



Joint Analysis of Ecosystem Characteristics (JACE) – Concept Paper

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IN COOPERATION WITH SMART CON EUROPE PARTNERS

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1. SMART CON EUROPE project

The SMART CON EUROPE project was formed out of recognised regional and European needs to encourage more small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to successfully participate in European Research and Innovation (R+I) programmes.

The problem addressed is confirmed by a number of analyses. The „Study on the effectiveness of public innovation support for SMEs in Europe” says that “Most studies on barriers to innovation for SMEs consider access to finance an important factor”. Interim evaluation report of Horizon 2020 shows significant differences in SME-participation among countries (18 %-points) and on average only 20 % SME participation. Thus, a system approach is needed to help SMEs by further developing the respective regional ecosystems.

The project brings together 8 project partners, 2 associated policy authorities and numerous regional stakeholders from 6 European regions. They aim to improve their respective regional ecosystem that helps SMEs to better utilise European Research and Innovation programmes. Therefore, all partner regions are running Peer Reviews of their current ecosystem including a SWOT Analysis with involvement of all partners and numerous stakeholders. Study visits in the partner regions and staff exchanges enable all partners to learn from each other and to identify Good Practices related with the respective ecosystems. Based on the interregional learning process, the SWOT results and the identified Good Practices each partner region improves its regional ecosystems, helping SMEs to better utilise European R+I programmes.

The point of departure for the learning and improvement process is the common understanding among all partners and involved stakeholders about ecosystems in general, but in particular about the characteristics and success factors of specific ecosystems that help SMEs to better utilise European R+I programmes.

Therefore, at the beginning of the project, SMART CON EUROPE partners are conducting a joint analysis of ecosystem characteristics, with a particular focus on those ecosystems that better help SMEs utilize European Research and Innovation programmes. This paper summarises the findings of the analysis and includes links to further sources with relevant information about ecosystems in general and the specific ecosystems that help SMEs to better utilise European R+I programmes. SMART CON EUROPE partners consider this document as very helpful for the improvement of their own respective regional ecosystem.

1.1. Partners

The 8 partner organisations in alphabetical order of the 6 partner regions are:

- Alentejo, Portugal
 - NERE - Business Association of the Region of Évora
- Galicia, Spain
 - Galicia Innovation Agency
- Hauts-de-France, France
 - Hauts-de-France Regional Council
- Pomorskie, Poland
 - Pomerania Development Agency Co.
 - Pomorskie Voivodeship
- South Ostrobothnia, Finland
 - City of Seinäjoki
 - Into Seinäjoki Ltd
- Western Macedonia, Greece
 - University of Western Macedonia

1.2. Overall project objectives

RAISING AWARENESS

- Raising awareness among SMEs for the importance of European R+I programmes for their own R+I activities

SUPPORT

- Support SMEs to exploit European R+I programmes in a more successful way

ALIGNING and LEVERAGING

- ALIGNING and LEVERAGING of regional financial funding schemes and support services together with European Programmes, incl. “rescue” mechanisms within regional funding schemes for proposals that receive Seals of Excellence or other external quality award from a selection process of international R+I funding programmes, but failed to get funded

ALLIANCE

- Alliance of partners’ regional ecosystems on a long-term basis for a more effective and efficient support for SMEs in terms of successful participation in European R+I programmes.

1.3. Target groups

The Target groups of the SMART CON EUROPE project are;

- Small and medium sized enterprises
- Public authorities
- Business support organisations
- Enterprise Europe Network contact points
- Horizon Europe national contact points
- Research and Technology organisations/Technology platforms
- Universities
- Education
- Clusters

2. Joint analysis of ecosystem characteristics – objectives and approach

The main objective is to get a common understanding among all partners and involved stakeholders about specific ecosystems that help SMEs to better utilise European R+I programmes. It can be divided into the following sub objectives:

DEVELOP CONCEPT OF OUR SPECIFIC ECOSYSTEM

- Concept for ecosystems that help SMEs to better utilise European Research and Innovation (R+I) funding programmes
- Define Components
- Define Characteristics

INPUT FOR PEER REVIEW

- Peer Review has to follow our concept for ecosystems that help SMEs to better utilise European (R+I) funding programmes
- Get a picture of the current status of ecosystems in the partner regions

INPUT FOR POLICY IMPROVEMENT

- Description of partner regions' ecosystems that helps SMEs to better utilise European R+I funding programmes following our concept is a policy improvement in itself (e.g. increased transparency)
- Demonstration of improvement of the current ecosystems through comparison of description of status quo – status at the end of phase 1

To achieve the project's objectives, the joint analysis of ecosystem characteristics combines literature research with partners' experiences and insights from previous European projects and other national initiatives focused on innovation systems and ecosystems. This analysis also includes workshops and further exchanges among partners and stakeholders within the project. It is a pragmatic approach that serves as a guideline for project partners to improve their regional ecosystems, without making scientific claims or striving for completeness.

3. Ecosystems –overview and structure

An ecosystem is a complex network of actors and their environment that is characterised by interactions and dependencies. Ecosystem thinking requires analytical and systematic approach. It's about common goals and their pursuit through cooperation. However, it must be accepted that different relevant stakeholders have different interests and expectations for cooperation, which requires an even more intensive communication among all stakeholders with high flexibility and high ability for compromises.

