



ACTION PLAN

RUMORE

Rural-Urban Partnerships Motivating Regional Economies

Region of Central Macedonia Greece

**Regional Development Fund of Central Macedonia –
on behalf of Region of Central Macedonia**

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Part I – General information

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The Action Plan in Phase 2 of the **RUMORE** Interreg-Europe project is a means to transfer best practices and lessons learned accrued in Phase 1 (although some actions have already been implemented in Phase 1). This Action Plan is structured in three parts: following this part I "General introduction", part II is presenting the policy context, and part III the envisaged actions, and the monitoring methodology.

The **action plan** is a document providing details on **how** the lessons learnt from the cooperation will be exploited in order to improve private R&D&I investments, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research centers and tertiary education sectors, the policy instrument tackled within the region. It specifies the nature of the actions to be implemented, their timeframe, and the players involved, the costs and funding sources and finally offers a specific guide on monitoring and implement it successfully.

Part II – Policy context

<p>The Action Plan aims to impact:</p>	<p>1) Investment for Growth and Jobs program</p>
<p>Name of the policy instrument</p>	<p>The policy instrument is under Regional of Central Macedonia's Operational program, Thematic Priority Axis 01 dealing with strengthening research, technological development and innovation and specifically encompasses the whole 1b investment priority, a priority that is promoting private R&D&I investments, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research centers and tertiary education sectors, particularly through: (a) investments in new product and services, (b) technology transfer, (c) social and ecological innovation, (d) public service applications, (e) encourage demand, (f) networking, (g) cluster formation, (h) support technological and applied research, (i) pilot projects, (j) early ratification, (k) advanced production capacity, especially in key technologies, and (l) dissemination of general technologies applications.</p> <p>This priority has been drafted to deal with the following goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Support local SMEs to invest in R&D infrastructures and research staff. ➤ Increase private R&D&I spending to reach EU & country averages ➤ Develop more funding mechanisms and tools ➤ Increase research and Market linkages ➤ Focus more on the commercial exploitation of results ➤ Focus more on RIS3 strategies, and actions mainly in the priority areas. ➤ Better support of new startups ➤ It is aligned with the Commission's Pact with Greece and ➤ It is also aligned with the national operational goals and programs. <p>It is not the first time that the region is developing a research & innovation strategy. But is the first time (RIS3 methodology) that it was more robust, more bottom-up and evidence based. The whole ecosystem in the region has huge assets and dynamics, but lacks common vision, common planning and common acting/evaluating. Based on the latter the governor decided in 2018, to develop a liaison office under the Innovation & Entrepreneurship directorate to both co-monitor and co – evaluate the RIS3 strategy but also (through the one stop liaison office) guide the ecosystem in more and better collaborations inside and outside the region.</p> <p>The main RIS3 strategic priorities in terms of market are AgriFood, & Tourism, and in terms of technologies are ICT, Energy, Environment and Logistics. That's why we focus our RUMORE activities predominantly on these sectors (Agrifood and Tourism) and plan actions in the project to try and to find ways to "Strengthen</p>

