



European
Commission



REGIOSTARS AWARDS 2017

PRESENTATION OF THE FINALISTS

#EUinmyRegion

Innovative
EU-funded projects

REGIOSTARS AWARDS 2017, Presentation of the finalists

European Commission
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FOREWORD

CORINA CREȚU

Dear reader

I am delighted to introduce the 24 finalist projects for the 2017 RegioStars Awards.

As we are celebrating the 10th anniversary of these awards, our finalists are once again real-life testimonies of how Cohesion Policy is a concrete engine for investment, sustainable economic growth and jobs, and for improving the lives of 500 million European citizens across our continent.

From job creation in SMEs to achieving a genuine low-carbon economy and society for all; from supporting women in business and education, to boosting their participation in local authority decision-making – it has been a real pleasure for me to witness the quality, richness and innovation of these projects.

This year, and for the first time, I am proud to say that we have a category dedicated to highlighting initiatives supporting women's empowerment and active participation in society and the economy.

But being a RegioStars finalist is not only a label of excellence distinguishing high-quality projects. It is also an encouraging reward and international recognition for our regions and cities, which are joining forces with the Commission to deliver our political priorities for the Union, contributing to creating a better, stronger and more inclusive Europe for 2020 and beyond.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the RegioStars jury members, composed of practitioners and academics in their respective fields, as well as jury president MEP Lambert van Nistelrooij. Their expertise and dedication enabled the selection of top-quality finalist projects, among the 103 eligible applications received.

The winners of the RegioStars Awards will be announced on 10 October, during the annual award ceremony in Brussels.

Meanwhile, I would like to thank and congratulate the finalists, as well as all the applicants, for demonstrating how much we can achieve with EU funding.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Crețu".

Corina Crețu

EU Commissioner for Regional Policy

FOREWORD

LAMBERT VAN NISTELROOIJ

Dear reader

Today, more than ever, we need the engagement and support of our citizens. There are so many good examples of European added value in daily life. People's support for Europe does not go via their wallets; we have to reach the hearts of EU citizens. This is why Commissioner Crețu and I support the RegioStars Awards. The 2017 RegioStars Awards demonstrate the best examples across Europe's regions of projects supported by the European Structural and Investment Funds.

In this brochure you will find descriptions of the 24 finalists, selected by an expert jury, which highlight how EU funds support innovative and inspiring projects. These creative projects address some of Europe's main challenges through targeted support for SMEs, social inclusion strategies, the circular economy, and urban development.

I would like to thank the jury members for bringing their expertise to the table throughout the in-depth discussions, which ultimately led to the selection of these finalists. I would also like to thank all the applicants and the selected finalists for taking part in the competition and helping us to showcase the best of what EU Cohesion Policy has to offer.

I look forward to meeting you all.



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, sweeping initial 'L' followed by a series of smaller, connected loops and a final flourish.

Lambert van Nistelrooij

President of the Jury

JURY MEMBERS



Lambert van Nistelrooij

Member of the European Parliament
President of the Jury

SMART SPECIALISATION FOR SME INNOVATION



Esteban Pelayo

Director of the European Association of Development Agencies (EURADA)



Jean-Claude Prager

Chief Economist of the Greater Paris Corporation (the state-owned company in charge of construction of the 200-km automated subway in Paris)

ENERGY UNION: CLIMATE ACTION



Tom Delreux

Professor of Political Science and Director of the Centre for European Studies, University of Louvain (Louvain-la-Neuve), Belgium



Diana Urge-Vorsatz

Director of the Center for Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Policy at the Central European University, Hungary and Vice-Chair of Working Group Mitigation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION



Barbara Helfferich
Independent consultant and researcher on gender, environment and social policies in the EU and founder of Gender5plus, the first European feminist think-tank



Pavla Špondrová
Lawyer, anti-discrimination and gender equality expert, assistant judge, District Court Prague

EDUCATION AND TRAINING



Barry van Driel
Senior staff at the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam and Vice President of the International Association for Intercultural Education



Christine Apap
Senior Manager - Human Resources & Corporate Communications at FTIAS Limited, Malta, which is part of FTI Touristik GmbH

CITYSTARS: CITIES IN DIGITAL TRANSITION



Tomasz Kulisiewicz
PhD, analyst and researcher at Centre for Studies on Digital Government, Poland



Sten-Erik Björling
Self-employed ICT consultant since 1983, currently developing concepts and solutions for large-scale circular economy implementations

CATEGORIES

This year, managing authorities submitted projects in five award categories:

SMART SPECIALISATION FOR SME INNOVATION **11**

SMEs are the backbone of the EU economy and central to the entrepreneurial discovery processes for developing smart specialisation strategies. Their involvement is crucial in the governance, monitoring and implementation of these strategies to improve innovation ecosystems and framework conditions for SME innovation.

ENERGY UNION: CLIMATE ACTION **23**

The EU has set in its Energy Union initiative ambitious targets to address climate change. Around 25 % of the overall ESI Fund budget goes into climate-related actions, paving the way for a shift towards a low-carbon economy and meeting the EU's long-term 2050 greenhouse gas reductions target.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION **35**

Empowering and supporting the active participation of women in business, employment, policy-making and urban and local communities are funding priorities of many regions and countries, in line with the EU's core value of promoting gender equality.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING **49**

Innovative and integrated investment in inclusive education at all levels is essential for developing the balanced set of knowledge, skills and competences EU citizens need to prepare well for both work and society.

CITYSTARS: CITIES IN DIGITAL TRANSITION **59**

Digitisation is playing a key role in the technological transformation of cities, opening up new approaches to city-based policymaking, providing better public services for EU citizens, creating new business opportunities, and contributing to sustainable urban development.

REGIOSTARS FINALISTS 2017





SMART SPECIALISATION FOR SME INNOVATION



Sharing in the bio-economy boost

A five-country partnership has helped SMEs scale up innovative products at an innovative bio testing centre in Belgium, to commercialise processes that could green industry in Europe.

Bridging the gap from lab to market is one of the biggest challenges in developing a new product. Proving that you can make a product in the lab does not mean that you can produce it under industrial conditions.

In the Bio Base NWE project, bio-economy innovators and SMEs in North-West Europe received voucher-based finance that gave them access to equipment and technical support to develop pilot versions of products. This enabled them to convince investors to support them in the commercial launch of their product. They could therefore achieve market entry within a fraction of the time and cost compared to if they had tried this on their own.

The bio-economy sector makes industrial products from renewable inputs and organic side streams instead of fossil fuels, with enormous potential for growth, jobs and greener manufacturing. Forty-three new jobs were created during the project, with a further 275 expected. Of the 30 SMEs Bio Base NWE supported, 16 are now planning to build a pilot or production line, attracting total investment of over EUR 70 million.

Although the project ended in 2015, the partners are taking the initiative further, expanding the services they offer and advising others on how to provide similar support.

“

The project sends a clear message to European innovators that a shared state-of-the-art pilot facility, in combination with an easily accessible voucher system, empowers SMEs to turn research into investments and jobs.

Lieve Hoflack, Project Manager at Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant



Project: Bio Base NWE

Countries: Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, United Kingdom

Programme: Interreg North-West Europe

Duration: 01/01/2013-31/12/2015

Total budget: EUR 6 149 200 (including EUR 3 074 600 European funding, ERDF)

Website: www.biobasenwe.org



Guillaume Wegria

Co-founder and general manager of Fyteko Sprl

“We produce a molecule that helps crops recover better from heat and lack of water, which could have a big impact all over the world. The support helped us convince investors that our process is feasible. We are now waiting for authorisation to put our first products on the market.”

