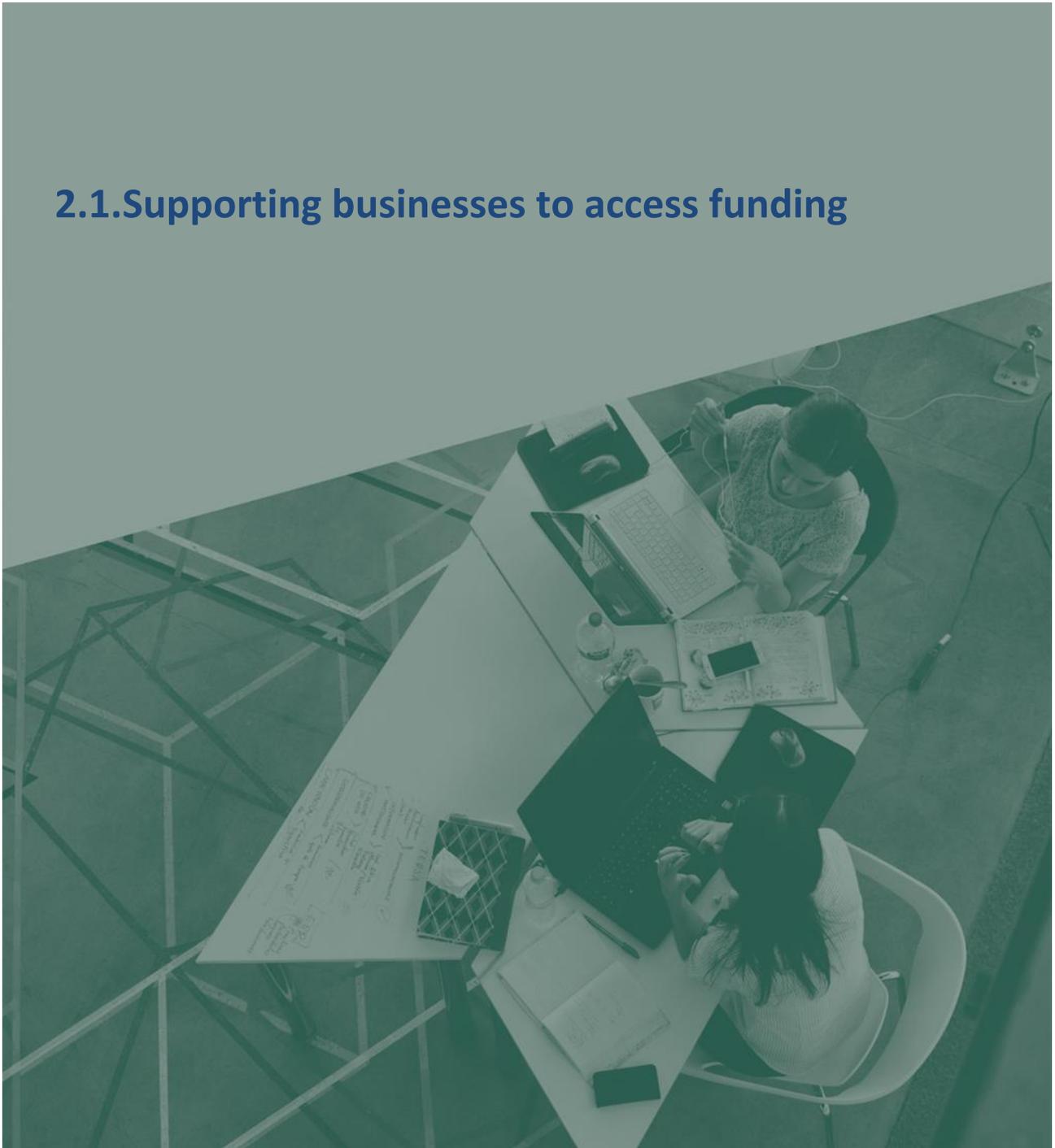
In line with the above capitalization objective, the INNOCOM project aims to: *“Improve communications between authorities and SMEs by introducing innovative models, digital tools and services, reducing obstacles, and making interactions less bureaucratic and more user-friendly.”*

The idea of the Handbook of Good Practices is to further extend the capitalization and achieve spill-over effects outside the INNOCOM’s partners’ territories to those interested parties, which might wish to transfer and implement Good Practices developed by other regions in their own area. In addition, information on the selected Good Practices will also be shared on the Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform.

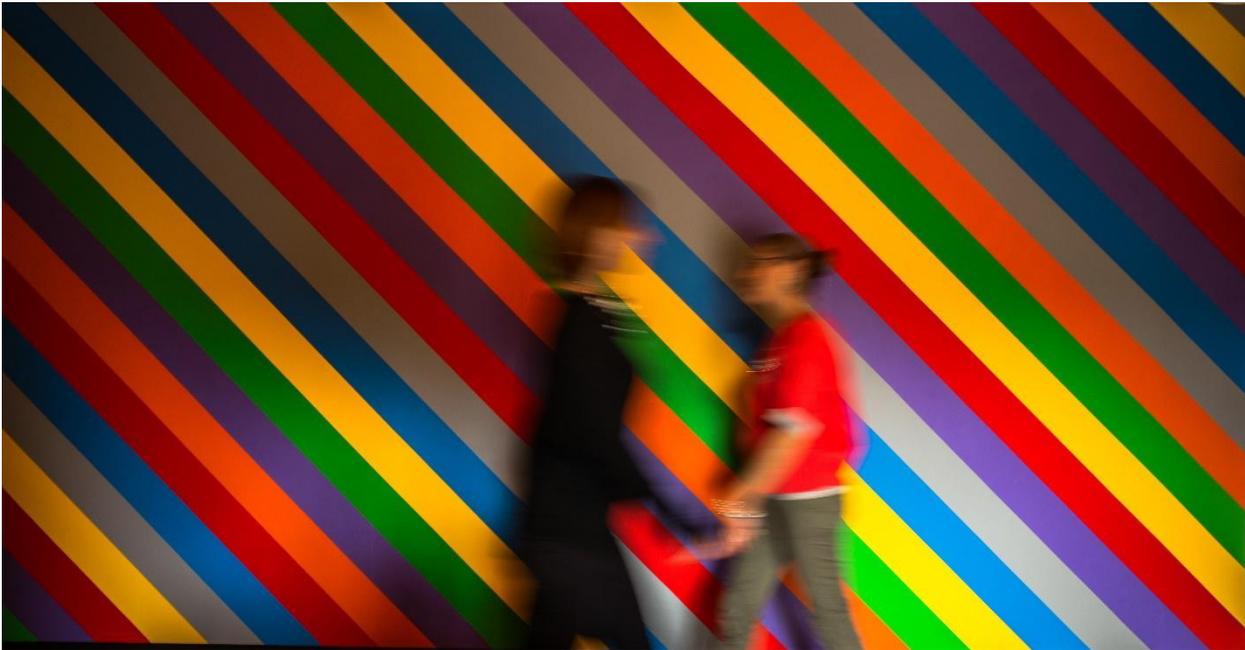
Please, see INNOCOM Handbook of Good Practices [here](#):

## II. Descriptions of Good Practices

### 2.1. Supporting businesses to access funding



## 1. Using videos to help SMEs through funding application process



Source: Umbria Region media gallery

SMEs can have difficulty understanding the technical and bureaucratic language of Calls for Proposals, and often potential beneficiaries must use business consultants to help them apply for funding. That was particularly evident during the lock-down period when it was impossible for the Umbria Regional Service staff to organize in-person meetings to provide support to those applying for grants.

Good practice general information	
<b>Title of the practice</b>	<b>Using videos to help SMEs through funding application process</b>
<b>Organisation in charge of the good practice</b>	<b>Valeria Covarelli – Umbria Region</b>
Description	
<b>Short summary of the practice</b>	Opening 2-way communication with SMEs seeking public funding opportunities through video tutorials to help beneficiaries through the application process.
<b>Detailed information on the Good practice</b>	<p>In 2020, the Region decided to produce a video tutorial offering a straightforward description of a call for proposals targeted to creative industries, explaining the funding opportunities available and how to correctly fill out applications to access the resources. The language used is simple, colloquial, not bureaucratic.</p> <p>Several versions of the video were produced: one <a href="#">without audio</a> (3 minutes) to assist potential beneficiaries at each stage of the presentation; a shorter <a href="#">“promo” version</a> (45 seconds) for sharing in social channels; and a <a href="#">version with audio</a> (for the blind) of about 6</p>

	<p>minutes was added.</p> <p>The videos were uploaded to the distribution channels, in social media and the Region organized a meeting to present the videos and the call for proposal.</p> <p>During the application period, the Regional Service also engaged in an open manner with citizens and businesses, implementing a type of two-way communication, attentive to participation and consensus and no longer limited to just “information”.</p>
<p><b>Resources needed</b></p>	<p>The Region self-produced the videos using software it already had (Adobe Photoshop, Keynote and iMovie) so the only direct costs were for personnel.</p>
<p><b>Timescale (start/end date)</b></p>	<p>30 December 2020 - March 2021</p>
<p><b>Strategic relevance</b> (long term impact)</p>	<p>The goal of this GP was to remove obstacles that keep SMEs from accessing support offered by regional and municipal governments, and to make communications between institutions and SMEs less bureaucratic and more user-friendly. Revitalisation of the production system, R&amp;D activities, synergies and collaboration among SMEs, large companies and research centres, investment in green technologies and circular economy, sustainable and data-driven choices, implementation of secure clouds.</p>
<p><b>Evidence of success</b> (results achieved – tangibility, durability and visibility)</p>	<p>During a webinar about the call for proposals, a survey was conducted to gather participants' opinions regarding the video. 83% of the attendees stated that they had watched the video broadcast on the ERDF ROP YouTube channel, and 73% of participants rated the video positively.</p> <p>Mart Veliste, a thematic expert within the Policy Learning Platform, evaluated this practice and wrote: “The Umbria Region's initiative to demystify the complex landscape of Calls for Proposals through user-friendly video tutorials exemplifies a noteworthy practice that prioritizes effective communication. Recognizing the challenge SMEs face in navigating technical and bureaucratic language, the added value of this practice lies in its ability to simplify the understanding of funding opportunities for creative industries, thereby overcoming the barrier of language complexity. The videos, ranging from a concise 45-second promo to a detailed 6-minute version for the visually impaired, not only solve the immediate challenge but also signify a proactive response to the evolving communication landscape. The practice's innovative character extends to its adaptability, as the Region has successfully replicated the tool for other calls for proposals. This approach can be easily transferred to other regions, fostering improved communication, accessibility and transparency between public institutions and SMEs.”</p>