	<p>research, technological development and innovation” potentials in these sectors.</p> <p>So far the importance of rural-urban cooperation, links and partnerships have not been entirely recognized in our RIS3 strategy and the potentials of such partnerships are still underused.</p> <p>More specifically the region has a huge base of R&D capacity and extrovert companies in the areas of Agrifood and Tourism (the two main priorities of our RIS3 strategy) that due to socioeconomic context are shown weak linkages and collaborations. The result is a low technology and innovation status of the companies and untapped R&D results by the research community.</p> <p>Some of the main reasons of that are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The size of the local SMEs is rather small (even smaller in the urban areas) and this leads to inability to innovate 2. The research and higher education community has been focusing mainly on research outputs that did not match the local needs, funded mainly by EU, thus creating a generalist type research effect (minimum specialization) 3. The main stakeholders are having a history of cooperating in ideas and not in actions, in the absence of a regional leader. <p>Thus the Region’s Innovation and Entrepreneurship Support Mechanism and mainly the One Stop Liaison Office which is a part of the Mechanism, is of a crucial importance due to its main activities focusing on the three aforementioned challenges. Its main activities are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Performing a number of collaborating actions (continues EDP, co-developing and co-monitoring the strategy and main actions.) in order to shift the ecosystem towards its main priorities that are agrifood and tourism, both of whom are also rural activities. 2. Support SMEs to boost competitiveness through innovation, by offering a digital data base of every single R&D infrastructure in the area, matching events, interactive workshops, roadshows to areas away from the city, to boost trust and collaborations. 3. Train and inform SMEs on how to better profit from innovations through boosting clusters, venture investments and generally new business models that try to boost the size of the ventures. <p>The objectives of the Action Plan are three (3):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use knowledge gathered in the context of the RUMORE project, even from the very beginning when dealing with the project proposal submission, to Good Practices, through meetings, discussions, arguments exchange and vision of partners, to enhance Rural-Urban collaborations by putting them in the center of RIS3 strategy and action plan.
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	<p>2. Link the two good practices from Lombardy to two main aspects of the newly established Innovation and Entrepreneurship Support Mechanism including the One Stop-Liaison Office:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">2.1. Inform, educate and engage rural stakeholders in RIS3 actions that focus on empowering the ecosystem in the region based on the 3plile helix model, and also2.2. Increase the level of interregional and extrovert exposure of these same actors by having the One Stop-Liaison Office operates as One Regional Contact Point between regional stakeholders and interregional partnerships (mainly from S3 thematic platforms).
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Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

The Regional Authority is planning and implementing a robust and compact action plan that is well defined and linked with phase one activities, learning process and changes occurred in the context of this project mainly in regards to policy instrument development and implementation.

The authority is working on the high level to ensure that all activities regarding RIS3 strategy and implementation are well linked and also connected with the project implementation and aligned as well with the activities that have been developed and implemented under the European Regional Entrepreneurship award the Region has been awarded for 2018.

The following sets of actions have been identified and interlinked to the action plan goals:

ACTION 1

Name	Rural – Urban Collaborations at the heart of RIS3 priorities (Agrifood & Tourism) through a new call for the establishment of the Region’s Innovation and Entrepreneurship Support Mechanism and mainly the One Stop Liaison Office which is a part of the Mechanism
Planned activities	<p>The activities that have been carried out were the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. The RCM and RoP MA executive staff attended discussions during the LSG and project meetings, during which the RCM developed and presented their draft proposal for inclusion of the rural-urban partnerships concept in the new call, and were familiarized with a number of arguments on the strategic importance of this concept and how they should immediately include it in the upcoming RIS3 call for the Mechanism and the One Stop Liaison Office ii. The MA and the RCM accepted and worked closely to accomplish that. iii. The proposal of the RCM was prepared having in mind that the new mechanism should have in mind the focus on both: rural-urban collaborations and the importance of agri-food and tourism values chains. iv. The MA evaluated the Mechanism (including the One stop liaison office) proposal and granted the Regional Authority the ERDF budget. A short history of the above: the call from the MA of the RoP was opened on the 31/12/2017, the regional authority submitted a proposal on 27/02/2018 that was accepted by the MA on 03/05/2018, then the regional authority on 06/08/2018 opened an international tender to get support and the Mechanism along with the One stop liaison office will be start operating on 15th of March 2019.