Rudi Dieleman

Director and co-founder of Pectcof BV



“It was not just about the money, it was all about the technical support. Our technology extracts useful chemicals from industrial coffee waste. The support helped us make the process commercially viable, secure follow-up investment from business angels and hire extra researchers.”



3D printing for Tampere SMEs

Easier access to 3D printing is helping small firms in Finland to develop new products, attract business and create jobs.

Educational institutions in Pirkanmaa Province, Finland have pooled their 3D printing knowledge and bought new technology to supplement their existing equipment. Under the 3D Boost and 3D Invest project, they have made it available to companies which lack resources to test new techniques.

Such firms now have a one-stop shop for their 3D printing needs. This helps with the research, development and manufacture of products. Subsequently, more than 30 have drawn up 3D printing business development plans.

New companies have been set up to make 3D prints and perform related activities. The technology has also allowed museums

to make replicas of objects and showcase cultural heritage without fear of loss or damage.

The cooperation network established by the project encompasses all educational levels, leading to improvements in teaching. It has access to all commercially available 3D printing techniques, including two laboratories, which it is committed to maintaining. Although the equipment is spread across different sites, each institution can use it as required.

3D projects also significantly promote students' opportunities for new learning and increase enthusiasm for studies.



The project provides students with new skills to meet future knowledge requirements. It also gives around 100 companies access to new technology and the chance to develop business opportunities and increase profitability.

**Anja Kakkuri, Head of administration,
SASKY Training Consortium**

Project: 3D Boost and 3D Invest

Region: Tampere (Finland)

Programme: Sustainable Growth and Jobs

Duration: 01/10/2014-30/06/2017

Total budget: EUR 2 300 900 (including EUR 1 223 800 European funding, ERDF)

Website: www.3dpirkanmaa.fi



Reijo Niittynen
CEO, OM-Finland

“Our company is a start-up and SME making preventive maintenance sensor products for a wide variety of industries. We joined 3D Boost to test more efficient and cost-saving production methods. 3D Boost was simple to join and cooperation was fluent and easy. We found new production methods for the sensor core which reduced the number of parts needed in assembly from almost 120 to 15. Also, assembly time was reduced by 70 %.”

Antti Korpi
CEO, GO3D

“3D Boost and 3D Invest made it possible to train my professional skills in a very well-equipped environment with everything from modelling software to scanners and printers. During the training I founded my company and using the printers helped me choose machines. I then noticed a gap in the market for continuous-fibre-reinforced 3D printed parts and invested in the technology. I also won a 3D printing competition.”





Smart cooperation in the Baltic

Easier access to large, high-tech research centres is helping European companies to develop new and better products faster.

Businesses often lack access to advanced research facilities. The Science Link project set up a cooperation network of major research centres in the Baltic Sea region measuring photons and neutrons.

The project linked the centres with regional contact points which informed companies about potential opportunities. It also launched calls for firms to submit proposals and to use the centres' facilities, as well as providing free support and consultation.

Two-thirds of the applicants, coming from across the region, were SMEs. Firms benefiting were operating in fields such as agriculture,

food, chemicals, construction, engineering, the environment, energy, home and personal care, and bio- and nanotechnology.

The products developed include better life jackets, more efficient electronic devices and radiation protection, and non-sticky skincare products without allergens.

Commitments made by participating facilities ensure the network's continuation, while a follow-up project involves setting up industrial research centres at universities.

“

Fundamental new products are only obtained with research. Science Link as a project has brought us many insights and practical steps to closer collaboration between research infrastructures and industry.

**Uwe Sassenberg, Coordinator,
Science Link Network**

Project: Science Link

Countries: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden.

Programme: Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013

Duration: 01/09/2011-30/06/2014

Total budget: EUR 3 619 000 (including EUR 2 790 000 European funding, ERDF)

Website: www.science-link.eu



Kenneth M Persson
Head of research, Sydsvatten AB

“For us, Science Link has been an eye-opener. Our participation made it possible to study the atomic composition of waterworks sludge using x-ray adsorption spectroscopy, which is great. Later, we got several insights into how advanced material science studies can be used to decipher molecular structures, also in a water-treatment context. It is a fantastic development.”

Anna Stenstam
CEO, CR Competence

“Through Science Link, we had the possibility to bring our client in the medical device industry exactly what they needed. It was urgent to find a way to evaluate the effect of their production parameters and without the method found at the MAX IV laboratory we would have had to resort to end-use trial and error. Instead, we got a clear picture of what the production method resulted in, which was very important at the time and was used as a basis for later company decisions.”





Helping tech firms accelerate

Business accelerators in Portugal play a key role in economic development, helping companies grow once they have taken their first steps.

Founded in 1991 at Coimbra University, the Pedro Nunes Institute (IPN) combines R&D laboratories with one of Portugal's most successful business incubators. In the absence of local structures to support companies after their first few years, in 2011 it launched the construction of the business accelerator TecBIS.

TecBIS helps technology firms innovate, grow and export. Two modern buildings, with around 4500 m² of office space, were designed to accommodate up to 25 companies and 600 people.

Since May 2014, the accelerator has supported 23 technology-based SMEs, many of

them graduated from IPN's incubator, that today employ altogether over 550 highly qualified professionals. Thanks to its success with local companies, the accelerator is continuing to attract businesses from other regions to Coimbra, which is vital in an area with few large industries. TecBIS is using the university, which is Coimbra's main asset, to drive economic development.

Lessons from TecBIS will help develop Coimbra's technology park. Managers of similar parks elsewhere have visited the accelerator to learn from it. Revenue from TecBIS has increased every year since 2014, securing its long-term future.

“

The RegioStars Award recognises an institution that, since 1991, through a solid relationship between university and companies, promotes innovation, quality, rigour and entrepreneurship in the region.

Ana Abrunhosa, President, Commission for Regional Coordination and Development, Centre Region

“

Qualification as RegioStars finalists will, in addition to recognising the impact and merit of our accelerator, add visibility, especially at European level, and motivate us to be more ambitious and persistent in working for the development of our region.

Teresa Mendes, President, IPN

Project: IPN TecBIS – Technology Business Innovation Sustainable Growth – Business Accelerator

Region: Centre (Portugal)

Programme: Centro

Duration: 01/03/2010-31/12/2014

Total budget: EUR 8 253 000 (including EUR 7 015 100 European funding, ERDF)

Website: www.ipn.pt



Pedro Pinto
CEO, Take the Wind

“Our experience at TecBIS in the last three years has been very positive, combining the use of a more suitable infrastructure for technology companies with facilitated access to a valuable and dynamic network, generating excellent business and growth opportunities for the company.”

Victor Batista
CEO, Present Technologies

“Joining IPN’s TecBIS proved to be a winning strategy for Present Technologies. In two years we have doubled our turnover and our clients nowadays are mostly from abroad. TecBIS’ infrastructure and team have been key to our recent growth.”





Clean energy breaks new ground

Links between academia and industry have created opportunities in Wales for small firms in the low-carbon energy sector.

The Cardiff University-led SEREN project has helped small businesses in Wales exploit low-carbon energy sources from the Earth's crust. It engaged with business in a hands-on way according to industry needs and market opportunities, and helped transfer research innovations to industry.

The approach entailed technology demonstration, expert support and industrial input. Where possible, the projects were led by SMEs. SEREN helped 90 SMEs, created 111 jobs, set up 28 projects and developed 36 processes and products. It also raised awareness of environmental sustainability and equal opportunities in 80 companies.