<p><b>Added Value (effectiveness, innovativeness and efficiency, quality, etc.)</b></p>	<p>The idea for the InnoCom project stems from the trial use of video tutorials by the Umbria Region. In the course of developing the project idea, feedback from project partners underscored the need to make more effective and user-friendly support available to SMEs.</p>
<p><b>Potential for learning or transfer</b></p>	<p>The Umbria Region has used the same tool for other calls for proposals, e.g. Open Umbria - Call for Support for Receptive Enterprises, in May 2021 following the same method as the Call for Support for Cultural and Creative Enterprises.</p> <p>No formal transfer has been made so far, but the Umbria Region adopted the methodology and the video tutorial format for 2 additional calls to enterprises.</p> <p>At national level in Italy, the practice has been shared with the Structural Funds Communicators Network, both through a WhatsApp chat of communicators and through social media; the video has been shared with the Inform Network and published in the Agency for Territorial Cooperation website.</p> <p>Potentially, using images/videos to support SMEs and communities in general in approaching public institutions can be easily transferred to other regions, and even updated to include more sophisticated tools, including AI.</p>
<p><b>Further information</b></p>	<p>The videos are published on YouTube:</p> <p><a href="#">without audio</a> (3 min)</p> <p><a href="#">“promo” version</a> (45 seconds)</p> <p><a href="#">version with audio</a> (6 min)</p> <p><a href="mailto:vcovarelli@regione.umbria.it">vcovarelli@regione.umbria.it</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.regione.umbria.it/programmazione-fesr">https://www.regione.umbria.it/programmazione-fesr</a></p>

## 2. Automatic search and filling of grants for SMEs in the process of attracting funding



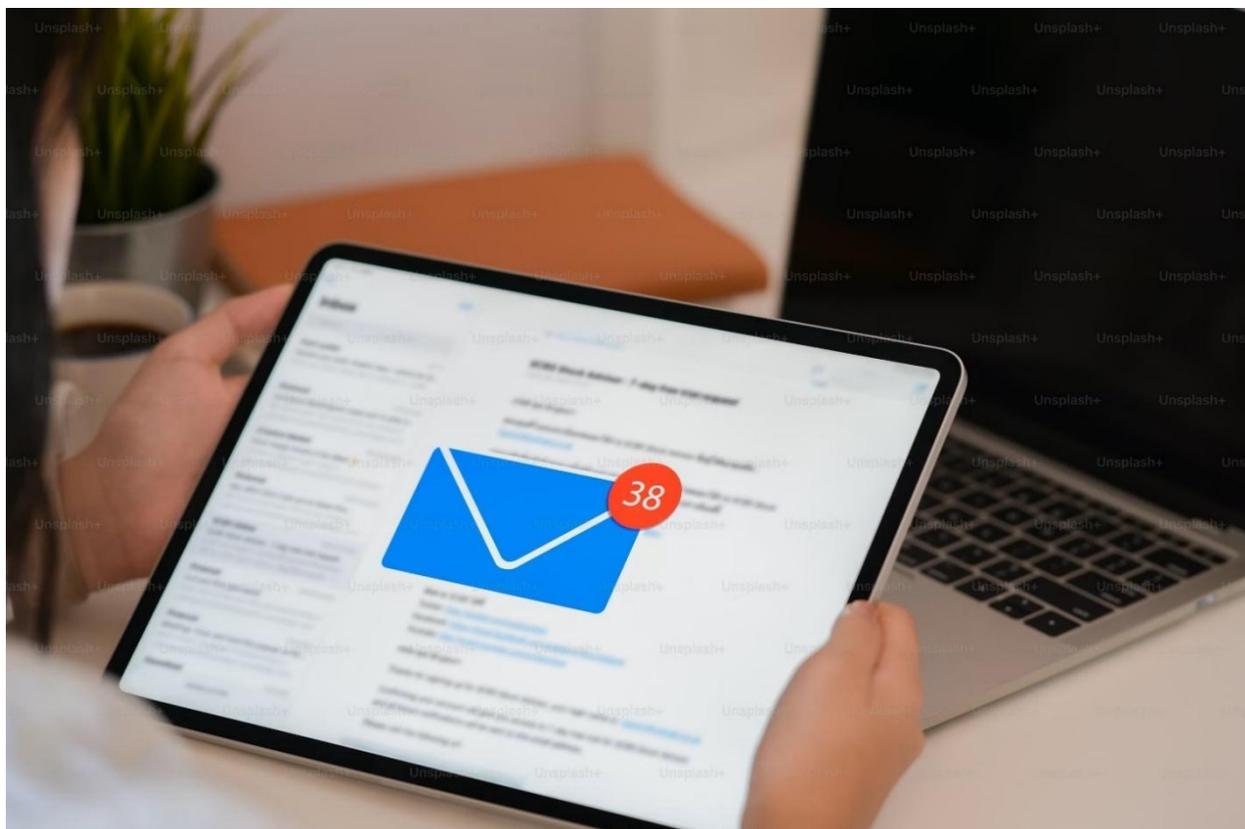
Source: [https://iclei.org/network\\_city/vozneseusk-city-council/](https://iclei.org/network_city/vozneseusk-city-council/)

SMEs often have a lack of time and professional knowledge, and difficulties of understanding technical and bureaucratic language while searching for additional financing and business ideas. However, the business needs changes and additional funding. This became evident during the war in Ukraine, when SMEs suffered losses and damage. This requires both additional funding, as well as skills to respond quickly to the needs of the population.

Good practice general information	
<b>Title of the practice</b>	<b>Automatic search and filling of grants for SMEs in the process of attracting funding</b>
<b>Organisation in charge of the good practice</b>	<b>Voznesensk City Council</b>
Description	
<b>Short summary of the practice</b>	Providing of help for SMEs through an electronic document in the process of finding and apply for grants, also to start up a business and develop the old one.
<b>Detailed information on the practice</b>	To support SMEs, City Council have created an electronic document with filtered grants and a simple description of the terms of each grant. The form includes the name of the program, a brief description of the targeted use of funds, the deadline for applying, the grant amount, eligible applicants, additional information, and contacts with a link to fill out the application. The form is updated as new grants become available. A link to the form is in a public application, namely in the Telegram messenger. Telegram channel is also constantly updated and replenished with new subscribers. In addition to this

	<p>initiative, an automated form is being developed to analyze and improve the business ideas of SMEs in the community, sessions are held with explanations of various SME issues related to grants, taxes, business registration, changes in legislation, etc. The main stakeholders and beneficiaries of this practice are: Micro/small/medium-sized enterprises, self-employed persons, freelancers, and other business entities (current or newly established).</p>
<b>Resources needed</b>	<p>Specialists of the Voznesensk City Council personally created an automated form.</p> <p>Technological, informational, organizational and communicative resources are used from the available own resources of the city council.</p> <p>Therefore, the only direct costs are personnel costs.</p>
<b>Timescale (start/end date)</b>	26 June 2024 - on a permanent basis
<b>Strategic relevance (long term impact)</b>	<p>This approach greatly simplifies the access of SMEs to grant opportunities, both state and international. It also helps to reduce the time in search of a suitable offer for financing SMEs and further - filling out applications. In addition, this initiative increases the level of awareness of SMEs and increases the chances for obtaining additional financing for the development, restoration, relocation of business, and contributes to the economic development of the region as a whole.</p>
<b>Evidence of success (results achieved – tangibility, durability and visibility)</b>	<p>12 SMEs participated in 8 competitions out of 5 programs, such as the State program "There is work," the Grant program "Create," "Own business" from # EU4Business, Grants from IOM, Grants in support of SMEs from the Danish Refugee Council. 3 businesses received positive approval.</p> <p>The additional value is in the ability to simplify the search of funding for SMEs, thereby overcoming time and language barriers. This practice improves communication, accessibility and transparency.</p>
<b>Added Value</b> (effectiveness, innovativeness and efficiency, quality, etc.)	<p>During communication with representatives of SMEs, the need to create one effective document with information was revealed. The idea received positive feedback from SMEs.</p>
<b>Potential for learning or transfer</b>	<p>We consider this good practice to be potentially interesting both for SMEs separately and for the community as a whole. As for business is going through a period of crisis. Therefore, it requires additional funding, training, organizational support and simplification of business procedures.</p> <p>Also, as a result of this good practice, the economic development of the community increases, and a more favourable environment for doing business, creating jobs, replenishing the budget is created.</p> <p>The innovative nature of the good practice extends to its adaptability, as this approach can be easily transferred to other ideas.</p>
<b>Further information</b>	<p><a href="https://t.me/+vMz8qR9Z6fMwMjUy">https://t.me/+vMz8qR9Z6fMwMjUy</a></p>

### 3. “Boîte Europe”: email address as a first contact for all operators about European funds



Source: Pexels.com

The EU 2021-2027 programming period has introduced new funding opportunities, making European programmes increasingly significant yet complex to navigate. As the managing authority, ensuring equitable access to information for all stakeholders is essential. Additionally, a structured system for coordinating and monitoring funding requests was necessary, along with a platform to unify a network of funding advisors.

To address these challenges, the European Department of the Hauts-de-France Regional Council established a single coordination and communication desk for all EU funds available in the region.

Good practice general information	
<b>Title of the practice</b>	<b>“Boîte Europe”: a generic email address as a first contact for all operators about European funds</b>
<b>Organisation in charge of the good practice</b>	<b>Hauts-de-France Regional Council</b>
Description	
<b>Short summary of the practice</b>	The “Boîte Europe” is a generic email address used to inform and guide operators to the available EU opportunities and advise them with thematic expertise.

