

INTER VENTURES

Regional Policy Recommendation

ITALY

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Project:	INTERVENTURES
Partner organisation:	UNIONCAMERE LOMBARDIA - UCL
Other partner organisations involved (if relevant):	The Regional Government of the Lombardy Region

2. POLICY CONTEXT

A. Main features and envisaged improvement of the policy instrument	
Policy instrument addressed	Lombardy Regional Operational Programme (ERDF ROP) 2014-2020 Co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) priority Axis 3: Competitiveness of SME
Body responsible for addressed policy	Lombardy Regional Government
What influence does your organization have over the targeted Policy Instrument?	
Regional Unions in Italy are interlocutors of local governments, as set by LEG. DECREEE 25 /11/2016, n. 219, art. 6. In light of the above-mentioned decree, the Lombardy Region and the Lombardy Chamber of Commerce System signed the "Agreement for Economic Development and Competitiveness 2019-2023", which constitutes a model of institutional partnership, in the implementation of shared interventions for the competitive growth of Lombard companies and territories, favouring the convergence of projects and resources for the following development objectives: innovation, internationalization, access to business credit, administrative simplification. This agreement assure the link and the valuable relationship between the Policy Instrument owner and Unioncamere Lombardia.	
Evaluation of the current operation of the policy	
The Regional Operational Programme (ROP) Objective Competitiveness is the programming tool prepared by the Lombardy Region for the implementation of Community programming: through the ROP the Lombardy Region defines which	

interventions will be financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The ERDF ROP Programme in the Lombardy Region has a total budget of 970.4 million euros, and two priority axes dedicated to the business system for an amount of approximately 644 million euros.

Axis III, with a budget of 294.6 Mln (30.4% of the ROP), is aimed at the promotion of the competitiveness of enterprises, including reserves for Internal Areas (9.7 Mln).

As at 31/12/2017, the Lombardy region had programmed resources for 237.9 Mln, establishing 11 initiatives, 8 of which were activated through a call for proposals for 186.9 million (63.4% of the axle equipment).

At present, we cannot refer about explicit factors, of political or economic nature, that can clearly represent problem or issue in the implementation of this ROP. What we want to achieve is a slight improvement of the already in place actions, programmes and call to further support SME internationalization.

What kind of change do you want to achieve in the addressed Policy Instrument? How would influence/improve the targeted Policy Instrument?

One of the main goals of UCL is to promote the internationalisation of Lombardy's entrepreneurial contest by supporting the implementation of internationalisation projects by SMEs through integrated programmes.

The engagement of the local stakeholders, through the Regional Stakeholders Group (RSG) series of meetings organized, offered the opportunity for identifying and draw the local situation, as well as it produced the following suggestions with the objective to improve the selected Policy Instrument:

Policy Influence n°1 – Implementation of a new project

Even if Switzerland is not part of the European Union, there is a strong history of territorial cross-border cooperation in the area. To exploit this predisposition and develop the international capacities of the area, UCL aims at establishing the *Swiss-Italian Working Group* (SW-IT WG), to strengthen the cross-border cooperation of SMEs, local institutions, universities and stakeholders and creating an environment favourable to internationalisation, innovation and economic partnership

The SW-IT WG will facilitate proactive dialogue and represent a possible first step towards a closer alignment of priorities of regional Managing Authorities, as well as ease the coordination between MAs and local SMEs' needs.

Policy Influence N°2 – Change in the strategic focus of the PI – Priority

The change UCL wants to achieve in the addressed policy Instrument respond to the need to bring attention to the role of women in the entrepreneurial world, to their business and networking models. Although many support mechanisms exist, there is still a lack of appropriate financial programs to develop a coordinative framework

among women, policymakers and institutions. Therefore, the final aim of the pilot is providing, in a medium-long-term perspective, a concrete contribution to the regional strategy for new programming 2021-2027.

The UCL action is aimed at supporting women entrepreneurs by facilitating the connection with European/national/regional institutions, increasing the availability of financial resources and improving internationalisation capacities of female entrepreneurs. A transregional vision is needed to support actions that build, hone, and strengthen the entrepreneurial and commercial capabilities of women. The action is conceived to help them to exploit as much as possible the business opportunities of the territory and therefore strengthen internationalization capacities of the Lombardy productive system.

If you would like to change your original Policy Instrument, please explain the reasons behind the modification! Please justify why the initial policy instrument can no longer be influenced!

UCL will not change the original policy instrument and will continue to influence the chosen one: Lombard ERDF Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020 priority Axis 3 - Competitiveness of SMEs, in particular in its specific measure targeting internationalisation.

3. PLANNED ACTIONS

Action 1

Action title:	<i>Swiss-Italian Working Group (SW-IT WG)</i>
Nature of the action	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the content of the action? - How this action contributes to the improvement of the Policy Instrument? 	
<p>The economic exchange between the Lombardy Region and the Helvetic Confederation Switzerland has traditionally experienced strong internationalisation and cross-border relations, thus it is a matter of creating or innovating tools to support existing and future cooperation.</p> <p>The Swiss-Italian Working Group (SW-IT WG) aims to strengthen the cross-border cooperation of SMEs, local institutions, universities and stakeholders to create an environment favourable to innovation and international partnership.</p> <p>The ultimate goal will be stimulating SMEs' cross-border joint project development and identifying funding opportunities to support them in the medium-long term.</p> <p>On the one hand, these funding opportunities will be based on synergies with existing funds (structural, national, and European funds). On the other, the initiative will continuously involve private financial providers interested in investing into the</p>	

joint cross-border projects of the companies, it could be a crowdfunding platform, business angels, fintech. The typology of provider will depend on the topic of the project proposed and on the specific needs opportunities.

