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Action Plan

Valencia Region - Comunitat Valenciana

Inno4Sports
Interreg Europe



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund



Research &
innovation

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1. General information

www.interregeurope.eu/inno4sports

Project: Sport for Growth and Healthy & Vital Communities

Partner organisation: IBV

Other partner organisations involved: IVACE

Region: VALENCIA

NUTS2 region: Comunidad Valenciana ES52

Contact person: Quique Alcántara

Email address: Enrique.alcantara@ibv.org

Phone number: +34649308793

2. Background

Inno4Sports project

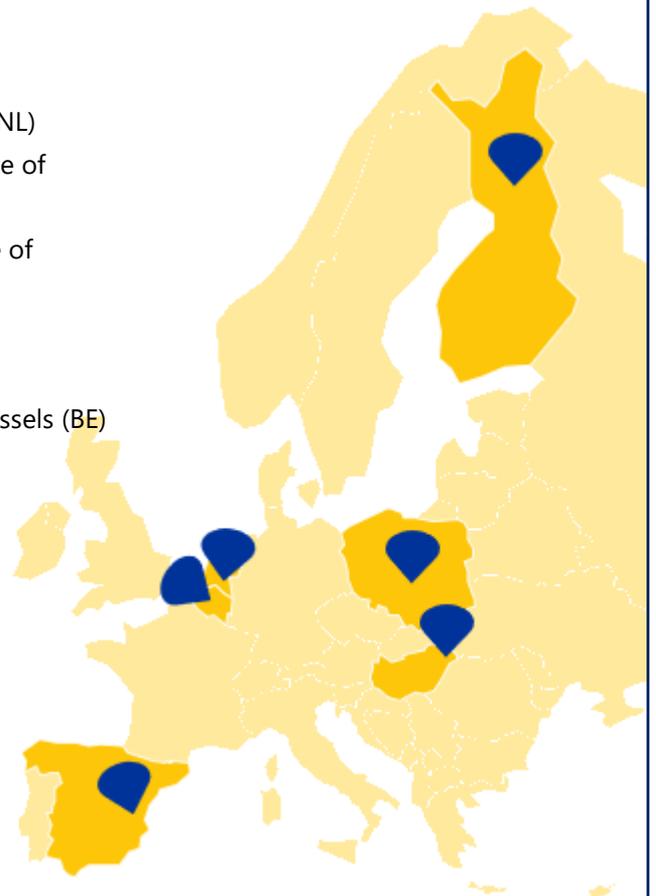
The Inno4Sports project brings together eight partners from six European regions that all share the ambition to promote the role of sport innovation in their regional economy. The aim of the project is to improve the performance and efficiency of regional development programmes (policy instruments) to make them better support innovation and business creation in the field of sport and vitality. This was done through interregional learning and knowledge exchange.

During the first phase of the project, from June 2018 to November 2020, the partners have shared good practices and learnt from each other through study visits, workshops and online communication. Based on interregional learning, each partner region has developed their own action plan where they determine how they will implement the lessons learnt in order to improve their regional development programmes.

You are now looking at the results of the first phase of the project. The second phase of the Inno4Sports project, December 2020 to November 2022, is dedicated to the implementation of the action plans. This document defines what has been learnt from partner regions during first phase of Inno4Sports and how these learnings are implemented in Valencia.

Project partners:

- Cluster Sports & Technology, South Netherlands (NL)
- Instituto de Biomecánica (IBV) & Valencian Institute of Business Competitiveness (IVACE), Valencia (ES)
- MSE Cluster Ltd & University of Debrecen Institute of Sport Sciences, Hajdú-Bihar (HU)
- Regional Council of Lapland, Lapland (FI)
- Verde Cluster, Łódź (PL)
- European Platform for Sport Innovation (EPSI), Brussels (BE)



Regional context

Valencia is a region with almost 5 million inhabitants where sports practice has a strong basis and a long tradition. The region has more than 15,000 sports facilities and is home for important sports clubs. Also, economy related to sports is relevant. There are near 3600 companies related to sports and the region hosts relevant sports events like the marathon of Valencia or the Moto GP in the city of Cheste. Sports tourism is growing year after year (0,5 million sports tourists in 2017, 30% more than in 2016). In addition, the region has a unique research and high education ecosystem including 5 sports sciences faculties, 2 universities with sports research departments and 3 technological centres doing innovation in sports. However, the regional relevance and recognition of sports as an economic, R&D and innovation sector is low. This, in the end, hampers unleashing its potential, since, for example, at present it is hard to get support from regional innovation support policies. As a result, contribution of the regional sports innovation ecosystem to regional socioeconomic development remains quite below its actual potential.

