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**PURE COSMOS Study Visit hosted by Birmingham City Council and GBSLEP Growth Hub**

**Date:** 19 September

**Venue:** Chamber of Commerce

**Attendance:** Partners and associates from PURE COSMOS project; GBSLEP Growth Hub representatives; Digital Birmingham

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**Background to PURE COSMOS (Public authorities Role Enhancing Competitiveness of SMEs)**

This is a 5 year interregional cooperation project that focuses on the role public authorities can play in enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs. PURE COSMOS aims to support the growth and development of SMEs by focusing on policies that support the needs of SMEs, and promote the administrative modernisation of the public services. It aims to have a concrete and measurable impact on Structural Funds Growth and Jobs policies and programmes (ERDF and ESF) e.g. change in the management and/or strategic focus of the policy instrument.

The project will improve Regional policies through the involvement of stakeholders and regional experts to share common solutions, identify innovative new projects and enhance governance. This will be done by:

- ✓ analysing partners' plans through **peer reviews**
- ✓ identifying **good practices (new solutions and ideas) from other regions or countries and bringing back ideas** that will improve these plans and support the competitiveness of businesses
- ✓ exploring them further through **study visits**
- ✓ importing good practice solutions through special **workshops and regional action plans**.

Through this approach it is expected that the project will advance services for SMEs, such as e-payment tools, one stop shop, "digital by default" models, and digital-skill support. Governance will also be improved through IT administrative solutions, regional legislation review and simplifying and launching of new business calls.

**Why this is important**

SMEs are the backbone of our regional economic growth and the goal is to look at how we facilitate SME innovation and accelerate the implementation of policies and initiatives that will favour that. In Birmingham for example 98% of the total population of businesses are SMEs and 90% of these are micro businesses, so we need to look at how we enhance access to financial and direct business / technical support to enable them to function effectively at local, national and international levels to grow and/ or gain competitive advantage.

**Who is involved in PURE COSMOS**

The Lead partner is Municipality of Genoa (Italy) with project partners from Municipality of Florence (Italy); Hajdu-Bihar County Government (Hungary); Development Bank of Saxony-Anhalt; Birmingham City Council (UK); Development Agency of Eastern Thessaloniki's Local Authorities (Greece); Usti region (Czech); Government of Catalonia (Spain)

**PURE COSMOS Study Visit 19 - 20 September, 2017**

The project is now in the process of arranging Study Visits to help all partners explore good practices in respective regions and countries that can enhance the learning and support development of new solutions and development of regional action plans to improve the competitiveness of SMEs.

The first study visit in the UK is being hosted by GBSLEP at the Chamber of Commerce on 19 September and encompasses a number of good practices:-

- (1) GBSLEP Growth Hub – "One Stop Shop" for SME's
- (2) Procurement – Findit in Birmingham and In-tend
- (3) GDPR – New European Data Protection Regulations that will come into force May 2018.

The Birmingham study visit will include partners and associates from Spain, Greece, Italy and Czech Republic.

The second UK study visit on 20-21st September and is being hosted by the Welsh Government (Merthyr Tydfil) and is focused on their e-Compliance System (which enables funding and grants to be issued to SME's using an end to end digital model).

#### PHOTO OF GROWTH HUB AND EU COLLEAGUES



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