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I-CON PROJECT NEWSLETTER NR. 1



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Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE
Programme supports regional
cooperation among central



IMPROVING COMPETENCES AND SKILLS THROUGH FOOD SECTOR INNOVATIONS

NEWS

Welcome to our first edition of I-CON newsletter, a half-yearly newsletter that keeps you update about what's going on at I-CON, upcoming events and activities.

About the project idea

Partners from seven Central European Countries join their forces to improve entrepreneurial competences and skills in remote areas through food innovation potentials. Slovenia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia are facing declining employment opportunities in traditional industries as a result of structural change. This emphasises the need to take steps to stimulate economic activity with employment generating potential in regions that are facing difficulties in maintaining a critical mass of facilities to support economic development. Analyses show that the food sector, together with other value-chain related sectors, represents one of the most important, potential fields to leverage improvement of the socio-economic situation in remote areas.

Sharing knowledge competences and strong relationships with local environments, the partners will collaborate to improve entrepreneurial competences and skills in remote areas through food innovation potentials, for 3 years.

It is expected to implement a sustainable transnational action plan to generate competitive advantages for SMEs and proactive hints for intermediaries and institutional representative levels.

European countries: Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, as well as parts of Germany and Italy. The programme aims to make central European cities and regions better places to live and work by implementing smart solutions answering to regional challenges in the fields of innovation, lowcarbon economy, environment, culture and transport.

About partnership

The consortium consists of 10 carefully selected competent partners who are, according to their role in the project, divided into 3 groups.

The first group consists of "knowledge partners" covering three areas of expertise where they will provide expertise to improve value added opportunities in the food sector. The areas of mechatronics, biotech and design will be analysed by: Hohenheim University, Business Upper Austria, Campden BRI Hungary Ltd. and Industry Association Service & Training of Treviso and Pordenone.

The second group consists of 5 "regional partners":

CNA National Confederation of Crafts and Small and Medium Sized businesses - Regional Association of Emilia Romagna, Slovenian Chamber of Agricultural and food enterprises, South Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency, Polish Chamber of Food Industry and Packaging, Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry, implementing actions on a regional level.

The third level of partnership represents Pomurje Technology Park as a "lead partner" whose role regards all main areas of intervention.



Kick-off meeting in Bologna

Last June 29th and 30th, Bologna hosted the launch meeting of I-CON, which will develop over three years of intense activity in accompanying SMEs toward innovation and improving of competences and skills.

All the partners presented their own organization to two JS officers, who joined the meeting, and proactively contributed to detail the project implementation strategy. They agreed to focus their research/analysis on trends in the food-processing sector, always aware of the S3-Strategies and cross-sectorial linkages.



Innovative solutions will be developed

The food sector is identified as the sector with most potential to achieve socio-economic multiplier effects in remote areas. This project is therefore focused to solve challenges in order to rise competences in the food sector with cross-sectorial cooperation between mechatronics (process technology), biotechnology (food safety) and design (packaging).

Innovative solutions will be created during the project period:

- a food mentor program that is professionally accomplished only for food companies does not exist in Central Europe. With a mentor program on food production SMEs will benefit of integrated cross-sectorial experts approach services (mechatronics, biotech and design), availability of a transnational pool of experts coming from different EU Regions, programs which will increase competences and skills in cost efficiency and quality assurance through technology process control improvements, food safety risk management and food design validation;
- a crowd design platform exists, but food SMEs are facing serious problems with its usability, because of food legislation restrictions. With a developed tool-kit tailored to unlock specific problems, the partners will unlock limited platform usability for food related design possibilities.

Who we are

Partners from seven central European countries join their forces to improve entrepreneurial competences and skills in remote areas through food innovation potentials.

Austria

- Business Upper Austria

Hungary

- Campden BRI Hungary Ltd
- South Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency

Italy

- CNA National Confederation of Crafts and Small and Medium Sized businesses - Regional Association of Emilia Romagna
- Industry Association Service & Training of Treviso and Pordenone

Germany

- Hohenheim University

Poland

- Polish Chamber of Food Industry and Packaging

Slovakia

- Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Slovenia

- Pomurje Technology Park
- Chamber of Agricultural and food enterprises

Who funds us

Our project is funded by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme that encourages cooperation on shared challenges in central Europe.

With 246 million Euro of funding from the European Regional Development Fund, the programme supports institutions to work together beyond borders to improve cities and regions in Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.



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