<p><b>Detailed information on the Good practice</b></p>	<p>The European Department of the Hauts-de-France Regional Council established a single coordination and communication desk for all EU funds available in the region. The email address <a href="mailto:europe@hautsdefrance.fr">europe@hautsdefrance.fr</a>, linked to a monitoring table (.xls), serves as a key tool to streamline communication and support. This practice is entirely managed within the European Department (Interfac'EU Unit) by two Project Officers, providing assistance to all regional actors, including SMEs, public bodies, and associations.</p> <p>This centralized contact point enables regional stakeholders to submit inquiries or present project ideas related to EU funding. Upon receiving a request, Interfac'EU assesses the need for support and delivers tailored guidance, connecting project owners with the appropriate thematic experts. Functioning as a "marshalling yard", this initiative enhances efficiency in accessing relevant funding opportunities.</p> <p>Additionally, the email address serves as a communication tool for disseminating information on EU-related events, including invitations, contact forms, and stakeholder contributions, ensuring a broader outreach and engagement across the region.</p>
<p><b>Resources needed</b></p>	<p>No funding was needed aside from the dedicated hours of 2 already hired civil servants which amount to an approx. 12 hours a week in order to guarantee regular tracking of the requests.</p>
<p><b>Timescale (start/end date)</b></p>	<p>May 2019 - Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Strategic relevance (long term impact)</b></p>	<p>The Boîte Europe serves as a gateway—a first step toward accessing European funds—without directly measuring long-term impact. However, this permanent tool ensures continuity of service for regional stakeholders, providing ongoing support for European opportunities. It also fosters a continuous dialogue between the administration and project owners, even during inter-programme periods when funding structures may change.</p>
<p><b>Evidence of success (results achieved)</b></p>	<p>This good practice saves operators time by putting them on the right track straight away, thereby speeding up the process.</p> <p>Internally, it filters the emails and avoids a potential overload for its experts, saving time and improving regional civil service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In 2023, 280 requests have already been processed, which generated approx. 2200 emails</li> <li>- At the 31st of July 2024, 180 requests had already been processed, expecting a significant progress for 2024- approx. 1200 emails.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Added Value</b></p>	<p>By centralizing funding inquiries through a single contact point, all potential financing opportunities are systematically reviewed—including those applicants may not have initially considered.</p> <p>This process ensures:</p> <p>Faster guidance to the appropriate financial mechanism and contact person.</p> <p>Quick identification of ineligibility, allowing applicants to efficiently seek alternative funding sources.</p> <p>Better knowledge-sharing about European funds, adapting to the level of experience of each project holder.</p> <p>Stronger internal communication, improving information flow between regional services and external partners.</p> <p>Although the tool itself relies on a simple email system, its innovative value lies in the institutional shift it introduces. By simplifying access to European funds and streamlining internal coordination, it enhances the overall efficiency and responsiveness of the Regional Council’s support system.</p> <p>This initiative has inspired better coordination and exchange of best practices between regional services.</p> <p>A structured management procedure ensures optimal functioning of this tool within the Hauts-de-France Region. This includes:</p> <p>Systematic responses to all inquiries, whether the request is eligible or not.</p> <p>Traceability of each request, allowing for follow-up even after it has been forwarded to the appropriate expert.</p> <p>Internal monitoring, ensuring that all queries are addressed within a reasonable timeframe.</p>
<p><b>Potential for learning or transfer</b></p>	<p>This good practice is easy to put in place and manage. It only operates on the basis of an individual mailbox to which few persons have access. It is a permanent contact, disconnected from shift changes. It also allows a collective approach within the regional authority, improving collaboration between services.</p> <p>It is essential to organise the tool clearly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clearly define the objective;</li> <li>- Define the day-to-day management process;</li> <li>- Allocate agent time on a regular basis;</li> <li>- Consolidate the technical side (spam vulnerability);</li> </ul> <p>- Explain the logic and expected benefits (filtering, monitoring and archiving, multi-fund management, permanence, etc.) to get internal stakeholders involved.</p>
<p><b>Further information</b></p>	<p><a href="https://europe-en-hautsdefrance.eu/contact">https://europe-en-hautsdefrance.eu/contact</a></p>

#### 4. “FRAPPE” - Regional Fund for European project leaders: Expert consultancy helping local stakeholders apply for competitive EU sectoral and Interreg funding programs



Source: Région Hauts-De-France

The European Commission's sectoral and interregional cooperation programmes offer valuable funding opportunities, but accessing these competitive funds requires expertise in EU project development. To support regional stakeholders, the Hauts-de-France Regional Council established FRAPPE (Fonds Régional d'Aide aux Porteurs de Projets Européens), a scheme providing expert consultancy services to strengthen applications for EU funding. FRAPPE offers fully funded consultancy services to assist stakeholders in preparing and submitting high-quality applications for EU funding calls.

Good practice general information	
<b>Title of the practice</b>	<b>“FRAPPE - Regional Fund for European project leaders”: a generic email address as a first contact for all operators about European funds</b>
<b>Organisation in charge of the good practice</b>	<b>Hauts-de-France Regional Council</b>
Description	
<b>Short summary of the practice</b>	Through FRAPPE, the Hauts-de-France Regional Council funds expert consultancy to help local stakeholders apply for competitive EU sectoral and Interreg funding programs.

<p><b>Detailed information on the Good practice</b></p>	<p>In collaboration with the Region’s European Department, experienced EU funding experts guide project leaders through every stage of proposal development, from concept structuring to application writing. Additionally, FRAPPE can be leveraged to support project implementation and monitoring once funding is secured.</p> <p>The initiative is open to a wide range of eligible organisations based in Hauts-de-France, including academic institutions, clusters, public bodies, and businesses (since 2022). Applicants must hold a key role in the project—whether as lead coordinator, co-coordinator, or work package leader—and must commit sufficient resources, particularly in terms of personnel, to develop the proposal.</p> <p>By covering sectoral programmes and interregional cooperation programmes, FRAPPE helps regional actors compete more effectively for EU funding, boosting Hauts-de-France’s participation in European initiatives.</p>
<p><b>Resources needed</b></p>	<p>FRAPPE requires:</p> <p>4 policy officers (equivalent to 2 Full Time Employment (FTE))</p> <p>1 administrative staff (0.3 FTE) managing public procurement, which is reviewed every 2 years per national regulations</p> <p>Annual regional budget of approx. €180,000, with expenditures averaging €100,000, for 231 consultancy days per year.</p>
<p><b>Timescale (start/end date)</b></p>	<p>2006 - Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Strategic relevance (long term impact)</b></p>	<p>FRAPPE plays a pivotal role in enhancing the capacity of regional stakeholders to secure EU funding, particularly in the long term. By providing expert consultancy, the program helps improve the quality and competitiveness of local proposals, thus fostering long-term regional economic growth and innovation. FRAPPE directly contributes to increasing the participation of Hauts-de-France in European projects, positioning the region as a strong player in European initiatives, which aligns with broader EU integration and development goals.</p>
<p><b>Evidence of success (results achieved)</b></p>	<p>In 2023, FRAPPE provided support to:</p> <p>17 project leaders,</p> <p>13 projects that applied for European Commission calls,</p> <p>5 projects successfully funded (Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, Creative Europe).</p> <p>This resulted in:</p> <p>An overall success rate of 30% for supported projects,</p> <p>A success rate of nearly 40% for submitted applications.</p> <p>Since 2022, 4 SMEs have received direct support, while many more benefit indirectly as part of supported consortia.</p>
<p><b>Added Value</b></p>	<p>Effectiveness: FRAPPE has significantly increased the success rate of applications for EU funding in the region, with nearly 40% of submitted proposals being successful. This results in tangible benefits for local stakeholders, such as successful funding for</p>

	<p>research, educational, and creative projects.</p> <p>Innovation: The program’s innovative approach lies in its comprehensive support throughout the project development process, including both pre-application consultancy and post-funding implementation support. It offers a practical solution to bridging the gap between local stakeholders and complex EU funding mechanisms.</p> <p>Externality &amp; Spillover Effects: FRAPPE has fostered regional knowledge exchange, allowing stakeholders to share best practices, methodologies, and experiences from successful EU projects. This has created a more cohesive and informed regional network, facilitating future collaborations across sectors.</p> <p>Quality: FRAPPE ensures high-quality service through its strategic public procurement process, which evaluates expert consultants regularly, ensuring that project leaders receive accurate, tailored advice.</p>
<p><b>Potential for learning or transfer</b></p>	<p>This good practice is valuable for EU regions looking to support local stakeholders applying for EU funding programmes, particularly those lacking internal resources or expertise in EU project development.</p> <p>To successfully implement a similar scheme, key factors include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial and legal capacity to set up a paid consultancy service for project leaders,</li> <li>Strategic public procurement, ensuring a minimum annual volume of expert consultant days to maintain both quantity and quality of support,</li> <li>Mapping of regional strengths and weaknesses in accessing EU funds, allowing for targeted support,</li> <li>Complementary integration with other regional support initiatives to maximize impact,</li> <li>Clear communication to reach relevant project leaders and stakeholders,</li> <li>Strong procurement processes to ensure an efficient and coherent framework, complemented by ongoing evaluation of expert consultants to maintain high-quality service.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Further information</b></p>	<p><a href="https://europe-en-hautsdefrance.eu/jai-un-projet/frappe">https://europe-en-hautsdefrance.eu/jai-un-projet/frappe</a></p>

## 5. Online Platform for EU Opportunities



National financing schemes are designed and approved at national level in close correlation with national strategies and are financed exclusively from national funds. The purpose of these programs is to implement various national policies and priorities. The implementation and management of the projects takes place exclusively in Romania, under the responsibility of the ministries/agencies designated for this purpose.

Source: <https://oportunitati-ue.gov.ro/>

The online platform "EU opportunities" is an efficient tool for different beneficiaries to look for EU financing opportunities, for partners and for good practices that could be used to develop new ideas of potential projects. All the data and information are published in real time and presented in a proper way to be understandable for different type of beneficiary.

Good practice general information	
<b>Title of the practice</b>	<b>Online Platform for EU Opportunities</b>
<b>Organisation in charge of the good practice</b>	<b>Ministry of Investments and European Projects (MIPE)</b>
Description	
<b>Short summary of the practice</b>	A platform to facilitate the access and use of financial resources available under EU programmes and the exchange of best practice between beneficiaries.
<b>Detailed information on the Good practice</b>	The concept of centralizing information on funding from multiple sources emerged from the challenges associated with navigating disparate and often fragmented funding opportunities. The main problems that determined the creation of the on-line platform are: Multiplicity of Information Sources - Funding opportunities are often dispersed across various platforms or websites. This dispersion makes it difficult for applicants to find all relevant funding opportunities. Inconsistent availability of details, with some sources providing detailed descriptions and others offering only basic or partial details, further contributes to the need to have all the

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	<p>information in one place.</p> <p>Unstandardized and Technical Language - Different funding bodies often use imprecise terminology that can be difficult for non-experts to grasp. The presentation of financial resources can vary widely across various sources. Some might offer comprehensive guidelines, while others provide minimal information, leading to confusion and potential misinterpretation.</p> <p>To tackle these problems the online platform "EU opportunities" was developed which offers real-time promotion of funding opportunities, the possibility of exchanging good practices between beneficiaries, and facilitates a network for partners that meet to discuss funding opportunities.</p> <p>Main Stakeholders: National Contact Points, National Agencies, Management Authorities, Executive Agencies.</p> <p>Beneficiary: private entities, public entities, academia, research institutes, NGOs</p>
<p><b>Resources needed</b></p>	<p>The financial resources needed were of approximately 3,3 million euro.</p> <p>The human resources used to set up and to run the practice is ensured by a young team of 10 people, open to digitalization and communication.</p>
<p><b>Timescale (start/end date)</b></p>	<p>June 2023- present</p>
<p><b>Strategic relevance (long term impact)</b></p>	<p>The online platform generated a strong impact related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- increased accessibility: an inclusive process, attracting a broader range of applicants, including those who might have been previously unaware of certain opportunities;</li> <li>- enhanced transparency: providing standardized and clear information;</li> <li>- improved efficiency;</li> <li>- greater equity in funding access;</li> <li>- data and analytics on funding trends;</li> <li>- increased collaboration among funding bodies;</li> <li>- sustainability and innovation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Evidence of success (results achieved – tangibility, durability and visibility)</b></p>	<p>In the course of 2023, 912 calls were published, the platform becoming indisputably the most important engine of information regarding funding sources in Romania. The platform is automatically integrated into public call management systems, which are presented in a single, user-friendly interface. The visibility of the project was ensured through: 9 "Financing Info Monday" events, 75 events organized by the institutions of the EU and 540 news items regarding events of major importance.</p>
<p><b>Added Value (effectiveness, innovativeness and efficiency, quality, etc.)</b></p>	<p>The implementation of the EU Opportunities platform generated important achievements:</p> <p>unified access to a central hub offering diverse funding opportunities, providing a single, user-friendly interface, reducing</p>

