



WPT2.3 INFOPOINTS FOR COMPANIES



**PROJECT NAME: "Business Registry Empowerment" - ACRONYM: BRE - PROJECT NUMBER:
230**

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of BRE consortium and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union and of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme Authorities

INDEX

BRE INFOPOINTS FOR COMPANIES	3
OBJECTIVE OF THE DOCUMENT	3
THE PROJECT	3
THE SERVICE	5
THE ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED	5
WHY IS INTERNATIONALIZATION SO IMPORTANT FOR COMPANIES?.....	6
WHY THE NEED TO INNOVATE COLLABORATING?	7
THE RESULTS	9
CONCLUSIONS	1

**PROJECT NAME: "Business Registry Empowerment" - ACRONYM: BRE - PROJECT NUMBER:
230**

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of BRE consortium and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union and of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme Authorities

BRE INFOPOINTS FOR COMPANIES

OBJECTIVE OF THE DOCUMENT

This document presents **the service of dissemination and assistance** to small and medium enterprises within the **BRE** project of the ITALY-ALBANIA-MONTENEGRO 2014-2020 Programme. The service called **INFOPOINT**, provided by the **Chamber of Commerce of Bari**, aims at supporting the enterprises of the involved territories through actions aiming at internationalization, the construction of virtuous networks and the awareness raising on environmental sustainability issues.

Therefore, the following chapters describe: the type of service provided by the Chamber of Commerce of Bari, how it is delivered, the importance of this service for the business world and the list of participating companies.

THE PROJECT

FOREWORD - Project general description

BRE is a project co-funded by European Union, under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II) in the framework of first call for proposal for standard projects "IPA CBC Italy – Albania – Montenegro". The project falls within the priority axis 1 "Strengthening the cross-border cooperation and competitiveness of SMEs" and in particular the thematic priority 1.1 "Enhance the framework conditions for the development of SME's crossborder market".

Project summary

A coordination among European Business Registries (BR) is a key factor for a joint continental business environment, producing administrative harmonization, transparency, legal certainty, competitiveness. Thus, national Business Registers from 26 EU Countries gave birth to EBR (European Business Register, a network to exchange experiences and to bring national BRs into harmony. Besides, the 1st EU Council Directive, March 9, 1968) mandated new Member Countries for a central BR, meeting some common requirements. Nowadays, pre-Accession Countries (e.g., Albania and Montenegro) have not tackled this issue yet and are still having a legislative debate on it; if nothing happens, after their formal accession they will have to accomplish the significant effort of connecting to an EU "standard" all at once. There it comes BRE project, by exchanging and improving experiences among Italian, Albanian and Montenegrin BRs on 3 levels: legislative (laws, actors involved, policies), operational (process management), technology (software, hardware, outputs). The Italian experience (1993-2005 reforms and electronic BR implementation) may come as a strength: "Early business registry reformers transformed a formerly paper-based business registry into a nationally centralized, one-stop,

PROJECT NAME: "Business Registry Empowerment" - ACRONYM: BRE - PROJECT NUMBER: 230

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of BRE consortium and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union and of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme Authorities

automated, web-enabled electronic system. Countries with efficient e-registries tend to have a shorter incorporation timeframe, fewer bureaucratic procedures, a lower cost of entry, a significant role in facilitating business creation. These lessons are hoped to be of help to EU new Member Countries as they embark on delivering EU-conformant e-BRs" [World Bank, "Implementing Electronic Business Registry (e-BR) Services", 2007]. So, creating a transnational platform to link national BRs, the BRE project will empower Chambers of Commerce, Ministries and IT providers (policies, process management, IT instruments); but above all SMEs (cross-border partner searching, legality, competitiveness).

Project objectives

BRE Project main objective matches with the specific objective of the Programme, aiming to enhance the framework conditions for the development of SME's cross-border market, through the creation of a transnational Platform, linked to the three National BRs, in order to favour the collaboration among companies. This tool, disseminated by tailored training activities, will boost the internationalization behaviour of SMEs giving them access to an official database of existing companies, enabling them to cooperate and innovate together. Therefore, BRE main output will be the Partner Query Platform, in which the 3 BRs will be joint. These registries are (and remain) property of the Public Institutions involved in BRE and they record existing companies, but can be adequately consulted by an on-demand query and deliver partners list, for instance. The main lack of these Registries, in fact, is that they are "stand-alone" and do not communicate with each other. Moreover, Italian, Albanian and Montenegrin companies are not mapped at all and they use different classification criteria. Besides, data are integrated, provided, managed in different ways, so a harmonization of laws, duties, procedures, processes is a key-factor to provide a commercial and industrial integration among the 3 Countries. The second main output of BRE will be a map of existing repositories and database of business information, favouring the integration between them with unique classification criteria. The third main output is the analysis of the existing legislation systems. BRE will provide a white paper proposal for the unification of business registration system. The other main output will be the capacity building actions addressed to Public Institutions and mostly training session both virtual and front-end addressed to companies, fostering the possibility to create value collaborating and innovating at CB level.

