

SMART INNO Project
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IPA Adriatic CBC Programme 2007-2013

Activity 2.4: Special Events

Report on the Special Events' initiatives
Organized by
FB7 -Zlatibor Regional Development Agency
during the SME Week 2015

Uzice, Zlatibor District, Republic of Serbia
On 17 - 18 - 19 November 2015

The IPA-Adriatic funded project SMART INNO

SMART INNO is a project funded by the European Union through the IPA Adriatic Cross Border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013, aiming at developing a smart networking system for monitoring and fostering Research and Innovation capacity in SMEs across Adriatic regions.

SMART INNO consortium, led by Province of Rimini, is composed by 18 beneficiaries of the Ionian - Adriatic Region (Italy, Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia) and includes relevant local actors such as universities, regional authorities, chambers of commerce, Innovation and Technology transfer centres as well as SMEs.

Description of the Special Events organized by *Zlatibor Regional Development Agency*

In accordance to the joint methodology agreed on the consortium level, Zlatibor RDA organized 3-day Special event in the European SME week, from 17th to 19th November, 2015, focused on the promotion of innovation, entrepreneurship, networking and science. This three-day event organized within the **European Week of Small and Medium Enterprises - SME Week 2015**, at the level of 18 partner organizations from 8 countries of the Adriatic region that implement SMARTINNO project. Following SMARTINNO PILOT ACTION proposed and implemented by Zlatibor RDA in the frame of SMARTINNO project, thematic area was in line with INNOVATIVE AND SMART REGION, as one of the four pillars of the ADRION Programme.

Title of the pilot action of SMART GROWTH - INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR THE TOURISM, AGRO FOOD PRODUCTION AND METAL SECTOR IN ZLATIBOR DISTRICT, determined topics and key sectors for the event.

Following basic instructions and agreements, Zlatibor RDA organized 3-day innovation forum SMARTINNO INNOVATION DAYS in the partnership with High Business Technical School for Vocational Studies. The event took place in the premises of High School for Vocational Studies and each day tackled specific topic, in line with **SMARTH GROWTH OF THE ZLATIBOR DISTRICT**.

The main objective of this 3-day event was to promote innovations in entrepreneurship and emphasise the need for closer cooperation and networking between the private sector and educational and scientific research institutions. Every day was dedicated to a specific topic, in line with the key priorities that emphasize innovative, smart and sustainable development of the region and therefore designed for a specific target group, to tackle specific issues and challenges, and propose possible solutions and make constructive conclusions.

Due to the main economic sectors within Zlatibor District, such as metal processing industry, tourism and agriculture, including environment protection as cross cutting issue relevant for all aspects, Zlatibor RDA SMARTINNO pilot action was the base for organization and design of the concept. Preparation of the 3-day event involved local authorities, regional and national institutions in charge for specific fields, business support organizations, academic sector and educational institutions, private sector, non-governmental organizations and civil sector.

Programme for each day was designed to involve speakers from national level, representatives of the institutions which represent very important link within innovation value chain oriented to private sector and start-ups. In addition to the representatives of the **National Agency for Regional Development of the Republic of Serbia** and **Tourism Organization of Serbia**, which were invited as speakers, among audience of the events were representatives of the **Ministry of Economy**, department for transnational EU funded projects.

Majority of participants were students of different study programmes at the Business Technical College of Vocational Studies, which is the most important educational institution in the Zlatibor District. Special event also involved innovative enterprises dealing in the 3 key sectors, and civil sector representatives, among which NGO Libergraf is very important, since it founded the first START(ME)UP INCUBATOR in the city of Uzice, providing young entrepreneurs unique chance to develop business idea and receive basic services in the first months after registration.

1st DAY - Tuesday - 17.11.2015 - Entitled **INNOVATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP - CHANCE FOR SUCCESS** - was dedicated to the existing sources of financing to increase the competitiveness and innovation of the SME sector, the need for cooperation and networking at all levels, examples of good practice of clustering, as well as successful examples of cooperation between industry and the education system. Engaged expert for pilot action implementation, Mr. Milivojevic was the first speaker, who had a task to introduce wider public with the main info on the **importance of knowledge, human capital** and his work on seeking for appropriate models for measuring of the **intellectual capital**.

As the main resource for innovations in the private sector, intellectual capital has to be properly valorised and used for improving business operations of SMEs. Also, one of the topics was presentation of developed **software for networking of various entities based on their innovation potentials**, which is part of SMARTINNO PILOT ACTION referring to the metal processing sector. Next session was dedicated to the **collaboration between private sector and education system**, which is charge for provision of skilled and qualified staff for private sector.

Example of cooperation between private company INMOLD d.o.o. and secondary Technical school Pozega, represents the best practice example for dual education.

Based on the mutual interest, those 2 entities established cooperation model, which assumes organization of practical classes for the secondary school students, which are necessary for improvement of their theoretical knowledge gained through classic teaching methods. Interested students may also receive scholarship from Inmold during secondary school, what provides them opportunity for employment after graduation.

On the other hand, the school adopts their education programmes according needs of the company, what makes this cooperation very efficient in terms of results and satisfaction of both sides. Mr. Miletic, engaged as mentor of practical classes, presented in details this model, with the special emphasis on the benefits of students and other human relations and interactions that arisen as added value of this cooperation model.

Networking of SMEs as a **model for increasing private sector competitiveness and boosting innovations**, was shown through presentation of the cluster **FACTS - Fashion Apparel Cluster Serbia**. The cluster manager, Ms. Sladjana Milivojevic, described their history from foundation to the present days, with special focus on the so far implemented joint projects and benefits of clusters' members in terms of export results, joint supply of raw material and contribution to the employment growth within the fashion and apparel sector.

Considering necessity to increase competitiveness and innovativeness of the SMEs, next session was dedicated to the available national funds for supporting private sector. Ms Jelena Uzelac, advisor in the **National Agency for Regional Development**, presented actual **programmes providing various subsidies for the SMEs** through funds provided by Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Serbia. This presentation included non-financial support provided through network of regional development agencies, as set on the soft services which are also important as financial subsidies.

The last presentation was dedicated to the **START (ME) - UP INCUBATOR**, which was recently established in the city of Uzice. This incubator represents the unique **opportunity for young entrepreneurs** under age of 30 to **test and develop their business idea**. Young people who applied to participate in this project received business premises for development idea into the business, but also, many accompanying services such as mentoring, promotion, book-keeping etc.

Zlatibor RDA is involved in this project through provision of trainings for incubator tenants and mentoring services in the first 6 month after official business registration. This model of business support organization is very important for our local community and its presentation was organized with the aim to boost young population to be innovative and start innovative business.

At the end of the first day, and in line with SMARTINNO objectives and activities, Zlatibor RDA presented initiative for establishment of the **ADRIATIC BAN**, as innovative funding opportunity for start-ups. Having in mind that wider public is not familiar with

the term BUSINESS ANGELS and their activities; a short film about business angels has been broadcasted. You can find the film on the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1b8YLBfQy44>. In accordance to the story related to business angels, the last part was used for promotion of the SMARTINNO web platform, as an innovative tool in the start-ups supporting system.

Very important part of the first day was press conference organized on the occasion of the official opening ceremony of the Tourism laboratory (T-lab). This cabinet is completely equipped thanks to the cooperation between Zlatibor RDA and Business Technical College of Vocational Studies, in synergy of two EU projects - SMARTINNO and Modernization and Harmonization of Tourism study programs in Serbia (MHTSPS) funded in the scope of TEMPUS. In addition to the great importance for education of future students, this laboratory will generate the information for needs of public and private sector for enhance tourism and thus contribute to the long-term monitoring and innovations in this field.

According to the attendance list enclosed to this report, there were 86 persons participated in the sessions dedicated to the **INNOVATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP - CHANCE FOR SUCCESS**.

2nd DAY - Wednesday, 18.11.2015. - Entitled **SMART BUSINESS SOLUTIONS - ENERGY AS A BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY** - was dedicated to an innovative approach in the field of energy production and consumption in the processes of creating added value as a factor for increasing the competitiveness of business.

At a time when energy costs take up an increasingly larger share of price that private sector has to pay, thereby burdening market operations, it is of crucial importance to achieve the most optimal solutions for providing heat energy in amounts that guarantee smooth operation and at prices that do not endanger the liquidity of the business.

Also, production of energy for more demanding markets is a great opportunity for entrepreneurship and making a profit and that opportunity has to be used properly. After introductory speech, engaged expert elaborated about sustainable energy sources with the specific reference on the Zlatibor District, whose 44% of surface is covered with forests. Accordingly, biomass represents significant potential in terms of starting new businesses. As alternative energy source, biomass can be solution for replacing existing heating systems. Expert presented 3 study cases, showing feasibility, necessary investment and period required for investment return.

At the next sessions, participants had the opportunity to be introduced with innovative ESC and ESCO models for energy distribution, presented by private companies whose core business is energy. The last part of the second day was reserved for presentation of study programmes of Business Technical College of Vocational Studies related to environment protection and eco tourism. Special attention was given to Eco tourism

laboratory, which is very important for practical education of students, their skills and competences.

Discussion was also interested part, since among participants were members of Regional Board for Environment Protection, Working Group for Biomass, local authorities and private sector, so the main output is joint initiative related to the decrease of taxes for heating products such as briquette, pellet and other alternative fuels made of biomass.

According to the attendance list enclosed to this report, there were 76 persons participated in the sessions dedicated to the **SMART BUSINESS SOLUTIONS - ENERGY AS A BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY**.

3rd DAY - Thursday, 19.11.2015. - Entitled **SMART SPECIALISATION OF TOURISM OFFER - OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH OF INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT** - was dedicated to the introduction of innovations in the tourist offer, as the model in synergy with other related sectors can contribute to increasing income and employment. Representatives of the tourism sector had the opportunity to get familiar with existing transnational support programs, examples of successful entrepreneurs and enterprises in the tourism sector, innovations in the interpretation of tourist resources.

The first speaker, Mrs Kristina Kujundzic, head of department for international cooperation in the **National Tourism Organisation of Serbia**, presented existing EU funds and programmes supporting tourism. She emphasised ADRION programme, which will be launched very soon and which may be great opportunity for our country to develop and improve tourism offer in cooperation with neighbouring and EU countries. Innovative management model that is applied for management of Western Serbia tourism destination was presented by director of RTO Mr. Miroslav Radjen, who presented development of the institution he leads, stressing importance of networking of local tourism organizations, joint promotion of the entire destination and appearance on domestic and foreign markets, showing in financial terms how cooperation and joint investments in promotion could bring much better and effective results.

After that, development of business idea of eco hostel and eco tourism promotion was presented by Mr Marko Ristovski, owner of Eco hostel Republic and member of Association of tourist guides, which is very active in introducing innovations in the tourism offer of this area. Idea for Eco hostel Republic is based on the cultural heritage from the 2nd World War and currently this facility represents almost the only accommodation option in the city of Uzice. Aiming to provide quality information and boost entrepreneurship among young population, next presentation was recently established START (MR) UP INCUBATOR, where 10 young entrepreneurs under age of 30 received various services in the first initial business phase.

This presentation was repeated, since this model of business support organization is very important for our local community and its presentation was organized with the aim to boost young population to be innovative and start innovative business. Then,

head of tourism department at High Business College of Vocational Studies presented tourism study programmes, especially focusing story on the innovative special tourism types.

The last session of third day was dedicated to the promotion of the recently established SMARTINNO web platform, which connects innovation stakeholders and provides start-ups various opportunities, not only chance to find investment for business idea, but other kinds of support for business idea development.

According to the attendance list enclosed to this report, there were 121 persons participated in the sessions dedicated to the **SMART SPECIALISATION OF TOURISM OFFER - OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH OF INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT**.

There were a great number of students among event participants, what was very important in terms of increasing awareness of entrepreneurship and innovations, networking with representatives of the private, public and civil sector, building capacities, what in overall score contribute to the improvement of their knowledge, skills and opens new perspectives.

Total number of registered participants is 283, what makes this event very important for the community of Uzice and other neighbouring municipalities in Zlatibor District, especially in terms of dissemination and promotion of SMARTINNO project among wider public. Deliverables such as web platform and ADRIATIC BAN are promoted and reached not only to attendants of the special event, but greater population through various electronic and printed media.

Media coverage

Organization of the event was followed by strong promotional activities. The information about event was distributed through the press release to all regional and local media, as well as representatives of national media covering Zlatibor District, both electronic and printed. At the press conference organized on the occasion of the official opening ceremony of the T-lab in its premises, speakers were representatives of partner institutions (Zlatibor RDA and High Business College of Vocational Studies), as well as director of Regional Tourism Organization of Western Serbia.

Before start of the official sessions, some of speakers were interviewed by TV and other media that reported on the held event. Info about held event was broadcasted in local and regional TV (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybdXK4UsCv4>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0nM4reLz4Q>), and radio stations, while promotional texts were published in regional weekly and various web sites and portals.

Attached to this report, please find enclosed:

- agendas;
- lists of presence;
- pre press of the printed posters;
- press clipping;
- pictures