Ecosystems can be defined for any topic which is of importance for the responsible actors. Here are some examples:



Business ecosystems

- Creating business and customer value



Knowledge ecosystems

- Creation and dissemination of new knowledge



Innovation ecosystems

- Co-creation, exploitation and commercialisation of knowledge



Entrepreneurship ecosystems

- Supporting entrepreneurship and start-up activities



Growth ecosystems

- When a network specialising in a particular business starts to grow rapidly

In the case of SMART CON EUROPE, partners consider the respective ecosystem in the geographic area in which the addressed policy instrument applies.

All successful ecosystems share the common trait of being dynamic processes. The intentional creation of new knowledge and intensive networking continuously lead to numerous opportunities to improve and fine-tune the ecosystem. Stagnation means losing relevance. The resilience of an ecosystem requires clear leadership over the long term and the ability of its actors to find appropriate solutions to current challenges.

3.1. Framework of the analysis

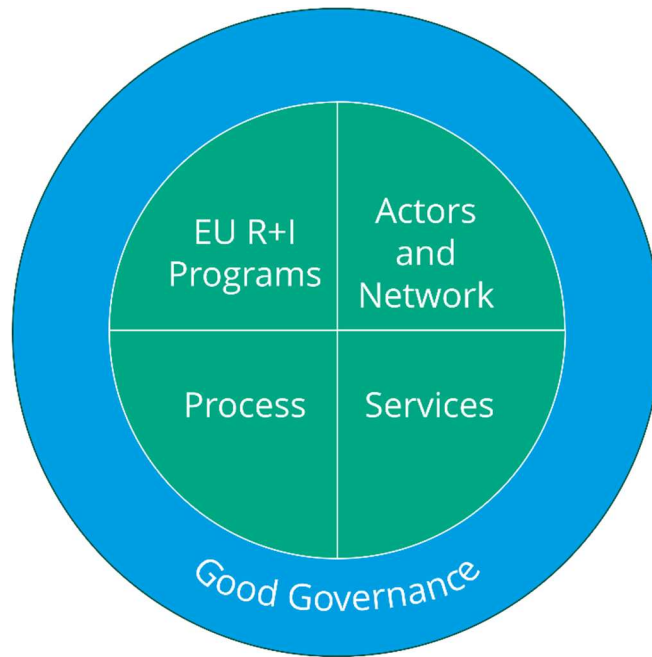
In the context of this analysis, we have identified three different components describing ecosystems in general:

- Process orientation
- Service orientation
- Actors and network orientation

Together these components cover complementary main aspects of ecosystems in general. With focus on our specific ecosystem that helps SMEs to better utilise European R+I programmes we have to add a fourth, specific component: *Orientation towards European Research and Innovation (EU R+I) programmes.*

As mentioned above an ecosystem is following a common goal in a systematic way. Therefore, a *Good governance of the ecosystem* is required, comprising coaching, leadership, coordination of actors and network, communication and promotion of the ecosystem, monitoring and impact assessment.

Consequently, our ecosystem that helps SMEs to better utilise European R+I Funding consists of five components, as depicted in the following diagram:



In the following chapters each of the five components is described in more detail, setting standards for our common definition of an ecosystem that help SMEs to better utilise European R+I programmes. This description includes also regional Good Practices from our partner regions and further links to interesting sources of information.

4. Ecosystem component “Good Governance”

Numerous characteristics and factors are prerequisites for successful ecosystems and the achievement of their objectives, like:

Leadership

- Leadership of the ecosystem should be clearly defined and held by an organization, not an individual. However, there must also be designated ecosystem drivers and contact persons.
- A common goal and mutual understanding.
- Value creation for the beneficiaries.
- Holistic approach to address the entire system related to the topic.
- Facilitation of the creation of new knowledge.

Coordination

- The coordinator role must be clearly defined.
- All actors must have clearly defined roles.
- Cooperation and interaction between actors need to be structured and guided.
- The leader must be well-acquainted with the network to select the appropriate platform for cooperation.
- Openness to expanding the network.
- Involving all relevant actors as much as possible.
- Facilitation through visualization.

Communication and Promotion

- The role of communication and promotion must be clearly defined.
- Communication ensures transparency and builds the image of the ecosystem
- Communication and promotion helps third parties connect with the ecosystem, potentially serving as an entry point for joining it.
- Communication and promotion are crucial also in each phase of the funding process.

Monitoring and Impact Assessment

- The role for monitoring and impact assessment must be clearly defined.
- Consider both quantitative and qualitative aspects.
- Ensure neutrality in the assessment process.
- Gain insights into the value created by the overall ecosystem and individual services.
- Continuous monitoring and updating of the full service portfolio as well as the actors/networks and related contact persons
- Use the results to continuously improve the ecosystem.

4.1. Good Practices from SMART CON EUROPE partner regions

4.1.1. Hauts-de-France: The Strategic Activity Areas

The Hauts-de-France Region has set-up 7 priorities (“Domaines d’Activités Stratégiques”) in its Smart Specialization Strategy that can rely on its Research and Innovation Ecosystem. These strategic sectors are:

- Mobility
- Health & nutrition
- Bioeconomy
- Creative industries
- Materials
- Energies
- Digital-robotics

To boost its economic development, create synergies and knowledge sharing, the Region’s economic development department (“Direction de la transformation de l’économie régionale”) has created 7 thematic working groups consisted of representatives from local universities, clusters, associations and institutions specialized in these strategic sectors. These actors are gathered every 3 months in order to discuss thematic news, share information on regional, national & European calls for projects and any other opportunities. They also have the role to validate ERDF projects applications that are in their thematic.

The Region’s support service for EU projects management and the Innovation agency also take part in these meetings to share information on EU R+I programmes.