Schemes developed through SEREN are helping to tackle fuel poverty, environmental injustice and social exclusion. One is using water from old coal mines to generate heat. This lays the foundations for wider use of mine water for sustainable energy and job creation in deprived areas.

The methodology, which has attracted global interest, can be readily transferred to other regions. A new research grant will guarantee the project's future, and Cardiff University is now leading a new EU-funded project developing research capability in energy systems in Wales.

“

SEREN has been instrumental in creating new SMEs and sustaining existing companies in a region with high unemployment. Schemes based on SEREN improve access to affordable energy, create jobs and mitigate environmental impacts.

**Aleksandra Koj, Research associate,
Cardiff University**

“

My company, Carreg Las, was created from work on the SEREN project. I am very pleased indeed to have been able to achieve this end. This would not have been possible without the SEREN project.

Rob Francis, Director at Carreg Las Ltd

Project: SEREN

Region: Wales (United Kingdom)

Programme: Convergence ERDF

Duration: 26/02/2010-01/06/2015

Total budget: EUR 11836800 (including EUR 6628900 European funding, ERDF)

Website: grc.engineering.cf.ac.uk



Dave Tucker
Director, WDS Green Energy

“WDS Green Energy are proud to have been a major partner in the SEREN project. Our collaboration was very beneficial to the company, leading to us working on new innovative projects, such as using the abandoned coal mines of South Wales as heat sources.”

Michael Jenkins

Team Leader,
Sustainable
Development,
Bridgend County
Borough Council



“Bridgend County Borough Council is currently investigating the use of abandoned coal mines in the Llynfi valley as a potential heat source for a new district heating network. The SEREN project has been our key partner on this journey and continues to play a strong and important part in our work.”



ENERGY UNION: CLIMATE ACTION



Sustainable secondary education

In the Estonia town of Põlva, the Construction of Gymnasium project gave this rural area a new, nearly carbon-neutral public secondary school.

In January 2017, over 200 secondary-school students in Estonia started classes in their new school. However, this school is far from typical: although students study the same courses as the rest of the country, they do so in a nearly-carbon-neutral facility.

From the construction process to the building itself and the equipment, both inside and out, everything about the EU-funded school is centred on energy efficiency. It was built with innovative materials and natural laminated timber. The LED lights are powered by 144 solar panels across the roof

and the school also benefits from a highly effective heat-recovery system. Even the windows and furnishings are environmentally friendly, while special insulation retains the building's heat more effectively, thereby cutting heating costs.

The school is part of a network of public secondary schools being set up across Estonia as the country works to expand educational opportunities in rural areas. The Põlva school, which is also fully accessible for physically disabled people, serves as a model for sustainable public buildings.

“

For the first time, we have a schoolhouse students do not want to leave. We have a place where performances are not just a school party but a part of the community as a whole. Nice architecture, energy efficiency and a good indoor atmosphere are definitely a mix to strive for in future buildings, especially in buildings designed for children.

**Kalle Küttis, Head of school network,
Ministry of Education and Science**

Project: Construction of Gymnasium of Põlva

Region: Põlvamaa (Estonia)

Programme: Reorganisation of the secondary school network in 2014-2020

Duration: 24/07/2014-31/05/2017

Total budget: EUR 5 780 200 (including EUR 4 913 200 European funding, ERDF)

Website: www.innove.ee



Alo Savi

Director of Gymnasium of Põlva

“This project gave me the opportunity to create a school where every teacher and every student really wants to attend and study. Thanks to this project, I can work and study at the best school in the world!”

Kuldar Leis

Chairman of the Põlva Municipal Council and author of the idea of constructing a nearly-zero-energy building



“Thanks to the successful project, the number of children coming to study at the Gymnasium of Põlva has increased, including children from other parts of Estonia. The slogan of Põlva County is ‘Green experience’, and it is extremely important to give children a school environment with a good indoor atmosphere.”



People power for cleaner air

The Finnish municipality of Ii is on track to cut CO₂ emissions by 80% thanks to a switch to renewables and redesigning public services with its citizens.

From 2007 to 2015, the Finnish municipality of Ii reduced its CO₂ emissions more quickly than any other municipality in the country, according to the Finnish Environment Institute, SYKE. It achieved these savings by redesigning public services, using less energy and switching to renewable energy.

To take this impressive achievement further, Ii turned to its citizens, in its Innovative Low-Carbon Public Services project. Through consultation methods such as workshops or competitions, citizens shared ideas on how to make climate-friendly choices desirable and easy. Their insights have improved public transport and cycling infrastructure, helped re-zone the town centre, introduced

smart technology into public services and led to a scheme to recognise businesses that save resources.

The co-design approach has not only made public services more citizen-focused and better value, but it has enhanced cooperation and efficiency between municipal departments.

Ii plans to co-design further improvements to services to cut CO₂ emission levels to 20% of 2007 levels before 2020. It hopes to use the RegioStars Award to raise awareness of its successful approach in municipalities across Finland and beyond.



This project inspires us to continue to work towards sustainability while co-designing services. It helps us share our practices with a wider international audience and strengthens our belief that we're doing the right thing.

**Kristiina Nurmenniemi, Project Manager,
Micropolis Ltd**



Project: Innovative Low-Carbon Public Services

Region: Northern Ostrobothnia (Finland)

Programme: Sustainable growth and jobs 2014-2020 – Structural Funds Programme of Finland

Duration: 01/12/2015-30/11/2017

Total budget: EUR 297 500 (including EUR 208 300 European funding, ERDF)

Website: www.greenpolis.fi/en/projektit/innohiili-innovative-low-carbon-public-services



Heidi Takalo
Citizen of Ii

“I took part in designing our city centre with experts and decision-makers. I really felt equal and thought my input made a difference. It also got my three children interested in the community's well-being through another inquiry on travelling to school. On the basis of that consultation, the municipality is making cycle routes safer and reorganising public transport. For this, I am really thankful.”

Teijo Liedes

Chair of the city council and the environmental association



“The project has changed the function of the municipality so that citizens can plan their own services. Ii wants to be inclusive and this project has made it possible. It has brought policymakers and citizens together to build a low-carbon society. Decision-making has also become easier when the common goal has been understood better and information on costs and savings provided.”



Capturing the power of the sea

Massileo, a thermal smart grid powered by 75 % renewable energy, is providing buildings in Marseille, France, with heat and air-conditioning.

By capturing energy from the sea surrounding the port of Marseille in France, the EU-funded Massileo project simultaneously delivers heat and air-conditioning to surrounding buildings.

The energy network comprises a temperate water loop connecting the sea-water energy-recovery station in Marseille's harbour to heat pumps in the urban districts. From the pumps, the energy is dispatched to provide buildings with heat, cool air and hot water.

The project is also turning individual buildings into energy producers. For example, the heat generated by a pump to cool an office

is recovered and used to heat hot water in another building, so no energy is wasted.

By providing sustainable energy to the 2.7-hectare îlot Allar eco-district, which includes over 58000 m² of offices, shops, homes and hotels, the Massileo project has reduced CO₂ emissions by 80 %. However, this represents only a fraction of the project's full potential. With a heat/cold production capacity of 21 MW, the smart grid has the potential to supply energy to 500 000 m² of buildings – and reduce emissions even further.

“

Using sea water as an energy source helps us transition away from fossil fuels. In addition, the high efficiency of the buildings and the energy transfer between users further reduce the buildings' energy consumption.

