

TEMPLATE

Output factsheet: Innovation networks

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.T3.2 - 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
Project website	https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/SMARTwatch/SMART-watch.html
Delivery date	05/2020

Summary description of the established innovation network explaining its structure and functions

Based on the delivered explanations for an operational model and comprehensive strategy for a network of regional branch observatories (RO's) of intelligent markets, the innovation network itself was confirmed and promoted at the final conference of the SMART_watch collaboration, held on the 29th of May, 2020. Throughout the project lifetime, project partners as well as like-minded business promoters worked out and signed a multilateral agreement on future cooperation and confirmed their commitment beyond the project lifetime to the agreed project purposes and goals such as linking the RO's and associated players on smart specializations, developing collaborations in S3 and cross-sectoral innovation, facilitating internationalization and innovation capacities as well as accompanying and implementing S3 themed events.

Also, the innovation network is aiming at an increase of synergy effects, a wide range of RO's as well as the initiation of research activities and follow-up projects. According to that, the network and its offerings will be accessible to all monitoring entities acting in the fields of new technologies and cross-sectoral innovation in Central Europe, providing broader and more comprehensive insights on regional innovation strategies and their implementation. By presenting a real and steady impact of observatory

actions on target groups and their everyday operations, their intention to use and apply the knowledge, mindset and data created within the frameworks of the SMART_watch collaboration will increase. Further objectives of the network of regional branch observatories will be to strengthen their efficiency in the field of monitoring technology trends and market developments as well as share best practices and distribute good models of existing innovation strategies in the regions.

NUTS region(s) concerned by the innovation network (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 innovation network for the concerned territories and target groups

Economic growth and innovation within Europe are fuelled increasingly by new technologies and smart specializations. However, these sectors are often affected by a limited exploitation of transnational ways of collaboration and the thinking and tools of other successful economic systems. The network we have established serves as an approach to connect Central Europe by reducing regional disparities, bundling resources and closing gaps between the regional innovation strategies (RIS) and the real needs of end-users of smart specializations. It provides regions and target groups with an innovative guideline containing different stages and various tools for building up a functioning network and taking on their role as true innovators and drivers for technology growth, prosperity and job creation.

From our perspective, the created linkages and network structures offer numerous benefits for the concerned territories and target groups, e.g. the use of synergies beyond regions, the increased exchange of good practice across the entrepreneurial community, the reduction of costs through the transfer of services and knowledge and the rise of political awareness for the topics of smart specialization and cross-sectoral innovation. Additional benefits may include a strengthening in business cooperation, the creation of innovative services and launching of products as well as the initiation of follow-up projects in relevant industry sectors and technology markets.

A well-aligned network of RO's will bring some highly required values to the participating regions and business entities: potential and linkages for the creation of innovations and economic development. Also, it will help to stimulate the technical capacities to network and trade internationally, to increase the power of target groups in the national policy arena, and positively influence policy decisions on technology innovations by making and considering analysis as well as delivering handling instructions and guidelines. Finally, the network facilitates a transnational view on production and management structures and generates fresh inputs for fundamental changes and amendments regarding business processes and technology transfer strategies.

Sustainability of the innovation network and its transferability to other territories and stakeholders

All project partners involved will be responsible for maintaining and consolidating the transnational project network and for ensuring the sustainability and dissemination of project results to the target groups.

During the project implementation, we carried out two networking-events for our partners, RO's and associated target groups. The events aimed at strengthening the sustainability and viability of the collaboration reflected in activities such as get in personal contact with the target audience and identify their needs, support networking, identify services and tools relevant in smart specializations and offer consultancy regarding the regional innovation strategy.

Thus, the partnership will not follow a dogmatic scheme in the implementation, securing and transferability of the developed project outputs in their regions and beyond, but orient themselves to the prevailing local conditions, capabilities and contexts. Sustainability means that the project results will be used and further developed in other, new contexts by project participants and non-participants. Beyond, that the project experiences will be made accessible to all interested parties and target groups, and thus promising concepts for action will permanently be implemented in entrepreneurial processes and institutional structures (e. g. the transfer and exploitation of the developed benchmarking tools).

Consolidation of network structures and the dissemination of SMART_watch findings will take place, for example, through independent workshops and events organised by the project partners. Another way to ensure sustainability is to launch new projects, i. e. to tap into new funding sources and implementation opportunities. For example, the structural funds (ESF, ERDF) could be used. Also, the online platform (Competence-map) developed within the project can be utilised as a suitable showcase and communication channel for the targeted development of project ideas.

A successful processing and targeted consolidation of the project experiences in the regions involved has already taken place in part with the production and dissemination of the “Final Publication” and the “Mini Books Edition” by all project partners. These documents were made accessible to interested parties from other contexts and value chains for the exploitation of the project results. A regular evaluation and assessment (post-implementation review) of the desired transferability and sustainability effects after the end of the project is also carried out every three months by the lead partner.

Also, future network activities are aligned to build up contact and affiliation to similar networks, think tanks and collaboration hubs in innovation-driven sectors across Central Europe. For example, the SMART_watch cooperation could highly benefit from building a consortium or task force for participation in future calls focusing on interregional innovation and structural funds. Beyond, a constant business exchange connected with ongoing processes of innovation capacity development will provide the network members and associated parties with valuable inputs on new markets, customer acquisition methodologies and new sales opportunities.

In summary, the network activities will help to connect stakeholders willing to sound out their growth potential, strengthen the existing working relations and ensure the transferability of project findings into new regions in terms of technology transfer, cross-sectoral innovation, as well as sustainable growth. In that way, the network not only creates added value for the partnership and new network members but also enables each territory to learn from other regions and chains of value, tapping into methods and tools developed and successfully applied elsewhere, and address future challenges in innovation-driven markets.

Lessons learned from the development and establishment process of the innovation network and added value of transnational cooperation

The SMART_watch Interreg-project combined a cross-innovation approach in the field of smart specialization with transnational business activities and facilitated recognizing and bringing together the strengths and advantages of the involved partners and regions. The foundation of an innovation network fostered the elimination of cultural and knowledge exchange barriers between partners and strengthened the cohesion. Therefore, for facilitating collaboration between partners of SMART_watch project and new members, we should undertake further actions to create economic synergies and organize cross-border events that would help to get in touch with each other and maintain a long-term partnership.

Moreover, the whole process of developing an innovation network was determined by finding attractive offers and identifying assets for the regions as well as establishing a concept of a collective vision and joint rules of understanding and cooperation. Through networking-events held in Kapfenberg (Austria) and Turin (Italy) strategic goals, future fields of activity and various operational models of networking had been discussed and identified. They brought awareness of the structure, prospective objectives, working schedule and future operations of the collaboration. Also, the workshops helped to identify and solve transboundary misunderstandings as the network members are very different and diverse regarding their business interests, activities and mentality.

Another lesson learnt throughout the implementation of innovation network was, that the building of a trustful and conducive setting for the transregional exchange of innovative services, technology trends

and the latest scientific findings will be crucial. To achieve that, we have to gain high-quality information on RO's and business promoters and provide them directly and promptly to our members as well as interested stakeholders, e.g. via the competence map or project website.

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>