

INTERREG EUROPE PROJECT “SUCCESS ROAD” KICKED OFF IN ATHENS

Public and private entities from Belgium Greece, Spain, Lithuania and Poland have officially launched the Interreg “Success Road” project in Athens on 2nd and 3rd December 2019. The project stems from a hard-hitting reality: 30% of SMEs do not survive the transition to the second generation of owners, and only 10% of SMEs can withstand the succession to a third generation. Under the leadership of the Greek Ministry of Development and Investments, this new public-private collaboration will guide and support regional and national authorities from the target countries shape policy instruments that allow textile, clothing and footwear SMEs to better face the succession phase and secure their future after a change of ownership.

SMEs: backbone of the European economy

SMEs are vital to the success of the EU’s economy: according to the European Commission’s 2019 Annual Report on SMEs, there are more than 25 million SMEs in the EU-28, which accounts for 99,8% of all enterprises in the non-financial business sector. SMEs are not only numerous; they are also indispensable creators of wealth and employment: they have generated €4,357 billion of value-added and employed 97.7 million people throughout the EU in 2018. Because of their essential role in the economy, each SME’s failed succession process is a threat to the EU’s economic structure with great impact on regional job markets and regional competitiveness.

A three-dimensional, policy-based approach to succession

The project therefore intends to help public administrations implement improved policy instruments and new succession measures that will help create a more favourable and business-friendly ecosystem. In particular, partners will address four specific policy instruments: The Regional Innovation Strategy for Mazovia until 2020 (RIS Mazovia) in Poland, the Operational Programme for investing European Structural and Investment funds in Lithuania, the Operational Programme and Competitiveness, Entrepreneurship and Innovation 2014-2020 (EPAnEK) in Greece and the ERDF Operational Programme 2014-2020 for Valencian Community in Spain.

To achieve the project’s objectives, three main lines of action will be followed: (1) Capacity building of key regional administrative staff involved in the policy design process. (2) A focus on entrepreneurship by supporting policies aiming to attract R&D investments and promote innovation, and new business models and processes, making SMEs more competitive and more resilient to change. (3) The development of new tools to support SMEs during the succession process so that business owners acquire the right competencies to conduct a smooth transfer of ownership.

Interregional learning to amplify best practices diffusion

The Success Road project partners recognise the importance of seizing every opportunity to learn from successful policies of other governments. The project will thus be a catalyst for interregional learning between the four regions/ countries involved through study visits, cross-regional thematic workshops and joint meetings that will be organised to devise the four Action Plans. Such cooperation and regular exchanges of experience between regions facing major structural changes in their manufacturing sectors will give the impetus for successful industry entrepreneurship policies to be adapted to each region's local circumstances.

Project partners will ensure that the generated knowledge and best practices reach and benefit the maximum number of textile, clothing and footwear companies and public authorities in Europe. By helping to maintain the overall sustainability and long-term viability of European SMEs, Success Road project will further contribute to the growth of the economy by preserving jobs and boosting economic growth in Europe, while encouraging policy learning between EU regions.

More information at <https://www.interregeurope.eu/successroad/>

Success Road Partners:

- **Ministry of Development and Investments (EL)**
- European Confederation of the Footwear Industry (BE)
- Hellenic Clothing Industry Association (EL)
- Valencian Association of Footwear Entrepreneurs (ES)
- Valencian Institute of Business Competitiveness (ES)
- Lithuanian Innovation Centre (LT)
- Mazovia Development Agency Plc (PL)