Project main results

BRE main result is to improve the SME CB framework conditions, in which PPs work as facilitators of competitiveness. With BRE Platform, SMEs located in Italy, Albania and Montenegro will be able to increase their internationalization with the possibility to enter in foreign markets, open new communication channels and introduce collaborative innovations, as well as with the support of such PPs providing tailored training actions. This will be reflected on a wide number of enterprises receiving non-financial support and the number of business support organizations, public institutions and Research centres cooperating and offering such kind of support. Besides, the general improvement of the 3 BRs will enhance business environment, by facilitating information access, providing

PROJECT NAME: "Business Registry Empowerment" - ACRONYM: BRE - PROJECT NUMBER: 230

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of BRE consortium and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union and of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme Authorities

transparency and accuracy of data, reducing costs and strengthening efficiencies for SMEs, decreasing the public-sector cost, providing a better tool for market surveillance, business monitoring and competitiveness.

THE SERVICE

The service is managed by the **Chamber of Commerce of Bari**. The Chamber of Commerce is a functional autonomous body of public law that carries out, in the provincial territory, functions of general interest for the system of enterprises, promoting and taking care of their development within the local economy.

It is an open institution, close to the economic activities of the territory, whose voices and values it interprets, boosting their development through the provision of real services. Networked with the entire chamber system in Italy and abroad, integrated with other national bodies and institutions, supported by the collaboration of business associations, the Chamber is the gateway to Public Administration for businesses, the point of confluence between productive activities and the State.

Together with these typical activities, the Chamber of Commerce contributes to the promotion of companies in international markets through numerous actions that range from the organization of trade missions to access to community initiatives and programs. The BRE project, with its **INFOPOINT service**, is part of this process.



This service has as its main aim the **internationalization** of enterprises together with objectives such as: building a **collaborative innovation network** of enterprises, raising awareness of **environmental sustainability** issues, differentiating the markets that enterprises can access.

THE ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED

In order to achieve its objectives, the staff involved in providing the assistance service directly contacted Apulian (48) and foreign (45) companies in the food and fashion sectors.

The first phase included an open call for Italian companies and a selection and participation by invitation for Albanians and Montenegrins companies by the partner projects.

PROJECT NAME: "Business Registry Empowerment" - ACRONYM: BRE - PROJECT NUMBER: 230

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of BRE consortium and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union and of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme Authorities

Following the call for participation in dissemination meetings concerning the **BRE** project, the **Chamber of Commerce of Bari** offered an information, dissemination and reminder service for each participating company.

Each company was contacted directly by the Chamber of Commerce of Bari. Although using a tool such as direct calling has as a disadvantage the huge investment of time devoted to each company, it has several positive aspects:

- The possibility of dedicating time ad hoc for each company: in this way it was possible to explain the project, making sure that the objectives and benefits for participation were clear;
- The possibility to clarify all the doubts of the participating companies about the project and the **INFOPOINT** service;
- The creation of a direct contact between the **INFOPOINT** staff and the interested companies, a fundamental step to ensure a future continuation of contacts.

Each call was divided into two parts:

- In the first part of the call, the contacted company was told about the BRE project, its objectives, partnership and activities implemented to date;
- In the second part all the advantages of participating in the BRE network of member companies were described. Among the most important aspects are:
 - **Internationalization**;
 - **Expand** and **differentiate** your market;
 - Raise awareness of pilot activity issues such as **environmental sustainability** and transportation optimization;
 - Being part of a **network** of enterprises that can exchange good practices, contacts and visions;
 - Being updated on current trends in the sector of your company;
 - Working in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration. These are important aspects to contextualise your company on a European and international scale.

WHY IS INTERNATIONALIZATION SO IMPORTANT FOR COMPANIES?

"Internationalization is the process by which companies open up to new foreign markets, establishing relationships with other companies, consumers and institutions operating in those territories, in order to sell, produce, buy raw materials, or find new sources of financing."

PROJECT NAME: "Business Registry Empowerment" - ACRONYM: BRE - PROJECT NUMBER: 230

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of BRE consortium and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union and of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme Authorities

In today's increasingly interconnected and globalized environment, companies are faced with the process of penetrating new foreign markets. This process is known as **internationalization**.

The reasons that lead companies to open up to new foreign markets can be varied: a slowdown in the markets in which they are already present, an increase in competition, or, why not, new profit opportunities.