4.1.2. Hauts-de-France: ASTRIDE, a reporting tool for the Hauts-de-France ecosystem

ASTRIDE is the collaborative information system designed and managed by the Hauts-de-France Innovation Agency (HDFID) to share and pool information between economic development stakeholders in the Hauts-de-France region. It is the database for business support in the region. It is regularly checked during the “7 strategic sectors” meetings described earlier.

Here are the latest figures on the use of this collaborative tool:

- Every day, more than 50 network partners enter their data on visits and support provided to companies in the Hauts-de-France region.
- In 2022, there were 7,173 visits to the platform, with an average duration of 10 min 29 s.
- A total of 85,740 pages were also consulted.
- The partners (ecosystem organisations) recorded 5,306 visits, for 1,632 support services and 654 grants (financing) awarded in 2022.
 - “Support” refers to company support (introductions, project set-up, finding partners, etc.).
 - Grants correspond to "public" financing to support innovation or industrial performance projects.

5. Ecosystem component “Actors and Networks”

Actors and networks form the essence of an ecosystem, encompassing both public and private entities. Each actor independently decides whether to join and collaborate within the ecosystem. However, for service providers funded with public money, their decision may also hinge on the organization's objectives and purposes.

The following characteristics and success factors for actors and network orientation have been identified by the partners:

1. Network of actors requires transparency for SMEs and the ecosystem actors themselves.
2. Collaboration among relevant service and knowledge providers – no competition in the public sector.
3. Willingness of public knowledge providers
 - a. to share their knowledge with SMEs
 - b. to get engaged in European R+I projects
 - c. to create new knowledge and to transfer it to the businesses.
4. Open platform for everyone interested in EU R+I funding

In order to ensure the required transparency of the ecosystem network there should be a central entry node with an overview over all actors with brief description and further links to actors' websites. SMART CON EUROPE partners recommend to provide for all service providers the following information:

- Name of the organisation
- Address
- Contact person(s)
- Target group(s)
- Main areas of activities
- List of provided services and tools
- Website address

5.1. Good Practices from SMART CON EUROPE partner regions

5.1.1. Hauts-de-France: The Europe Research Innovation Network (RERI)

RERI, that stands for “*Europe Research Innovation Network*” is a dynamic and collaborative regional network of over 230 European projects and research professionals. Its main role is to make its members (universities, clusters, local authorities and companies) exchange ideas and work together to seize the opportunities offered by Europe in terms of R&D&I.

Created 10 years ago at the initiative of the Hauts-de-France Region, with the support of the regional innovation agency (HDFID), this network was born out of:

- **The fact** that European funding opportunities are numerous and complex, particularly the Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation such as Horizon Europe.
- **The need** to unite and support European project professionals in their work

- **The objective** to provide the best possible collective support for project promoters so that they can step up to the challenge of European competition.

The network is managed and coordinated by the Region and its Innovation agency (HDFID) thanks to a steering committee and an operational team made up of 7 employees from both structures. The RERI's main services are awareness and thematic sessions on EU R+I programmes (mainly Horizon Europe), training, advices & support, event management, communication and promotion.

The Europe Research Innovation Network (RERI) is partially financed by ERDF Hauts-de-France (Policy instrument 4). It is also one of the 5 transverse axes of the Region Smart Specialization Strategy (S3).



<https://www.hautsdefrance-id.fr/financements-europeens/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uNQ1LKvyAlk>

5.1.2. Hauts-de-France: Plug in labs Hauts-de-France

The project was born out of the need for socio-economic and academic players to be able to find in one place the skills and research offerings of laboratories and technology platforms in the Hauts-de-France region.

Equipment, patents, innovations and expertise, particularly from research laboratories in the Hauts-de-France region, are now just a few clicks away. <https://www.pluginlabs-hautsdefrance.fr/en/>

5.2. Additional Links to further relevant information

5.2.1. Kumu

Kumu is an online tool to model stakeholder networks, systems or concepts. Complex data and interrelations can be organized into graphical relationship maps. Further information can be added. Into Seinäjoki and CCDR-Alentejo have experiences with this tool in modelling own ecosystems.

<https://www.kumu.io/> , E.g.: <https://www.kumu.io/ucskumu/kestavat-ruokajarjestelmat-innovaatioekosysteeminä>

5.2.2. Horizontal Contact Point Northern Poland

Horizontal Contact Point Northern Poland is a team of specialists supporting the participation of scientific entities, research institutions, enterprises and other entities in Horizon Europe with regard to its cross-cutting and administrative aspects. Find more on: <https://www.gov.pl/web/hpkpp/o-nas>

5.2.3. Pomeranian centre of the Enterprise Europe Network

Pomeranian centre of the Enterprise Europe Network operates within the structure of the "Free Entrepreneurship" Association. This EEN centre is one of the six centres creating together the EEN Central Poland Consortium. More: <https://een.pomorskie.pl/uslugi/informacje-i-doradztwo/>

5.2.4. Pomeranian Digital Innovation Hub (PDIH)

Pomeranian Digital Innovation Hub (PDIH) The European Commission has selected the Pomeranian Digital Innovation Hub (PDIH) coordinated by the Pomeranian Special Economic Zone (PSEZ) / Gdańsk Science and Technology Park (GSTP) as one of the 11 national centres responsible for digital transformation in Poland. PDIH is part of a network of 136 such centres allocated across Europe, selected by the EU and designated as European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs). The centres gather knowledge, experience, and expertise in the field of digital transformation and will play a crucial role as regional one-stop-shops, where businesses can find a comprehensive set of information and services, as well as access the necessary infrastructure to meet their needs in the digital and green transformation. More information: <https://gpnt.pl/en/pdih>

5.2.5. Pomeranian Innovation Broker

Innovation Broker offers support to SMEs with innovative potential and interested in applying for EU R+I funds. It is situated in Pomerania Development Agency, within a strategic project financed from regional funds named *Pomeranian Export Broker*. The activities of the Innovation Broker will be within the framework of the continuation of the Pomeranian Export Broker project.

