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RECREATE

REinforce Competitiveness of REgionAI Transport SMEs

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Rhodes Online Thematic Workshop & Study Visit Report

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Coventry – South Aegean – Vilnius – South-west Oltenia

Improve the capacity and capability of regional transport SMEs towards further development and growth, including support for research and development, rapid growth and implementation of products and services, and access to finance schemes and internationalization opportunities

<https://www.interregeurope.eu/recreate/>

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1. Introduction

On June 28-29, 2021 a Thematic Workshop and Study Visit on Good Practices and potential transfer to local and regional policy documents was organised by the Development Agency of South Aegean Region S.A. (READ S.A.). A total of 31 people participated to the online sessions, including representatives of the four project partners, local and regional stakeholders, as well as policy makers.

2. Thematic Workshop – Day 1

The first day of the event was Monday 28th June 2021.

2.1. Welcome / Presentation

The president of the Board of Directors of the Development Agency of the South Aegean Region (READ S.A.), Mr. Christos Bardos, welcomed the participants of the online Thematic Workshop and Study Visit, giving the floor to the Lead Partner, Coventry University Enterprises Ltd.

2.2. RECREATE Project

Ms. Giuliana Famiglietti – Pipola, Business Delivery Manager for Coventry University Enterprises Ltd, summarised the objective of the project, highlighting its innovativeness to the transport sector in total, and specifically to the relevant SMEs. She referred to the sector's status quo and the project's aim to improve the sector through the promotion of innovation and increase of productivity. Ms. Famiglietti – Pipola also referred to the Good Practices identified throughout the project implementation and the potential transfer and implementation into other EU regions. Additionally, she pointed out that RECREATE is going to provide Policy Recommendations on SMEs support and to develop regional Action Plans in each of the Region/Country involved.

Followingly, Ms. Famiglietti – Pipola described the three strands that the project will focus on, and in particular the:

- Enhancement of innovation capacity in transport SMEs,
- Improvement market access and productization, and
- Improvement of transport SME funding schemes.

In addition, she briefly presented the partners involved in the RECREATE project, meaning:

- Coventry University Enterprises Ltd (United Kingdom)
- Development Agency of South Aegean Region (READ S.A.) (Greece)
- Lithuanian Innovation Centre (Lithuania)
- Regional Development Agency South West Oltenia (Romania)

Following that, Mrs. Famiglietti-Pipola analysed the workplan of the project, by referring to each Phase, and its results and outputs. Phase 1 has a duration of 42 months (June 2018 to November 2021) and focuses on the interregional learning and exchange of experience between Partners. As a result, each

Region/Country develops an Action Plan that is implemented and monitored during Phase 2 which has a duration of 18 months (December 2021 to May 2023). Regarding the project's outputs and results, Ms. Famiglietti – Pipola presented the project's deliverables as follows:

- Transport SME Competitiveness report that is about the status quo.
- Good Practice Handbook, which will require to collect and collate good practices and identification of the transferable elements.
- Four Regional Policy Recommendations and a Joint Policy Recommendation Report.
- Four Regional Action Plans for policy improvements.

Five Study Visits & Thematic Workshops have been organised together with stakeholders from all Regions (this is the last event). The local stakeholders' role has been to provide feedback and suggestions on activities of the project and reports, and they will implement the Action Plans in their own Region/Country.

2.3. The importance of the HIT branch in Rhodes for the South Aegean Region

Mr. Evangelos Bekiaris, Director of Hellenic Institute of Transport, Vice-President of Centre for Research and Technology Hellas, gave a presentation concerning the importance of the Hellenic Institute of Transport (HIT) branch in Rhodes for the South Aegean Region.

To begin with Mr. Bekiaris gave a concise presentation of the Centre of Research and Technology-Hellas (CERTH) and its actions. Moving on, he referred to HIT, which is the main transport research organisation in Greece. HIT was created in 2000, however it started operating during 2001. He also presented HIT's objectives and vision, along with its operational chart. Furthermore, valuable reference was made to the research activities along the different Greek Prefectures.

Mr. Bekiaris emphasised that their role and contribution in the Region of South Aegean is to upgrade region's role and competitiveness and increase interregional cooperation. In this context, he analysed the ways HIT branch's operation in Rhodes could support interregional policy. In particular, he mentioned the following:

- Support of innovation and research – R&D SMEs development, which will lead to the creation of new job positions
- Exploitation of products/goods/services/technologies/state of the art methodologies/policies
- Support of technology testing in the region, which will act as mobility Innovation Centre and Living Lab
- Support the development of regional transport ecosystem with the inclusion of all actors and stakeholders
- Establishment and promotion of new form of interregional cooperation, such as Smart Islands Agglomerations.