**Arnaud Westrich, Managing Director,
Optimal Solutions**

Project: Réseau d'eau tempérée de l'îlot Allar (îlot Allar moderate-temperature water network)

Region: Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (France)

Programme: PACA Region ERDF Operational Programme

Duration: 01/06/2015-31/05/2018

Total budget: EUR 9660950 (including EUR 941 940 European funding, ERDF)

Website: www.massileo.fr



Pascal Peres

Development territorial manager EDF

“To think about the Mediterranean city of tomorrow on an energy level – this was the challenge we faced. Naturally, we started by integrating climatic data and available natural resources before working with the construction crew to create a system of complementarity energy uses. Thus, the heat generated when cooling an office space is now used to produce hot water for homes! Massileo uses more than 75 % renewable energy and contributes to reducing the ‘heat island’ effect in a significant way.”

Tahri Slimane

Massileo project manager

“The first thought that comes to mind is why didn't we use this potential before? In fact, the Massileo sea-water loop gets its source of energy from the Mediterranean that surrounds Marseille and has accompanied us for millennia. What could be simpler and more normal than using its calorific potential to warm us in the winter and cool us during summer?”





Geothermal heats up Tuscan town

The EU-funded Montieri Heating System project in Tuscany, Italy, leverages geothermal resources, providing residents of Montieri with year-round heat and hot water.

By connecting Montieri to the geothermal power plant located in neighbouring Travele, citizens living in this mountain village now enjoy safe, dependable and affordable heating and hot water. The state-of-the-art system, the first of its kind, involved constructing an innovative heating network, refurbishing sewers and updating aqueducts.

Today, nearly 500 homes benefit from the availability of 24/7 heat and hot water provided by the region's district heating scheme. As the system replaces the use of wood-burning stoves and gas boilers, it also eliminates the risk of fire, gas leaks

and explosions. Homes not served by geothermal energy get their heat and hot water via a solar thermal collector system which has also been developed by the project.

As a direct result of the geothermal project, the town has significantly reduced its energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. Utility costs have also fallen considerably, with numerous beneficiaries across the region including public infrastructure, aquaculture, sports and tourism facilities, and cultural heritage sites.



The power grid is easy to use. Citizens can regulate the temperature or turn off the heat using a simple thermostat. Individual citizens can now enjoy a safe, convenient and cost-effective heating system – advantages that translate into greater value for homes connected to the heating grid.

Alessandro Vichi, Director responsible for public works - energy – management, Engineering Training Faculty of University of Pisa

Project: Impianto di teleriscaldamento dell'abitato di Montieri

Region: Tuscany (Italy)

Programme: ERDF ROP 2007-2013

Duration: 01/10/2012-29/12/2014

Total budget: EUR 5 983 600 (including EUR 776 500 European funding, ERDF)

Website: www.comune.montieri.gr.it



Grazia Vatti,
Montieri citizen

“I used to spend EUR 3400, now I spend a maximum EUR 800 for heating, including hot water, for the entire year for my 95-square-metre apartment. I no longer have to worry about having wood in my cellar, which took up so much space and created a mess.”

Pancini Carlotta,
Montieri citizen

“Our decision to purchase a home in Montieri was highly influenced by the new heating system. Having a very young daughter, the system allows for an ideal temperature for her in the winter, and not having to worry about the dangerous gas emissions and toxic fumes. The extraordinary thermal efficiency, along with the economic savings, confirms that we absolutely made the right decision.”





Alpine action against climate change

SEAP_Alps is providing Europe's Alpine communities with common solutions for adapting and mitigating the effects of climate change.

Due to their unique vulnerability to global warming, there is a sense of urgency among Europe's Alpine communities about finding common solutions for mitigating and adapting to climate change. However, the problem is that these communities are spread across many countries and are separated by challenging terrain.

The EU-funded Supporting Municipalities in the implementation of Sustainable Energy Action Plans (SEAP_Alps) project laid the groundwork for overcoming this by creating a common platform for municipalities to use to lead successful mitigation/adaptation strategies and create energy action plans.

The online tool includes methods for identifying and implementing actions to achieve sustainable energy goals, a tool for selecting relevant energy projects, online training for municipalities, and a communication strategy.

SEAP_Alps succeeded in establishing a network of cooperation between local authorities working to draft and implement energy action plans. The platform is being used by nearly 60 Alpine municipalities and, thanks to widespread promotion, an additional 3000 municipalities are interested in initiating sustainable energy action and climate adaptation measures.



Not only does the project provide an innovative methodology that integrates mitigation and adaptation to climate change approaches, but it also allows us to identify opportunities to invest in energy refurbishments of public buildings using innovative public-private contractual forms.

Silvio DeNigris, SEAP_Alps project manager

Project: Supporting Municipalities in the implementation of Sustainable Energy Action Plans (SEAP_Alps)

Regions: Piedmont, Veneto (Italy); East Slovenia, West Slovenia (Slovenia); Auvergne, Rhône-Alpes (France); Carinthia, Styria (Austria); Upper Bavaria, Swabia (Germany)

Programme: Alpine Space Programme

Duration: 01/10/2012-31/05/2015

Total budget: EUR 2 217 000 (including EUR 1 685 000 European funding, ERDF)

Website: www.seap-alps.eu/hp2/Home.htm



Eugenio Gambetta

Mayor of Orbassano, Italy

“Joining the SEAP_Alps project allowed the City of Orbassano to plan actions for a more sustainable future, identifying energy-efficiency measures in public buildings that subsequently have been realised through innovative public-private contractual forms. In this way, around EUR 850 000 in energy-efficiency investments have been implemented without increasing public spending – setting an example for other municipalities.”



Michael Müller

Mayor of Geretsried, Germany

“We remain committed to climate mitigation objectives and strive to make Geretsried a lighthouse city of how to successfully turn around energy use for the region.”



WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION



Working to improve gender equality

Encouraging women to join the labour market and set up their own small businesses in Bulgaria and Turkey can contribute significantly to regional economic development.

The Equity project set out to strengthen gender equality in the border areas of Bourgas in Bulgaria and Kırklareli in Turkey, close to the Black Sea. The inspiration came from the two local Chambers of Commerce and Industry, with a view to opening up more job opportunities for women in the region.

The work started with an in-depth analysis of women's role in the local economy and the support available for small business start-ups – leading to publication of some important studies and examples of good practice.

The next step was to set up workshops in Bourgas and Kırklareli, with training on gender equality issues, entrepreneurship and other skills. About 80 women took part in seminars, exchange visits to female-run companies, and discussions ranging from science to women's rights.

Besides lifelong learning, the project looked at ways to combine work with family responsibilities, and encouraged social cohesion and respect between the two communities. One practical outcome has been the setting up of women's entrepreneurship committees within both Chambers of Commerce. The partners now want to see the project replicated on a wider scale.

“

The project contributed to a better application of equality in the two border regions – Bourgas and Kirklareli – and created new friendships and opportunities for strengthening the role of women in business and the labour market.

**Eng. Vidka Valcheva, Vice-president,
Bourgas Chamber of Commerce
and Industry**

Project: Enhancing Respect for Gender Equality in BG-TR Cross-Border Area - Equity

Regions: Bourgas (Bulgaria);
Kirklareli (Turkey)

Programme: Bulgaria – Turkey IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme

Duration: 29/07/2013–29/07/2014

Total budget: EUR 68 300 (including EUR 58 100 European funding, IPA)

Website: www.cci-bourgas.org/



**Prof. Dr Sevdalina
Turmanova**
Deputy regional
governor of Bourgas
District

“My participation in the project has benefited my work as a university lecturer and regional representative of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. I gained new knowledge and shared my experience of the role of the woman in the field of science. To use the potential of women in all spheres of our society, and especially in entrepreneurial and scientific activity, is key to the economic growth of our country.”

