



REINFORCE Project – Concept note – DRAFT INTERREG Europe

PD/ HD, 24/05/2017

Outlines of the REINFORCE project (Renewable energies: a new force for SMEs in the European Coalfield Regions”

Preparation of the 3rd call for proposals of the INTERREG Europe programme (March-June 2017)

Submission deadline : 30 June 2017

Priority axis 2 (INTERREG Europe programme) : Competitiveness of SMEs

Overall objective of the project: Improving regional policies in former and current European mining and heavy industry regions to support the creation and development of SMEs in the sector of renewable energy.

Context

Most of the mining and traditional heavy industrial regions have declined in Europe. Those regions, that represent an important part of the European population, face challenges of economic, social and environmental reconversion.

At the economic level, those regions share a low rate of creation of SMEs in comparison to national average and a low entrepreneurial spirit inherited from a strong mono-industrial economic model. Environmentally speaking, those regions used to base their development with mining activities and traditional heavy industry (steel industry and coal chemistry) that had a strong impact on the environment.

This economic and environmental context show sound reasons to develop particularly SMEs in the sector of renewable energy on these territories. For most of those regions, the heavy industry is now obsolete. For regions where there is still a mining activity (especially coal), there is an imperative need to prepare the phasing-out.

Furthermore, the promotion of the renewable energy presents a significant opportunity for those regions of carbon-economy. It can help them become a new driving force of the energy transition where SMEs have a key role to play as highlighted in the European Directive 2009/28/EC. Consequently, the enhancement of SMEs in the sector of the renewable energy in European mining regions should be considered as strategic.

- Some regions still producing coal (in Greece, Spain, Romania and more particularly in Poland where the coal industry is still the principal source of energy) and pursuing the energetic mix.
- Other regions already phased out from coal for more than 20 years (France, Belgium,)
- Some regions have already a strong experience in the RE sector (Germany); other not
- Some markets more developed (in France), less in others (Greece).

Main problems and needs identified:

- Lack of entrepreneurship in the renewable energy sector.
- Need of long-term and costly investment but difficulty to access the capital.
- Highly competitive sector at the international level.
- To change the mindset (at the citizens' level): to convince consumers to use energy from renewable sources.

Objective



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The overall objective of the REINFORCE project is to improve regional policies and programmes in former and current European mining and heavy industry regions **to support the creation and development of SMEs in the sector of renewable energy**. The project takes into account the value chain in the renewable energy sector and SMEs that on produce/install/maintain goods and services to produce energy from renewable sources and for energy efficiency (from mere application of existing technologies to development of technologies).

The project will focus on 4 operational themes:

- 1) The enhancement of entrepreneurship
- 2) the development of innovative economic models in the sector of renewable energy
 - Measure for the creation of SMEs in the renewable energy sector
- 3) Specialisation and differentiation
 - Measures to access high technology
 - How to gain a competitive advantage
- 4) To strengthen the access to international markets

Policy instruments to be improved

- ⇒ The main goal of the project is to improve existing policy instruments in each region represented in the project by exchanging good practices.
- ⇒ It is necessary that each partner select a policy instrument to be improved. **A policy instrument** is a means for public intervention. It refers to any policy, strategy, or law developed by public authorities and applied on the ground in order to improve a specific territorial situation.
- ⇒ The majority of policy instruments should be Structural Funds programmes, like **Regional operational programs implementing ERDF and ESF funds**.

Partnership and policy instruments

	Name	Country	Policy instrument	Managing authority In the partnership
1 (LP)	ACOM France, association of local authorities	France	Operational program of Nord Pas-de-Calais, axis 1, OT3	No
2	cluster TWEED on renewable energy	Belgium	Regional Operational Program of the Walloon Region 2.A.1 Priority axis 1: economy 2020	No
3	University of Western Macedonia	Greece	Regional Operational Program of Western Macedonia Axis 3: Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs IP 3a: supporting regional eco-SMEs in the field of renewable energy for developing actions	No
4	Regional	Slovenia	Zasavje Regional	Yes



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	Development Agency of Zasavje		Development Programme 2014-2020 (RDP)	
5	Ministry of Economy	Romania	The Mining Strategy of Romania, 2017-2035	Yes
6	City of LAVIANA	Spain	ROP of Asturias Region (TBC)	No
7 (advisory Partner)	Science Park of Gelsenkirchen	Germany	as <u>advisory partner</u>	Tbc?

Activities

The project will be implemented in **2 phases (5 years in total)** starting in January 2018:

- Phase 1: interregional learning process (3 years)
- Phase 2: monitoring action plan implementation (2 years)

January 2018 – December 2020: the methodology of the project in phase 1 will be the following:

- 1.1 Territorial diagnosis, consolidation of the stakeholders groups
- 1.2 Exchange of experience and identification of good practices (GP) on the operational themes (Partners and Stakeholders groups)
- 1.3 Transfer of good practices and draft of regional action plans (Partners and Stakeholders groups)

What is an Action Plan?

Produced by each region, the action plan is a document providing details on how the lessons learnt from the cooperation will be implemented in order to improve the policy instrument that is addressed within their region. It specifies the nature of the actions to be implemented, their timeframe, the players involved, the costs (if any) and funding sources (if any).

- 1.4 Draft of policy recommendations

2. Phase 2: monitoring of action plan (January 2019 – December 2020)

Co-financing rate of ERDF: 85%