In addition, he presented the New and flexible modes of ElectroMobility in Southern Aegean (NEMO), along with its aim, objectives, and innovations. However, the use of e-scooters is facing several challenges, such as visual disturbance, vandalism, safety issues, and recycling issues. Nevertheless, NEMO has found

solutions to tackle these issues, such as organised parking lots, smart locks, geofencing, smart app and training, and recycling.

Moreover, he presented the core aspects of the ELEKTRON project:

- ELEKTRON aims at establishing a Lab of Excellence, which, with the use of the tools to be developed, will implement smart solutions to alleviate the environmental impact, mainly derived from transport, on island regions.
- It will study, elaborate, develop, and propose smart solutions for energy savings both through the application of modern technologies in transport and through the production of renewable energy, with a focus on solar energy.
- The project seeks to implement some of the methods for creating "Smart Cities" in island regions, to develop and create "Smart Islands".
- It aims at the expansion of renewable energy sources use with a view to meet the future power supply needs in the transportation sector.
- The implementation of new "smart" solutions, such as electromobility, will significantly contribute to the islands' growth by creating new permanent jobs in existing and new local economy sectors.

2.4. Sustainable transportation to enable South Aegean Islands' decarbonization

The following presentation was delivered by Mr. Kostas Komninos, Director of DAFNI – Network of Sustainable Greek Islands. To begin with, Mr. Komninos presented DAFNI, by mentioning that DAFNI promotes the sustainable development in Greek islands through the delivery of integrated actions in the fields of energy, water, waste, and transport / mobility enabling the transition to a circular and sector-coupled local economy boosted by touristic activities. DAFNI works closely with numerous European projects. More specifically, DAFNI provides technical support to its island members through an integrated way that includes six main sectors of sustainable development:

- Clean Energy
- Energy Efficiency
- E-mobility
- Smart Water Management
- Smart Waste Management
- Sustainable tourism.

Furthermore, Mr. Komninos presented several DAFNI's support activities, such as the workshop in Kythnos, along with ongoing examples of participatory planning process. Moreover, the power system's reliability was presented. In order for this to work, it's necessary to balance between the demand and the generation in small island systems, maintaining the stability and the frequency of the system to avoid failures and black outs. He also noted that one of the key issues is the islands' seasonality, and more specifically the higher demand during each year, especially during summer. Numerous other challenges have also been presented, for example the sensitive ecosystems, the limited resources, and the lack of economies of scale.

Regarding the transition towards Green mobility, a reference to the European Green Deal was made, including its Action Plan and policies. Concerning the mobility decarbonisation, it was mentioned that “alternative fuels” (fuels/energy sources which serve as substitute for fossil fuels in energy supply in transport sector), have the potential to contribute to it, in electricity, hydrogen, biofuels, synthetic and paraffinic fuels, etc. Another aspect of this transition was electromobility and electric vehicles, where they offer potential for grid/ancillary services.

Additionally, Mr. Komninos gave a brief explanation about how electric vehicles can behave either as loads or as distributed energy sources. Depending on how the energy can flow the terms “unidirectional charging” (flow in one direction) and “bidirectional charging” (flow in both directions) are used.

Towards this direction, DAFNI contributes to numerous projects, as Kythnos Smart Island and smart transport and mobility, aiming to decarbonize the island’s transport sector via the promotion of electric mobility on land and sea transportation. The next project focuses on the Island of Astypalea as a “smart & sustainable island”. Astypalea is a place that remains genuine and traditional with inherited assets, but it also faces the structural challenges implied by insularity. Mr. Komninos pointed out that the transition to a clean, green, and smart island will offer higher quality of life to its inhabitants and visitors. With the support of DAFNI, the Municipality of Astypalea has been working intensively and installed six publicly accessible EV chargers, and a charging network extension is already envisaged.

2.5. Astypalea: the energy transition into a "smart and sustainable" island

Mr. Nicholas Martinos, Group PR Manger of KOSMOCAR S.A. focused on the project “Astypalea: Smart and Sustainable Island”. He stated that such project is for the first time implemented around the world. Over the next six years, in the Island of Astypalea several actions will take place. In specific, the Hellenic Republic and the Volkswagen Group will establish a ground-breaking mobility system on the Mediterranean island of Astypalea. To that end the current transport system on the island will transition to electric vehicles, by replacing all the internal combustion cars of the island with electric ones.

Additionally, Mr. Martinos stated that both residents and visitors will commence the transition to a new mobility philosophy: e-cars and e-bikes will become a part of their everyday life. Alongside, the reconstruction of the energy production of the island will begin, as currently the island must produce its own energy locally, using diesel generators and causing major pollution.