	<p>v. The specific points in the proposal (the whole project had 4 wps). The 3rd and 4th wps which are relevant to the project have a total budget of 672.560€:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Work Package 3: Updating the RIS3 strategy: Continues EDP, new version of RIS3 strategy, emphasizing the whole values chains. ○ Work package 4: Development and Operation of the One Stop Liaison Office: supporting SMEs and especially from the rural areas in boosting their competitiveness through a digital platform (type of a digital incubator) with information on funding, good practices of business planning, where to find tech partners, extrovert and interregional collaborations etc. ○ The other two wps are: work package 1 which will be supporting the regional authority in setting a regional intelligence system to gather data and work package 2 that will be dealing with RIS3 monitoring and evaluation.
<p>Challenge addressed</p>	<p>The participation of the Region of Central Macedonia in the RUMORE project by its idea inception and through all activities so far has uncovered an important missing element in the RIS3 strategy of the region. The region is mainly focusing on the Agrifood and Tourism priorities, and from the strategy the focus and the importance of the rural areas, activities and stakeholders were totally missing. Examples of challenges include the lack of SME's collaborating with R&D&I institutions, the absence of networking with other business networks, their inability to develop export capacity etc</p> <p>Since it was not possible to change the RIS3 strategy, the Regional Authority has decided to add to the new flagship initiative, the so called "Innovation and Entrepreneurship Support Innovation Mechanism", supporting services to boost rural – urban collaborations i.e. inform rural stakeholders on where to find specific R&D expertise.</p> <p>This action has been mainly implemented, in the context of Phase 1. The main goal was to educate both the senior staff members of the Regional Authority and the RoP Managing Authority, to quickly include the new concept in their RIS3 strategic actions and specifically in the call they have prepared to launch the Mechanism and the liaison office.</p> <p>The concept of "Rural-urban Partnerships" has not been included as an idea at the strategic level of the ROP, back in 2012. During the RUMORE project a number of meetings were organized with the aim to increase the learning ability and capacity of triple helix stakeholders and the Managing Authority (MA) of the ROP. During those meetings, the participating stakeholders and the MA staff were able to hear a number of good practices regarding how other RUMORE partner regions</p>

	<p>have been planning and implementing actions boosting collaborations but also emphasize on the value chains. The meetings were organized in a co-working, interactive manner using co-participatory methodologies.</p> <p>The discussions and learning exchange unveil and showed a number of strategic and innovative ideas and the different possibilities / activities that could be transferred and used in the new Mechanism of supporting the Innovation and Entrepreneurship ecosystem. After 3 exhaustive LSG meetings (in Semester 1, 2 and 3) with altogether around 100 participants, there was an initial agreement with the ecosystem about the direction and context of the Mechanism.</p> <p>More specifically the Region, following the ROP call from the Managing Authority and considering the feedback from all above actions in the RUMORE context, prepared a proposal regarding the new Mechanism that included the concept of "Rural-urban Partnerships".</p>
<p>Interregional inspiration</p>	<p>Even though the region has decided to focus its RIS3 on Agrifood and Tourism, the strategy has neglected to emphasize on the rural assets. It does now by encompassing the rural-urban collaborations and value chains in the "Innovation and Entrepreneurship Support Mechanism" call by the RoP Managing Authority. The whole RUMORE project since its inception, proposal, meetings, discussions, good practices, knowledge exchange and study visits. More specifically we have identified the structured good practices (Open Innovation Platform and Open Agri) from Lombardy region and took it as an example to promote Urban – Rural partnerships. The main points that made us to take this decision were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The digital aspect (digitalization and provision of digital services) of the platform makes it easy for stakeholders to communicate 2. Lombardy's online Open Innovation platform gives innovators tools, contacts and information on opportunities related to their needs. 3. It provides innovation and research professionals with a network in which to discuss and collaborate on shared challenges and goals. 4. What makes this platform unique is that it targets individuals involved in research and innovation. Unlike many similar platforms, Lombardy's Open Innovation platform does not serve as a collaboration space for companies, but as a social network for innovators. 5. The interregional dimension of the OIP. 6. The implementation of the concept of virtual incubation
<p>Players involved</p>	<p>The main stakeholders were the RCM and RoP MA executive staff members and apart from those we can also mention Halkidiki development agency, Aristotle University, Technical University, National Center of Research, Thessaloniki Chambers, etc.</p>