In the region, there is a general consensus in that sport has a humongous potential for developing the regional economy through cross-overs with other sectors such as health promotion and tourism. This potential gets reflected in different initiatives being developed by public and private entities, as for example:

- .- Sports recipe . An initiative by local authorities and regional health authorities to prescribe Physical activity from primary care centers.
- .- A Sports Sponsorship programme from a private sponsor for 32 million euro per year.
- .- A regional sports tourism strategy with the collaboration of local authorities and private actors which is based in sports events like the marathon of Valencia.

Also, COVID19 impact has also to be considered. After the lock-down, raised awareness of the relevance of sports for health together with an increased digitalization and connectivity of our society, especially in sports, posed new opportunities for innovation and business. A high innovation potential aroused by cross-overs with creative industries (which are relevant in the region) and ITC companies regarding exergaming, online sports and others.

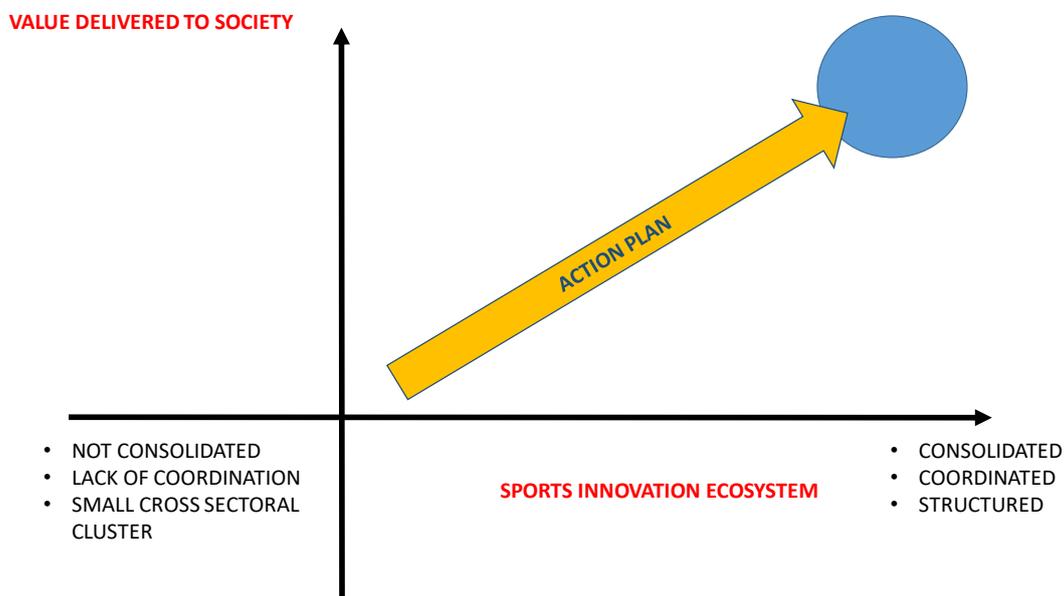
A regional SWOT identified that the two main barriers for unleashing all potential of sport are:

1. Though the sports innovation ecosystem is strong and developed, it is poorly structured and coordinated. It is missing a leadership from regional sports authorities coordinating initiatives with other departments at regional level and with local authorities. Also, different departments (health, tourism, sports, ...) and levels of public authorities (national, regional and local) make decisions with little coordination among them.

2. There is a cross-sectorial quadruple Helix cluster (called CVIDA) where Cross-overs of sports with health promotion, and tourism are relevant, but due to difficulties to get funding from public instruments, its activities related to sports are limited.
3. Current regional policies supporting innovation are not well suited for sports related projects, especially regarding projects with a cross-sectorial perspective of sports with sectors like tourism or health promotion, which are intensive in services.

From this base line, the desired situation for the region is having a well-coordinated and active Q-Helix, cross-sectorial sports innovation ecosystem contributing more to the socioeconomic development of the region in terms of health, employment, education, knowledge and innovation.

The action plan pursues this scenario as showed in the following figure by developing actions to increase coordination and innovation activities of the regional sports innovation ecosystem.



3. Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:

- Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
- European Territorial Cooperation programme
- Other regional development policy instrument

Policy instrument addressed:

The policy objective for Valencia is the operative programme (OP) (Programa Operativo de la Comunidad Valenciana) for the period 2014-2020. Priority 1: Development of the knowledge-based economy. It was due to end in December 2020, but due to the special circumstances in Europe (Brexit and Covid-19) it has been reprogrammed till the end of July 2021, being uncertain when works for preparing the new OP (2021-2027) will start.

The policy context and the contribution to improve the policy instrument

The regional OP (2014-2020) (Programa Operativo de la Comunidad Valenciana 2014-2020) covers the 'Regional competitiveness and employment' EU objective with a total budget of 2,2 billion (1,3 billion ERDF).

In the current OP program and in the regional smart specialization strategy (RIS3CV), sport is not specifically considered. However, it could have a greater relevance given that RIS3CV includes smart tourism and health promotion as strategic pillars, both of which find opportunities for development in cross-overs with sports.

The current OP (2014-2020) is composed of five priorities, with a notable support provided for research, technology transfer, innovation and entrepreneurship. The priority concerned by Inno4Sports is Priority 1 (P1): Development of the knowledge-based economy, R&D&I and the information society covering around 17% of the total OP budget. The priority is fully in line with Investment Priority 1b (**IP1b**). Focusing on actions linked to the promotion of research, innovation, the development and dissemination of technologies and the information society; the priority is to boost the region's technological convergence to the European Union.

In P1, the goal is to foster the cooperation between companies and Research & Tech organisations (RTO's) via R&D, and Innovation projects led by RTO's, with the active participation of SMEs.

The calls (launched annually and owned by IVACE, the regional development agency) target

- 1) the promotion of R&D activities led by SMEs;
- 2) the support for the creation of innovative companies, and for innovative public enterprises
- 3) the transfer of knowledge and cooperation between companies and research centres.

On the past, there has been not specific call for sports projects. Existing calls have supported a small number of projects in sports. In the last 4 years and in the framework of these calls, regional RTO's and SMEs have developed a total of 7 projects in sport with a general budget around 1 million euro. Around 10 SMEs have taken part in these projects.

The action plan targets at these calls for meeting the challenges identified. Concretely, to develop a more coordinated and active regional sports innovation ecosystem delivering more innovation in sports.

To this end, the goal is achieving:

.- A type 1 policy change by submitting and implementing a project to develop a sports data driven innovation hub (quadruple-helix and cross-sectorial) as a way of increasing coordination and collaboration of all stakeholders in the ecosystem including the regional cluster CVIDA. This project will issue indicators of the potential of sports innovation.

.- A type 2 policy change, by introducing changes in the above calls to make them more supportive of sports innovation activities, especially those aiming to develop products and services with cross-sectorial relevance (tourism, health promotion, ...). That will include changes in priorities as well as in selection criteria in the calls for proposals. Both will remark the relevance of cross-sectorial projects impacting in health promotion, smart tourism and others, like creative industries. These changes would help in increasing the number of innovation projects related to sports from the regional ecosystem, especially those coming from opportunities identified in the cluster CVIDA and in the sports innovation hub.

From this situation, performance indicators for the next 4 years (2021-2024) will be:

- Number of project ideas gathered in the regional sports innovation ecosystem: 20
- Number of Stakeholders involved in the process: 30
- Number of SMEs included in projects financed from the OP: 15
- Projects developed with a cross-sectoral relevance, resulting from the project's learning process: 10 projects with a total budget of 1.5 Million €

3. Action 1. Valencia hub for sports data driven innovation.

This action aims at strengthening the current regional sports innovation ecosystem following a 4D helix approach and considering the cross over of sports with other sectors like health promotion, creative industry and tourism. The sports ecosystem is currently strong and well developed but misses mechanisms, structures and spaces for increasing sectorial and cross-sectorial cooperation and synergies among stakeholders. Having them would definitely boost innovation and reinforce the quadruple Helix regional sports innovation ecosystem.