6. Ecosystem component “Process”

Our desk research and the numerous examples we have analysed show that a systematic and structured oriented approach of an ecosystem or regional innovation system is usually applying a process-oriented approach.

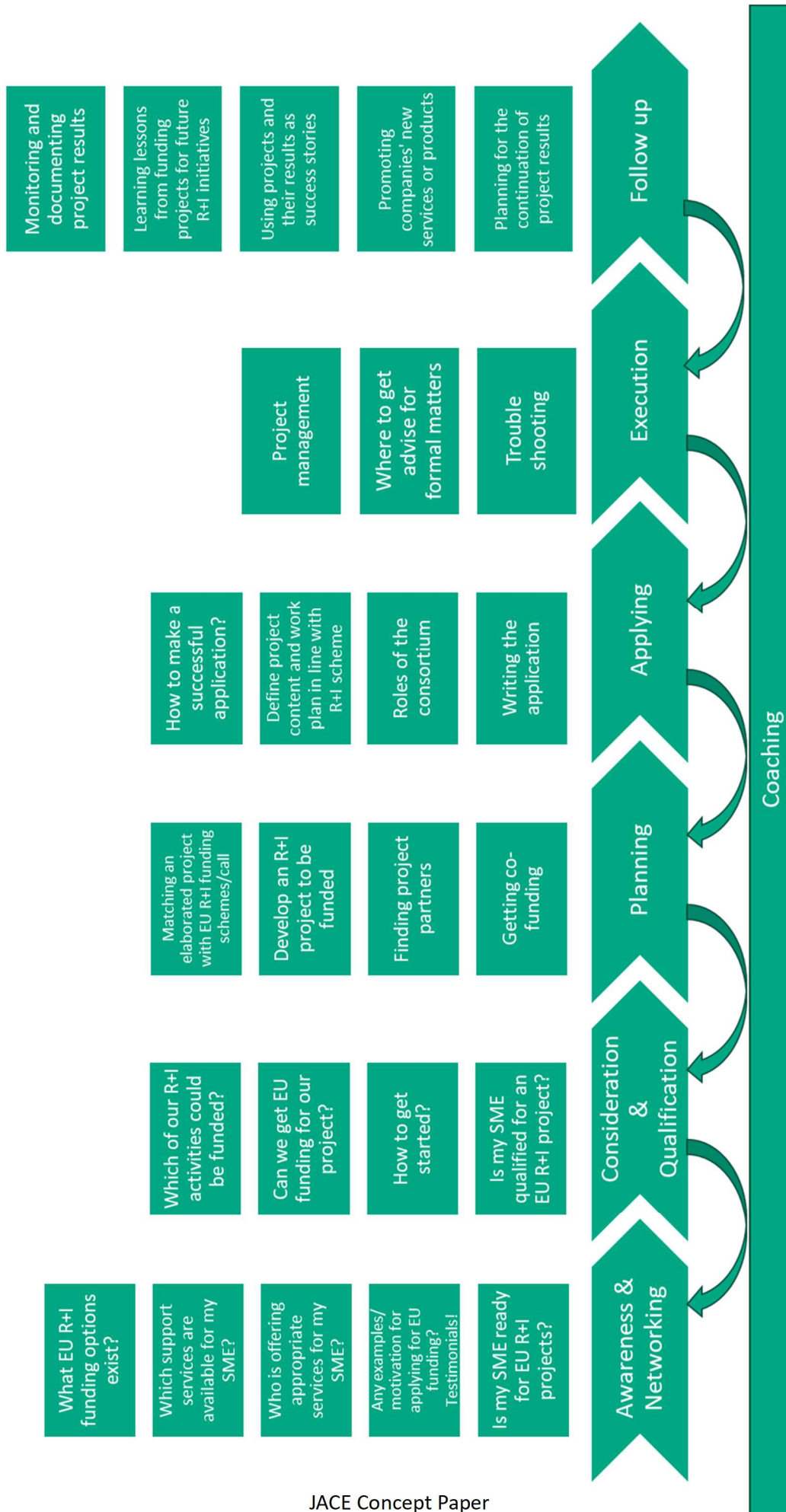
In our case dealing with ecosystems that help SMEs to better utilise European R+I funding we defined 6 phases for the process of supporting SMEs in utilizing EU R+I funding:

1. Awareness
2. Consideration & Qualification
3. Planning
4. Applying
5. Execution
6. Follow-up

The process is no one way, as the SME can return to the previous step(s) at any time. These six phases are accompanied by coaching of SMEs.

The process approach describes the different phases of a funding project, the graphical depiction facilitates the understanding. It supports both the SME in recognizing their own stage in the funding process as well ecosystem leader and actors to allocate the existing services to single or several steps and identify potential gaps in the SME support or unnecessary similarities or overlapping of services.

The process approach is visualised in the following chart. The allocation of services can be enriched/ changed.



6.1. Awareness

The first step in applying for funding is to understand the available options. Many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are unaware that the EU offers funding programmes that could support their research and innovation initiatives. Service providers tasked with raising awareness should inspire, persuade, and inform SMEs in the region about funding programmes from various perspectives, such as:

- What EU R+I funding options are available?
- Which support services cater to my SME?
- Who offers suitable services for my SME?
- Are there any examples or testimonials to motivate SMEs to apply for EU funding?
- Is my SME interested in EU R+I projects?