Furthermore, the initiative establishes a structured cooperation among key actors present on both sides of the border, allowing to overcome the current lack of an effective dialogue and representing a possible first step towards a closer alignment of regional objectives.

Interregional exchange of experience

The inspiration came from the good practice Baranya County Industrial Development Programme presented by the LP during the 1st Knowledge exchange workshops of the INTER VENTURES project on 15.04.2020. This is a bottom-up initiative that provides a coordinative framework for local economic actors to cooperate to dynamize the regional economy, with a focus on industry. Its overall purpose is to help dynamize the economy of Pécs and County Baranya by providing a coordinative framework for local economic actors and an integrated development programme that involves decision-makers outside the region, including government and potential investors.

The inspiring good practice is implemented in the Hungarian-Croatian cross-border cooperation; the Lombard-Switzerland border area is fundamentally different: SMEs are keen to internationalisation and export, with high socio-economic development, excellent entrepreneurial skills and no-language barriers (Canton Ticino is an Italian-speaking area).

Anyway, all aspects of the Hungarian good practice can be applied to our territory, having the effect to boost the positive trends already present and providing a coordinative framework to further improve cross-border internationalisation and joint innovation of companies.

In the same way as the inspiring GP, the Italian-Swiss working group aims to strengthen the cross-border cooperation of SMEs through a structured coordinative framework of local actors. It aims to create an environment favourable to innovation and to the creation of international partnerships, exchanging skills, establishing economic collaboration projects (joint ventures or strategic partnerships), developing innovation projects, attracting investments. The initiative will establish a collaboration among key actors present on both sides of the border, allowing to overcome the current lack of effective dialogue and representing a possible first step towards a closer alignment of regional objectives.

The objectives of the transferred good practice are similar, the same applies to the activities.

Action 2

Action title:	<i>“Women Make Economy - paving the way to 2027”</i>
Nature of the action	
<p>The Lombardy Region represents one of the most developed areas in the EU. However, according to the OECD-EU Commission reports, women are still under-represented among local entrepreneurs, even if the number of women entrepreneurs is constantly increasing. The support to women in the way towards entrepreneurship is also a key development priority of the regional development program and the policy instrument chosen.</p> <p>There is still a lack of appropriate funding programs to develop a coordinative framework among women, policymakers and institutions, and, for this reason, a specific action, targeting the selected policy instrument is necessary.</p> <p>This action is conceived to help women exploit the business opportunities of their territory, strengthening internationalization capacities of the Lombardy productive system. A second aim will be providing, in a medium-long-term perspective, a concrete contribution to the regional strategy for the new programming period 2021-2027: in the perspective of the new European programming period, the activities intend to be aligned to EU/national/regional current actions, as well as to influence policymakers for implementing new tailor-made programs and strategies.</p> <p>To enable women establishing a direct dialogue with institutions and managing authorities, the promotional event will include a section dedicated to meeting and discussion with policymakers, which will continue with regular policy recommendations. It will involve more than 100 female entrepreneurs, with coaching, mentoring and high-level training workshops. Among other topics, the workshops will provide shared support in building international networks and facilitate access to finance (public procurement, crowdfunding, blockchain, business accelerator programmes, etc). It will be also the basis for the setting up of an international network of women entrepreneurs, to consolidate the relations deriving from the event, and which will be then extended.</p>	
Interregional exchange of experience	
<p>Promoting women entrepreneurship within project “Partnership for all 2” is the selected practice to be transferred in Lombardy. The practice has been developed in Koprivnica Križevci County.</p> <p>The action was implemented in the framework of the strategy “Efficient Human Resources Operational Programme 2014 – 2020” funded by a framework call “Local Employment Development Initiatives”, aiming to strengthen and develop local cooperation with an objective of coordinating and increasing employment locally.</p>	

The selected practice is designed to support female business and to constitute a window to give them visibility, open possibilities for professional exchange and training, help to cross their networks, match needs and solutions. The core content of the practice, consisting in providing with strategic support, knowledge, training, networking and services will be replicated without major changes.

Nevertheless, to optimise the transferability process there is a need to adapt the practice to the specific local social, economic and cultural framework of the Lombardy region, also to improve existing activities, to the specific role of women in the entrepreneurial regional framework, on their models of business and networking

Some aspect will be further implemented, namely:

- Benchmarking on regional women entrepreneurship and draw the explanatory framework, assess their impact and economic potential for internationalization
- Benchmarking on regional actions, regulation, stakeholders
- Benchmarking on specific local women needs, challenges, business models and trends for internationalization
- Strengthening entrepreneurship networks
- Focussing on facilitate access to alternative finance

The adaptation of the selected practice is also aimed in providing, already from 2020, a concrete, qualitative, collaborative and guiding contribution for the European strategic guidelines in the new programming 2021-2027.