	<p>Their main roles were to express their needs and vision for the future and also offer their ideas in the meetings where brainstorming took place regarding the Rural-Urban linkages and the value chain approach.</p>
Timeframe	<p>The meetings and discussions took place during the whole procedure from the winter of 2017 to this day since the Mechanism and the One Stop Liaison Office will be start working on 15th of March 2019. There were 4 meetings that took place on December 11, 2017, January 8th and 16th 2018 and February 10th 2018</p>
Costs	<p>WP3 and WP4 (one stop liaison office) of the new Innovation and Entrepreneurship Mechanism had already been affected to some extent by the RUMORE feedback. The total cost of these two WPs is 672.560 €. In addition we will define in the next draft of this Action Plan some supportive activities, meetings etc to the functionality of the IES Mechanism.</p>
Funding source(s)	<p>ERDF funding (Regional Operational Programme) and some additional direct funding from the Regional Development fund of Central Macedonia.</p>
Urban-rural aspects	<p>Including the importance of rural – urban collaborations in the RIS3 priorities and in the services that will be offered by the new mechanism and the one stop liaison office boost the linkages and long term collaborations since more focus will be on the rural part of the territory, boosting cohesion as well.</p>
Innovative character	<p>It is innovative mainly due to the fact that it is the first time that rural activities are included in the regional innovation strategy and actions, in comparison with urban actions as well.</p>
Monitoring	<p>Local Stakeholder Group meetings, meetings with the Managing Authority. Finally the IESM including the OSLO has its own monitoring system which will be implemented by the Region</p>

ACTION 2

<p>Name</p>	<p>“OpenAgri”, “Open Innovation Platform” and “Controlled DNA” good practices as add-ons to One Stop Liaison Office.</p> <p>Using the idea, business model and the tools of OpenAgri, Open Innovation platform and Controlled DNA Good Practices from Lombardy, the regional authority will organize the Innovation & Entrepreneurship Support Mechanism (especially the One Stop Liaison Office) accordingly.</p>
<p>Planned activities</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Run two (2) workshops to inform rural actors about the specific digital incubation services, calls etc. ii. Run two (2) workshops in order to engage rural stakeholders into extrovert activities and specifically the S3 platforms, Digital Innovation Hubs, global value chains. iii. A number of digital services to every SME (i.e. how to collaborate with R&D partners. Business Plan templates, finance for small SMEs, what to look when gaining funding, what kind of funds are available in the area or elsewhere for them etc.) in a form of a digital incubator. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication and support web platform • Horizon scanning trends web iv. The liaison office will be responsible to develop a draft plan in order to develop at a later stage a Digital Innovation hub for the Agrifood value chains. The inspiration for this came from all the three good practices of Lombardy Region including the “Controlled DNA” good practice.
<p>Challenge addressed</p>	<p>As said many times in this plan the Region has made the decision to prioritize the agrifood and tourism industries as its RIS3 focus. Before the RUMORE started the idea of the RIS3 and its action plan were focusing on: bring together research and market, work with all stakeholders to create a common vision and common plans in the long run, support SMEs to use more innovative tools (innovation vouchers) and boost SMEs to run joint ventures in order to become larger and more competitive. After the RUMORE project and specifically the lessons learned both by the Milan openAgri project and the open platform of Lombardy Region, we gathered some more specific ideas to use them in the policy instrument.</p> <p>These specific lessons are the huge number of services offered by our One stop liaison office services to SMEs in the</p>