Throughout the process, but especially in awareness phase, actors of the ecosystem should also concentrate on the language they use. EU project language is often complicated and full of expressions that are unfamiliar to the entrepreneurs and SMEs.

Project members have good experiences from promoting the programmes in events and one-to-one-meetings. For example, digital marketing has not been widely used so far.

6.2. Consideration and Qualification

In consideration and qualification phase the SME has already recognized that EU offers funding opportunities also for this kind of companies. SME can still have many open questions, like

- Is my SME qualified for an EU R+I project?
- Which of our R+I activities could be funded?
- Can we get EU funding for our project?
- How to get started?
- If SME is not qualified for EU project, who can support in seeking national funding?

Actors of the ecosystem should have simple, transparent method to support the companies in this phase. In partners' experience, this typically starts with a one-to-one meeting to gather information where SME's capacities and potential needs or gaps are identified. Based on the assessment, service providers can suggest steps like qualification or training.

6.3. Planning

As the funding process requires significant commitment, the final decision for starting the planning process lies with the SME. Service providers can then support the SMEs in following tasks:

- Matching an elaborated project with EU R+I funding schemes/calls
- Developing an R+I project to be funded
- Finding project partners
- Getting co-funding
- Ensuring internal financial management

6.4. Applying

Writing a successful proposal is usually a big challenge for an SME, in particular for smaller ones or a first-time applicant. Each European R+I funding programme has usually its own formal rules and it takes quite a lot of time to get acquainted with them.

Nominating a project partner with comprehensive competencies and experiences in the respective EU R+I programme as main applicant and/or project leader is a promising way for a successful application.

Furthermore, throughout Europe there are consultants that have expertise in this field. Ecosystem should either have a consultant like that as an actor or a member who has a good network of funding programme consultants.

- Define project content and work plan in line with R+I scheme
- Roles of the consortium
- Writing the application

6.5. Execution

The applicant must allocate sufficient resources for project execution, including professionals knowledgeable in the project's content, as well as support from organizations handling finance, communications, and overall reporting. Technical project management can be outsourced or managed internally.

During this phase, the ecosystem can assist SMEs by providing advice and troubleshooting. Members of the SMART CON EUROPE project have actively participated in stakeholder groups, thereby supporting the consortium in project execution. The experiences have been positive, and the collaboration has been meaningful for all involved parties.

Check the following issues:

- Is project management ensured?
- Where to get advice for formal matters?
- Who helps me in case of trouble shooting?

6.6. Follow-up

Funding projects often extend beyond their formal end dates. Even many programmes require project partners to demonstrate outcomes and effects 1 or 2 years later, systematic follow-up is rarely conducted, despite compelling reasons to do so:

- Monitoring and documenting project results
- Learning lessons from funding projects for future R+I initiatives
- Using projects and their results as success stories
- Promoting companies' new services or products
- Planning for the continuation of project results

6.7. Coaching

In order to ensure full support of regional SMEs to better utilise EU R+I funding programmes it might not be sufficient to provide individual support services for each of the six phases of the funding project process. In particular for small companies and less experienced SMEs with EU R+I programmes a coaching along the entire process is often very helpful for SMEs.

Coaching can include activities like

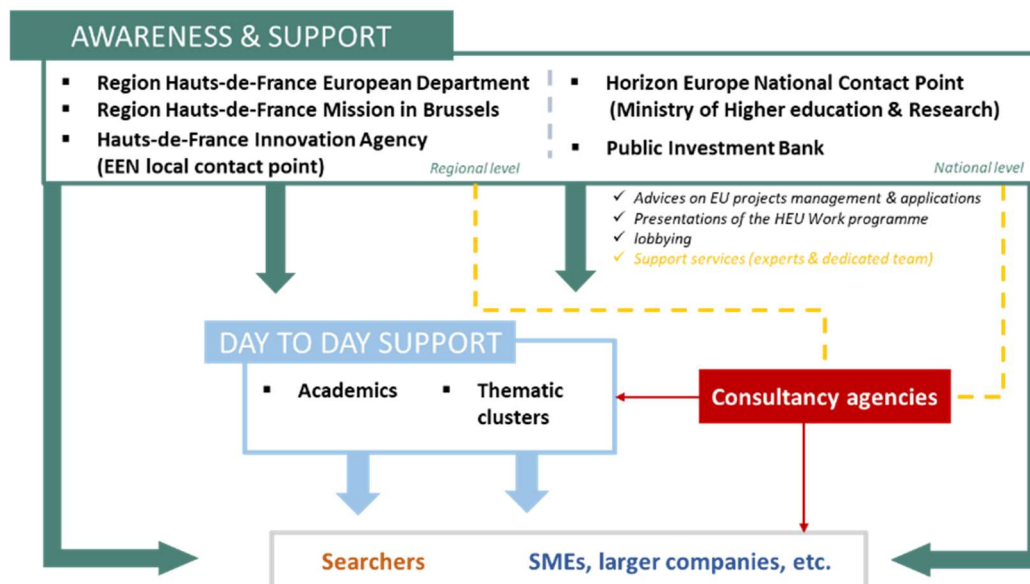
- Maintaining contact with SMEs over the year to stay informed about the current situation of an application or funded project or ideas for potential R+I projects/activities
- Building a trusting relationship between SMEs and actor

6.8. Good Practices from SMART CON EUROPE partner regions

6.8.1. Hauts-de-France: The support service for European project management

In France, several R&I actors have dedicated experts and / or services that helps researchers or companies to access to EU programmes: We can mention the national contact points on EU programmes that are based in French Ministries, the clusters, universities, etc.

