

## Output factsheet: Strategies and action plans Final Version

Project index number and acronym	CE1063 - SMART_watch
Lead partner	Upper Silesian Agency for Entrepreneurship and Development Ltd. (GAPR); ul. Wincentego Pola 16; 44-100 Gliwice; Polska
Output number and title	O.T3.1 - Strategy for a network of regional branch observatories of intelligent markets in Central Europe
Responsible partner (PP name and number)	ATI erc gGmbH - education, research and furtherance of cooperations, PP5
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### Summary description of the strategy/action plan (developed and/or implemented)

The approach of the SMART\_watch strategy was and will be, to significantly contribute to a transnational network with interactive ways of collaboration - based on regional branch observatories (RO's) and key players of innovation sectors in Central Europe. All stakeholders and players (SME's, research and educational institutions, regional administrations and business promoters) related to the field of smart specialization can address the future challenges more effectively by operating on unitized principles and taking advantages of synergy effects. For us, the most valuable assets are generated by connecting complementary stakeholders from different countries, industries, sectors or chains of value to bundle resources, strengthen competitiveness and reduce costs.

To that purpose, a strategy concept has been elaborated that strongly aims at emerging transnational cooperation between promoters and stakeholders of the economic, scientific and public sphere of intelligent markets in Central Europe. Our strategy draft includes the organizational structure, success factors and values as well as different stages for the implementation of a cooperation network of regional branch observatories and promoters of innovation sectors. It is based on pilot actions (study visits and workshops), gathered data (reports and analysis) and project-gained knowledge. Beyond, our strategy concept includes next operational steps and post-project activities, as well as a set of usable

management tools (e.g. online competence map for smart specializations, bench learning approach), developed throughout the project implementation.

Further objectives of a network of regional branch observatories will be to increase their efficiency in the field of monitoring technology trends and market developments as well as share knowledge and good models on existing and prospering Regional Innovation Strategies (RIS) for smart specializations.

#### NUTS region(s) concerned by the strategy/action plan (relevant NUTS level)

Project-involved regions:

PL, *Region (NUTS 2)* PL22, Śląskie, *Sub-region (NUTS 3)* PL229, Gliwicki

PL, *Region (NUTS 2)* PL31, Lubelskie, *Sub-region (NUTS 3)* PL314, Lubelski

HU, *Region (NUTS 2)* HU32, Észak-Alföld, *Sub-region (NUTS 3)* HU321, Hajdú-Bihar

HU, *Region (NUTS 2)* HU22, Nyugat-Dunántúl, *Sub-region (NUTS 3)* HU222, Vas

DE, *Region (NUTS 2)* DE80, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, *Sub-region (NUTS 3)* DE804, Schwerin, Kreisfreie Stadt

DE, *Region (NUTS 2)* DE80, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, *Sub-region (NUTS 3)* DE80E, Nordwestmecklenburg

IT, *Region (NUTS 2)* ITH3, Veneto, *Sub-region (NUTS 3)* ITH35, Venezia

IT, *Region (NUTS 2)* ITC1, Piemonte, *Sub-region (NUTS 3)* ITC17, Asti

SI, *Region (NUTS 2)* SI01, Vzhodna Slovenija, *Sub-region (NUTS 3)* SI012, Podravska

AT, *Region (NUTS 2)* AT22, Steiermark, *Sub-region (NUTS 3)* AT221, Graz

CZ, *Region (NUTS 2)* CZ03, Jihozápad, *Sub-region (NUTS 3)* CZ032, Plzeňský kraj

#### Expected impact and benefits of the strategy/action plan for the concerned territories and target groups

The network strategy has in mind to be an approach to connect Central Europe by reducing regional disparities, overcome national barriers and closing gaps between the Regional Innovation Strategies (RIS) and the real needs of end-users and the target audience of smart specializations. It provides regions and target groups with a holistic strategy guideline containing different stages and tools for setting up a well-functioning collaboration.

From our perspective, the implementation of the strategy and network structures offers numerous benefits for the concerned territories and target groups, for example, the use of synergies beyond regions, the reduction of costs through the exchange of services and knowledge and the rise of political awareness for the topic of smart specializations. Additional benefits may include the development of innovative services and new products as well as the initiation of follow-up projects with higher added value and better chances of obtaining EU research or development funds.

An elaborated strategy and functioning network of RO's could also help to increase the voice and power of target groups/SME's in the national policy arena, and positively influence policy decisions on smart specializations and future trends by making analysis and delivering handling instructions.

### **Sustainability of the developed or implemented strategy/action plan and its transferability to other territories and stakeholders**

The implementation of a strong network of regional branch observatories directly after the final conference will help to strengthen the trustful working relations beyond the project lifetime and should ensure the sustainability of project outputs.

In that way, the final cooperation agreement could be seen as a first step and proof to enhance capacities and gain like-minded network members to address future challenges and follow-up projects. During the project implementation, a range of comprehensive articles of association referring to the time after the project closure was prepared and integrated into the strategy concept. They shall not only facilitate to keep the network running but also foster long-term cooperation between existing and new network members.

Moreover, stakeholders in transnational networks often develop a habit of cooperation and a strong sense of shared interests, which often results in framing concrete future activities in a regional as well as a cross-border perspective. Also, the strategy concept outlined the close contact and affiliation with a view to similar networks and collaborations. For example, the SMART\_watch cooperation could highly benefit from building a consortium for effective participation on future calls focusing on interregional innovation investments. Even the competence map could be used as a valuable tool of sustainability by matching network members with compatible references, whether from the same sector or across different fields of activity. In that way, a lively exchange of knowledge and scientific findings will be initiated.

### **Lessons learned from the development/implementation process of the strategy/action plan and added value of transnational cooperation**

The SMART\_watch Interreg-project combined a cross-innovation approach with transnational activities and facilitated in that way being aware of and bringing together the strengths and advantages of the involved partners and regions. The strategy development and project stages were affected by transnational learning between all partners. Throughout the whole project lifetime, benchlearning was a crucial tool for knowledge exchange, finding attractive solutions for the regions and establishing a common understanding of the network strategy. Through workshops and networking-events held in Kapfenberg (Austria) and Turin (Italy), strategic goals and future challenges in the field of smart

specializations have been identified. They brought awareness of a better use of limited resources, matching research fields and market needs. Also, the workshops facilitated to identify and solve transboundary challenges in the field of smart specializations.

Even the value and importance of regional branch observatories (ROs) were extracted and emphasized throughout the strategy elaboration. ROs recognize the real needs of the economy and help to transmit them to the scientific sphere, regional administrations and national policy-makers. Also, they serve as required links between science and economy and contribute significantly to a functioning transfer of knowledge and technology trends and help to bring the latest scientific findings into practice and industrial use. In that way, they foster the development and implementation of new technologies and innovation-driven markets. All the results and learning processes of the project implementation are well-documented and summarized in our mini-book edition.

#### References to relevant deliverables and web-links

If applicable, pictures or images to be provided as annex

SMART\_watch D.T3.1.1 - Networking workshop for preparing the strategy for network of regional branch observatories in Kapfenberg/Austria

SMART\_watch D.T3.1.3 - Set of tools for strategy implementation

SMART\_watch D.T3.1.4 - Network operational model

SMART\_watch D.T3.1.5 - Networking workshop for preparing the strategy for network of regional branch observatories in Turin/Italy

SMART\_watch D.T3.1.6 - Strategy for a network of regional branch observatories

Gloor, Peter A. (2006). Swarm creativity: Competitive advantage through collaborative innovation networks.

<https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/SMARTwatch/SMART-watch.html>