**Eng. Maria
Maria Bentzien**

Owner and manager
of Marie Bentz Ltd,
Bourgas

“I participated in the project as a business woman and representative of small and medium-sized enterprises. The contacts established have allowed a better understanding of employed women in the cross-border regions, and their participation in the management of companies.”





Solid foundations for women to build on

Although traditionally a ‘man’s world’, the building industry is attracting more and more women, some of them highly educated. In the Île-de-France, construction is a major source of employment.

Yet gender equality remains a long way off: 98% of building-site workers are male. Challenging the prejudices surrounding female roles in the workplace is one of the aims of the Women and Construction project, which provides women-only professional training in skills such as plastering and painting, tiling and floor-laying.

All the beneficiaries are job-seekers, ranging from school drop-outs and single mothers to women with socio-professional difficulties. Rather than end up in low-paid, precarious jobs, they are keen to learn a trade that

offers employment security as well as career development.

In teams of eight, the trainees get five months’ on-site experience, followed by a month in a company. From this base, some can go on to set up their own companies, while others aim for site manager or forewoman positions.

Thanks to the project’s network of local building firms, in 2016, over 62% of trainees landed job contracts for 12 months or more. The scheme is now likely to be adopted on a broader scale, with the next training session getting under way in January 2018.



The construction sector should not close the doors of its construction sites to women, who represent 50% of the population. Companies that have overcome prejudice and stereotypes by hiring them are convinced that WOMEN have a place in this field of activity.

Daniela Bulfaro, Project Manager at the Habiter au Quotidien Association

Project: Femmes et Batiment (Women and Construction)

Region: Île-de-France (France)

Programme: European Social Fund – Emploi et Inclusion en Metropole

Duration: 01/01/2016-31/12/2016

Total budget: EUR 11 117 200 (including EUR 5 102 900 European funding, ESF)

Website: www.habiter-au-quotidien.fr/



Touta Djiballah

Former trainee, now first woman companion for Île-de-France in the Colas company

“This training strengthened me in my professional choice and confirmed my willingness to flourish in the field of construction. Thanks to the Habiter au Quotidien Association for its ‘Women and Construction’ training: thank you for being a key element in the realisation of my projects and for allowing me to get to where I am now.”



Ruken

Former trainee, now painter and decorator at Infobat

“I was in a difficult situation when I joined this training. Thanks to this apprenticeship, I realised my professional project and regained self-confidence. For the past two years, I have enjoyed my work as a house painter, and in my private life I am totally autonomous, which was not previously obvious to me.”



Making engineering a family-friendly business

Qualified women who put their careers on hold to raise children are being eased back into the labour market in Germany's Leine-Weser region by the Back2Job - *Ingenieurinnen gesucht!* (Engineers wanted!) project.

A shortage of workers with mathematics, science and technology (STEM) skills threatens to slow innovation and competitiveness in the region. Yet women who have the professional qualifications are sometimes discouraged or find it hard to return to these fast-moving sectors after family leave.

The 12-month project offered individual coaching and training, trade fair visits, mentoring and work experience. Technical skills were refreshed in regular sessions at the Hochschule Hanover (University of Applied Sciences and Arts) and the Leibniz University of Hanover. Women also received advice on combining family responsibilities with working time. The project cooperated with employers, especially SMEs, to raise awareness of the need for flexibility.

Involving participants from 17 countries, Back2Job enabled immigrant women to obtain recognition of academic or language qualifications gained abroad.

A further aim was to foster gender equality in hitherto male-dominated technical sectors where the corporate culture tends to put women off – creating a vicious circle of discrimination that must be broken.

Twenty women, aged from 27 to 57, took part. All completed their five-month work placements, with five kept on permanently. By project end, 12 participants had signed employment contracts.

“

Every woman sacrifices her professional phase to start a family and raise kids, which makes perfect society and patriotic citizens. The project aims to lighten the professional life of women with an engineering background by providing them with a career in their respective domains so that technology and innovation keep evolving.

Ayten Berse, Project Manager Back2Job – Ingenieurinnen gesucht!, Bildungswerk der Niedersächsischen Wirtschaft gGmbH

Project: Back2Job - Ingenieurinnen gesucht!

Region: Lower Saxony (Germany)

Programme: European Social Fund

Duration: 01/03/2016-31/03/2017

Total budget: EUR 19 223 600 (including EUR 9 207 400 European funding, ESF)

Website: www.bnw.de



Aouatef Ben Amor

Mechanical engineer,
BG Verkehr

“Back2Job provided me with the chance to extend my contacts with interesting companies which strengthened my confidence level after my parenting phase. I grabbed the opportunity to get a position in a reputable organisation. It was a great professional comeback.”



Kavitha Karuppana

Software test engineer, HaCon
Ingenieurgesellschaft mbH

“The project Back2Job was a gateway for me to get introduced into the German software industry. It triggered confidence in me that an immigration background plays no role in achieving professional success – rather, it is the technical skills, creativity and dedication towards the work.”



Breaking the silence for deaf mothers

In the Latvian capital, Riga, an expert support system helps women with hearing impairments to cope with the challenges of childbirth and motherhood.

Childbirth is an exciting but also stressful experience. So if a new mother cannot hear her baby, or the advice she is receiving from doctors and helpers, it becomes doubly complicated.

In the *Together beyond Silence* project, the Latvian Association of the Deaf (LAD) worked with Riga Maternity Hospital to provide information and social support for deaf mothers. It trained five sign language experts to help during childbirth, and five more specialists to offer post-natal assistance.

The project aided the safe delivery of six babies, and guided 19 hearing-impaired

women through the days of early motherhood, overcoming the risk of distress and social isolation.

The service proved so popular that LAD continued to work with the maternity hospital after the project finished. It will receive funding from Riga City Municipality until 2019, and has opened a monthly 'Mommies Club', as well as a community centre for deaf people.

The pioneering solidarity offered by the project improved the well-being of vulnerable new mothers, helping to prevent health risks for them and their babies and boost their social integration.



A deaf woman suffering severe pain in childbirth may experience physical complications, too. A newly trained specialist is a support person as a mediator between the doctor and woman. And a specialist helps young mothers during the post-natal period, reducing health risks for mother and baby.

**Diāna Zālamane-Leite, Project Leader,
author of the idea**

Project: Together beyond Silence
(Don't stay alone in the silence)

Region: Riga (Latvia)

Programme: Addition to the Operational Programme 'Human Resources and Employment'

Duration: 02/04/2012-31/03/2014

Total budget: EUR 5 104 600 (European funding EUR 1 204 000, ESF)

Website: <http://www.lns.lv>



Liene Bērziņa

The first deaf mother to receive support from a newly trained specialist during childbirth

“When I got to the hospital, the trained specialist was completely at my side everywhere, so it was very easy for me to get in touch with the doctors and it made me feel secure. I was able to concentrate on giving birth! It helped the baby to come into the world safely.”

Ilze Pole

Deaf mother who received trained specialist assistance during childbirth in 2017



“I felt safe, I did not have to worry about the insignificant things that I encounter on a daily basis as a hearing disabled person. Because of the specialist I had a chance to think and concentrate on the birth process at that moment and how to help my child come into this world. This assistance provided me with physical, emotional, informative help that was very important to me.”



Skills to start again in Spain

Spain's Region of Murcia has improved its services for survivors of gender-based violence through a multi-partner programme to develop job-related skills.

For women who have experienced gender-based violence (GBV), finding a job or starting a business can empower them to find a much-needed place in society. Yet women are more likely to be unemployed than men in Spain's Region of Murcia, and GBV survivors often lack the skills and confidence to re-enter the labour market.

The regional authorities therefore developed a programme – Coordination to Improve Gender-Based Violence Survivors' Labour Market Integration and Social Inclusion – to better help these women. It provides GBV survivors

with action plans, training and grants to help them find work. The programme is supported through the different regional services working with GBV survivors and job-seekers, by specialist professionals and local businesses.

This multi-partner approach enables the region to better target resources to the women and provide personalised support. By June 2016, 57 % of women participating had found work – an impressive rate for this vulnerable group. The region now plans to develop new measures and transfer best practices to other groups to extend its success.



This Award encourages everyone committed to the empowerment of women survivors of GBV. It motivates us to continue working in this area and improve their access to the labour market.

Alejandro Zamora López-Fuensalida,
Director General, Murcia's Regional Service
for Employment and Training



Project: Coordination to Improve Gender-Based Violence Survivors' Labour Market Integration and Social Inclusion

Region: Murcia (Spain)

Programme: Murcia ESF 2014-2020 OP

Duration: 01/01/2011-01/12/2020

Total budget: EUR 5 610 000 (including EUR 1 204 000 European funding, ESF)

Website: www.sefcarm.es



GBV survivor who found employment through the programme, anonymous at her request

“I believed it was impossible for me to get a job. This programme helped to restore my self-confidence, be aware of my capabilities and not feel alone. Finally, I was hired. I can now support my family and retake control of my life.”

Mónica Egea
 Employment
 counsellor, Regional
 Service for Employment
 and Training

“The coordination allows us to build a professional supportive network, so that we can improve our service for women survivors of gender-based violence. Participants are treated with respect and encouraged to feel more positive about their abilities. They usually go beyond all their expectations and initial goals. Their achievements are the best reward for us.”





Self-belief breaks down gender barriers

In Wales, twice as many women as men work in low-paid jobs. Agile Nation 2 is helping to increase the numbers in high-skilled or management positions.

Wales is the only part of the UK where men's employment has risen faster than women's since the economic crisis. Figures show that only 7% of working women are in management or senior roles compared with 11% of men, while skills gaps are most common in sectors with fewer women.

The ongoing project aims to change this state of affairs by giving women the skills and confidence to take on management and non-traditional jobs, for example in science, technology and engineering. A career development programme offers advice, training and one-to-one mentoring, as well as tackling work-life balance.

Through a business culture survey, employers can identify barriers to women's progression in their firms. The project then draws up a tailored action plan to help them recruit and retain female staff.

To date, Agile Nation 2 has supported 1336 participants and 304 businesses.

Equipping more women with the skills to secure higher-paid jobs is not only vital for a successful economy, but will also help to combat poverty in families that rely on women's salaries.

“

Agile Nation 2 is making a real difference by ensuring the skills and talents of women across Wales are fully realised. Many women have been enabled to transform and progress their careers. Coupled with the culture change among businesses, the project is leading the way in creating a Wales where women can achieve and prosper.

Hayley Dunne, Chwarae Teg

Project: Agile Nation 2

Region: Wales (United Kingdom)

Programme: European Social Fund - East Wales and West Wales and the Valleys

Duration: 01/04/2015-01/06/2018

Total budget: EUR 12 130 000 (including EUR 9 345 000 European funding, ESF)

Website: www.cteg.org.uk



Ellie Morgan

Accounts receivables specialist,
GE Capital Industrial

“I moved from a fixed-term contract to a permanent one with a higher salary. I’ve realised that I can apply for any job rather than holding back. Taking on courses and joining up to things I wouldn’t have had the courage to do before, my confidence was increased to successfully apply and obtain this promotion.”

Harriet Kings

Senior communications partner, Brighter Comms

“The Agile Nation 2 programme definitely gave me a massive confidence boost. I’d been a manager for about six months when I started the programme, but I wasn’t sure if I was going about it the right way, making sure that I was getting the best out of people. I’m in a completely different place now after finishing the programme. It really is a great opportunity to just focus on yourself.”





EDUCATION AND TRAINING



Raising organic farmers

A programme in Croatia's Dalmatia-Split county has trained young farmers in organic production, creating jobs and a new industry in the region.

Organic food production is a growing sector and one that can be very profitable. Split-Dalmatia County saw it as an opportunity to reverse rural depopulation and unemployment, make more use of local biodiversity, promote sustainable eating and most importantly, encourage new entrepreneurs.

Its EkoBiz programme gave over 100 young and new farmers specialist training and business advice on organic farming to help them create a regional specialisation in this industry. It also promoted wider interest through a trade fair, EkoFjera, which is now the biggest

organic food event in Croatia. Other activities in schools and nurseries – along with film and music events – promoted organic agriculture to potential future farmers.

Public interest in healthy, sustainable food is now much stronger in the region. And with the help of EU funding, 15 trainees have started a new farming business. Across Croatia, the county is now known as the expert organic-farming region – expertise that other regions are keen to share. Organic agriculture is now a firm part of the region's business development strategy, so that more farmers can feed us all sustainably.



A strong organic sector is a priority for us. The Award promotes young Croatian organic producers and the county's development of organic agriculture.

Jelena Petrov, Senior Advisor, the Public Institution for the Development and Coordination of Split-Dalmatia County (RERA SD)



Project: EkoBiz – Promotion of Youth Entrepreneurship in the Organic Agriculture Sector

Region: Split-Dalmatia county (Croatia)

Programme: Operational Programme Human Resources Development of Republic of Croatia 2007-2014

Duration: 20/07/2015-19/07/2016

Total budget: EUR 40 168 (including EUR 34 143 European funding, ESF)

Website: www.rera.hr



Božo Vukušić
Organic olive oil producer

“As in any other business, new skills and knowledge are very important for running a farm efficiently. EkoBiz taught me about production techniques, plant protection and EU funding opportunities. I now have the knowledge I need to manage my farm. I hope our experiences will inspire others to spread awareness of organic farming and create a better life for future generations.”

Zrinka Filipović Dermit
Organic dairy farmer

“Thanks to EkoBiz, I understand marketing and business planning in organic production much better. Learning about different aspects of agriculture from real experts and visiting best-practice farms was tremendously useful. The courses were also a great starting point for developing my farm's business plan. In EkoBiz, I became part of a network of young farmers – and we're still helping and learning from each other.”





Tailor-made job-seeker support

A new labour market policy model using a customised approach is increasing job opportunities in Lombardy, Italy.

The EU-funded Dote Unica Lavoro project is promoting a new approach to combat local unemployment and promote entrepreneurship in Lombardy, Italy.

With a focus on individual demands, job-seekers are profiled according to their experience, the time spent unemployed, educational level, gender and age. The project then determines whether they should be offered a high, medium or low level of support, and delivers a customised service tailored to each person's specific needs.

Customised job-placement and focused training services are available for all job-seekers.

For workers who need to improve their skills, help in gaining new qualifications or upskilling is the priority.