The Hauts-de-France Region and its Innovation Agency have developed complementary services to help local actors to access to the European Commission programmes. Here is a simplified scheme that illustrates this organization:



The Hauts-de-France Region has created a unique service in its Europe Department that is dedicated to inform and help local actors to access to the Commission programmes, the support service for European project management ("Service Animation et Montage de Projet Européen).

It consists of two teams:

1. The interface Europe team is in charge of raising awareness on the different EU programmes for all kind of audiences

2. The support team which is made up of thematic experts is giving advises and guidance to local stakeholders on the different EU R+I programmes. It also help them to apply to specific calls.

6.8.2. South Ostrobothnia: Making different funding opportunities visible for the entrepreneur

Different funding options are numerous. To support entrepreneurs and companies to find the right options, Into Seinäjoki has gathered information about different funding programmes to their website. Instruments are categorised based on company's life cycle:

1. Launching the business
1. Developing and investing
2. Export and internationalisation

User can browse different funding instruments under these categories, divided per financier. For example, for launching the business entrepreneur can seek for funding from four different financiers: Business Finland, Finnvera, Leader and TE-palvelut.

Perustaminen ja käynnistäminen

Business Finland Finnvera **Leader** TE-palvelut

Maaseutualueella sijaitsevaan yritystoimintaan:

INVESTOINTITUKI >>

Toimitilojen rakentamiseen, remontointiin tai hankintaan, koneiden ja muun käyttöomaisuuden hankintaan sekä aineettomiin investointeihin. Investointihankkeen tuettava budjetti 5.000–100.000 euroa (tuki 20 %).

KÄYNNISTYSTUKI >>

– Yrittäjyyskokeiluun, 2.500 e (tuki 100%), ei vielä y-tunnusta, max 4 kk, asiantuntijapalveluihin ja tila- ja laitevuokriin, koulutukseen, matkoihin, aineisiin ja tarvikkeisiin.

– Osa-aikaisen yritystoiminnan käynnistämiseen, y-tunnus (ei ole vielä ensimmäistä tilikautta takana), 5.000 e (tuki 100%), tavoitteena työllistyminen osaaikaisesti (10–35 h/vko) ja liikevaihto yli 10.000 e/v, asiantuntijapalveluihin, tila- ja laitevuokriin, koulutukseen, matkoihin, aineisiin ja tarvikkeisiin, pienhankintoihin, vuokriin, kokeiluihin.

– Päätoimisen yritystoiminnan käynnistämiseen, y-tunnus (ei ole vielä ensimmäistä tilikautta takana), 7.500 e (tuki 100%), tavoitteena päätoimeentulo ja liikevaihto min 15.000 e/v, asiantuntijapalveluihin, tila- ja laitevuokriin, koulutukseen, matkoihin, aineisiin ja tarvikkeisiin, pienhankintoihin, vuokriin, kokeiluihin. HUOM! Starttiraha mahdollinen samanaikaisesti!

KEHITTÄMISTUKI >>

– Suunnittelupaketti, 1.000 e (tuki 100%), ei vielä y-tunnusta, 1–2 pv asiantuntijapalveluihin (liiketoimintasuunnitelman laatiminen).

– Valmistelupaketti, 2.000 e (tuki 100%), y-tunnus, 2–3 pv, asiantuntijapalveluihin (liiketoimintasuunnitelman viimeistely, investointien suunnittelu, laskelmien tekeminen, tukihakemuksen valmistelu).

The information can be found here: [Julkista rahoitusta yritykselle - Into Seinäjoki \(intoseinajoki.fi\)](https://intoseinajoki.fi).

7. Ecosystem component “Services”

The process chart in previous chapter gives a clear impression of the required bandwidth of the service portfolio that an ecosystem helping SMEs to better utilize EU R+I funding programmes should provide. This approach helps different actors of the ecosystem to understand the entity and the leader of the ecosystem to succeed in his/hers work. In our analysis, service description is gathered especially for these purposes, not for the use of SMEs as such.

The following characteristics and success factors for service orientation have been identified by the partners:

- High quality and transparency of offered support services
- Easy access of SMEs to offered services
- Focus on SMEs’ needs
- No gaps in the portfolio of support services
 - Covering all the relevant EU R+I funding programmes for the region
 - Support for every phase of the process
 - Closing gaps as soon as possible
- Expand the toolkit of regional services with national/international services and AI tools
 - e.g. Spinbase and Kaila
 - clear interfaces between regional ecosystem and others

To ensure the required transparency of the ecosystem service portfolio there should be a central entry node with an overview over all provided service with brief description and further links to service websites.

SMART CON EUROPE partners recommend providing for all services the following information:

- Title of the service
- Contact person
- Service providing organisation
- Target group(s) of the service
- Summary of the service, overview over service content
- Positioning the service in the process chart – service is provided in step(s)...
- Categorisation of service

Categorizing services is useful for gaining a straightforward overview and comparing service portfolios across different regional ecosystems. However, classification isn't always unambiguous (e.g. hybrid services), and it inherently involves some loss of information. Therefore, service classification should provide additional information rather than replace detailed descriptions of individual services.

- Services can be applied for under the following EU R+I funding programmes: ...
- Link to the service website
- Available budget for the target group/beneficiaries

The Peer Reviews of the current ecosystems to help SMEs to better utilise Eu R+I programmes will provide an overview over service portfolios in the SMART CON EUROPE partner regions within the following months.

