SME Innovation Capacity Boost (SMEInnoBoost)

About the project

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the BM Region experience hardships in realizing their innovative potential - markets are fragmented, transfer of know-how is under optimal levels and understanding within SMEs regarding innovations needs to be raised.

The overall objective of the project is to boost transnational innovation capacity of SMEs from selected priority sectors and support them to make sustainable network formations with other SMEs from the BM region in order to share know how and develop innovations, through bringing together triple helix partners from all 5 BM countries, and equipping SMEs with relevant data, tools and systems. The project supports the first two phases in the innovation cycle - proof-of-concept and innovation development.

The direct target groups will be the pilot SMEs in the BM region and project partners. SMEs will benefit through the assessment of their standing in the innovation ecosystem and the developed action plans, increased ability to develop/attract innovations and funding and boosted capacity. The project partners will share know-how and best practices in developing data, tools and systems for the BM region.

The indirect target groups that will benefit from the project will be all SME innovation ecosystem stakeholders in the region (not only pilots), including SMEs, the business, research institutions, investors, universities, policy makers, technological parks, related NGOs, etc. The SME innovation ecosystem stakeholders will benefit from the availability of comparable statistical data, self-assessment tool and universal system for innovation cluster formation available at the project resource platform (web-page).

The project idea as described above was jointly developed and agreed with all partners during live and conference call meetings. The project idea is shaped by the specifics of the region and the diversity of the countries included. Project partners include NGOs to analyse demand and develop action plans, national statistical institutes (NSIs) to gather benchmarking data and research institutions needed for the development of the unified Recommender cluster system. The project proposal was developed by a consulting company that coordinated the partners in all countries.

Partnership of the project

The project is transnational, meaning the partners are coming from the following countries: Albania, Bulgaria, Crete, Cyprus and North Macedonia.

Lead partner is: National Association of Small and Medium Business from Bulgaria

Other project partners are:
National Statistical Institute of the Republic of Bulgaria
State Statistical Office of the Republic of North Macedonia
Institute of Statistics of the Republic of Albania
Foundation for development of small and medium enterprises – Skopje
Foundation Regional Development Agency (S.M.E.) of Korce, Albania
Institute of Information and Communication Technologies - Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
Foundation for Research & Technology Hellas, Science & Technology Park of Crete

The project also has observer partners:
Software Engineering and Internet Technologies Lab - University of Cyprus
Fund for Innovations and Technology Development

Role of SSO

SSO conducted a pilot survey on innovations and innovation capacities of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SME), 2016-2018. The pilot survey was conducted in the period from 22 to 26 October 2018. It covered micro (1-9 employees), small (10-49 employees) and medium-sized (50-249 employees) enterprises from the following divisions: 26 Manufacture of computer, electronic and optical products; 61 Telecommunications; 62 Computer programming, consultancy and related activities and 63 Information service activities, in accordance to NACE Rev.2, on national level. The objective of the pilot survey was to check whether the questionnaire is clear and understandable to the reporting units or is it necessary to make certain changes in its contents or to prepare additional explanations related to the filling in of the questionnaire.

 In March 2019 SSO conducted a regular statistical suvery on innovations, based on a methodology and questionnaire developed for the purposes of this project. The enumeration units were all micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in the divisions 26, 61, 62 and 63, in accordance to NACE Rev. 2.

SSO staff developed a data entry application for the purposes of this survey and it was installed on laptops that were given to the interviewers engaged specially for this project.

The data collected from the survey will serve for benchmarking at transnational and SME level, as well for policy making.

After the end of the project, the statistical institutes will continue collecting the data according to the developed new questionnaire and methodology in every two years as a minimum for 2 consecutive periods (overall for 4 years).