To this end, this action includes activities to create the The Valencia **hub for sports data driven innovation**. It will be a one stop-shop where entities (SMES, start-ups, sports clubs, professionals, and public authorities) can get access to technology and knowledge for innovation in sports powered by data. They will access also to data from sportive and active people for developing and testing new technology, products, services, and policies, as well as for R&D activities, aimed at promoting sports crossovers with, for example, tourism and health promotion. As well as supporting the maturation and transfer of excellent technology and knowledge towards applications in society and industry. To this end, the hub will offer services for setting data ecosystems, identification of innovation opportunities, testing of products and services, among others. It will be based at the campus of the Polytechnical University of Valencia (Universitat Politècnica de València).

The hub will be created with the participation of the regional cluster CVIDA, regional and local authorities as well as research entities, SMES and sports clubs. In this way, coordination and innovation activities are expected to grow.

This initiative is linked to investment protocols arising from ClusSport (the sports thematic area within the industrial modernization S3 platform) for the creation of a European network of innovation hubs on sports and vitality.

Lessons learnt

This action was inspired by lessons learnt from South Netherlands and Lapland which can be stated as follows:

Lesson learnt 1. *For unleashing the power of sports as an innovation and socio-economic driver, it is necessary to have a well-coordinated and consolidated regional sports innovation ecosystem. It has to follow a 4D helix and cross sectoral approach. A key element in the ecosystem is a good coordination and understanding between the different authorities. Also, sports innovation ecosystems work better if there are structures and mechanisms, like clusters, networks, living labs or facilities, acting as a glue and fostering synergies.*

South Netherlands. During the Interreg Event, Knowledge capitalisation seminars and the staff exchange week, Inno4sports partners saw how the good relationships among stakeholders, authorities (Brabant Sports, Cities of Eindhoven and Antwerp), citizens (sports clubs, civil associations), sports companies, universities (Eindhoven technical University), high-tech companies (IMECH) and the network of living labs created a lot of synergies and opportunities. S&T as a cluster, organized activities such as hackathons, start-ups competitions or workshops, where stakeholders meet and cooperate. Their network of living labs helps in bringing stakeholders together identifying many innovation opportunities. By way of an example, even though sport has not a specific role in the S3 of SN, they have achieved a good support for innovation projects with ERDF funds that have acted as good demonstrators for sports potential.

Lapland. At the workshops and visits during the IE and KCS Inno4sports partners saw the good tuning between the different stakeholders and how positive this was. The Arctic Sports Network is a quadruple cross-sectorial helix representation of the important stakeholders of the bottom up network in Lapland on sports and tourism. The combination of bottom-up (from SMES and Citizens to policies) and top-down (from policies to SMES and Citizens) approaches in a same platform is similar to that followed in Valencia by the cluster CVIDA, however including the transversal role of sports as driver of socioeconomic development is a good practice to be integrated yet. Artic network is a good example for VLC when considering the relationship between stakeholders from sports and tourism.

Lesson learnt 2. *Support innovation ecosystems around sports data and data generators (living labs, smart stadiums and smart active spaces, regions) is a rather low cost, and easy to develop, structure which can have a tremendous impact in people becoming active and also in innovation and business creation.*

South Netherlands. During the Interreg Event, Knowledge capitalisation seminars and the staff exchange week, Inno4sports partners had the opportunity to learn different experiences in which innovation and business creation took place around data. There were visits and workshops to see different approaches as living labs (spaces where sports people take part in identification of opportunities as well as in product testing), smart training like the high-performance swimming training at Eindhoven, where development of technology for gathering data is a key pillar on its business model or smart cities testing new ICT and AI (artificial intelligence) solutions providing data for promoting sports practice. For example, City of Eindhoven designed running paths using data from people running in the city. Eindhoven University of Technology provided knowledge in this regard as they explained how both public and more personal (Strava) data are applied for the development of smart walking routes and how people apply public spaces for sport according to safety, lights of the different city areas and weather conditions

Their Vitality living lab project was a particularly inspiring good practice. The Vitality Living Lab project (co-funded by ERDF OPZuid, see GP South Netherlands SN), applies procedures and methods for using physical activity data for identifying, developing, testing and launching new products and services.

Lesson learnt 3. At Holst center (Eindhoven) VLC learnt that for data driven innovation in sports it is better to have a strong high-tech partner able to launch the technology to the market and exploit it (sensors, for example) by fostering the development of applications. Otherwise, like in the case of Valencia, it seems wise to focus on applications of this technology and interregional collaboration.

South Netherlands. During the staff exchange week, we visited Holst center. They develop sensing technology (like flexible electronics for smart textiles or sensors for sweat or CO₂ analysis) applications to different sectors, being sports one of them. The combination of their technology push with the market push from sports and vitality has a terrific potential.