Offering an idea about the fleet, car models like e-Up!, the ID3 Pure, and the SEAT MO e-scooter will be used. Then, Mr. Martinos referred to the customer journey, targeted to both private and business customers, and how this transition to the e-mobility will be implemented, as among many others, it will also offer new job positions for the residents. He, also, made a quick note about the ordering process, which is very fast and simple. Specifically, KOSMOCAR will dedicate resources to provide a holistic customer experience. In conclusion, in terms of the after-sales support, KOSMOCAR will establish a workshop in order to service all e-vehicles.

2.6. Environmentally friendly transport of products by sailboat in the Aegean

Following, Mr. Loucas Gourtsoyannis, President and Captain of the Social Cooperative Enterprise “Aegean Sails” took the floor. He mentioned that the project started four years ago, and the idea was to prove that the wind can be used as a mean of propulsion in the sea.

The main purpose was to prove that technologically more advanced sail boats used for transportation, are able to advance almost at the same pace as the big commercial boats. Mr. Gourtsoyannis, stated that as the project is about an ecological transport, ecological traditional products are using the sign “Transported by wind”. After the four-year implementation, 80 different producers sent their products and 20 stores bought them. Meaning, that this kind of transportation is accepted as a good mean to bring ecology to the sea transportation. However, even though the volumes are small, still being in experimental scale, and the size of boats that are used are also on experimental scale, there is the hope to establish the service including thematic tourism that supports the transport, and then continue increasing the service to the point that they can adopt the new sailboat vessels are already in service in the Atlantic and many more to be built.

In order to continue the project what is needed is to be supported from a legal point of view, having the recognition of this kind of service legally, and also from the public investment regarding the number and the size of the boats.

After the end of this presentation, there was Q&A section. However, no questions were asked and thus the First Day of the event came to an end.

3. Study Visit – Day 2

The second day of the event was Tuesday 29th June 2021.

3.1. The Policy Recommendation Report of the RECREATE project

The second day began with a presentation from Mr. Povilas Bacevičius, Consultant in the Lithuanian Innovation Centre. Mr. Bacevičius gave an overview of the Policy Recommendation Report that was in the process of being developed within the RECREATE project.

He explained that a policy recommendation is written advice prepared for a group or for a person who has the authority to decide or to influence (i.e., policy makers, business associations, etc.). Moreover, policy recommendations must inform people on a particular field to take the best possible decisions, but they also must be based on research and good practices. In the case of RECREATE project, the goal is to boost the competitiveness of the transport SME's.

Furthermore, he presented the methodology followed to prepare the report, which can also be found on the RECREATE website and includes five main sections:

- Executive summary,
- Introduction,
- Results and approach,
- Implications, and
- Recommendations.

Then, he proceeded showing the first draft of the policy recommendations, as formulated by each project partner.

3.2. Bike-sharing in Greece: the cases of Rhodes and Igoumenitsa

The next speaker was Mr. Siakantaris Harris, the CEO of Cyclopolis, who offered an overview of the Cyclopolis Bike Sharing Systems. Mr. Siakantaris commenced explaining why they are dealing with the bike sharing projects:

- The environmental character of the bike was stated, benefiting public health.
- They proved to be a good means of transportation during the pandemic.

He continued referring to the fact that the company has installed 20 systems in municipalities, regions, and some educational programs, acquiring the 50% of sharing-bike market. More specifically, Cyclopolis designs and produces their systems, implements, installs, maintains, and operates them.

Then, he proceeded with introducing some good practice examples: the first focus was on Rhodes with seven stations, and 60 bikes. He also mentioned that last year the demand boomed.

In terms of the INTERREG project of Igoumenitsa, the demand has been a surprise and it is already planned to be expanded, including three stations and ten bikes. Since February 2020, the demand for ten bikes was extremely high in comparison to the number of its residents.

Following that, Mr. Siakantaris presented the Cyclopolis example as a SME: in 2011 there was the 1st round of investment, in 2014 the 2nd round of investment took place and since 2020 the 3rd round took

place with the participation in the “VARCities” project. During the 2nd round, a lighter station has been developed with an app for controlling the lock, located inside the bike. Through their participation in the “VARCities” project, they are developing a sensor kit, which can offer series of data, focusing on air quality and combining measurements with other sources, whilst the focus of the program is the health and the wellbeing. Towards the end, he referred to the vision of the Cyclopolis Rhodes, which includes the fleet renewal, expansion, electrification and automatic charging, deploy sensor kits, air quality measurements, and also integration with other public transport means.

3.3. The development of the waterway network in the South Aegean Region

Mr. Georgios Nikolouzos, Professional Sea Plane Pilot, and Mrs. Fay Drakopoulou, of the Administrative Support Department, Greek Water Airports took the floor.

Mr. Nikolouzos showed a sea plane network with destinations and flight times. These flights can be operated either from the sea plane company or in cooperation with major airlines. Most of the flights will be scheduled flights, but they also offer charter flights, flights for the firefight, etc.

