

Interreg EUROPEAN UNION

Balkan-Mediterranean BALKANMED E-BP

NEWSLETTER No. 1

PROJECT BALKANMED E-BUSINESS PAGES



ABOUT THE PROJECT

BalkanMed e-Business Pages Project is approved in the framework of the Transnational Cooperation Programme, INTERREG VB, as part of the Balkan-Mediterranean Programme 2014-2020.

This project falls under the priority axis:

Entrepreneurship and Innovation, financed by the EU funds (ERDF and IPA II) and national funds.

The project will be implemented in the two-year period, starting from September 2017 till August 2019. The project's main goal is to enhance the competitiveness of the exporting SMEs in the BalkanMed region, through development of conditions for expanding the transnational collaboration. The present project envisages creation of BalkanMed E-Business Pages web platform, providing information about export-oriented SMEs from the area thus promoting the companies and

making their operations visible to their foreign counterparts, potential investors and the public. Also, the Project encourages business cooperation initiatives, partnerships and joint projects, which bring enhancement of the companies' performance. The project also provides seminars for representatives of the companies to develop their capacities. The project will create a set of tools in supporting SME's competitiveness, such as analyses of the export industries in the BalkanMed area, the existing associations of companies and clusters and the possibilities for business cooperation; handbooks with good practices and e-guides on technology transfer and cluster development. As the SMEs represent the most important driver of growth and job creation in the eligible areas, it is deemed that their improved competitiveness will translate into direct

benefits and long-term advantages for the local communities. It is forecasted that the project will contribute for increasing of employment and business opportunities, regional development and enhancing the quality of life. The project's approach that enables collaborations of business entities from five participating countries with different economic, regulatory and social conditions shall facilitate knowledge and technology transfer, exchange of good practices, creation of business networks and other processes contributing to building the capacity of local SMEs, enhancing their effectiveness and improving the quality of offered products and services. All these activities will result in mitigation of the structural weaknesses of the local markets and in correction of the territorial imbalances. The total budget of the project is €717 588,50.

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For further information:

<http://www.interreg-balkanmed.eu/approved-project/27/>

<https://www.facebook.com/BalkanMedEBusinessPages/>

This Project co-funded by the European Union and National Funds of the participating countries

PRESS CONFERENCE TO LAUNCH THE PROJECT

The BalkanMed e-Business Pages kick-off press conference was held on 28th Sep 2017 in the Business Hall of the Cosmopolitan Hotel in Ruse, Bul-



garia. The representatives of the Lead Partner, the Human Resources Development Agency, presented the project, its goals and expected results to the participating journalists and guests. All project beneficiaries had the opportunity to further explain the benefits and significance of the BalkanMed e-Business Pages implementation for their countries and to respond to particular ques-

tions with regard to the business and international trade development in their region. One national (Bulgarian) TV station and five local (Ruse) media covered the event and published short information about the project. As positive media feedback was received, it is believed that the project implementation will trigger the interest of the target group representatives and the public and will encourage the stakeholders' support for the efficient project implementation and the delivery of the planned outcomes.

KICK-OFF MEETING

10 representatives from 5 participating countries held the kick-off meeting in Hotel Cosmopolitan in Ruse-BULGARIA

The kick-off meeting for the BalkanMed e-Business Pages project was held in Ruse, Bulgaria on 27-28th Sep 2017. Hosted by the Lead Partner, the Human Resources Development Agency. The meeting brought together representatives of the 5 partner countries: Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania. The project

beneficiaries had the opportunity to present their organizations and to share their experience with regard to the business development and competitiveness in their region. The partners also discussed the first steps in the project implementation and the expected outputs within the project duration, including the development of an effective and well-designed web platform which will foster the exchange of business information among the BalkanMed SMEs and will facilitate the cooperation and technology transfer processes in the eligible areas thus contributing to the integration of the local markets. The other important topics addressed during the meeting were the project work plan, timeline and partner roles. The consortium decision-making structure was also established and agreement was reached with regard to the project communication plan which will play a major role in promoting the business support tools elaborated



SUMMARY OF EXPECTED PROJECT'S RESULTS

The main products of this Project, jointly developed and implemented by the project's partners will be:

1. The creation of the Balkan Med E-Business pages platform, which foresees the displaying of 1200 companies' profiles from five participating countries. The platform will enable the visibility and expose these companies to their counterparts in the region, as a possibility to encourage the business cooperation, increase export between countries, investment, etc. Part of the platform will be various existing associations, business

organisations and cluster organisations in the BalkanMed region.

2. Additional informative and practical advice tools in support of SMEs' competitiveness will be a number of analyses and guides such as:

- a) Analysis of the export industries for SMEs, the existing associations and clusters and the possibilities for cooperation;
- b) Handbook with good practices from existing clusters and implemented technology transfer examples;
- c) Cluster development e-guide;
- d) Technology transfer e-guide.

3. Capacity building activities are foreseen within the project life cycle. Five seminars with specific topics will be organised in five participating countries.

Five representatives from the business companies from each partner country will join seminars. Activities promoting the cooperation between participating companies as business to business, and additional information through lectures, or speakers will be in the benefit of participating companies.

OTHER ACTIVITIES IN PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES—INFO DAYS

The Managing Authority of European Territorial Cooperation Programmes and the Joint Secretariat of the BalkanMed transnational Cooperation Programme with the headquarter in Thessaloniki, Greece, organized a series of **Info Days on Project Implementation** for the beneficiaries of the Projects funded under the 1st Call for Project Proposals in all beneficiaries countries.

The goal of the Info Days was to present the Programme's requirements on project implementation, including the First Level Control system and national co-financing, and provide assistance to all beneficiaries of 37 winning projects, under the three priority axis under this call.

BULGARIA

The info day event with representatives of the winning organization from Bulgaria was organized in cooperation with The Bulgarian Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, and with the National Authority of BalkanMed transnational Interreg Cooperation Programme, The event was held on Wednesday, 4th October 2017 in Hotel COOP, Sofia, Bulgaria.

GREECE

The info day event was held - with the kind support of the Museum of Byzantine Culture - on Wednesday 20th September 2017, in Thessaloniki, Greece.

CUPRUS

An Info Day on Project Implementation for the Cypriot beneficiaries was organized in cooperation with the Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development, The event was held on Thursday 19th October 2017 in Hotel "Kleopatra" in Nicosia.

FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

The Info Day on Project Implementation for the beneficiaries of the Projects was organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Local Self-Government. The event was held on Thursday 5th October 2017 in Hotel TCC Grand Plaza, Skopje. Mrs.Vesna Nedelkovska from GAUSS Institute participated in this event.

ALBANIA

The Info day was held on 10th of October in the EU Information Centre in Tirana with participation of the representatives from organisations of 32 Albanian winning projects. This event was organised in cooperation with The Albanian Ministry of European Integration.



PARTNERS' ORGANISATIONS IN THE PROJECT



The Human Resources Development Agency (HRDA-Bulgaria) is a non-profit organization working towards development and recognition of civil society, science and technologies in North Central Region of Bulgaria. The agency has extensive experience in the development of regional plans and strategies and also elaborated the Education and Sociodemography part of the "Common Strategy for Sustainable Territorial Development of the Cross-border Area Romania-Bulgaria". HRDA's background includes development and implementation of various project in the field of education and training, innovations, tourism, preservation of the natural and cultural heritage, etc., most of which carried out in multicultural environment. A major asset to the BalkanMed e-BP project will be the agency's experience as a Lead partner in the "E-business Pages - Creation of a Cross-Border E-Business Portal" project under the CBC Programme Romania-Bulgaria 2007-2013. The latter project involved development of a database with information on SMEs from the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region and creation of a website in 4 languages, presently having approximately 1000 registered profiles of companies, NGOs and public bodies.

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Hellenic Management Association (HMA-Greece) is a not-for-profit organisation established in 1962, with a mission to contribute to the promotion, dissemination and promulgation of modern management principles, methods and practices.

HMA's headquarters are in Athens but has also Departments in Macedonia (based in Thessaloniki), in the Peloponnese and Western Greece (based in Patras) and in Crete (based in Irakleio). HMA has members, both corporate - enterprises and organisations of the private and public sector - and individuals - medium

and top-level executives, entrepreneurs, professors and students. HMA's Strategy and actions are developed around five main pillars: **Education:** Postgraduate-level Programs, Certified Training Programs, Executive Programs, Open Training, 'In-Company' Training and Vocational Training.

Knowledge and Information: Institutes, Sectors, events, annual events

Networking: between enterprises, public organizations, social partners and other stakeholders

Business tools: Certification (Greek Certification of Business Excellence «Aien Aristevein», EFQM Levels of Excellence, Investors in People) and Research.

Communication: «Manager» magazine, «Paths to Development» TV programme, «The Edge» annual edi-

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LIMASSOL CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE AND
INDUSTRY
since 1962

The Limassol Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI- Cyprus) represents more than 750 companies operating in all regional economic sectors. It defends the interests of the Limassol business community and promotes economic development and sustainable growth. The Chamber is actively involved in supporting innovation and entrepreneurship and was a driving force for the development of strategic projects - the Cyprus University of Technology and the Cyprus Science Technology Park. LCCI has developed

an excellent communication mechanism with the business community and this is a crucial aspect for the successful project implementation. The Chamber will benefit from the project as it will be able to offer more useful tools to its members.

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Gauss Institute (Gauss) is a Foundation for New Technologies, Innovations and Knowledge Transfer in Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. It is a R&D civil society organisation which realises projects for implementation of new technologies in different areas of socioeconomic life. Gauss's activities include promotion of new technologies and their usage, providing services of technology and knowledge transfer, technological information and access to innovations. Gauss is registered at the Agency for Support of Entrepreneurship of the Republic of Macedonia as a licensed consultant to companies. Gauss has also a broad project experience in cross-border and international projects. The present project will enable them to offer improved services to the companies and to gain valuable knowledge with regard to the technology transfer in the eligible areas.

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Centre for Competitiveness Promotion, (CCP-Albania), is a non profit organisation, Its main focus is providing business support, entrepreneurial skills and learning and vocational education and training. It has broad experience in working with business actors and governmental institutions and in offering business support activities, in-company consultancy, trainings to managers, training on entrepreneurship, market researches, match-making activities (B2B), studies and reports. Through the project CCP aims to promote the potential of Albanian export products and to offer the companies a matching tool for partnerships across the border.

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