A performance-based budgetary scheme encouraged public and private employment agencies to deliver placements effectively and efficiently. This was complemented by engagement with and feedback from all stakeholders.

In the first phase of the project, 54 275 people started a work experience placement. The second phase was launched in 2016 to further support the region's employment policies.

“

Dote Unica Lavoro is a new policy model bringing an innovative approach to employment and training policy in Italy. A unique, customised tool for job-seekers, the number of opportunities available has increased as a result of this initiative.

Gianni Bocchieri, Director General for Education, Training and Employment in Lombardy Region, Dote Unica Lavoro Project Coordinator

Project full name: Dote Unica Lavoro

Region: Lombardy (Italy)

Programme: European Social Fund Regional Operational Programme (ESF ROP) 2007-2013 of Lombardy Region

Duration: 15/10/2013-31/12/2015

Total budget: EUR 61 624 800 (including EUR 26 103 100 European funding, ESF)

Website: www.fse.regione.lombardia.it



Davide Giroto
Sales assistant at CSDM

“After losing the job that I had held for 17 years, I spent two years looking for a new position. Then I joined Dote Unica Lavoro, which provided me with training and employment services, helped me to get motivated and gave me a new permanent job.”



Paola Frosi

Working as an accounting assistant
in Minerva Antincendio

“When I became unemployed after 27 years, I got discouraged in the face of constant rejections. Dote Unica Lavoro supported me in looking for the most suitable opportunities, helping me to be more self-confident at interviews and starting my new job.”



Training vouchers ease burden on SMEs

By avoiding cumbersome payment methods, a simplified voucher system in Poland encouraged SMEs to participate in funded training programmes.

Complex procedures can be particularly burdensome for SMEs which do not have the resources or time required to manage them. Complaints about accessing EU funding to train staff in Poland were widespread, discouraging many SMEs from training their staff.

A new voucher scheme, known as PFK (Podmiotowe Finansowanie Kształcenia), operated by the Polish Małopolska region, managed to solve this problem. SMEs can use this form of payment to avoid administrative constraints – they simply hand them over in exchange for training courses. The practical solution encouraged 180 SMEs to sign up soon after its launch.

Institutions from all over the Małopolska region took up the offer and vouchers were soon available at 147 training companies in the region, all bearing the Małopolskie Education-Training Services Standards (MSUES) mark of quality, which guarantees their training facility is of a high standard.

The staff voucher system in use as part of the Career Direction project has already benefited more than 2000 people and is expected to serve more than 46 000 customers by mid-2023. The simplified voucher system for SMEs, which has supported over 7000 employers in Malopolska, also helped to ensure that public funds are being used appropriately.

“

The PFK project has demonstrated that providing funding to businesses using training vouchers while also assuring service quality is an effective method of distributing European funds for development services and motivating business owners and employees to pursue professional development.

Jacek Pająk, Director of the Voivodship Employment Office in Krakow

Project: PFK – Podmiotowe Finansowanie Kształcenia

Region: Małopolskie (Poland)

Programme: Program Operacyjny Kapitał Ludzki 2007-2013

Duration: 02/11/2012-30/09/2015

Total budget: EUR 1 146 900 (including EUR 974 900 European funding, ESF)

Website: www.wup-krakow.pl



Katarzyna Lalik

Chairman of the Board, Bank Spółdzielczy in Zator

“Staff who participated in training as part of the PFK project gained new skills and consolidated their existing knowledge about customer service as well as risks and regulations in the banking sector.”



Grzegorz Pałka

Owner of PAREN, which designs, sews and sells curtains and window accessories

“The PFK project helped us transition to a limited liability company in order to grow our business. We now operate in Poland and Slovakia, with further international expansion already planned.”



Broadening business horizons

A new EU-funded programme provides Spanish entrepreneurs with training abroad to promote self-employment and spark innovation back home.

The European Coworkings Programme gives Spanish entrepreneurs of all ages the chance to gain one-on-one insight from experienced mentors in more than a dozen EU Member States.

Over a three-month period, the participants take part in free online and face-to-face sessions aimed at getting them to think outside the box, learn new skills and assess their business ideas from a culturally different angle.

Each entrepreneur benefits from a tailor-made plan, part of which is held in one of 17

training centres in 13 different EU countries. In addition to meeting with mentors, the participants get the chance to share knowledge and network with local business owners and potential partners.

The programme is largely open to all, but applicants must have already started their business and speak good English. To date, 102 entrepreneurs have been trained under this initiative, and 102 internationally focused Spanish businesses have been created. Plans are in the pipeline to expand the project to all EU Member States.

“

So far the programme has helped to boost more than 100 entrepreneurial projects from all around Spain. The experience of getting mentorship abroad from European experts was in some cases so revealing that many entrepreneurs had to completely deconstruct their business ideas and make a fresh start!

**Eva Curto Izquierdo, Director,
European Coworkings**

Project: European Coworkings EOI

Region: Madrid (Spain)

Programme: ESF Operational Programme for Employment, Training and Education

Duration: 03/07/2016-31/07/2020

European funding, ESF: EUR 4 500 000

Website: www.eoi.es



Desire Tortosa
Mentored at Centre
Héraclés Charleroi
(Belgium)

“Participating in the programme provided me with real tools to get ready for venture investment and be launched in the market a few months later. The experience of living abroad and connecting with other European start-ups definitely added value to my business idea which is now a real company in the market.”



María Angeles Medina
Mentored at StartPlatz Köln (Germany)

“I received mentoring for my start-up on e-health in StartPlatz, Köln (Germany). I wanted to make it grow and become internationalised. Thanks to the programme and the confidence gained from both my mentors and the whole EOI team during the process, I feel well prepared to enter the market.”



CityStars: CITIES IN DIGITAL TRANSITION



Self-driving buses: right on track

Small automated mini-buses are being trialled in three Finnish cities – Helsinki, Espoo and Tampere – on open roads, in mixed traffic.

The aim of these electric self-driving mini-buses, which can carry up to 12 people at a time, is to provide transport for what is known as the ‘last mile’ of users’ journeys. Last-mile operations offer a service at the end of the line of heavier transportation networks, such as metros or tramlines.

The last mile is seen essential for the development of progressive public transportation because it is considered the most costly and difficult part of the journey. However, if operated effectively, it is also the most likely to increase uptake of public transport.

Beyond the trials being conducted in Helsinki, Espoo and Tampere, the SOHJOA project hopes its work will raise awareness of, and better prepare transport providers for, automated travel.

The aim is to contribute to a behaviour change tipping point away from private cars towards sustainable autonomous technologies which offer flexible, non-polluting and user-friendly transport solutions for all.

“

The SOHJOA project is one of the first in the world to bring automatic mobility to daily life. The pilot robot buses in three Finnish cities have been open and free for everyone, and offer a concrete example of smarter mobility. It has also engaged officials, companies and communities in designing and shaping the future together.

Oscar Nissin, Project Manager at Metropolia University of Applied Sciences

Project: SOHJOA: Physical and virtual innovation platform of autonomous last mile urban transportation

Region: Helsinki-Uusimaa (Finland)

Programme: ERDF (ITI 6AIKA)

Duration: 01/06/2016-31/05/2018

Total budget: EUR 559 600 (including EUR 374 930 European funding, ERDF)

Website: <http://sohjoa.fi/sohjoa-in-english>

Martti Mustajärvi

Principal technologist,
Nokia Oyj



“Nokia has been monitoring the SOHJOA project which has facilitated important ideas for new projects combining telecommunication with autonomous driving. It is foreseen that autonomous transportation of goods and people will be an important user of mobile telecommunication so in this respect SOHJOA has helped open a view to the future of connected transportation.”