	<p>the time and effort required to search across multiple sources;</p> <p>enhanced data integration from various funding sources: the platform has set a precedent for how to effectively aggregate and present complex information;</p> <p>presenting examples of good practices related to the areas of available funding;</p> <p>highlighting synergies and complementarities, maximizing the effectiveness of available funds in driving economic growth and development;</p> <p>identifying potential national partners or partners from EU Member States.</p> <p>Additionally, the platform offers innovative features by providing tools, connections and knowledge to facilitate the search for open calls and partners across national and international boundaries.</p>
<p><b>Potential for learning or transfer</b></p>	<p>One of the key features of the platform is its multilingual support, which further enhances its accessibility. Available in multiple languages, the platform allows users from different EU member states or regions to engage with the content in their native language, thus breaking down language barriers that might otherwise hinder participation.</p> <p>Overall, the practice demonstrates a holistic approach to managing and utilizing public calls and funding opportunities, making it a valuable model for other regions aiming to enhance their efficiency, collaboration, and innovation.</p>
<p><b>Further information</b></p>	<p><a href="https://oportunitati-ue.gov.ro/">https://oportunitati-ue.gov.ro/</a></p>

## 2.2. Sustaining local businesses, improving services and reducing administrative barriers



## 6. Smart support for start uppers in Umbria



Source: <https://smartup.sviluppumbria.it/>

SmartUp is a project financed by the Umbria Region and implemented by Sviluppumbria, aimed at supporting all phases of creating a start-up: identifying the idea, testing it, researching its commercial potential, and implementing the business idea.

SmartUp assigns experienced business advisors to accompany the start-up along its journey, including a mentor for the first year. The support services help new entrepreneurs overcome obstacles, write a business plan, find potential partners, and explore international markets.

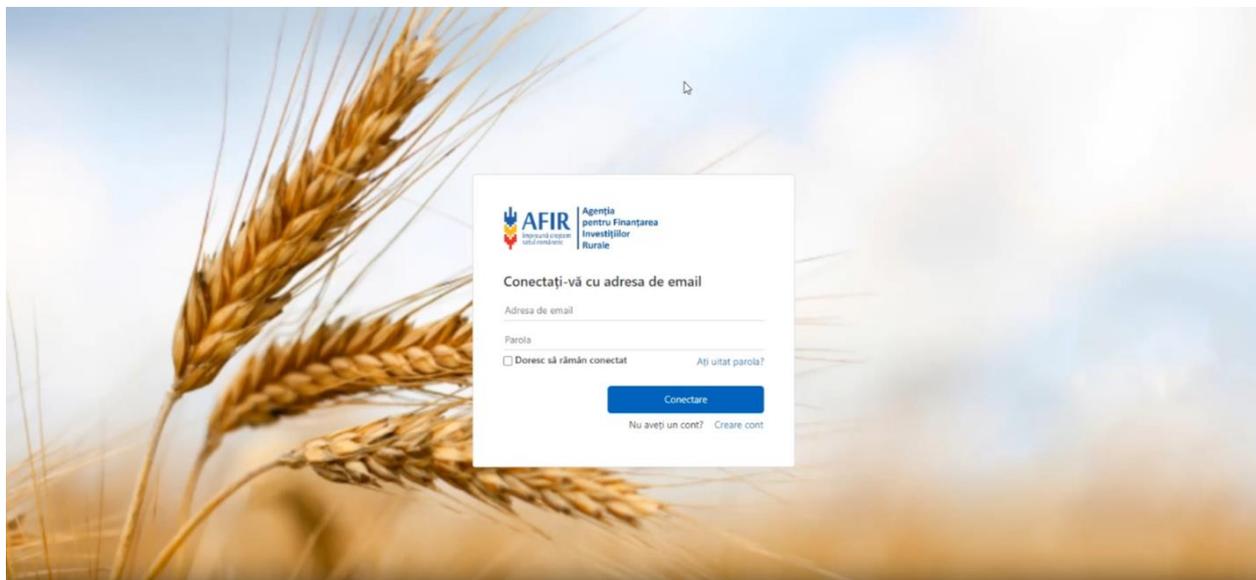
Good practice general information	
<b>Title of the practice</b>	Smart support for start uppers in Umbria
<b>Organisation in charge of the good practice</b>	Sviluppumbria
Description	
<b>Short summary of the practice</b>	Founding and growing a start-up isn't easy. SmartUp provides entrepreneurs with guidance and support.
<b>Detailed information on the Good practice</b>	In 2021 a call was launched to co-finance the business ideas developed through the SmartUp project. To help applicants fill in the paperwork, 5 mini videos were created and published on the SmartUp website. They show how to compile a Lean canvas, a tool to guide the entrepreneur in identifying a dozen different elements needed for her business plan. The Lean canvas is a required element in the grant application, because it demonstrates that the start-up has investigated not only the technological aspect of its idea but also its commercial potential and business strategy.  22 start-ups were co-financed at the end of the first SmartUp

	<p>project, which also provided a wider range of support over 12 months, with periodic meetings to track progress and accelerate achievable results, the Practical Academy for Innovation, an Investors' Forum to make "elevator pitches" to potential funders, and the option for start-ups to upload their videos describing the SmartUp experience in the website.</p>
<p><b>Resources needed</b></p>	<p>The business support experts and entrepreneur training for the SmartUp project cost 70,000€. There were additional costs for the technical tools needed, such as the website and videos, whose production cost 1,000€ each.</p> <p>The grants to co-finance the start-ups are not included in this calculation.</p>
<p><b>Timescale (start/end date)</b></p>	<p>First call launched in Dec. 2020, additional call announced in 2024</p>
<p><b>Strategic relevance (long term impact)</b></p>	<p>With a second call underway, SmartUp is already prolonging its initial impact. Innovative support for start-ups, such as the mentoring in SmartUp, is an ongoing priority for the Region, through its regional development agency, Sviluppumbria.</p> <p>Additional ways that extend the program's impact are the mini-videos, which are freely accessible to anyone interested, and guide the viewer through the Lean canvas process.</p> <p>Finally, the continued existence and scaling-up of successful SME participants contributes to the economic vibrancy of the region.</p>
<p><b>Evidence of success (results achieved – tangibility, durability and visibility)</b></p>	<p>6 startups financed through SmartUp participated in an Academy for Innovation along with 53 other SMEs from Umbria, and were testimonials of the Lean canvas tool, and the accompanying process of support done through videos.</p> <p>Another indicator of success is that the Region launched a second SmartUp in 2024, to continue to enrich the innovation enterprise community of Umbria. The same tools were used to support potential beneficiaries, including the 5 mini-videos.</p>
<p><b>Added Value (effectiveness, innovativeness and efficiency, quality, etc.)</b></p>	<p>The mini videos, and the possibility for start-uppers to share their own videos, opens the experience to a wider audience.</p> <p>The workshops and other training moments (the Practical Academy of Innovation) supports the growth and development of entrepreneurs with theoretical preparation for the real-world challenges to come.</p> <p>The Investors' Forum provided an additional opportunity for start-uppers to meet prospective investors and present their business ideas.</p>
<p><b>Potential for learning or transfer</b></p>	<p>Linking a program of business support services to grants that co-finance start-ups requires coordinating the activities and efforts of advisors who are already working in the SME support ecosystem. The entity managing grants would need to bring together Enterprise Europe Network partners, regional development agencies, Chambers of Commerce, business incubators and others already working to support entrepreneurs. The different stakeholders all</p>



	have an interest in nurturing start-ups, and the example of SmartUp provides an occasion to coordinate and oversee this ecosystem and amplify the impact on the territory.
<b>Further information</b>	<a href="https://smartup.sviluppumbria.it/">https://smartup.sviluppumbria.it/</a>

## 7. Digital Transformation of Workflows within the Leader Intervention at Managing Authority Level



Source: <https://depunerepac.afir.ro/Instruciuni/InstruciuniCreareCont>

MADR is funding, through the LEADER intervention, local development strategies to promote sustainable, integrated growth in specific areas. These strategies help communities develop harmoniously by addressing local needs, leveraging resources and balancing economic, social, and environmental goals.

Good practice general information	
<b>Title of the practice</b>	<b>Digital Transformation of Workflows within the Leader Intervention at Managing Authority Level</b>
<b>Organisation in charge of the good practice</b>	<b>Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR)</b>
Description	
<b>Short summary of the practice</b>	SMART PDFs streamline administrative procedures, improve the quality of public services and ensure efficient project implementation through IT systems.
<b>Detailed information on the Good practice</b>	<p>MADR is funding, through the LEADER intervention, local development strategies to promote sustainable, integrated growth in specific areas. These strategies help communities develop harmoniously by addressing local needs, leveraging resources and balancing economic, social, and environmental goals.</p> <p>For a more efficient process of financing these local development strategies the LEADER intervention has been digitized using the SMART pdf format, resulting in the following improvements:</p> <p>Less manual processing: applying for funding, tracking projects and meeting reporting requirements is less time-consuming and resource intensive. Before, document submissions, approvals and reporting were</p>

