

## SHORT TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSION (STSM) – SCIENTIFIC REPORT

The STSM applicant submits this report for approval to the STSM coordinator

Action number: TN1302-The voice of research administrators - building a network of administrative excellence (BESTPRAC)

STSM title: Capacity building for SMEs proposal and project management

STSM start and end date: 26/03/2018 to 30/03/2018

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### PURPOSE OF THE STSM

The main aim of the STSM “Capacity building for SMEs proposal and project management” between Joint Secretariat of the ADRION Programme and Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia (CCIS) was:

- knowledge sharing necessary for increased efficiency in application and implementation of European funded projects,
- fostering collaboration between home and host institution,
- sharing and developing best practice and
- gaining access to specific data, tools and / or methods related to SMEs proposal and project management.

ADRION region includes numerous leaders in R&D and some highly skilled industrial sectors, but full exploration of their potential is weakened by limited capacity of SMEs, inadequate cooperation among companies, research centers and public agencies and by an overall lack of focus on specific issues that can strengthen the area competitiveness.

Having in mind importance of EU integration for overall Serbian economy and especially importance of increased participation of Serbian SMEs in available EU funding, purpose of this STSM wasn't only contribution to my professional development but also provision of benefit to my home institution by exchanging best practice regarding specific financial, legal and administrative issues related to participation of SMEs in interreg programmes, knowledge transfer in order to improve project management of SMEs and establishing a network for the administrative, finance and legal services.

### DESCRIPTION OF WORK CARRIED OUT DURING THE STSMS

Meeting with Mr. Lodovico Gherardi, Coordinator of the ADRION Managing Authority Unit, provided me overview on ADRION programme. Mr. Gherardi emphasized importance of EUSAIR – EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region and recommended full inclusion of CCIS in Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce, having in mind that CCIS currently is associated member.

Mr. Gherardi presented activities of Emilia Romagna region, as Managing Authority of the ADRION, regarding general implementation of the programme on behalf of the Partner States. It performs its tasks for

the benefit of the whole programme and, in line with its coordination role, it further ensures that all programme bodies work together. The Managing Authority organises the call for proposals and coordinates the assessment of the received applications and the monitoring of the funded ones. It is responsible for the sound financial management of the programme.

Emilia Romagna Region as the Managing Authority also carries out the functions of Certifying Authority and Audit Authority. Ms. Barbara Parma and Ms. Elena Cavani presented me activities of Certifying Authority, while Mr. Michele Migliori, Coordination ADRION audit activities, and his team provided me with overview on activities of Audit Authority.

Ms. Barbara Di Piazza, Head of Joint Secretariat, provided me in depth knowledge on activities of the Joint Secretariat. ADRION JS provides information to applicants about funding opportunities, deals with project applications and assists beneficiaries in implementing their projects. It ensures the project selection is equitable and transparent, collects and elaborates data for programme monitoring and coordinates and promotes programme events at a transnational level. It also assists the Managing Authority and the Monitoring Committee in carrying out their tasks.

During STSM, Second Call for proposals of ADRION programme was launched and it was great opportunity to see whole complexity of ADRION JS tasks: completion of operational tasks regarding launching call in very short deadlines and at the same time, coordination of activities with National Contact Points in 8 partner countries.

Meetings with Project Officers Ms. Lucia Calliari and Ms. Adela Franja, Finance Officers Ms. Evangelia Karpodini and Mr. Marco Zecchinato and IPA Officer Ms. Jelena Kolić provided me very detailed information on the Adriatic Ionian Programme. Focus was on participation of SMEs:

- pre-award activities (promotion of the call among SMEs, support to SMEs participation in the projects, specific issues regarding SMEs proposal management and tools and methods for proposal management)
- post-award activities (specific issues regarding SMEs project management, implementation and internal procedures, EU and national legislation – legal, audits and financial issues).

Ms. Roberta Pierantoni, eMS Officer, presented me thoroughly ADRION electronic Monitoring System (eMS), on-line programme tool that allows the online submission of project proposals, assessment of project proposals, contracting, reports on project implementation, First Level Control, Certifying Authority Confirmation and Audit Authority audits.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE MAIN RESULTS OBTAINED

Having in mind that CCIS is a national business association, its focus is on the business sector, especially SMEs: to increase SMEs capacity to absorb results of the Program that would directly lead to long-term sustainability of all Program activities and overall fulfilment of EUSAIR Strategy's goals to bring growth, jobs, and stability to the Region, as well as supporting the Western Balkans' integration into the EU.

Within this STSM, CCIS learned best proposal and project management practices, how to apply knowledge acquired in ADRION projects to work on the EU Acquis in areas that are of importance for EUSAIR (connectivity, tourism, ...) as well as a stimulus to further strengthen administrative capacity.

JS ADRION had insight in business community's aspirations, how transnational cooperation in the context of the European Union and the EUSAIR could support these and how to bridge the gap between the EUSAIR objectives and funding opportunities in order to make best use of other available funding resources.

CCIS, as a national business association, is clearly aware of the importance of regional cooperation for facilitating the EU enlargement process of the Western Balkans, which is a clear objective of the countries themselves and of the EU. EUSAIR is very much in line with the EU enlargement strategy. Participation of

Serbian companies in ADRION is an excellent framework for business community to get ready for cohesion policy upon accession. Lessons learned in the implementation of the ADRION project would show how to tackle national priorities, chapters of the EU enlargement process, as well as cooperation in the macro-regional context. The exchange of ideas and experiences, is crucial for learning about best practices and to streamline programmes in order to have the best possible results for the Adriatic-Ionian Region.

However, there were no Serbian companies in the first ADRION call. This STSM allowed me to establish a network for the administrative, finance and legal services with the experienced colleagues at ADRION JS. Fostering participation of Serbian SMEs in ADRION calls can have a significant contribution towards constructing an area of sustainable economic development, safety and security. It provides, at the same time, a unique framework of cooperation between EU and non-EU member states, which can considerably assist participating candidate countries, as Serbia, in their path towards the EU, without substituting the enlargement progress. Increased participation of Serbian business community in ADRION and other EU programmes will also build a new economic / productive model based on exploiting the country's comparative advantages, which will ensure a fair-for-all development, beneficial to the people and not only to the numbers.

Gaining an insight into the practices of ADRION JS was a great inspiration in my own learning process and work, providing knowledge transfer and development of various new services leading to

- increased participation of Serbian companies in ADRION calls;
- new services for SMEs that will enable knowledge and skill transfer between Program participants and Serbian SMEs
- thorough exploration of market opportunities identified by Program.

#### FUTURE COLLABORATIONS (if applicable)

This STSM has created a path of collaboration between CCIS and Joint Secretariat of ADRION programme. There will be further contact in the future and continued sharing of knowledge between the two institutions.

Under current Call for Proposal, there are two Specific Objectives of the Priority Axis 2:

Specific Objective 2.1: Promote the sustainable valorisation and preservation of natural and cultural heritage as growth assets in the ADRION area and

Specific Objective 2.2: Enhance the capacity in transnationally tackling environmental vulnerability, fragmentation and the safeguarding of ecosystem services in the ADRION area.

Since Serbian SMEs are eligible to apply for both objectives, specific action steps to be performed immediately are:

- creating a list of Serbian SMEs from tourism and environment sector, which comply with Self-assessment financial viability criteria,
- informing them on open call for project proposals within ADRION and
- offering them assistance in finding project partners and defining project ideas.