	<p>form of an incubator and the focusing on the whole value chain testing. Also as said before in the planned activities section and more specifically in iv section.</p>
Interregional inspiration	<p>The action is directly linked to both Milan's openAgri project and Lombardy's Open Innovation Platform project. Considering the differences and similarities of those two regions i.e. Milan and Thessaloniki are quite dominant metropolitan areas, the aspects of interests are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The general concept of the platform: open and inclusive • The other aspect is the goal to aggregate "innovation actors and stakeholders" to face together common strategic challenges and opportunities • The tools described and offered in the platform can fit the needs of the regional players • The platform offers an entire suite of tools aimed at supporting all phases of the research and innovation process. This includes everything from consultation to the creation of ecosystems where relevant actors can discuss and share information. It also facilitates the launch of collaborative proposals and the dissemination of results. • It aims to act as a support system to facilitate the creation of Open Innovation projects that benefit local SMEs • Users of the platform can select from a number of themes and once selected, the user then has access to all content published on the platform, from news and discussions to project proposals. • To promote further growth, a recent upgrade has incorporated several new features, such as a free Open Source licensing scheme and a multilingual interface. The aim of these enhancements is to facilitate the platform's adoption in similar and complementary user scenarios and promote collaboration among them (i.e. in other regions, company networks, clusters, large collaborative projects, etc.). • Interregional cooperation • The implementation of the concept of virtual incubation
Players involved	<p>Every stakeholder in the quadruple helix but mainly rural ones like companies, farmers, experts, citizens, chambers of commerce, rural development agencies, Cities and small villages authorities etc. X</p> <p>The regional authority will organize and implement the actions mentioned before with the support of stakeholders like the CERTH & AUTH research centers, chambers of commerce and development agencies like Anatoliki, ANKI etc</p>
Timeframe	<p>During the next 2 years. Specifically the services will start to be implemented during the 2nd semester of 2019, the liaison</p>

	office will have an initial draft of the digital innovation hub during the 1 st semester of 2020 and the workshops will be organized around the same time context. More analytical time scheduling will be possible when the action plan will be finalized.
Costs	WP3 and WP4 (one stop liaison office) of the new Innovation and Entrepreneurship Mechanism had already been affected to some extent by the RUMORE feedback. The total cost of these two WPs is 672.560 €. In addition we will have an additional funding from the Regional Development Fund of Central Macedonia. This funding will be clarified in the next version of the Action Plan.
Funding source(s)	ERDF funding (Regional Operational Programme) and direct funding from the Regional Development fund of Central Macedonia.
Urban-rural aspects	As the region focus a lot on Agrifood and Tourism it must take into account the fact that many of their activities are taken place in the rural or peri-urban areas. Most of the times people in these areas feel excluded from decisions that affect them. Using digital services and offering them easy to understand services and data the region is closing the gap and increases the trust between any kinds of the quadruple helix actors.
Innovative character	It is innovative mainly due to the fact that many of the services will be offered online and also due to the fact that this action is boosting the AgriFood competitiveness by focusing in the whole value chain.
Monitoring	The Regional Fund will perform several monitoring actions as soon as they decided, and a time frame will be in place. Some of these actions are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Periodically check of all actions 2. Based on the internal control values the Fund will be very close to everyone involved to make sure everything is well understood and run accordingly 3. Based on the following actions any changes that must be done will be altering the initial plan. 4. Based on the periodically checks, the staff will run a 1-2 pages evaluation reports, regarding actions performed, challenges, deliverables and results. 5. Every year the Fund will also develop a yearly report, compiled by the four quarterly ones 6. By the end of Phase two a final monitoring report will be delivered on the same issues, plus an analysis of future recommendations

	<p>7. During Phase 2 activities the Fund staff will be participating in various project workshops and exchange knowledge regarding the action plan implementation and monitoring Indicators To efficiently monitor the implementation of the actions defined and analyzed previously, a number of output and result indicators will be decided and monitored.</p>
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Date: 17/12/2019

Name of the organization(s): Mr. Apostolos Tzitzikostas, President of the Board of Directors, Governor of the Region of Central Macedonia

Signature of representative of the relevant organization:

