Interreg

EUROPEAN UNION

France (Channel Manche) England

E-Channel

European Regional Development Fund

WP T1.1.2
Report on potential contribution of other EU projects to E-Channel

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1. Rationale for Report

This report is no. 1 of the 2 components of Deliverable T1.1.2: Contributions from other EU funded projects. There are two outcomes in this deliverable:

Report 1:   A report on potential contribution of other EU projects to E-Channel

Report 2:   A report on actual contribution of other EU projects to E-Channel

The focus of this first report is on the potential contribution of other EU projects to E-Channel. It considers relevant outcomes from other EU projects dealing with e-commerce, new market focus including export and, in line with World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules, an SME Consultancy/ Communication model. In addition, some specific operational experience of relevance to E-Channel was also researched.

E-Channel is unique in that it is a Micro-Project and the two partners are both SMEs.

2. Methodology

In the original bid, T1 WP implementation Activity T 1.1, it was stated that:

> As well as sharing practice to enable the building of the E-Channel Platform and Launchpads, the Vertical Plus and Soledis teams will also consider relevant outcomes from other EU projects dealing with e-commerce and SME export.

In the bid Deliverable T1.1.2 Deliverable title: Potential contributions from other EU funded projects (p19), it was also stated that:

> The outcomes will be: [1] The completion of a report created as part of the bid writing process on the potential contributions to E-Channel from other EU funded projects. Highlights from this are covered in section C.3.1 Synergies. This report will be discussed as part of E-Channel induction and training work (including the review of available online materials), as outlined in Management Work Package Deliverable: Recruitment and set up of the delivery team.

> From this work, a short-list of EU projects with potentially E-Channel relevant outputs will be created. These projects will be further investigated by relevant E-Channel team members.

To begin the research, key phrases including SME export, SME e-commerce, SME competitiveness, SME France and England and INTERREG were used to undertake an initial internet search for relevant EU funded projects. This produced a long list[1] of INTERREG projects, micro-projects (live and completed), as well as non-INTERREG Projects.

In preparation for T1 WP implementation Activity T 1.1, an initial *Rationale for Inclusion* was developed with a focus on key areas 1-4 (See the table in 2.1).

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[1] *This long list can be found in Appendix 1: Long list of Interreg Projects for potential contribution to the E-Channel Project.*

2.1 Impact of WTO Regulations

Due to feedback on our project submission by the Joint Secretariat (JS) regarding World Trade Organisation (WTO) regulations around State Aid[2], changes were made via Technical Modifications to the project. The outputs from the E-Channel Project, while remaining focussed on e-commerce and SME new markets including export, were now based on a Consultancy / Communication Model of guidance and support work to be undertaken in order to help SMEs in the cross-border area with export and new market entry.

The research of key phrases was therefore extended to include Consultancy, Support and Guidance for SMEs, and this in turn led to the addition of point 5 to the Rationale for Inclusion below:

Rationale for Inclusion *Potential contributions to E-Channel from other EU funded projects.*	
1.	Enhancing SME innovation/ competitiveness, capacity and sustainability.
2.	Working with business support organisations. (BSO)
3.	Strategies to help SME competitiveness, innovation, internationalisation and thinking commercially for new markets, including international markets.
4.	The use of tools and technology to re-shape business models and create value chains and efficiencies e.g. in the specialist artisan food sector.
5.	Consultancy and Communication model of working with SMEs.

Table 1: Rationale for Inclusion

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[2] https://www.channelmanche.com/assets/Programme-Manual/EN/Guidance-Note-11-State-Aid1.pdf

3. List of the 10 projects cited in the original E-Channel bid document

The 10 projects cited in the original E-Channel bid document covered the following Interreg areas of interest:

Interreg Area of Interest		
A. SMEs and cross-border trading	**B. E-commerce tools and products**	**C. Other projects, reviewed for lessons learnt and potential contribution to E-Channel**
[1] EIS[3] [2] KISS ME[4] [3] COMPETE IN[5] [4] Fast Forward Europe[6]	[5] NICHE[7] [6] RESOLVE[8] [7] SME ORGANICS[9]	[8] ENVISION (UEAPME project)[10] [9] e-SENS and CEF[11] [10] Accelerating Women's Enterprise[12]

Table 2: List of the 10 projects cited in the original E-Channel bid document

From this list, three projects were initially selected for further research as having the *potential to* contribute to E-Channel, because of their emphasis on ways to support SMEs to grow their markets including cross border competitiveness:

- Niche
- SME Organics
- EIS

The key potential benefits from these three projects were identified as follows:
- Niche, SME Organics and EIS are all live INTERREG projects which overlap with E-Channel;
- All three projects finish in 2020 and so will have recently experienced the journey about to be undertaken by E-Channel;
- All three projects address e-commerce tools and technology;
- Niche and SME Organics have links to the food sector; agro-foods and organic foods;

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[3] https://www.interregeurope.eu/eis/
[4] https://www.interregeurope.eu/kissme/
[5] https://www.interregeurope.eu/competein/
[6] https://www.interregeurope.eu/ffwdeurope/
[7] https://www.interregeurope.eu/niche/
[8] https://www.interregeurope.eu/resolve/
[9] https://www.interregeurope.eu/smeorganics/
[10] https://www.tudelft.nl/2016/tbm/envision-netwerk-omvat-ruim-3-miljoen-mkbs
[11] http://www.esens.eu/content/about-project
[12] https://www.acceleratingwomensenterprise.uk/

- Niche, SME Organics and EIS all aim to support SMEs to grow their markets including new markets and cross border competitiveness.

4. Additional Project Choice Rationale

A further five INTERREG projects, from the keep.eu database were also selected for initial research because they had an emphasis on supporting SMEs with new markets including export. It was felt that they might also make a potential contribution to the E-Channel Project.

[11] SME Internationalisation Exchange[13]

[12] BASIS Project[14]

[13] Project BaltFood[15]

[14] UpGradeSME[16]

[15] Inside Out EU Project[17]

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[13] https://www.interregeurope.eu/sie/

[14] BASIS- Building up Availability of SME Internationalisation Services 2007 - 2013 Central Baltic (FI-SE-EE-LA) https://keep.eu/projects/5279/Building-up-Availability-of--EN/

[15] http://eu.baltic.net/

[16] https://www.interregeurope.eu/upgradesme/

[17] https://www.interregeurope.eu/insideouteu/

5. Review of On-line Project Materials

The online materials of each of the five projects were then reviewed and a RAG (Red, Amber Green) rated criteria mapping exercise was undertaken to narrow the focus and select the projects best suited to as to their potential contributions to E-Channel.

Project Criteria Mapping					
Project ✓(green) ✓(yellow) ✓(red)	1. Enhancing SME innovation/ competitiveness / capacity/ sustainability	2. Working with business support organisation	3. Strategies to help SME competitiveness, innovation, internationalisation and thinking commercially for new/ international markets	4. The use of tools and technology to re-shape business models and create value chains / efficiencies e.g. in the specialist/ artisan food sector	5. Consultancy / Communication model of working with SMEs.
[1] EIS	✓ (green)	✓ (green)	✓ (green)	✓ (yellow)	✓ (yellow)
[2] KISS ME	✓ (yellow)	✓ (yellow)	✓ (yellow)	✓ (yellow)	✓ (red)
[3] COMPETE IN	✓ (yellow)	✓ (yellow)	✓ (yellow)	✓ (yellow)	✓ (red)
[4] Fast Forward Europe	✓ (yellow)	✓ (yellow)	✓ (yellow)	✓ (yellow)	✓ (red)
[5] NICHE	✓ (green)	✓ (green)	✓ (green)	✓ (green)	✓ (yellow)
[6] RESOLVE	✓ (yellow)	✓ (yellow)	✓ (yellow)	✓ (yellow)	✓ (red)
[7] SME ORGANICS	✓ (green)	✓ (green)	✓ (green)	✓ (red)	✓ (green)
[8] ENVISION (UEAPME project)	✓ (yellow)	✓ (yellow)	✓ (yellow)	✓ (red)	✓ (red)
[9] e-SENS & CEF	✓ (yellow)	✓ (yellow)	✓ (yellow)	✓ (yellow)	✓ (red)
[10] Accelerating Women's Enterprise	✓ (yellow)	✓ (yellow)	✓ (yellow)	✓ (yellow)	✓ (red)