These lessons inspire Action 1 in this AP aimed at developing an inexpensive structure as a data driven innovation hub to act as a gluing and driver element for the regional ecosystem. It will build around a consortium including Cvida cluster and regional authorities incorporating entities from the quadruple helix with a cross-sectorial orientation. In the framework of Inno4sports, a pilot has been submitted to check and test data driven innovation in the context of Valencia. It will help in a better definition of Action 1.

Action steps and activities

Action summary

This action aims at creating a structure to act as a gluing and driver element for the regional ecosystem. To this end, a project will be submitted to the regional IVACE call for developing the Valencia hub for sports data driven innovation. This action grounds on previous and running regional projects funded with EDR Funds.

The hub is a one stop-shop where entities (SMEs, startups, sports clubs, public authorities) can get access to technology and knowledge for innovation in sports powered by data. As well as supporting the **maturation and transfer of excellent** technology and knowledge towards applications in society and industry.

The design of the hub and estimation of the expected impact will be based in the results of the pilot submitted within the framework of Inno4sports.

Action Steps	Responsibility	Resources	Timeline							
			(Jan, 2021-Dec, 2022) Quarters							
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A1.1. <u>Detailed design of the hub:</u> Operations, services, elements and business plan	IBV	1 person-month. Results from the pilot submitted. Current calls by IVACE								
A1.2. <u>Build a consortium.</u> Initially the consortium includes core partners like CVIDA, IBV, Polytechnical University of Valencia, sports regional authorities, SMEs,	IBV and Cvida	1 pm Results from the pilot submitted. SG taking part in it.								

sports clubs, local authorities. More partners will be further included										
<u>A1.3. Prepare and Submit the project to start the hub to be funded regionally with EDF.</u>	IBV	2 pm. Results from the pilot								
<u>A1.4. Pilot activities including:</u> .- Identification of innovation opportunities (workshops, creative sessions, matchmaking) and development of projects .- Product and services testing .- Projects development .- Projects funding	IBV and core partners	6 pm These actives will stem and complete use cases included in the Pilot submitted								
<u>A.1.5. Evaluation of KPI's</u> .- Computation of KPI's .- Evaluation with respect to goals .- Debate and conclusions	IBV, core partners and IVACE	1 pm								
<u>A.1.6. Communication and dissemination</u>	IBV and IVACE	2 pm								

Goals of the action

This action aims at increasing the coordination of the regional sports innovation ecosystem, as well as at increasing the regional relevance of sports showing its potential for innovation and socio-economic development. This is key for achieving further policy changes. The main goal of this action is consolidating the existing sports innovation ecosystem by creating the Valencia sports data driven innovation hub. This structure will bring all regional stakeholders together and will boost innovation in sports with a transversal perspective.

Policy Change

The policy changes is type1. Implementation of new projects. The project to be submitted for starting the Valencia hub for data drive innovation in sports, aims at increasing cross-sectorial cooperation among stakeholders. This is expected to boost the identification of innovation opportunities as well as the development and launching of new products and services. The hub will significantly change the regional situation since it will connect stakeholders in the ecosystem and provide them with mechanisms and resources for innovation. The project will increase the regional relevance of sports, as well as its contribution to socioeconomic development, in a transversal manner.

4. Action 2. Actions to modify existing calls to promote sports innovation with a cross-sectoral approach.

This action aims at modifying existing calls launched annually by IVACE (regional development agency) for funding innovation projects with EDRF under the OP.

The calls target at:

- 1) the promotion of R&D activities led by SMEs;
- 2) the support for the creation of innovative companies, and for innovative public enterprises
- 3) the transfer of knowledge and cooperation between companies and research centres.

The present conditions of these calls make rather difficult having sports related innovation projects (at most, at present there are 2 projects a year). They focus in regional industrial sectors, which is not the case of sports or tourism, and in products, rather than in services, innovation. This is not favourable for those project ideas with an impact in other sectors such as tourism. Calls should consider the relevance of cross sectoral projects including selection criteria accordingly (for example, when assessing the social and economic impact, the size of the sector and market or when considering alignment with the regional s3). Also, innovation in services should be included as topic for the call. With this respect, assessing the degree of innovation should consider not only technology or product developments.

