

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
SMART INNO Final Beneficiaries
during the SME Week 2015**

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Introduction

This document is a report of the activity 2.4 “Special events” implemented by SMART INNO Final Beneficiaries in the framework of SMART INNO project.

SMART INNO project is 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.

The project consortium, leaded 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 centers as well as SMEs.

As foreseen by the Application Form and agreed among the 18 partners of the project, in order to respect the goal of organizing 18 *Special events* contemporaneously, this project initiative was linked to the “European SME Week”, organized from 16 to 22 November 2015.

In addition, the following thematic areas of the 18 *Special events* were identified:

- **INNOVATIVE & SMART REGION;**
- **SUSTAINABLE REGION.**

Each partner was in charge to organize the 3-day events in its own area by developing an agenda - involving local actors/stakeholders and other experts of local/national level - and promoting the events at local/regional level (by the organization/project website, local media, newspapers, Social media, specific leaflets, newsletter, etc.).

Description of the Special Events organized by SMART INNO Partnership

In occasion of the “European SME Week”, held all over Europe on 16th-22th November 2015 but covering events at European level throughout the year (till December 2015), the SMART INNO Partners have organized a 3-days special event on a series of themes connected to Innovation, Research & Financial instruments supporting Innovation in different areas (f.e. from Training on Entrepreneurial Skills, to Environment and Energy, Agro-food and Tourism).

WHAT/BACKGROUND

From mid-spring 2015, UCV (in the role of WP2 leader), proposed to partners the idea to organize these events in the framework of the European Commission initiative called “European SME Week”.

The reason of this choice was to have a unique occasion of strengthening the impact of these events which, as stated in the AF, needed to be run contemporaneously in the IPA Adriatic area.

Indeed, the “SME Week” has the goal to promote Entrepreneurship in Europe thanks to a campaign of events, coordinated by the European Commission, throughout the whole year.

By giving to intermediary organizations and entities providing business support services the chance to show and demonstrate their experience and capacity in being active in local territory development, this occasion represented a great opportunity for all SMART INNO partners to:

- **Give insights into SMART INNO activities** and current development, the path done until now, all the initiatives developed thanks to this project, showing all the positive side effects;
- **Explore and deepen the knowledge or know-how on specific topics;**
- **Providing training and consultancy on the needs of Innovative SMEs, Start ups, Spin offs** concerning capacities, competences, financial tools;
- **Learning from best practices and having an exchange of ideas on future steps** which could be made in terms of additional services, tools, joint projects.

Each Partner provided an official communication to the Referee of each SME Week National Contact Point in order to have the event validated and officially registered on the **SME Week platform**

http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/support/sme-week/index_en.htm

This guaranteed visibility to all SMART INNO Special events and provided them additional promotion at European level.

WHERE AND WHEN

SMART INNO Special Events' initiatives covered all the Country areas of the partnership so the Ionian-Adriatic Region (Italy, Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia).

Events have been held at the premises of the FBs headquarters or in locations considered relevant for the inner strategic role or the messages each partner wanted to deliver. For example FB3-Tecnopolis organized part of its activities at Tecnopolis Scientific and Technology Park, in Valenzano - Bari at the Training Building - Classroom A3, FB4-SI.PRO. decided to choose different locations in Ferrara City, depending on the issues tackled.

All Partners promoted the event following the indications provided by WP2 leader: they either decided to hand out basic brochures and other informative materials on SMART INNO project or to prepare ad-hoc banners, roll ups, leaflets and brochures specific for the events.

During the events, the majority showed PPT presentations and video; Skype calls have also been chosen for guaranteeing the involvement of Public Officers or experts.

Before and after the events, a strong and effective press campaign was launched by each FB to increase event visibility among local/regional/national mass media (newspapers, TVs, radios, etc.) and paving the way for a larger involvement of stakeholders. A good number of partners hosted a Press Conference on the 1st day (for the Opening Ceremony) or on the last day, for the Closure of the Special Event.

PREPARATORY EFFORTS

From the analysis of FBs' reports we have recognized some common patterns concerning the preparatory activity of these Special Events within the SME Week.