	<p>done manually leading to inefficiencies, delays and errors, especially with large volumes of paperwork.</p> <p>Improved transparency and accountability: the SMART pdf ensures better monitoring &amp; accountability. The traditional approach lacked real-time tracking, delaying the detection of issues and misuse of funds.</p> <p>Enhanced communication: SMART pdf improves coordination and goal alignment among multiple stakeholders, whereas before, the lack of centralized processes caused fragmented communication.</p> <p>The old system hindered real-time monitoring, delaying decisions and project improvements due to outdated data. Lacking up-to-date data, MADR struggled to adjust projects on time.</p> <p>Main Stakeholders and beneficiaries: Local Action Groups, local communities, small businesses and farmers.</p>
<p><b>Resources needed</b></p>	<p>The IT specialists from MADR provided the necessary human resources to run the practice. They developed and implemented the digitization functionality to ensure full operational capacity. This practice was developed internally and did not require any additional financial resources.</p>
<p><b>Timescale (start/end date)</b></p>	<p>December 2023 - present</p>
<p><b>Strategic relevance</b> (long term impact)</p>	<p>The process of submission, evaluation and selection of the Local Development Strategies generated a strong impact related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- improving efficiency of public services</li> <li>- optimization of work flows within the intervention</li> <li>- digitization of data bases related to the local development strategies</li> <li>- better communication and cooperation among different parties</li> <li>- sustainability and innovation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Evidence of success</b> (results achieved – tangibility, durability and visibility)</p>	<p>Between December 15, 2023 and January 22, 2024, the submission session of Local Development Strategies was held within DR-36 LEADER - Local development placed under the responsibility of the community, which resulted in 246 strategies with a 500 mil. EUR public value being submitted.</p> <p>The entire process of submission, evaluation and selection of the Local Development Strategies was digitized and done through a dedicated IT platform which reduced the administrative burden and made it easier for beneficiaries to access funding.</p>
<p><b>Added Value</b> (effectiveness, innovativeness and efficiency, quality, etc.)</p>	<p>The proposed solution focuses on digitizing work processes within MADR for the Strategic Plan 2023–2027. This digital-first approach significantly modernizes rural development initiatives, with key innovations such as:</p> <p>Complete Digitization: The submission, evaluation, and selection of local development strategies use a SMART pdf format, streamlining the funding process.</p> <p>IT Platforms: The system connects Local Action Groups to an IT platform, automating procedures.</p> <p>Automation and Integration: document downloads from authorities are handled through automatic processes, improving efficiency and</p>

	<p>accuracy.</p> <p>Collaboration Protocols: Direct access to public institution documents enhances transparency and reduces processing time.</p> <p>Online Submissions: Applications and evaluations are digital, with secure digital signatures.</p> <p>This practice is highly efficient and cost-effective for several reasons</p> <p>Internal Development: It uses existing human resources, avoiding external contractors or additional financial input, reducing costs while enhancing in-house expertise.</p> <p>Resource Optimization: By leveraging internal IT specialists, the organization demonstrates efficient resource management and self-sufficiency.</p> <p>Sustainability: Internal solutions are more sustainable long-term, allowing direct control over updates and maintenance without ongoing vendor costs.</p> <p>Customization and Flexibility: Tailored to the organization's specific needs, the solution offers flexibility to adapt or expand as necessary.</p>
<p><b>Potential for learning or transfer</b></p>	<p>This practice can serve as a strong solution for other regions for several reasons:</p> <p>Cost Efficiency: By utilizing internal IT resources, public institutions can digitize processes without additional financial burdens - a key factor for regions with limited budgets.</p> <p>Scalability and Adaptability: The flexible approach can be tailored to other regions' specific needs, allowing adjustments for changing conditions, and making it a scalable model.</p> <p>Self-Reliance: GP fosters self-reliance by investing in internal capabilities, creating long-term sustainability, and reducing dependence on external contractors.</p> <p>Improved Digital Infrastructure: This model promotes local digital infrastructure, offering a roadmap for efficient digital transformation with minimal external costs.</p> <p>This GP provides a valuable example for regions seeking cost-effective public service enhancements.</p>
<p><b>Further information</b></p>	<p><a href="https://depunerepac.afir.ro/Instructiuni/InstructiuniCreareCont">https://depunerepac.afir.ro/Instructiuni/InstructiuniCreareCont</a></p>

## 8. Gender based business supports to encourage engagement – Powerhouse Women in Business Network



Source: photography by Jim Schofield

By offering comprehensive support through various programs, the Powerhouse Women in Business Network creates an environment where female entrepreneurs can develop, grow and thrive. The combination of financial assistance, mentorship, training, support and partnerships creates greater engagement and active participation within the Powerhouse women in business network. This approach ensures that female entrepreneurs have the resources and opportunities they need to succeed, and therefore, encouraging more women to pursue and sustain entrepreneurial ventures.

Good practice general information	
<b>Title of the practice</b>	<b>Gender based business supports to encourage engagement – Powerhouse Women in Business Network</b>
<b>Organisation in charge of the good practice</b>	<b>Carlow County Council</b>
Description	
<b>Short summary of the practice</b>	Powerhouse Women in Business Network aims to create a strong support system through networking, workshops, and mentorship programmes that helps female entrepreneurs overcome barriers, grow their businesses, and achieve sustained success thereby encouraging more women to actively participate and engage in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

<p><b>Detailed information on the practice</b></p>	<p>Powerhouse Women in Business Network is an initiative designed to support and empower female entrepreneurs through a comprehensive range of activities and resources.</p> <p>The network offers their members access to financial support through grants from Carlow Local Enterprise Office. This financial backing helps women overcome initial funding barriers, enabling them. The network also offers mentorship programmes where experienced female business mentors are paired with emerging female entrepreneurs. These mentorship programmes provide invaluable guidance, support, and advice, helping new entrepreneurs navigate the challenges of running a business. Regular networking events, such as seminars, workshops, and training courses, are hosted to facilitate networking and knowledge sharing. These events create opportunities for female entrepreneurs to build relationships, share experiences, and collaborate on projects, thereby creating a supportive community to start or expand their ventures.</p> <p>Workshops and training events on essential business skills, leadership development, and industry-specific knowledge are provided to the members of Powerhouse Women in Business Network. These workshops are designed to equip female entrepreneurs with the tools and skills they need to succeed and grow in their businesses.</p> <p>The network highlights the achievements of female entrepreneurs through The Powerhouse Awards. These awards celebrate success stories and provide role models for aspiring female business owners. Powerhouse Awards finalists are promoted through various media channels. This visibility helps to inspire and motivate other women to pursue entrepreneurial ventures and showcases the potential of female-led businesses.</p> <p>By offering comprehensive support through these various programmes, the Powerhouse Women in Business Network creates an environment where female entrepreneurs can develop, grow and thrive. The combination of financial assistance, mentorship, training, support and partnerships creates greater engagement and active participation within the Powerhouse women in business network. This approach ensures that female entrepreneurs have the resources and opportunities they need to succeed, and therefore, encourages more women to pursue and sustain entrepreneurial ventures.</p>
<p><b>Resources needed</b></p>	<p>The programme is managed by a staff member of the Local Enterprise Office.</p> <p>The Powerhouse Women in Business Network relies primarily on funding from the Carlow County Council Local Enterprise Office, which allocates an annual budget of approximately €35,000 to support its initiatives.</p>
<p><b>Timescale (start/end date)</b></p>	<p>February 2022 – Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Evidence of success (results achieved)</b></p>	<p>Since the introduction of Powerhouse Women in Business Network in 2022, the number of female entrepreneurs in our network has increased by 300%. This growth is evidenced by our monthly network events.</p> <p>Female entrepreneurs have reported a revenue increase of 71% since</p>

	<p>the existence of the Powerhouse women (2022) in business network. A recent survey conducted in 2024 by the Powerhouse Women in Business Network has highlighted significant achievements among its participants, particularly in the area of international business expansion with one now exporting their services to three European countries. This business used the network's resources, including mentorship, funding, and exporters programme to navigate their way to international trade.</p> <p>It is also evident from the survey that the employment growth over the last two years have made a massive difference to each business with 50 new jobs created with the support of financial training and advisory supports through the network.</p> <p>Female entrepreneurs have access to grant aid through the Local Enterprise Office to develop and grow their business with approximately €150,000 awarded in grant aid towards capital costs, salary and consultancy costs. This grant aid has been crucial in scaling their businesses. Other financial aid awarded through the Local Enterprise Office has been Trading Online Vouchers in the sum of €120,000 to build a website, IT consultations and digital marketing strategies.</p> <p>The Powerhouse Women in Business Network recently collaborated with Kilkenny Local Enterprise Office and Carlow Local Enterprise Office to implement initiatives such as the EmpowerHER Business Builder Programme. This program is strategically crafted to inspire female entrepreneurs to embrace lean principles within their enterprises, enhancing productivity, boost sales, improve performance and heighten competitiveness.</p> <p>The Annual Powerhouse Awards have been a platform for honouring dedicated and hardworking female entrepreneurs. Since its establishment in 2022, the Powerhouse Awards have received 163 applications across seven categories, celebrating the achievements, hard work, and business successes of these inspiring women.</p>
<p><b>Challenges encountered (optional)</b></p>	<p>Managing a growing network increases challenges of ensuring the network continues to meet the needs of the members.</p> <p>As the network continues to grow and increase, it will add to the challenge of creating a sustainable model that allows the network to continue to operate well into the future.</p> <p>Another challenge is the succession planning for future facilitators and not to lose the essence of the network.</p>
<p><b>Potential for learning or transfer</b></p>	<p>Promoting engagement in entrepreneurship, especially regarding gender equality, is an important matter. Women often encounter obstacles and barriers when seeking resources, mentorship, and networking events. Tackling these barriers is pivotal for creating diversity and inclusivity within the business world. The Powerhouse women in business network stands out as an exemplary model of effective gender-based business support system. Established with a distinct goal of empowering female entrepreneurship, this network offers tailored business assistance, including funding opportunities, mentorship initiatives, and specialised training workshops.</p>

	<p>Ensuring the proactive management and effective communication of the Powerhouse Brand are essential for the Network's success. The Powerhouse women in business network prioritise activities that steer clear of stereotyping females into traditional roles. Instead, the focus is on initiatives that support professional growth and showcase a diverse range of interests and capabilities. Effective brand management plays a crucial role in building trust with the members. By spotlighting the members' achievements and promoting them through the Powerhouse Awards, this can attract new members and ensure that the network is respected and valued within the business community.</p> <p>Ensuring effective stakeholder engagement is crucial for the network's success. While network members represent one group, others also play a significant role in extending the network's reach and impact. Specifically organised events like International Women Day and National Women's Enterprise Day offer stakeholders a platform to engage with the network through panel discussions, creating collaboration, sharing resources, and enhancing visibility. The Chief Executive's encouragement to explore partnerships with female students in secondary schools to expand the network's reach to a younger audience, empowering women from an early age. Additionally, the Powerhouse Network collaborates with other stakeholders on initiatives such as EmpowerHER programme - a management development program in collaboration with Kilkenny County Council. This program aims to equip female entrepreneurs with lean principles to enhance productivity, increase sales, improve performance, and boost competitiveness in their businesses. Powerhouse women in business network collaborates with Network Ireland Carlow, to further support women in business. Through this collaboration, members gain access to a broader network of professionals and industry insights, enhancing their professional growth and business success.</p> <p>The scheduling of the network's events is carefully chosen to align with the network's objectives and to provide value to the members. Skill-building workshops deliver training sessions on essential competencies such as negotiation, cash flow management, and public speaking. Additionally, scheduled guest speakers offer valuable insights, discuss trends, and share personal experiences to create female empowerment and leadership development.</p>
<p>Further information</p>	<p><a href="https://www.localenterprise.ie/Carlow/">https://www.localenterprise.ie/Carlow/</a></p>

## **2.3. Promoting digital transformation and innovation**



## 9. Digital for Business - Using Digital Vouchers to assist SME's to build a pathway for Support



Source: photographed by Finbarr O'Rourke

Small businesses need to maximise every advantage - and implementing a digital strategy can give businesses a real edge. Digital for Business is designed to give Local Enterprise Office-funded clients a digital edge - from optimising processes to delivering a seamless digital customer experience. The aim is to help businesses prepare and implement a plan for the adoption of digital tools and techniques across the business.