Additionally, a flight network from Rhodes Island was presented, and it was noted that the duration of these flights is in average 45 minutes with the sea plane being a friendly mean for the environment, without noise or water pollution. Moreover, it is easy and accessible for people, whereas the time for preparation is not necessary in this case. At the same time of course, the security remains at the same levels, whereas the time for the people or the goods to arrive to their destination (small islands) is significantly decreased. Mr. Nikolouzos emphasised the fact that sea planes arrived in the Aegean Sea to help and add more value, and not to replace boats or speed boats. The whole project is characterised as very ambitious, and it is believed that until next summer a good network of sea planes will be established in the Aegean Sea.

Mrs. Drakopoulou presented the company of “Greek Water Airports” which specialises in waterdromes study, design, construction, licensing and management services, acquiring a market leading position in Greece. The founder of the company is Mr. Govas Anastasios, and there is collaboration with other shareholders. The main activity of the company is consultation service from the water drome licensing process and water drome operation and management. In both cases, the client target group for “Greek Water Airports” is the local and municipal port authorities, municipalities and in some cases private sector businesses. Among the services provided, there are passenger support services, VIP services, security, support services, flight organisation services, etc. The company has completed the licensing of the first five waterdromes in Greece, whilst a perspective of the Corfu waterdrome, the Paxoi waterdrome and the one in Patra was presented. “Greek Water Airports” company has also undertaken the licensing of 64 waterdromes. Grecian Air Seaplanes will be the operator in Greece.

3.4. An awarded local shipping company connecting the South Aegean islands

Mrs. Irini Spanou, the Press Officer of Dodekanisos Seaways, presented the history of the company, which was established in 1999 by Mr. George-Sarantis Spanos. His vision was to offer modern, high-quality, fast, and efficient transport services to the people and visitors of Dodecanese islands.

New catamaran vessels were added to the fleet the following years. More specifically the choice of high-speed Catamaran type ships was made after an extensive study into the overall living environment and the resulting needs of the people, by adapting the Norwegian model to remote Greek islands. Moreover,

they greatly assist the fishing and fresh product industries of the small islands, as they are equipped with refrigerator and freezer compartments.

Mrs. Spanou described the existing fleet, followed by the current routes between the islands. Numerous small islands are connected and that is the reason why the company justifiably calls the Dodekanisos Seaways transportation system as the “*maritime metro system of the Dodecanese*”, transporting daily passengers to 18 different destinations. The company’s goal is to connect the inhabitants of the islands, offer high quality travel experience to the visitors and actively contribute to the development of local community and economy. Alongside, the company works closely with 17 main port agencies and more than 400 travel agencies. The next step is planned to be the creation of an e-ticket/boarding pass application, aiming to improve the service and make transactions more convenient for passengers.

3.5. The establishment of an International Centre for Marine Technology & Innovation in Syros Island

Mr. Kostas Nikolouzos, Managing Director of the International Centre for Maritime Technologies & Innovation & ONEX lot presented the company. The goal of the company is to highlight Aegean Archipelago as the new Silicon Valley, pointing at digital transformation and being in the geopolitical transformation hub and contributing to the rebirth of the Greek ship industry.

Furthermore, future actions were presented:

- The transformation of Syros to a digital island
- The highlight of the South Aegean region as a region friendly to new technologies
- The provision of medical services in other sectors as shipping, in collaboration with the Syros hospital, which already operates telemedicine
- The provision of high-quality broad band services through a privately-owned network
- Opportunities for the digital nomads by creating the appropriate infrastructure in the hospitality sector.

The centre of the company is a maritime innovation hub, boosting forward to the future of its customers. The pillars, that will be the main priority regarding the actions, are among others cybersecurity, crew welfare and business intelligence.

3.6. Integrated Intelligent Transport Systems: the case study of the Municipality of Rhodes

Mrs. Voula Moraitou, Architect in the Ministry of Culture, proceeded with her presentation regarding the Integrated Intelligent Transport Systems and the case study of the Municipality of Rhodes. More specifically, sustainable urban mobility contains environmental, social, and financial stability.

Transport systems affect urban planning, the economic, and the cultural life of citizens. In the meantime, among the urban transport problems is the traffic congestion, the lack of parking spaces, accidents, etc.

As opposed to the current situation, sustainable transport design focuses on people, signifies road as space, and acquires a long-term vision for the whole city. Toward this direction Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) help to optimize the use of existing infrastructure through a variety of technical means.

Moreover, Mrs. Voula Moraitou referred to the geography and urban structure of Rhodes, referring to the development of the DIAVLOS and MOTIVATE Intelligent Transport Systems in the area. They will include among others, an online platform, a mobile application, vehicle tablets, etc. The Integrated Urban Sustainable Mobility Centre will provide traffic information, a trip planner with useful information, places of interest. Lastly, participants were informed that a Rhodes Public Transport App has been designed.