The preparation efforts at partnership level have been almost similar between all:

- **Internal meetings to decide what the event was about, establish an agenda and asking to local stakeholders for:** (not onerous) patronage, contribution to the program, activation communication initiatives for promoting the events;
- **Identification of the location/s** (the premises of the partner' headquarters or other strategic places in the partner city or in the surrounding areas, f.e. an incubator, a renovated former factory now hosting innovative artisans, a Museum, an hotel renovated as an efficient energy building, etc.);
- **Convocation of speakers (representatives of other organizations, experts, SMEs) for setting up and fine tuning their contributions during conferences/workshops/training** (in some cases there have been organized Business simulations "games" with young people/students divided in teams, mentors assisting them and a final award to the best team;

- Formal invitation (by letter or email) sent to local stakeholders and promotion of the event through news on websites, newsletters, radio/TVs/newspapers.

Concerning Communication & Dissemination, **follow up activities** at partnership level have been relevant as well: although not all partners have proved to be incisive/to take care to this aspect, quite a lot of them made their efforts on preparing:

- news/articles and made them published on websites or Social Media, with pictures, presentations and list of contacts available for reading or download;
- interviews and press releases/press conferences for local/regional/national newspapers, thematic websites and blogs, local/regional/national TVs and radios and Social Media.

TARGET GROUPS

All the Special Events have tried to involve the higher possible number of local actors of the **Innovation Ecosystem**, which can be defined as:

(...) an innovation ecosystem is a model based on the dynamics deriving from complex relationships between actors or entities whose functional goal is to enable technology development and innovation.

In this context, the actors would include the material resources (funds, equipment, facilities, etc.) and the human capital (students, faculty, staff, industry researchers, industry representatives, etc.) that make up the institutional entities participating in the ecosystem (e.g. the universities, colleges of engineering, business schools, business firms, venture capitalists (VC), industry-university research institutes, federal or industrial supported Centers of Excellence, and state and/or local economic development and business assistance organizations, funding agencies, policy makers, etc.).

*The innovation ecosystem comprises two distinct, but largely separated economies, the **knowledge economy**, which is driven by fundamental research, and the **commercial economy**, which is driven by the marketplace. Of necessity, however, the two economies are weakly coupled because the resources invested in the knowledge economy are derived from the commercial sector (included public research and development investments) (...)"¹*

Since actors of the Innovation Ecosystem come from what can be namely considered as the “Knowledge sector” (actors providing **information**) and the “Commercial sector” (entities providing **financial & marketing support**), SMART INNO partners targeted their Special Events to the following groups:

- Local/regional/national authorities, civil servants;
- Representatives of intermediary organizations for local economic development, Business Support, Info Center on Business opportunities (Chambers of Commerce,

¹Deborah J. Jackson , “What is an Innovation Ecosystem?”, National Science Foundation, Arlington, VA (USA), 2011.

- Agencies for Development, Science and Technology Parks, Incubators and Accelerators, Trade/Professional Associations, ...);
- Universities & representatives of academic world;
 - Institutional (finanziarie regionali, Financial Bodies at EU level, f.e. EIB, EIF) and non institutional investors/private sector (banks, financial institutes, VCs, Business Angels, Crowdfunding platforms (Reward Based, Equity Based, Donation based, Lending Based) and other “non conventional” investors);
 - Coworking spaces and Fablabs, Hackatons, online communities;
 - Experts on specific topics (Business support, Financial tools, Tourism and Territorial Marketing, EE & RES, Training and TVET, etc.);
 - Innovative SMEs, start ups, spin offs and new Entrepreneurs or “old” Entrepreneurs eager to improve their capacities/skills;
 - Young people/Students approaching Business themes for their first time (involved in Business simulations..).

SMART INNO SPECIAL EVENTS: AN OVERLOOK

The following table helps to have a monitoring of the Special Events implemented by SMART INNO partnership:

FB	WHAT	WHEN	WHERE	PARTICIPANTS NO.	ADDED VALUE
LB-Province of Rimini	A 4-day event on “SMART INNO - Innovation Square”, on innovation issue in environment\energy field	Within the exhibition Ecomondo 2015 - The Green Technologies Expo, on 3-4-5-6 November 2015	At SMART INNO Innovation Square, Ecomondo 2015, Rimini Fair Centre (I)	200 people + 1000 visitors passing-by	During the four days event, 15 positions have been displaced within the space SMART INNO - Innovation Square of Rimini Province, devoted to the start-up selected by the Sustainable Development Foundation, Ecomondo scientific committee and Unindustria Rimini, in order to foster the dialogue between start-up and audience.
FB1-UCV	A 3-day event on “SMART INNO Project: Financial support to Innovative SMEs and creation of a Cluster on Bio-Energy”	On 16-19-26 November 2015	NH Hotel Laguna Palace, Venice (I)	Around 70 people	Investigation on the possibility to exchange information and promote existing, available networking/training/financial tools for fostering Innovative Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Renewable Energy sector in Veneto Region. The 3 rd day was devoted to UCV WP5 Pilot Project “BIO - GEO - SOLAR Cluster”.
FB2-F.I.	A 3-day event on “Arts/Tech/Biz MASH UP”, on business projects	On 19-20-21 November 2015	Friuli Innovazione, Udine (I)	83 people (out of which 57 creatives, IT experts and startappers)	The development of 13 business projects chosen by 7 Jury members, involvement of 15 sponsors and 10 highly experienced mentors. The initiative was integrated in the support path for actors of Cultural and Creative Industries: “SmART-Creative Business Lab” (Friuli Innovazione WP5 Pilot Project).
FB3-Tecnopolis	A 3-day event on “Technological SMEs for the Health Industry”	On 16-17-18-19-20 November 2015	Tecnopolis, Valenzano (BA - I)	A total of 309 participants (86	Great involvement of local/regional/national stakeholders (included local associations, Digital

				<p>people on 1st day, 67 people on 2nd day, 66 people on 3rd day, 59 people on 4th day, 31 people on 5th day)</p>	<p>Icons, Schools) around Health issues, Innovation in the sector (ICT, Robotics; Social challenges), financial tools to support it, the relevant role of innovative SMEs, start ups and new entrepreneurs. Slogan of the events: <i>“Big challenges have small and medium sized solutions!”</i></p>
FB4-SI.PRO.	A 3-day event on “The Cultural and Creative Sector”	On 18-19-20 November 2015	Different locations in the City of Ferrara	260 people	<p>Events were focused on how to foster and stimulate Cultural sector and Creative Industry, which is related to SI.PRO. WP5 Pilot Project.</p> <p>Slogan of the events: <i>“No overlaps or replication of actions but promotion of a system-based approach!”</i></p>
FB5-A.I.	<p>A 3-day event on “Web marketing/ communication strategies for SMEs”</p> <p>1st day: <i>Digital Culture for SMEs - the strategic role of the website;</i></p> <p>2nd day: <i>Digital Culture for SMEs - webmarketing for SMEs;</i></p> <p>3rd day: <i>Tourism at the digital time, opportunity for the territory’s growth</i></p>	On 17-19-27 November 2015	Different locations in Pesaro (Innovation District 106, Pesaro Studi)	101 people	<p>A culture on digital tools is necessary to improve competitiveness for the business of artisans and SMEs.</p> <p>Website and mobile commerce are technologies that each entrepreneur has to learn to manage today.</p>
FB6-DDSME	A day Roundtable on “Understanding of the banking business and its impact on the company”	On 10 December 2015	At the premises of the Chamber of Commerce of Montenegro (Podgorica, MNE)	28 people	<p>A focus on support offered by banks to companies in order to properly develop their business and how to overcome existing problems on low-performing loans.</p> <p>The Government and the Central Bank (as regulator), need to work harder in order to create additional favourable conditions through increased competition for</p>

					cutting interest.
FB7-ZRDA	<p>A 3-day event on “SMART INNO INNOVATION DAYS - Smart Growth of the Zlatibor district”</p> <p>1st day: <i>Innovative Entrepreneurship - Chance for success;</i></p> <p>2nd day: <i>Smart Business Solutions - Energy as a business opportunity;</i></p> <p>3rd day: <i>Smart specialization of Tourism offer - Opportunities for growth of income and employment</i></p>	On 17-18-19 November 2015	At the premises of High School for Vocational Studies, Uzice (RS)	283 people	<p>Strategic partnership with High Business Technical School for Vocational Studies.</p> <p>Great involvement of all possible stakeholders interested in Zlatibor District development (among all, representatives of National Agency for Regional Development of the Republic of Serbia and Tourism Organization of Serbia as speakers and representatives of the Ministry of Economy, department for transnational EU funded projects among audience).</p> <p>The event was coherent to ZRDA WP5 Pilot Project “Smart Growth - Innovative Solutions for the Tourism , agro-food production and Metal sector in Zlatibor district”</p>
FB8-CCIS	<p>A 3-day event on “SME WEEK 2015: SMART INNO Platform for R&I - training”, SMART INNO project promotion and training on SMART INNO platform</p>	On 17-18-19 November 2015	At the premises of Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia, Belgrade (RS)	A total of about 40 participants (20 people on 1 st day and 20 people on the 2 nd day)	<p>Participants had the opportunity to get information about the possibility to join SMART INNO “Innovation Hub” Platform and to make usage of the existing network within the platform.</p> <p>They were informed about supporting instruments for R&I sector as well.</p>
FB9-RDA GK	<p>A 3-day event on “Role of SMEs in tourism”</p> <p>1st day:<i>Development of innovative tourist products with the help of storytelling;</i></p> <p>2nd day: <i>Development of innovative tourist products - practical work;</i></p>	On 16-18-23 November 2015	Centre for Innovation and Development, Pivka (SI)	35 people	<p>In cooperation with Regional Management Organisation Postojnska jama-Green Karst, events organized aimed to develop innovative tourist products & services based on storytelling, under the established regional brand Green Karst.</p> <p>In addition, the theme was coherent with the aim of the “Centre for</p>