Good practice general information	
<b>Title of the practice</b>	<b>Digital for Business – Using Digital Vouchers to assist SME's to build a pathway for Support</b>
<b>Organisation in charge of the good practice</b>	<b>Carlow County Council</b>
Description	
<b>Short summary of the practice</b>	Digital for Business provides support to allow micro-businesses obtain digital strategy, technical and/or advisory services to progress their digital journey.
<b>Detailed information on the practice</b>	Digital for Business provides support to obtain digital strategy, technical and/or advisory services for eligible businesses. Our expert digital consultants help to develop a unique digital strategy that transforms businesses by identifying where they are on their digital business journey, developing a digital adaptation plan based on their identified needs and assisting them to implement their digital plan. It

	<p>prioritises areas like business process optimisation, enhancing the digital customer experience or utilising data better.</p> <p>Eligible businesses are encouraged to apply to the Local Enterprise Office for participation on the programme. Businesses who are accepted are matched with a consultant who will support the business to develop a digital roadmap to transform their business processes or client offerings. Following completion of the assignment, the participant business has the option of applying to the Local Enterprise Office for financial aid to assist with the costs of implementing the digital strategy.</p>
<b>Resources needed</b>	<p>The programme is managed by a staff member of the Local Enterprise Office.</p> <p>Each assignment has a cost of €3,600 and the Local Enterprise Office has a budget to deliver 8 assignments annually.</p>
<b>Timescale (start/end date)</b>	Ongoing
<b>Evidence of success (results achieved)</b>	<p>This good practice encourages and supports the adoption of digital strategies in micro-enterprises to allow them to face the challenges of the 21st century. Each project includes a report written by the delivering consultant outlining the digital history of the business and the proposed digital solutions to current challenges. This report is then used by the Local Enterprise Office to develop a framework for implementation with the client, often involving the provision of financial support to assist this implementation.</p>
<b>Potential for learning or transfer</b>	<p>The digital transition is an issue determining the rate of business growth across Europe. Micro-enterprises have been particularly slow to embrace digitalisation. The European Investment Bank has found that only 30% of micro-enterprises in Europe prioritise digitalisation compared to 62% of large firms.</p> <p>The Digital for Business programme is an example of good practice which addresses the challenges of digitalisation in micro-enterprises in a manner which could be adopted and replicated across Europe. Digital for Business has provided micro-enterprises in Carlow with access to expertise which has assisted them to develop benchmarks measuring their current levels of digital engagement, identify opportunities which could arise through effective digitalisation and develop a strategy to implement interventions to open themselves to these opportunities. This model could be adopted by agencies providing supports to micro-enterprises in any country in Europe.</p>
<b>Further information</b>	<p><a href="https://www.localenterprise.ie/Carlow/Financial-Supports/Digital-Start/">https://www.localenterprise.ie/Carlow/Financial-Supports/Digital-Start/</a></p>

## 10. Entrepreneurship workshops at the ApiLab Innovation Technology Centre



Source: <https://www.hisakranjskecebele.si/en/>

The ApiLab Innovation Technology Centre – the Carniolan Bee House is a business epicentre for the local community, the region and the country. It is a bridge between heritage, tradition and innovative economy. It is a space of new ideas and success stories. SMEs can take advantage of ApiLab's brand-new technologies and approaches to develop new insights and design advanced solutions.

Good practice general information	
<b>Title of the practice</b>	<b>Entrepreneurship workshops at the ApiLab Innovation Technology Centre</b>
<b>Organisation in charge of the good practice</b>	<b>Public Institute for Culture and Tourism Nice and homely Ivančna Gorica</b>
Description	
<b>Short summary of the practice</b>	Workshops with local SMEs.
<b>Detailed information on the Good practice</b>	Although it has some features of a coworking space, such as 3D printers available for use, ApiLab's fundamental purpose is to serve the SME community. It was created in 2021 in response to different needs of local SMEs and since then, it has organized regular free

	<p>workshops and events discussing entrepreneurship topics for local businesses. ApiLab has evolved into a hub where entrepreneurs can get support from the local environment, training, events, gatherings, and protocol events. Every event also promotes local cultural and natural heritage and local SMEs.</p> <p>The focus of workshops is wide-ranging: Lobbying as the art of the future; The key to succeeding in family business; Creation and development of a startup - the difference compared to a “normal” company; Working in a toxic society - how to be successful in spite of it; Entrepreneurs’ Chat; Persuasive communication; How to design a good brand; ABC of communication in the business world; Labor law legislation and internal control in employment process; The Art of Talent Management - Leadership skills to leverage and inspire talent.</p>
<p><b>Resources needed</b></p>	<p>70,000 EUR per year covering the costs of ApiLab staff and for the external experts presenting the workshops. There is 1 person working for ApiLab as technical support. Since ApiLab is located in the Carniolan Bee House it is interlaced with the Bee House and supported by Bee House staff (head of the Bee House and CEO of the Public Institute for Culture and Tourism Nice and Homely Ivančna Gorica).</p>
<p><b>Timescale (start/end date)</b></p>	<p>2021 - ongoing</p>
<p><b>Strategic relevance (long term impact)</b></p>	<p>The local community can be an excellent resource for real, actionable information about how to improve business. Meeting others who might be going through similar challenges is an important step towards not only improving business practices but also making local organizations more aware of what steps it can take to help businesses and be an advocate.</p> <p>Workshops with different lecturers allow business owners to gain new knowledge, to learn and pose questions and gain valuable feedback.</p> <p>Knowing what is going on in your community and the businesses around you is crucial for both improving your business and providing a community for local business owners.</p>
<p><b>Evidence of success (results achieved)</b></p>	<p>24 FREE workshops and events with different topics have been organised for local business owners in ApiLab since 2021.</p>
<p><b>Added Value</b></p>	<p>Not every good practice is suitable for every environment. It is important to understand the state of local economy and its most important needs. The biggest quality of this practice is that it is an answer to real needs of local business owners.</p>
<p><b>Potential for learning or transfer</b></p>	<p>The heart of this good practice is two-way communication and active listening. Topics for seminars come from the bottom up: ApiLab listens to the needs expressed by entrepreneurs and responds to those actual needs, which can have a great impact in improving local businesses. And because it is simple, it also has significant learning potential and can easily be adopted by other local authorities interested in supporting their SMEs through practical, useful workshops and seminars on many aspects of running a business.</p>
<p><b>Further information</b></p>	<p><a href="https://www.hisakranjskecebele.si/en/#s5">https://www.hisakranjskecebele.si/en/#s5</a> and <a href="https://www.hisakranjskecebele.si/aktualno/">https://www.hisakranjskecebele.si/aktualno/</a></p>

## 2.4. Improving communication, dissemination and awareness rising



## 11. Regular meetings between SMEs and local authority



Source: <https://www.ivancna-gorica.si/>

Local governments play a key role in creating conditions for business development. They are responsible for physical infrastructure – roads, water supply, waste management, ICT, necessary prerequisites to economic activity. Business growth drives demand for space, electricity, and personnel, which are also key directions for the activities of the municipal administration.

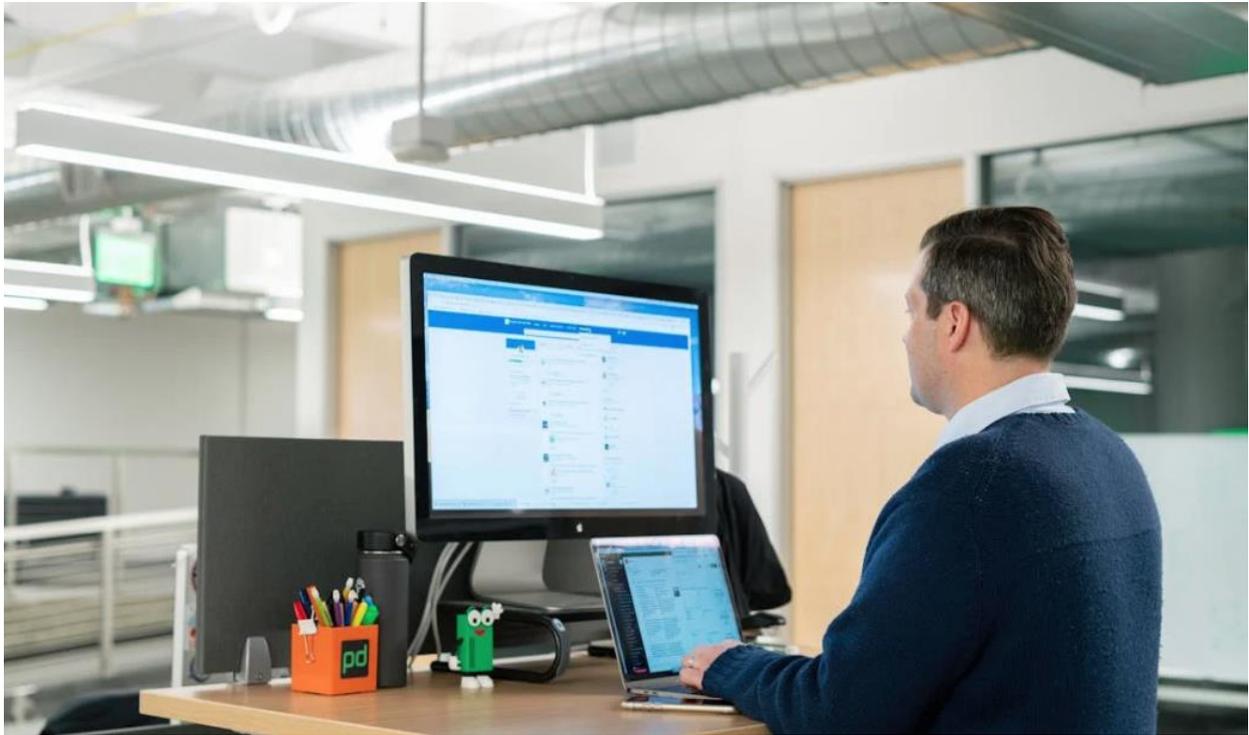
Because of these interconnections, Municipality Ivančna Gorica decided to establish regular meetings between SMEs and the mayor, in order to better understand and communicate their needs and potentials. The meetings were held quarterly, i.e. 4 times per year, where the Municipality introduced entrepreneurs to current information and, together with them, looked for solutions for the further development of the economy.