7.1. Good Practices from SMART CON EUROPE partner regions

7.1.1. Hauts-de-France: FRAPPE - Regional Fund for European project leaders

European cooperation and sectoral programmes offer numerous funding opportunities. Participation in these competitive programmes requires expertise in setting up European projects to increase the chances of success for project leaders. The Hauts-de-France region has therefore put in place a whole range of support measures for project leaders interested in these programmes, from the support provided by regional agents to the FRAPPE.

It provides project funding consultancy services for local European project coordinators. Working with the Region 'support service for European projects management, these experts support projects leaders in transforming a project into an application for a European programme. FRAPPE can also be used to support the implementation and monitoring phases of the project.

Who can apply?

Various types of organisations can apply for the FRAPPE, as long as they are located in the Hauts-de-France region:

- Local authorities
- Public and semi-public bodies
- Associations
- Companies (VSEs, SMEs, SMIs, ETIs)
- Chambers of commerce and trade unions
- Research laboratories and organisations
- Educational establishments

The project leaders applying for FRAPPE must be the lead partner/coordinator of a partnership or "work package leader". They must propose a project that is eligible for the targeted programme and undertake to dedicate resources, particularly human resources, to writing the application.

For which European programmes?

The European programmes covered by FRAPPE are as follows:

Sectoral programmes:

- Horizon Europe
- European Defence Fund
- Digital Europe
- Interregional Innovation Investments (I3)
- European Urban Initiative
- LIFE
- Eurostars
- Erasmus +
- Creative Europe

- Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme
- EU for Health
- Neighbourhood, Development Cooperation and International Cooperation Instrument
- Connected Europe Facility

Under the INTERREG programmes

- INTERREG North Sea
- INTERREG North West Europe
- INTERREG Europe

7.1.2. Pomerania: Service portfolio provided in Pomerania region to support SMEs in better utilising EU R+I programmes

The region of Pomerania in cooperation with its regional and national network partners is offering a wide range of support services for SMEs, including

- **Horizontal Contact Point Northern Poland** offers following services supporting participation of SMEs in the Horizon Europe programme:
 - information and advisory,
 - training and workshops on HE and various aspects of applying for funding from this programme,
 - consultation for entities preparing project proposals,
 - consultation for entities implementing projects.
 - <https://www.gov.pl/web/hpkpp>
- **“Free Entrepreneurship” Association (also EEN centre)** offers individual consultations on preparing applications for Horizon Europe. They also indicate other possible sources of investment funding, both from national and foreign programmes, and advise on which ones to choose.
- **Innovation Broker** identifies companies whose products or services are innovative, helps to identify sources of funding and support in EU programmes announced by the European Commission, as well offers assistance in searching for potential foreign partners.
- **Pomeranian Digital Innovation Hub (PDIH)** specializes in Industry 4.0, Robotics, AI, VR/AR, and Cybersecurity, with a particular focus on the needs of the maritime industry. Services offered by PDIH are divided into four key categories:
 1. Skills & Training (increasing awareness, competencies, qualifications, and digital skills)
 2. Test before invest (allowing for testing a particular solution, checking its operation in current operating conditions, conducting pre-implementation analysis, and assessing the feasibility of its implementation - before incurring any investment costs for its purchase)
 3. Support to find investments (supporting in assessing financing opportunities and searching for available optimal sources of financing for those parts of investments (purchase of fixed assets, infrastructure, or other elements necessary in the digital transformation process) that go beyond the PDIH offer)
 4. Innovation ecosystem and networking (enabling the establishment of a wide network of contacts and business relationships resulting in a lasting cooperation beyond the PDIH structures).
The support will be provided by experienced Consortium Partners (companies, software houses, technology suppliers, business environment institutions, scientific and training institutions).

Pomerania Development Agency is part of the PDIH, participating as a regular project partner and providing services supporting SMEs in assessing financing opportunities and searching for available optimal sources of financing).

7.2. Additional Links to further relevant information

7.2.1. Service classification in European, interregional ImpactScan project

The following types were applied for interregional benchmarking of the impact of regional innovation policies:

- Contact generating – awareness-raising
- Access to Information
- Advice
- Technology services (incl. research, IPR and equipment)
- Project Management
- Networking / clustering
- Human Resources
- Access to Finance
- Incubating Services
- Finance
- Infrastructure

<https://www.ideum.de/Impactscan%20Users%20Guide.pdf>

7.2.2. Service classification in Interreg Europe InnoBridge project

Interreg Europe InnoBridge project has defined the following service classification:

- “Investment in Infrastructure”
- “Finance”
- “Soft Service/Advice for defined Group”
- “Soft Service/Information for undefined Group”
- “Human Resources”

7.2.3. Services in Poland

National Contact Point for Horizon Europe 2021-2027 programme

The National Contact Point offers for institutions and other entities a lot of support in the process of applying to the Horizon Europe programme.

Proposal Consultation - analysis of a proposal for a Horizon Europe or EURATOM funding application. As part of the Proposal Consultation, the experts of the National Contact Point or the network of Horizon Contact Points provide comments to the applicant about the competition/programme requirements.

Applications for Horizon Europe projects vary depending on the type of call, from very short applications involving relatively low budget collaborations between 1 institution and 1 researcher, to extensive

applications submitted by extensive international consortia requesting substantial financial contributions. NCP consult on a fully prepared complete proposal, in the case of large international it is strongly recommend first consulting on the project idea itself before even start working on the actual proposal.