In the end, that makes difficult unleashing the innovation potential that regional sports assets have. For instance, there are relevant international sports events, a growing number of tourists coming to the region for practising or watching sports. But innovation opportunities they offer are hardly exploited due the difficulties for getting support for developing them.

Lessons learnt

This action is inspired by **lesson learnt 4** from the regions of South Netherlands (SN) and Lapland where sports innovation projects with a transversal impact are supported by regional calls. In SN, sport is not specifically included in the regional S3, however, S&T got support for a big project about innovations in sports and ICT, high-tech, etc. In Lapland, sports tourism projects are being developed with regional support. The lesson was focussing in the potential of sports innovation to impact in other sectors as a way of getting more support for the sector.

Then, IBV learnt how conditions and selection criteria of existing calls could be more supportive of cross-over projects by considering transversal impact in those sectors. In particular from the following lessons.

Lesson learnt 5. *Sports events are a key element for leveraging the power of sports as an innovation and socio-economic driver. This was learnt during the Interreg and KCs events in Eindhoven. We attended to a conference in which innovations (sensors, apps,...) tested during the Eindhoven marathon were presented. In Lapland, during the Interreg and KCs we learnt the way facilities and events related to winter sports attract international sport teams for training and improving performance. This could be introduced in the scope of existing calls in Valencia to leverage the innovation potential of sports events.*

Lesson learnt 6. *Sports tourism is a big opportunity for Valencia, especially for nature sports, but it has to be carefully done to make it sustainable. Inno4sports partners learnt this during the IE and KCS in Lapland as well as from the online IE from Lodz.*

The stay and visits at Pyha Tunturi National park (Lapland) and the presentation about the Lodz Horse Trail clearly inspired this lesson. In Lapland we visited the Pyha Tunturi park where measures (walking paths conditioning and e-bikes usage for example), are taken to combine nature preservation and economic impact of winter sports and tourism. On the other hand, the Lodz Horse Trail is a good example of how combining sports, tourism and heritage in a regional perspective. The trail has been created using other existing trails to meet the needs of fans of other disciplines, such as cycling, walking or water sports. But its design also allows appreciating the natural, cultural, and historical heritage of the region.

Both, are good examples of how assessment criteria of projects could be modified to include sustainability as both, a criteria and a field of innovation, at the time than enhancing cultural and historical heritage.

Action steps and activities

Action summary.

This action consists in modifying existing calls to make them more supportive of sports cross overs projects. To this end, the text of the calls should introduce a mention to this kind of projects and the selection criteria be modified accordingly.

Action Steps	Responsibility	Resources	Timeline							
			Jan, 2021-Dec, 2022 (Quarters)							
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<u>A2.1. Prepare the text to be included in the next call.</u> IBV and IVACE have agreed in preparing a text for the 2021 call which as an introductory paragraph, will stress the relevance of projects with a cross-sectoral impact in sports, health, tourism or creative industries Also, the relevance of sports events as a driver of this kind of impact would be introduced.	IBV and IVACE	1 pm								
<u>A2.2. Prepare</u> the evaluation criteria to consider above changes.	IBV and IVACE	1 pm								
<u>A2.3 Include both in the calls.</u>	IVACE	1 pm								
<u>A2.4. Launch calls</u>	IVACE									
<u>A2.5. Promotion of the new call.</u> .- Communication through IBV, CVIDA and IVACE means (website, e-mailing, newsletter). .- Promotion in annual IVACE and IBV workshops presenting annual calls.	IBV-IVACE	1 pm								
<u>A2.5. Follow-up impact of the call</u>	IVACE and IBV	2 pm								

Goals of the action

The goal is modifying existing calls to increase the support for sports transversal projects. This is expected to increase the participation of SMEs and the creation of new businesses.

- Number of SMEs included in projects financed from the OP: 15
- Projects developed with a cross-sectoral relevance (sports and tourism, sports and health promotion, sports and creative industry), resulting from the project's learning process: 10 projects with a total budget of 1.5 M€

Policy Change

The policy changes is type2. change in the management of the policy instrument (improved governance). Improve organisation of thematic calls or project selection. The change includes stressing the relevance of projects that have an impact in more than one sector or relate to several strategic pillars of regional S3. Also, the calls will recognize innovation in services as important. This will make them more supportive of sport innovation projects, especially those with a transversal impact in other sectors like health promotion, tourism or creative industry.