Good practice general information	
<b>Title of the practice</b>	<b>Regular meetings between SMEs and local authority</b>
<b>Organisation in charge of the good practice</b>	<b>Municipality Ivančna Gorica</b>
Description	
<b>Short summary of the practice</b>	Regular meetings between SMEs and local authority in order to better understand and communicate their needs and potentials.

<p><b>Detailed information on the Good practice</b></p>	<p>Starting in 2012 the Municipality Ivančna Gorica set up quarterly meetings between 22 SMEs and the mayor, to better understand and communicate their needs and potentials. At these meetings the Municipality updated entrepreneurs on current information and worked jointly for solutions for the further development of the economy.</p> <p>Over time, this bilateral communication led to an increase in the town's electricity capacity, so some industrial businesses could increase their production (and energy demand) without causing brownouts. Another output was the development of a new industrial zone.</p> <p>SMEs told the mayor that they needed to meet trade partners. As a result, several events and trainings were organized. The biggest event was a fair for local businesses from Slovenia and Germany in 2012, offering a platform for growth, learning, and networking. 70 SMEs took part and so did the Slovene prime minister and the president of the Slovene-German Chamber of Commerce.</p> <p>The city also organized a visit of SMEs to its sister municipality Hirschaid (Germany) in 2012 to network and make new connections.</p>
<p><b>Resources needed</b></p>	<p>70,000 EUR per year for lectures, consultations, training, networking and other types of events for SMEs.</p>
<p><b>Timescale (start/end date)</b></p>	<p>01/01/2012 - 31/12/2020</p>
<p><b>Strategic relevance (long term impact)</b></p>	<p>As a result of this good practice, the economic development of the community increased, and a more favorable environment for doing business, creating jobs, and replenishing the budget was created.</p> <p>In 2022 there were 1.500 business entities in Municipality Ivančna Gorica compared to approx. 1.000 business entities in 2012.</p> <p>In 2022 Total revenue of companies in Municipality Ivančna Gorica exceeded 600 mio EUR, compared to 300 mio EUR in 2012.</p> <p>The number of employees or self-employed persons in Municipality Ivančna Gorica increased from 3.900 in 2012 to 6.000 in 2022.</p> <p>From the above data we can make a conclusion that recovery after COVID-19 crisis was very good in Municipality Ivančna Gorica.</p>
<p><b>Evidence of success (results achieved)</b></p>	<p>Direct, regular communication allowed the Municipality of Ivančna Gorica and SMEs to set and work toward shared priorities such as the need for greater electrical capacity, which is a significant challenge. Increased energy capacity eliminated a limit on industrial production and prevented the risk of brownouts to the town's residents and businesses. The construction of a new industrial zone also promoted business growth. Events such as the "Fair and trade mission" were organized to meet SME requests for new contacts.</p>
<p><b>Added Value</b></p>	<p>Through the meetings, the mayor presented large municipal investment projects, which were also an opportunity for the local</p>

	economy, as entrepreneurs and craftsmen could apply for public tenders for contractors, especially in the field of construction of sewers, water supply and road infrastructure.
<b>Potential for learning or transfer</b>	This good practice is potentially interesting for local authorities of other regions of Europe. The nature of the good practice extends to its adaptability, as this approach can be easily transferred to other local authorities.
<b>Further information</b>	<a href="https://www.ivančna-gorica.si/">https://www.ivančna-gorica.si/</a>

## 12. Creating Experience Based Video Content as a way of communicating to clients using LinkedIn



Source: Pexels.com

In the rapidly evolving landscape of digital communication, LinkedIn has emerged as a powerful platform for enterprise development agencies to network, share insights, and connect with clients. Among the myriads of content formats available, video has become increasingly popular due to its ability to convey complex ideas in a concise and engaging manner. In particular, experience-based video content offers a unique opportunity for enterprise development agencies to communicate with clients effectively.

Good practice general information	
<b>Title of the practice</b>	<b>Creating Experience Based Video Content as a way of communicating to clients using LinkedIn</b>
<b>Organisation in charge of the good practice</b>	<b>Carlow County Council</b>
Description	
<b>Short summary of the practice</b>	Creating Experience Based Video Content as a way of communicating to clients using LinkedIn.
<b>Detailed information on the practice</b>	In the rapidly evolving landscape of digital communication, LinkedIn has emerged as a powerful platform for enterprise development agencies to network, share insights, and connect with clients. Among the myriads of content formats available, video has become increasingly popular due to its ability to convey complex ideas in a concise and engaging manner. In particular, experience-based video content offers a unique

	<p>opportunity for enterprise development agencies to communicate with clients effectively.</p> <p>Experience-based video content revolves around showcasing development agencies' activities and supports in a means that are accessible and understandable. By leveraging this approach on LinkedIn, enterprise development agencies can establish credibility, build trust, and foster meaningful connections with their target audience.</p> <p>The Local Enterprise Office in Carlow County Council utilises experience-based video content as a key communications tool to develop two-way engagement with its client base. Staff of the Local Enterprise Office record short videos of 90-120 seconds in duration which are then uploaded to their personal LinkedIn accounts and the organisational LinkedIn account. The staff member speaks in the video to highlight a specific Local Enterprise Office support or activity and issues a 'call to action' encouraging client engagement with the service or activity.</p> <p>The videos foster client engagement through likes, comments and sharing. The majority of LinkedIn activity takes place on mobile devices and the use of mobile phones to record the videos optimises the suitability of the video for the user experience.</p> <p>This experience-based video content offers a dynamic and impactful way to communicate with clients on LinkedIn. The videos embrace authenticity, humanise the Local Enterprise Office brand, provide educational value and foster interactive engagement. Enterprise development agencies can leverage the power of video to strengthen client relationships, drive engagement, and achieve agency objectives in the digital age.</p>
<p><b>Resources needed</b></p>	<p>The programme is managed by staff members of the Local Enterprise Office.</p> <p>The videos are recorded using standard mobile phones and 'selfie sticks'. Canva is utilised to provide frames and captions for the videos.</p>
<p><b>Timescale (start/end date)</b></p>	<p>Ongoing 2021 - Currently</p>
<p><b>Evidence of success (results achieved)</b></p>	<p>This good practice encourages and supports the adoption of digital video techniques by enterprise development agencies to communicate about services and activities with clients.</p> <p>Ongoing analysis of social media posting conducted by the Local Enterprise Office in Carlow County Council shows that experience-based video content garners one of the highest levels of client viewership and interaction compared to other forms of social media engagement undertaken by the office.</p>
<p><b>Potential for learning or transfer</b></p>	<p>This activity developed by the Local Enterprise Office in Carlow County Council serves as a compelling best practice model for other enterprise</p>

	<p>development agencies across Europe seeking to enhance their client communication strategies through digital platforms like LinkedIn.</p> <p>The example underscores the recognition of LinkedIn as a powerful platform for enterprise development agencies to network, share insights, and connect with clients. This realisation serves as a starting point for other agencies to explore and harness the potential of LinkedIn for their own communication efforts. By emphasising the effectiveness of video content in conveying complex ideas in a concise and engaging manner, the example encourages other agencies to prioritise the creation of video content. This includes recognising the unique opportunity presented by experience-based video content in effectively communicating agency activities and supports.</p> <p>Ultimately, the example demonstrates how leveraging video content on LinkedIn can contribute to achieving agency objectives such as strengthening client relationships and driving engagement. This outcome serves as a tangible demonstration of the effectiveness of digital communication strategies in the modern age. The experience-based video content strategy employed by the Local Enterprise Office in Carlow County Council offers valuable insights and best practices for other enterprise development agencies in Europe. By learning from this example and adapting similar approaches, agencies can enhance their client communication efforts, foster meaningful connections and achieve their objectives in the digital landscape.</p>
<p><b>Further information</b></p>	<p><a href="https://www.localenterprise.ie/Carlow/">https://www.localenterprise.ie/Carlow/</a></p>

### 13.Podcast - Entrepreneurial ability and skills



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/@LIAALatvia>

When trying to promote the motivation of natural persons to start their own business, it was always found that SMEs have encountered various challenges, which in most cases are similar and therefore relevant for most new companies. These challenges are not always related to the lack of initial capital or investment, but are often relatively simple things - where to look for professional knowledge, what documentation must be provided to comply with the requirements of regulatory acts, how to find or save time, how much resources are needed, bureaucratic burden to ensure the stated requirements, etc. Is the lack of knowledge and experience the reason why companies do not develop and stagnate, thus not realizing successful and viable business ideas. To find answers to these and similar questions that are relevant for new companies, the idea to create a podcast series "Entrepreneurial ability and skills" was created and implemented in the Jelgava business incubator.

Good practice general information	
<b>Title of the practice</b>	Podcast - Entrepreneurial ability and skills
<b>Organisation in charge of the good practice</b>	Latvian Investment and Development Agency (LIAA) Business incubator
Description	
<b>Short summary of the practice</b>	The LIAA Business Incubator podcast, <i>Entrepreneurial ability and skills</i> , highlights brave and purposeful individuals who have proven themselves in business despite having little prior experience.

<p><b>Detailed information on the practice:</b></p>	<p>The main purpose of these podcasts was to encourage and motivate people to develop their entrepreneurial skills by listening to stories about the challenges that other entrepreneurs have faced. The information in the podcasts was presented in an easy-to-understand way, reflecting examples of good practice, while avoiding cumbersome bureaucratic explanations of details that were long and hard to understand.</p> <p>A significant amount of work went into the podcasting process to identify topics of interest to entrepreneurs. A large number of SMEs were addressed in the form of a survey. The podcast guests were asked questions that are particularly relevant to SMEs on specific topics. The choice of guests was determined by the industries they represented and the areas in which these entrepreneurs were strong. The charisma of entrepreneurs also played a big factor in the choice of podcast guests, as it was important that the narrative be delivered in a positive, understandable and also exciting language.</p> <p>All podcast videos were published on the LIAA YouTube channel. The first video was published on November 29, 2021.</p>
<p><b>Resources needed</b></p>	<p>LIAA Jelgava Business Incubator specialists put a lot of work into the creation of each podcast, conducting surveys, creating scenes and filming materials. The only material investment required was the purchase of three appropriate microphones, which were purchased from the funds provided in the project. The rest of the resources for creating podcasts were already at the business incubator's disposal - the business incubator's premises, a camera for filming, equipment for video editing and existing employees.</p> <p>The biggest cost in podcasting was staff costs. One employee was involved – a Senior Project Manager. It was the employee's initiative and took place during working hours. He received a bonus of approximately 15% of his salary.</p>
<p><b>Timescale (start/end date)</b></p>	<p>The podcast was published from November 29, 2021 to March 14, 2023.</p>
<p><b>Evidence of success (results achieved)</b></p>	<p>The two biggest benefits people (not just SMEs) got from these podcasts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. answers to questions that are important to them and their business, directly from the experience of other entrepreneurs, for example, what should be taken into account when entering export markets or developing a product, etc.;</li> <li>2. motivation and inspiration, which was a great benefit not only for entrepreneurs, but also for individuals who are still thinking about opening their own business.</li> </ol> <p>The podcast perfectly outlined that entrepreneurship is engaging and interesting, full of opportunities and discoveries. Thus, existing entrepreneurs could get additional motivation, and natural persons, on the other hand, could think about the possibility of starting their own business.</p>

<p><b>Strategic relevance (long term impact)</b></p>	<p>This approach significantly raises the level of awareness of SMEs and natural persons and increases the opportunities to obtain additional information about the opportunities to receive additional financing for business development, renovation, relocation, thus contributing to the improvement of the economic development of the region as a whole.</p> <p>Such an approach opens the horizon, gives inspiration and dispels doubts.</p> <p>Judging by the increase in the number of views of the podcasts, it can be concluded that they are still being watched on YouTube, which ensures their long-term influence.</p>
<p><b>Added Value (effectiveness, innovativeness and efficiency, quality, etc.)</b></p>	<p>The podcast received positive feedback from both SMEs and individuals.</p>
<p><b>Potential for learning or transfer</b></p>	<p>This practice is potentially interesting both for SMEs individually and for society as a whole, it is undeniably transferable, as SMEs will also need additional financing, training, organizational support and simplification of business procedures in the future.</p> <p>Under the influence of this practice, the economic development of the community increases, a more favourable environment is created for business, especially when applied to young SMEs, for creating jobs and, accordingly, supplementing the state budget.</p> <p>The innovative nature of the practice proves its adaptability, as this approach can be easily transferred to other ideas, thus always ensuring its relevance.</p>
<p><b>Further information</b></p>	<p>Podcast videos are posted on YouTube:  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSwqkq1HYbU&amp;list=PL-GAjBmq_k4pjd5KyFj2_qZbKuep5QL83&amp;index=1">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSwqkq1HYbU&amp;list=PL-GAjBmq_k4pjd5KyFj2_qZbKuep5QL83&amp;index=1</a></p>

## 2.5. Promoting employment and entrepreneurial skills



### 13. Mentor for business growth



Source: <https://www.mentorsbiznesaizaugsmei.lv/par-programmu/>

The LIAA program "Mentors for Business Growth" was created within the framework of the LIAA Business Incubation Support Program and is intended for incubation and pre-incubation merchants. The program provides an opportunity for "knowledge seekers", in this case, entrepreneurs, and "knowledge carriers" or mentors to cooperate for the meaningful transfer/reception of information and skills for the purpose of professional development. The program is based on the principle of voluntariness - professionals in mentoring, as well as specialists of specific industries, who are ready to devote 10 hours of their time over half a year, are invited to join, providing support to the participants of the program.

Good practice general information	
<b>Title of the practice</b>	<b>Mentor for business growth</b>
<b>Organisation in charge of the good practice</b>	<b>Latvian Investment and Development Agency (LIAA) Business incubator</b>
Description	
<b>Short summary of the practice</b>	The "Mentors for Business Growth" program organized by LIAA regional offices is about the transfer of knowledge between entrepreneurs and industry professionals in order to help participants overcome business challenges, make strategic decisions, and become global industry leaders with mentoring tools.

<p><b>Detailed information on the practice:</b></p>	<p><b>A mentor</b> is an experienced advisor, most often an entrepreneur (or specialist in the field) with specific and professional knowledge in a specific issue related to business development, who guides and supports a less experienced mentee by sharing knowledge and personal skills. The role of the mentor is to promote the mentee's personal and/or professional development.</p> <p>Most often, mentors are persons with longer and "brighter" experience in the field of business than the mentee, however, this is not a determining factor. Mainly a mentor is characterized by a person who has practical personal experience in solving specific problems.</p> <p>Participation in this program can be a valuable benefit for mentors as well - it is an opportunity to develop management and communication skills, gain a new perspective, improve personal and professional development, expand circle of professional contacts, inspiration and satisfaction.</p> <p><b>A mentee</b> is a person who receives support from a mentor. The main motivation of the mentee is to solve a problem/need for the further development of the company, while also gaining personal and professional growth.</p> <p>In order to promote the successful operation of the mentor program, descriptions of the processes of the mentor program, visualizations and video recordings "Business development cycle", "Mentors for business growth-guide" have been developed, which allow both potential mentors and mentees to assess their opportunities and needs in a perceptible way.</p>
<p><b>Resources needed</b></p>	<p>The mentoring program "MENTORS FOR BUSINESS GROWTH" was created within the existing capacity and resources of LIAA regional representation specialists.</p> <p>All mentors participate in the program voluntarily and without remuneration.</p>
<p><b>Timescale (start/end date)</b></p>	<p>The mentoring program "MENTORS FOR BUSINESS GROWTH" was launched and the opening event took place on December 3, 2024.</p>
<p><b>Evidence of success (results achieved)</b></p>	<p>Such an approach raises the level of awareness of SMEs in the incubation and pre-incubation period and helps them overcome business challenges and make strategic decisions. Such an approach helps to identify the problems of SMEs, set goals, maintain focus, identify resources and search for solutions. It allows to open horizons, gives inspiration and dispels doubts.</p>
<p><b>Strategic relevance (long term impact)</b></p>	<p>At the moment, it is not possible to assess the long-term impact of the mentor program, because the mentor program was launched on December 3, 2024. The mentoring support program is still ongoing.</p>
<p><b>Added Value (effectiveness, innovativeness and efficiency, quality, etc.)</b></p>	<p>The mentor program received positive feedback from both SMEs and the mentors themselves.</p>

<b>Potential for learning or transfer</b>	<p>LIAA representative offices provide consultations and support for all LIAA programs and services throughout Latvia, and cooperate with partners and companies in attracting investments. Representative offices also organize various events for the growth of entrepreneurs and promotion of cooperation. In all representative offices, co-creation rooms are also available for anyone interested.</p> <p>The mentor program is available in 20 regional offices of LIAA in various cities of Latvia, as well as in the office of Creative Industries and Technologies in Riga.</p>
<b>Further information</b>	Additional information: <a href="https://www.mentorsbiznesaizaugsmei.lv/">https://www.mentorsbiznesaizaugsmei.lv/</a>

## 14. Programme to support self-employment of unemployed persons



Source: <https://trebinje.rs.ba/javni-poziv-za-samozaposljavanje/>

The lack of entrepreneurial experience reduces options for employment, innovation and economic growth. Trebinje authorities responded with a programme offering grants and technical support for unemployed people to generate innovative ideas and start their own businesses.

Good practice general information	
<b>Title of the practice</b>	<b>Programme to support self-employment of unemployed persons</b>
<b>Organisation in charge of the good practice</b>	<b>City of Trebinje</b>
Description	
<b>Short summary of the practice</b>	Widely promoted replicable programme offering grants and technical support to unemployed people to start their own businesses and generate innovative ideas.
<b>Detailed information on the Good practice</b>	This call is publicized through the City of Trebinje and Tredea (Development Agency of City of Trebinje) websites, social networks, info boards and media. A characteristic of this programme is that authorities also communicate directly with potential beneficiaries throughout the process to increase mutual understanding.  The call funds new businesses through grants to people registered at the employment service, prioritizing innovative ideas and people

	<p>from vulnerable groups. Tredea provides them with technical support to prepare and develop business plans, and other practical advice.</p> <p>Funds are paid in 3 stages: 60% after contract signature, 25% at the start of year 2, and 15% after end of year 2. Successful applicants must ensure investment of 50% of the first payment for means of work (e.g. equipment), their own regular employment and running the business for 2 years.</p>
<b>Resources needed</b>	<p>Resources to prepare and implement the programme are up to 600,000€ annually (amount for 2024), depending on expected interest. Most of preparation is done by City of Trebinje and TREDEA with up to 10 people engaged during 3 months/year.</p>
<b>Timescale (start/end date)</b>	<p>2017 - ongoing</p>
<b>Strategic relevance (long term impact)</b>	<p>In the longer term, entrepreneurs funded by the programme will improve their competitive position and increase their ability to access other available funds because of the experience, knowledge and skills gained.</p> <p>The programme also promotes cooperation of SMEs with public sector and international partners because of their positive experience in this initial, relatively simple programme. Another expected benefit is an increased interest in other programmes, including EU-funded ones.</p> <p>By supporting the creation of new businesses, the programme can lower the unemployment rate and prevent the outflow of a quality labour force.</p> <p>Increasing the number and variety of SMEs positively affects overall economic growth in the wider community.</p>
<b>Evidence of success (results achieved)</b>	<p>Results over 8 years show the value and efficiency of the practice. About 40% of beneficiaries continue with activities after the 2-year commitment set by the programme. 228 people have become self-employed or employed, lowering the unemployment rate.</p>
<b>Added Value</b>	<p>This good practice provides an opportunity for SMEs and unemployed people to gain knowledge and funds for innovative ideas and businesses. The community benefits from new businesses, economic growth and lower unemployment. The innovative approach fosters close cooperation of traditionally opposed sectors and wide promotion involving modern channels and direct bilateral communications. It strengthens mutual trust and creates space for further actions. The good practice has its own methodology to impose transparency and quality which is thoroughly checked by the selection committee. Overall, it represents the opportunity to exchange experiences and share the good practice as a whole with interested parties.</p>
<b>Potential for learning or transfer</b>	<p>This good practice represents a way for authorities to support the economic growth of their communities. Key elements include mutual understanding and direct communication with existing or future</p>

	<p>SMEs from the beginning of the process which creates a very firm foundation for qualitative cooperation in the future. The good practice relies on an open and transparent information flow, using modern means such as email and social media.</p> <p>The programme has been modified and adjusted each year according to lessons learned from previous experiences, the estimated need and the information from involved stakeholders, including potential co-financing. Information is collected through the monitoring process and feedback from beneficiaries, and also from the people involved, which is the basis for findings and recommendations. This is important for the sustainability and effectiveness of the programme in the future, especially in terms of its practical viability, and selection of proper, potential sectors to be supported.</p> <p>For the purposes of potential replication, this good practice can be used in just specific sectors or can be aimed at specific community groups. Of course, it has to be adjusted to local needs and practical circumstances in order to ensure its full efficiency and effectiveness, which require thorough analysis of the needs as well as availability of basic preconditions and resources in the initial phase.</p>
<b>Further information</b>	<p><a href="https://trebinje.rs.ba/javni-poziv-za-samozaposljavanje/">https://trebinje.rs.ba/javni-poziv-za-samozaposljavanje/</a> <a href="https://trebinje.rs.ba/grad-trebinje-podrzo-pokretanje-57-samostalnih-biznisa/">https://trebinje.rs.ba/grad-trebinje-podrzo-pokretanje-57-samostalnih-biznisa/</a> <a href="https://msptb.net/?p=27107">https://msptb.net/?p=27107</a></p>