More info on the webpage: <https://www.kpk.gov.pl/>

Industry Contact Points supporting Polish actors in Horizon Europe partnerships

Industry Contact Points (ICP) have been established to support entrepreneurs and scientists in applying for EU funds for research and innovation under the Horizon Europe programme. Industry Contact Points cooperate with the National Contact Point at the National Centre for Research and Development and with Horizontal Contact Points.

The Industry Contact Points complement the Polish support system for participation in Horizon Europe, the central unit of which is the National Contact Point at National Centre of Research and Development.

More info on the webpage: <https://www.kpk.gov.pl/branzowe-punkty-kontaktowe-wespra-polskie-podmioty-w-partnerstwach-horyzontu-europa>

8. Ecosystem component “EU R+I programmes”

SMART CON EUROPE project aims to help SMEs to better utilise EU R+I funding programmes and to increase the share of SMEs in EU R+I funding programme beneficiaries.

Partners have identified the following funding schemes as relevant EU R+I funding programmes to be considered within our specific ecosystems (listed in alphabetical order):

Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)	https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/connecting-europe-facility_en
Creative Europe	https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe
DG ECHO schemes	https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/organisation/dg-echo-dg-european-civil-protection-humanitarian-aid-operations_en
Digital Europe	https://www.digitaleurope.org/
EU for Health	https://eu4health.eu/
EU Space programme	https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/european-space-programme_en
Eureka	Home - Eureka (eurekanetwork.org)
European Defence fund	https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/european-defence-fund-edf-official-webpage-european-commission_en
Horizon Europe	https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/horizon-europe_en
Innovation fund	https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/eu-funding-climate-action/innovation-fund_en
Interreg A, Interreg B	https://interreg.eu/
Life	https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/programme-environment-and-climate-action-life_en
European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) (national and regional level):	https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/european-regional-development-fund-erdf_en
European agricultural fund for rural development (EAFRD):	https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/financing-cap/cap-funds_en#eaf rd
Single market I3	https://www.i3-market.eu/

Regional differences, smart specialization strategies and industry structures make each regions situation unique. To get the best advantage of the project for each region, each partner region indicates the relevance of different EU R+I programmes for their region. Also, EU R+I programmes can be added for single regional ecosystems by the respective partner for the Peer Review.

8.1.1. Relevancy of different EU R+I programmes to each regional ecosystem

Each partner region will fill this table from their perspective.

	Very relevant	Relevant	Less relevant	N/A
CEF				
Creative Europe				
DG ECHO schemes				
Digital Europe				
EU for Health				
EU Space programme				
Eureka				
European Defence fund				
Horizon Europe				
Innovation fund				
Interreg A, Interreg B				
Life				
European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) (national and regional level):				
European agricultural fund for rural development (EAFRD):				
Single Market I3				

8.2. Additional Links to further relevant information

Here are additional links to further relevant information and some particular links to initiatives in the partner regions/countries, the European Union and other interregional projects

[Spinbase - AI tool to find relevant EU funding, partner, and project instantly](#)

[EU funding playbook – Take your business to the next level with EU Funding](#)

Food from Finland Export path: [Elintarvikkeiden vientipolku \(businessfinland.fi\)](#)

EIS Tool: [Source: file_1546955884.pdf \(interregeurope.eu\)](#)

Thesis: EU funding guide for SME's [Haaga-Helian opinnäytetyöohje \(theseus.fi\)](#)

8.2.1. Polish initiatives to support SMEs in R+I funding

Ścieżka SMART

Ścieżka SMART (“SMART track”), aims to increase the research and innovation capacity of enterprises. It is co-funded from the national EU funds, under the Programme named: “European Funds for a Modern Economy 2021-2027”.

- Only micro, small and medium-sized entrepreneurs operating in the territory of the Republic of Poland may apply for funding.
- In the case of small and medium-sized enterprises, it is compulsory for the application for funding to include at least one of two modules: an R&D module or an innovation implementation module.

As a result, Ścieżka SMART projects are a step towards preparing good proposals for international programmes related to the R&D+I for SMEs. More information:

<https://feng.parp.gov.pl/component/grants/grants/sciezka-smart>

A Seal of Excellence competition for small and medium-sized entrepreneurs who have applied for an EIC Accelerator grant

The National Centre for Research and Development (NCRD) has announced the Seal of Excellence competition, implemented with funds from the European Funds for the Modern Economy programme. The competition has just started in June 2024.

Representatives of the SME sector who have obtained the “Seal of Excellence” from the European Commission for the submitted project under the EIC Accelerator facility of Horizon Europe - companies that have reached the 3rd stage of the application but have not passed the panel - will be able to submit their applications for funding starting from 10 June 2024. The budget of the competition is 35 million PLN. Projects must involve the same tasks, resources and foresee the same objective as the project with the Seal of Excellence or the part of it concerning the conduct of R&D.

The certificate itself should have been issued no earlier than 18 months prior to the date of application to the competition. In addition, each project should fit into at least one National Intelligent Specialisation.

More information on the webpage <https://www.kpk.gov.pl/rusza-konkurs-seal-of-excellence-dla-msp-ktore-ubiegaly-sie-o-grant-eic-accelerator>

8.2.2. Rural Toolkit by the European Union

The European Union has gathered a toolkit for Rural areas development with EU funding. Toolkit includes a funding finder, inspiration from on-going and previous projects as well as guidance to apply for funding. Same kind of service could be useful for SMEs.

Read more about the Rural toolkit: <https://funding.rural-vision.europa.eu/>