Whatever the reasons for this opening up, it is necessary to decide which business strategies to undertake and, if necessary, to be supported by professionals in this delicate process of integration. It is in this regard that the Chamber of Commerce, a body that supports businesses in the territories, has created the **INFOPOINT** within the **BRE** project.

Internationalization represents, indeed, the necessary evolution of the traditional way of 'doing business'. Very often it is the only real alternative to the implosion of the domestic market, which is gripped by:

- Saturation of the productive sectors;
- Competition from foreign-based competitors;
- Lack of incentives for consumption;
- Excessive bureaucratisation;
- High tax burden.

As can be seen, however, the internationalization process is not without its obstacles. Often, when a company approaches a foreign market on its own, it runs the risk of experiencing initial discomfort. The causes are usually a lack of knowledge of the political, economic, legal and social system of the host country, as well as risks arising from currency exchange rates or language and cultural barriers.

WHY THE NEED TO INNOVATE COLLABORATING?

It's necessary forgot the traditional approach and learn how to create a "**COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION**" between the actors present in the territory

Embracing the motto "**union is strength**" several operators combine their skills and resources to work together to achieve common goals: grow together their tourist destination, make it more attractive to the eyes of visitors and promote tourist flow.

In recent years, the study of organizational networks has grown exponentially. Much of this interest has been generated by the academics' recognition that businesses, as well as

PROJECT NAME: "Business Registry Empowerment" - ACRONYM: BRE - PROJECT NUMBER: 230

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of BRE consortium and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union and of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme Authorities

organizations in the public and non-profit sectors, are increasingly turning to various forms of alliances.

Cooperation means an improving of **competitiveness** and **effectiveness**, otherwise impossible through traditional hierarchical governance mechanisms and market. In particular, there is a growing interest in the potential advantages and disadvantages that managing a tourism destination in the form of an organizational network might have.

A network can be described as "*a set of nodes and links continuously reconstructed through transformations among the nodes present in the whole*". These nodes are created between independent organizations and autonomous organizations, individuals who act on behalf of an organization, or individuals who establish relationships of exchange between each other. Network are therefore **multi-subjective** and assumes varied forms of interaction based on general and flexible arrangements of cooperation or more specific and **rigid**, which, for example, may be based on formal structures.

In the tourism sector, network **members** are tourism businesses (hotels, restaurants, airlines, travel agencies) other supporting businesses (arts, entertainment, sports, recreation) and the DMO (public, private or public-private). Whatever the definition of a network, there is one element that always appears and which is configured as a distinctive trait of this form of organization: its recourse to social interaction and collective action, with the underlying trust and propensity to collaboration. Governance that adopts a network presents precisely the distinctive character of collective action.

Interestingly, it is often the case that the **benefits of networks**, brought about at both the organizational level as well as at the level of the entire network, are often analysed at the level of relationships between **individual organizations**, paying less attention to the analysis of the entire network. This predilection is dictated both from the difficulties that exist when one goes to analyse the benefits in the complex context of an entire network and because the single organizations (especially for-profit organizations) have a less clear-cut interest in the development of a comprehensive network.

PROJECT NAME: "Business Registry Empowerment" - ACRONYM: BRE - PROJECT NUMBER: 230

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of BRE consortium and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union and of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme Authorities

THE RESULTS

Below is a table showing the trend of companies' accessions to the project. It is evident from the following tables the companies contacted at the beginning and the number of final companies joining the network after the INFOPOINT service.

Participation of Italian companies:

ITALIAN COMPANIES	Pre-recall (expressions of interest)	Post-call	Actual participation
Food producers	25	20	21
Fashion producers	30	29	27
TOTAL			48

Participation of foreign companies:

FOREIGN COMPANIES	Pre-recall (expressions of interest)	Post-call	Actual participation
Food producers	10	7	8
Fashion producers	45	40	37
TOTAL			45

PROJECT NAME: "Business Registry Empowerment" - ACRONYM: BRE - PROJECT NUMBER: 230

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of BRE consortium and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union and of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme Authorities

CONCLUSIONS

Considering the service provided and the excellent results obtained thanks to the large number of participating companies, we hope for medium- and long-term results. Among these are certainly:

- **Increase in the internationalization rate of Apulian companies;**
- **Improvement of commercial relations with Albania and Montenegro;**
- **Increasing supply and demand of fresh products;**
- **Increasing profitability and quality of service.**

Monitoring activities for these activities will follow in order to ensure their continuous quality.



**PROJECT NAME: "Business Registry Empowerment" - ACRONYM: BRE - PROJECT NUMBER:
230**

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of BRE consortium and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union and of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme Authorities