	3 rd day: <i>Cooperation in tourism as a foundation for development of innovative tourist integral products - regional cooperation</i>				Innovation and Development” (RDA Green Karst WP5 Pilot Project) to be focused on SMEs in different sectors of regional economy (Tourism included). Finally, the event provided concrete results in a very efficient and timely manner.
FB10-RRC Koper	A 3-day event on “Tourism, Entrepreneurship and Innovation”	On 17-18-19 November 2015	At the premises of Regional development centre Koper, Koper (SI)	47 people	An important contribution to knowledge and awareness of regional stakeholders about creative and innovative promotion methods in the field of tourism as well as other business incentives and business support available. In addition, a key factor was the chance for networking provided to Pilot project stakeholders. Indeed the theme of the event was coherent with RRC Koper WP5 Pilot Project “Establishment of a destination management organisation - DMO of Obalno-kraška region” which is currently in implementation.
FB11-PTP	A 3-day event on 2 initiatives: 1. Slovene Innovation Forum (“Innovative ecosystem subject pitching”; Business Opportunities - Business and Technological meeting; Innovations - An exhibition of Slovenian innovation); 2. Coinvest Venture Days (investment conference divided	On 17-18-19 November 2015	At the premises of Primorska Technology Park and HIT Sport Centre, in Šempeter pri Gorici (SI)	More than 20 people	Events were organized with the relevant cooperation of: 1. SPIRIT Slovenian National Agency for the Promotion of Entrepreneurship, Innovation, Development, Investment and Tourism (with the support of Slovene Ministry of Economic Development and Technology); 2. COBIK , one of the partners in IPA Adriatic PACINNO project (a partnership agreement was signed between PTP and COBIK for organizing

	in: Investor Day and Start up Day)				<p>Coinvest event edition 2015).</p> <p>Other relevant entities have been Internet Week, Hekovnik Start up School and international partners from Israel, Austria, Slovak Republic, Turkey and Great Britain.</p>
FB12-LIR	<p>A 3-day event on Local SMEs operating in wood processing and metal processing sectors: 1st day: <i>SMEs in wood processing sector;</i> 2nd day: <i>SMEs in metal processing sector;</i> 3rd day: <i>SMEs in wood processing sector.</i></p>	On 21-22-24 December 2015	<p>On 21st of December 2015 at the hotel Bosna, Banjaluka; on 22nd of December 2015 at the hotel Talija, Banjaluka; on 24th of December 2015 at the hotel Bosna, Banjaluka (BiH)</p>	A total of 20 people (10 people on 1 st day, 12 people on 2 nd day, 8 people on 3 rd day)	<p>Events were dedicated to local SMEs operating in wood processing and metal processing sectors, which are also related to LIR Evolution WP5 Pilot Project on improvement of energy efficiency as a precondition for SMEs innovative performance boost (co-financed by CREDO Krajina). SME representatives learned how to improve SMEs' performance through innovative Energy Efficiency measures.</p> <p>In addition, within the special events B2B meetings were held, during which SMEs discussed their businesses issues, investment opportunities and circumstances at local markets.</p>
FB13- Uni.Pula	<p>A 2-day event: 1st and 2nd day: Conference on "Challenges of sustainable tourism in Croatia"; 2nd and 3rd day: Student visit to "The Center for popularization of science and innovation", Pula</p>	On 18-19 November 2015	<p>At the Faculty of Economics and Tourism (Juraj Dobrića University of Pula) and at the Center for popularization of Science and Innovation, Pula (HR)</p>	149 people at the conference (in addition to students)	<p>The first event provided a closer look at the concept of sustainable tourism and the importance of the environmental quality which represent the main components of the Adriatic and Ionian Macro-region. The second helped students getting closer to science and innovation, fostering a "context" open to new creative ideas in the future.</p>
FB14-IDA	A 3-day event on	On 17-18-	At the	Around 60	The events gave to

