

UpGradeSME

Interreg Europe

UpGradeSME aims at improving the export performance of SMEs by exchanging on internationalisation policy instruments and tools increasing SME ability to export, gain new know-how and improve competitiveness.

www.interregeurope.eu/upgradesme

An interregional cooperation project for improving SME competitiveness policies

Project Partners

Steinbeis Innovation gGmbH (DE)
San Sebastian Socio-Economic Development Agency Ltd. (ES)
Ministry for National Economy (HU)
Pannon Business Network Association (HU)
Business Development Friesland Foundation (NL)
Municipality of Leeuwarden (NL)
ADRAVE – Regional Development Agency of Vale do Ave (PT)
South Muntenia Regional Development Agency (RO)



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

UpGradeSME focus

UpGradeSME is an international cooperation for enhancing SME internationalization firstly on policy level. UpGradeSME is a 5 year **learning process** with the close cooperation of 8 actors representing 6 European regions of Hungary, Romania, the Netherlands, Germany, Portugal and Spain.

Since 2008 the business growth in Europe originated dominantly from export activities, where **SMEs are underrepresented**. Less than one third of the SMEs are able to export, meanwhile it is an essential element of gaining new know-how and improving competitiveness.

'Only 13% of SMEs export out of the EU.'

There is a numerical evidence that exporting activity is in correlation with **innovativeness, new employment**. There are **internal and external reasons** for the relatively weak performance of the SMEs. External reason is that large companies are over-represented in export-oriented industries. Internal reasons are cultural barriers, information shortage, language skills, financing.

'We in UpGradeSME project will deeply investigate both levels.'

In the participating countries there is a heritage of internationalization support policy instruments. Part of the partners represent **innovation-oriented area**, while others have more **labour-intensive character**, providing a mixture of background.

'Common for our partnership is the essential focus on internationalization of SMEs.'

As an overall **result** of UpGradeSME the change in the policy instrument management, or change in the strategic focus is of the policy instrument is expected.

There are two ways of focuses – methodological and content related. The expected results of the methodological work are based on four pillars – **methodology, impact, communication and integration**, while the content related part will be elaborated by peer reviews. Both directions will be accompanied by stakeholder group involvement.



Our Partnership

UpGradeSME Partnership is based on a fruitful cooperation reached in former international projects. Each of our participating partners gained contentful experience in the previous period of INTERREG IVC both in fields of cooperation and interest towards each other's relevant knowhow.

During the implementation of Interreg projects focus areas and core competencies have been identified and match made. **Stimulating growth of the SME sector** is an essential shared element, where **innovation** and **internationalization** are the two decisive factors. The UpGradeSME partnership will focus on this latter.

During our work all partners will receive a **mirror for their individual policy instrument** provided by the partnership and further international actors, when each policy instrument is discussed one-by-one in detail.

Thematic workshops, international staff exchange programs, interactive discussions with SMEs and the continuous exchange of know-how will contribute to the improvement of each internationalization policy instrument.



UpGradeSME Facts and expected results



- o **8 partners** cooperate in the deep restructuring of **6 involved policy instruments** in the topic of SME internationalization
- o **SME interviews** in all involved countries will bring the needs of beneficiaries and the offers of the decision making level closer – a real dialogue begins
- o During the 5 years exchange of **experience workshops, staff exchanges, study visits, peer reviews** and the **direct interaction with different policy levels** starting from the SMEs through intermediary organisations to the Managing Authorities will be realized
- o **Scientific publications** provide a deeper inside into the core topic on EU level
- o **6 Action plans** will be composed which will provide the methodological upgrade of the selected policy instruments
- o **EU level policy recommendation** will be provided on SME internationalization topic

CONTACT

Lead Partner

Pannon Business Network Association, Hungary
Ms Andrea Kurucz andrea.kurucz@pbn.hu Tel: +36 30 968 14 45

Official project homepage: <http://www.interregeurope.eu/upgradesme/>

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Interreg Europe helps regional and local governments across Europe to develop and deliver better policy. By creating an environment and opportunities for sharing solutions, Interreg Europe aims to ensure that government investment, innovation and implementation efforts all lead to integrated and sustainable impact for people and place. Interreg Europe is funded by the European Regional Development Fund.