Santtu von Bruun

Head of City of Helsinki's
Competitiveness and
International Affairs Unit

“Innovative solutions to existing urban challenges build a base for a thriving society and economic growth – solutions developed in the SOHJOA project are a prime example of such! New technologies trialled for last-mile logistics present business opportunities and positive experiences in everyday life and build trust for future initiatives too. This makes it possible to develop a sustainable and safer environment for our citizens.”



Smart living for seniors

The Smart Service Power project in Germany has developed technology to remotely manage devices that help elderly people to live independently at home.

Elderly people often wish to live independently in their own homes for as long as possible, while their relatives want to know they are safe. Yet as populations get older, municipalities face pressure on resources and outpatient nursing and care services are able to recruit fewer staff.

The Smart Service Power project in Germany has developed an Internet of Things platform that manages diverse technologies to support senior citizens in secure, independent living. Devices linked to the platform can collect hydration and weight data, detect falls and dispense daily medicine and more. The system analyses information to detect medical problems or call for assistance if needed.

Users communicate with the system through easy-to-use natural language assistance, choosing services and how these suppliers access their data. Seniors who have trialed the system are positive about its potential, while a 'fair share' business model distributes costs and revenues between providers for economic viability.

The project consortium, which includes the cities of Dortmund and Arnsberg, is now looking to partner with more communities, medical device manufacturers and service providers to help more seniors live well at home.

“

The RegioStars Award helps us to convince communities, care services, health insurance companies, housing associations and senior citizens and their relatives that smart technology can be a big part of their solution.

Bettina Horster, Director of business development, VIVAI Software AG



Project: Smart Service Power

Region: North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany)

Programme: Nordrhein-Westfalen ERDF 2014-2020

Duration: 01/10/2016-30/09/2019

Total budget: EUR 2 808 600 (including EUR 1 404 300 European funding, ERDF)

Website: www.fh-dortmund.de/de/fb/4/einrichtungen/laboratorien/imsl/Projekte/SmartServicePower/index.php



Christel Hahnen, 80
Resident of Arnsberg,
Germany

“For me and my relatives, life becomes easier and safer. The older I get, the less thirsty and hungry I am. It is great if smart technologies can remind me to drink and eat to minimise the risk of health problems, because my children cannot be with me all the time. I am also less afraid of falling – when I get sick or fall, my children get an alert. I hope to live a long, self-determined, high-quality life in my own home.”



Erika and Cord Ludwig (both over 80)
Residents of Dissen, Teutoburger Wald, Germany

“We are glad that we have more security in our home. Fall detection is very important to us. In our circle of friends a lady fell and was not found for hours as she had left her emergency button in the bathroom. Other people forget to drink and this is dangerous, particularly in the summer. A reminder to drink something helps them a lot.”



More mobility in Malopolska

In the Polish region of Malopolska, home to the cities of Krakow and Tarnow, an integrated ticketing solution is making life easier for commuters.

Although modern public transport systems are provided in the cities of Krakow and Tarnow, those who commute from the wider area have not always had easy access to them.

The MKA project is developing an integrated system which enables all users from the wider region to access competitive transport prices in the cities. Whether they are using commuter trains, urban transport or park- and ride- facilities, they are all available now via one single card, mobile app and subscription: MKA.

The mobile app allows travellers to purchase single, integrated or season tickets with just a few easy clicks.

The aim is to reduce the environmental impact of travel in the region while simultaneously giving service providers detailed and accurate information about user needs, as well as easing the daily commute for Malopolska residents.

The MKA card has also been designed to integrate with other public systems in Malopolska, such as medical services, administration and tourist attractions, making citizens' lives even simpler.

“

When I was designing the MKA system, my goal was to increase availability and range of transportation services for the region.

I believed it would be crucial to design a solution where inhabitants could purchase all transport services in one place.

Patryk Zakrzewski, MKA project manager

Project: The Małopolska Agglomeration Card (MKA) - transport – management system of the Małopolska Region

Region: Malopolska (Poland)

Programme: Operational Programme ‘Lesser Poland’

Duration: 01/10/2013-14/12/2015

Total budget: EUR 3 838 000 (including EUR 3 050 000 European funding, ERDF)

Website: www.mka.malopolska.pl



Grzegorz Sapoń,

Director, Department of Transport and Communication, Office of the Marshal of the Małopolskie Voivodeship

“The MKA system is a solution that was necessary to increase the role of public transport in the region. For some time we have provided inhabitants with the possibility of using modern trains. Now, we have expanded our offer with a modern and reliable system of service sale.

Our transport policy was evaluated by the Supreme Audit Office (NIK) which stated in its final report that the local municipality was the only one implementing the integrated system of transportation services sale (MKA).”

Francuz Krzysztof

Commuter and user of the MKA card



“The iMKA mobile app has entirely changed my way of thinking about buying a public transport ticket. I don’t have to stand in line or worry about having change or losing my ticket any more. All I have to do is just a few clicks and there it is, right on my iMKA app. I often used to forget to extend my season ticket but now with iMKA app I always receive a reminder.

It’s fantastic!”



E-services save both time and money

Public administration has been digitised in Olsztyn, Poland, resulting in lower costs for the city and less burden on the residents.

The Municipality of Olsztyn has taken a major decision to integrate and implement e-services for local tax returns, declarations relating to property, agricultural, forestry or transport tax, parking tickets and fines.

Making payments is not only one of the most common reasons that citizens generally visit the town hall but also the most commonly used public e-service. Olsztyn's electronic payments portal saves time for its inhabitants, who get quicker access to their personal up-to-date information at any time without having to depend on opening hours at city hall.

This means less time is wasted – particularly during working hours – for both citizens and public administrators, for whom the

electronic system saves time and eases pressure on public resources. Simultaneously, the e-system is also helping public employees to acquire new and useful IT skills.

Thanks to the pre-verification system included in the tax return and declarations, the portal also saves time and resources by ensuring a minimum of the information is correct before it can be submitted. Of course, both the e-declaration and payment portals require the safe electronic signature of the user.

The new system means that citizens can manage their personal administration tasks at their own convenience, from any location, making it easier for them to submit their paperwork and payments accurately and on time.

“

Our citizens do not have to come to City Hall anymore as their computer screen has become the clerk's window. It is particularly important for those unable to visit City Hall regularly. Without leaving their home or office they can now submit a property, agriculture or forest tax declaration via the internet.

Rafał Ruchlewicz, Head of Olsztyn City Hall IT Department

Project: Integrated Public Services Platform Implementation and Electronic Payments of Olsztyn

Region: Warmińsko-Mazurskie (Poland)

Programme: Operational Programme 'Warmińsko-Mazurskie'

Duration: 19/04/2013-30/11/2015

Total budget: EUR 566 700 (including EUR 475 200 European funding, ERDF)

Website: www.olsztyn.eu



Marta Kruk
Citizen of Olsztyn

“E-services above all save my time. I no longer have to adjust my personal agenda to the working hours of City Hall. I check my due payments and make them online whenever I have the time and wherever I am.”

Michał Cygan
Property manager
in Olsztyn

“As a property manager I manage condominiums and private apartments. E-services harmonise and accelerate my work. Thanks to them I do not drown in paperwork, and I am able to limit my visits to City Hall. I have constant access to information and I can monitor my clients' due payments to City Hall. I can update information easily, too.”



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