[11] SME Internationalis ation Exchange	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
[12] BASIS Project	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
[13] Project BaltFood	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
[14] UpGradeSME	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
[15] Inside Out EU Project	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 3: Project Criteria Mapping to select the projects best suited to as to their potential contributions to E-Channel

6. Additional Projects which may be more closely aligned to a Consultancy Model

In response to:

a) the project criteria mapping exercise and

b) as the delivery focus of the E-Channel Project had changed to become a Consultancy Model

This led to a re-evaluation of initial focus to include projects more closely aligned to a Consultancy Model additional rationale for inclusion.

Two further projects, FUSION[18] and INTRA[19], were identified which potentially had a strong Consultancy Model element and might therefore make a potential contribution to E-Channel. INTRA developed consultancy programmes called XPANDE and Digital XPANDE.

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[18] https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/2199/xpande-xpande-digital/

[19] https://www.interregeurope.eu/intra/

Project Criteria Mapping					
Project	1. Enhancing SME innovation/ competitiveness / capacity/ sustainability	2. Working with business support organisation	3. Strategies to help SME competitiveness, innovation, internationalisation and thinking commercially for new/ international markets	4. The use of tools and technology to re-shape business models and create value chains / efficiencies e.g. in the specialist/ artisan food sector	5. Consultancy / Communication model of working with SMEs.
[16] INTRA / XPANDE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
[17] FUSION	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 4: Project Criteria Mapping to demonstrate potential contribution of projects with identified consultancy models to E-Channel

7. Next Steps

The final five projects shortlisted for further research were:

- Niche
- SME Organics
- EIS
- INTRA
- FUSION

These projects were selected as they shared similar areas of focus to E-Channel, due to:

a) the broad potential synergies identified from the Rationale for Inclusion
b) the review of online materials of each project
c) the Project Criteria Mapping which was key to this exercise

The next step was to consider the potential conversation that E-Channel might have with each of these projects with a clear focus on where an actual contribution to the E-Channel Project might be made.

To summarize, seven specific areas for in-depth review were agreed by the E-Channel Steering Group:

1. Project partner working
2. Consultancy Models
3. Working with SMEs

4. Working with INTERREG processes and the Joint Secretariat
5. Working with Business Support Organisations
6. Working with tools and technology
7. Brexit

7.1 Key questions for each area of review

From the Agreed Areas for Review a list of research questions was agreed.

The Project Criteria Mapping was very effective in answering many of the key questions for review using the online material made publicly available by each project. This piece of work meant that the Questions for In-Depth Review would be bespoke for each of the five projects.

The process of agreement of a list of Questions for In-Depth Review was a helpful exercise for the E-Channel Steering Committee as it allowed them to revisit, and reflect on areas where a potential contribution from other EU projects might be most helpful and effective. E.g. A key concern at this time (September/October 2019) was Brexit and the unknown repercussions for new markets including export.

These questions are available in Appendix 2: Key Questions for the five identified Interreg projects to ascertain any potential contributions to E-Channel

It was then agreed to contact the five identified projects. First contact was therefore made with each project and each project provided contact details.