	<p>“Fostering development and innovations in process industry”: 1st day: <i>Presentations of programs for foster development and innovation in Croatia;</i> 2nd day: <i>Workshop “Innovation, entrepreneurship and financing of innovative start-up companies”;</i> 3rd day: <i>Visit of the Center for the Popularization of Science and Innovation in the Region of Istria by students (in cooperation with FB13 Univ. of Pula)</i></p>	19 November 2015	premises of Istrian Development Agency and at the Center for popularization of Science and Innovation, Pula (HR)	people	organizations providing business support services the chance to promote them to entrepreneurs and starting a business, support to existing entrepreneurs to find information on available support and encouragement to new entrepreneurs for setting up their own businesses. Special focus on Innovation, entrepreneurship and financing of innovative start-up companies.
FB15-Atlantis and FB16-ERFC	A 2-day event on “Support to Business Angels Networks and Fund-raising for Startups”	On 22-23 December 2015	At the InnovAthens hall of Technopolis, Gazi (GR)	96 people	Events aim to raise public awareness of SMART INNO as an instrument providing support to the Greek Innovation Ecosystem in terms of networking, incubation, exploitation of innovative ideas and preparation for fund-raising. In occasion of a pitching event, the best Business Plans were awarded with the ‘SMART INNO Most Promising Startup Award’ after evaluation by business, innovation and finance experts.
FB17-AULEDA	A 2-day event on: 1. Informative session “Guaranty Fund as a supported instrument to innovative enterprises”; 2. Workshop on	On 17-18 November 2015	At the University of Vlora and at the Information Centre of the EU in Vlora (AL)	A total of 126 people (108 students on 1 st day, 18 Business representatives on	The events, organized in cooperation with the University of Vlora and the Information Centre of the EU in Vlora, aimed to inform students on financial opportunities for being new Entrepreneurs as well as professionals

	“Instruments of EU funding for SMEs innovating”			the 2 nd day)	interested in SMEs to get in touch with EU-funded projects.
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FINAL RESULTS

By going through the reports on Special Events organized by SMART INNO Partners, the impression is that all the initiatives offered to actors of the Innovation Ecosystem a very stimulant occasion to:

- Get in contact with **Experts** (of different domains) for **getting informed** on:
 1. **Business opportunities for fostering new Entrepreneurship or making innovative SMEs more competitive** (access to Know-how, Entrepreneurial capacity building, funding opportunities offered by European Union, banks, Venture Capital, Business Angels, Crowdfunding platforms, mentors, etc.), mainly targeted to Start ups, Spin offs, innovative SMEs and initiatives promoted by young and women;
 2. **Research and Innovation or Innovation on Products/Services/Materials/Methodologies** in specific sectors such as: Creative and Cultural Sector; Tourism and Local Development Marketing (on Blue Growth, Green areas, Agro Food and Metal Sector); Communication and Digital Culture; Health; Energy & Environment.
- Get in contact with **other Innovative actors** such as Intermediary Organizations (Business incubators, Local Development Agencies, Technology Parks, Chambers of Commerce) and Financial operators (banks, investors, Business Angels, etc.) for **networking and 1-to-1 meetings**.

In the preparatory efforts, all Partners contacted local actors with the goal to: create initiatives with a larger impact on the territory, obtain (free or sponsored) support, be at first line in providing information and intervening, have a follow up in terms of presence institutional / business / financial bodies around fostering Business opportunities connected to Innovative sectors.

Also at implementation level it is recognizable a great variety of solutions from SMART INNO Special Events: partners organized traditional workshops and conferences, very operative training, competitions between students divided in teams and only the best ideas and Business Plans awarded during Pitching events, networking occasions like Start up cocktails and Road Show, Touristic tours (included a bicycle one in the City of Ferrara).

The results of this experience is **absolutely positive**: SMART INNO Partners got directly involved in promoting project objectives and the results (the SMART INNO “Innovation



Hub” Platform, the creation of the Adriatic-Ionian BAN and the 18 Pilot Projects) to **about 1930 people and other 1000 visitors passing-by all across Adriatic-Ionian area**, conveying “Innovation” in specific sectors which are considerent predominant for the area development and raising awareness around all the opportunities offered by SMART INNO project.