This work will form the basis of *Report 2: Actual contribution of other EU projects to E-Channel[20].*

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[20] This report is available at https://www.e-channel.org/resources

Appendix 1:
Long list of Interreg Projects for potential contribution to the E-Channel Project

	Project	Link to Interreg website
1	EIS	https://www.interregeurope.eu/eis/
2	KISS ME	https://www.interregeurope.eu/kissme/
3	COMPETE IN	https://www.interregeurope.eu/competein/
4	Fast Forward Europe	https://www.interregeurope.eu/ffwdeurope/
5	NICHE	https://www.interregeurope.eu/niche/
6	RESOLVE	https://www.interregeurope.eu/resolve/
7	SME ORGANICS	https://www.interregeurope.eu/smeorganics/
8	ENVISION (UEAPME project)	http://www.envisionproject.eu/
9	e-SENS & CEF	https://www.esens.eu/content/about-project
10	Accelerating Women's Enterprise	https://www.channelmanche.com/en/projects/approved-projects/accelerating-womens-enterprise/
11	SME Internationalisation Exchange	https://www.interregeurope.eu/sie/
12	BASIS Project	https://www.keep.eu/project/5270/building-up-availability-of-sme-internationalisation-services?ss=e5f823470d55ea6192b2efc3b1a12d5e&espon=
13	Project BaltFood	https://www.keep.eu/project/6152/baltfood-the-bsr-food-cluster-innovation-and-competitiveness-in-action?ss=23fb62c5e03764ebc518d92e500334ce&espon=
14	UpGradeSME	https://www.interregeurope.eu/upgradesme/
15	Inside Out EU Project	https://www.interregeurope.eu/insideouteu/

Appendix 2:
Key Questions for the five identified Interreg projects to ascertain any potential contributions to E-Channel

1. **At Partner level:**
   1.1 How did you work with your partners to agree on a Consultancy Model?
   1.2 How did the WTO rules re: competition / explicit support / market advantage affect your project?
   1.3 What did you learn from cultural exchange when working with your partners?

2. **The Consultancy Model:**
   2.1 How did you go about setting up your project / Consultancy Model?
   2.2 What were the key lessons learnt from your consultancy model?

3. **Working with SMEs:**
   3.1 How did you go about finding / accessing SMEs potential involvement in your project?
   3.2 Do you have any advice about events / activities to attract and sign up SMEs?
   3.3 Do you have any advice concerning English speaking and non-English speaking SMEs? Including any cultural differences/ difficulties?
   3.4 What was your working model with the SMEs?
   3.5 How did you help define and develop new international markets for your SMEs?
   3.6 What did you learn from the e-commerce element of your project?
   3.7 What did you find was most / least effective when working with your SMEs?
   3.8 What was your offer? Did this change during the life of the project?
   3.9 What were the most significant areas where you were able to enhance SME innovation / competitiveness / capability / sustainability?

4. **Working with Interreg Bodies/ Joint Secretariat:**
   4.1 What was your experience of working with the FLC / key advice?
   4.2 What was your experience of working with the JS / key advice?

> **5. Working with Business Support Organisations:**
> 5.1 Could you give us advice about working with Business Support Organisations such as Chambers of Commerce?
> 5.2 What has the impact of the unknown Brexit situation been on your work with these organisations? How did you counter the 'Brexit effect'?
> 5.3 What were the national / regional cultural differences you encountered?

> **6. Working with tools and technology:**
> 6.1 Could you give us advice about how you engaged the SMEs with the tools and technology and lessons learnt?
> 6.2 Which tools/ technology did you find most / least successful?
> 6.3 Were there any SME misconceptions around accessing / use of tools and technology?
> 6.4 Did you encounter any national / regional cultural differences in the use of tools / technology?

> **7. Brexit:**
> 7.1 What have been / are your Brexit concerns / strategies?
> 7.2 Have you done anything specific to prepare for Brexit?
> 7.3 Was there a Brexit impact on your stakeholders and project engagement?