

FINAL report

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Project: **Business Registry Empowerment - BRE**
INTERREG IPA CBC Italy–Albania–Montenegro 2014/2020 Programme

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1. INTRODUCTION

BRE Project main objective matches with the specific objective of the Programme, aiming to enhance the framework conditions for the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) cross-border market, through the creation of a transnational Platform, linked to the 3 National Business Registers (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. So, 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 Cross Border (CB) level.

BRE main result is to improve the SME CB framework conditions, in which Project Partners (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.

As one of the most important objectives of this project are established 3 infopoints, one in each chamber of commerce, in order to help businessmen in the consultation of the Platform. In addition, these infopoints have been delivering one-to-one support regarding: sales agent, logistics and internationalization.

2. Scope of activities

In cooperation with the Chamber of Economy of Montenegro, an analysis of the situation in the economic environment was performed, with an emphasis on companies, primarily SMEs, which may be important for the implementation of the project.

A questionnaire was created that was placed on an online platform and distributed to potential users, the questionnaire is focused on the problems faced by SME companies, both those that are already operating and companies that are newly established. A special part of the questionnaire is dedicated to students, especially those who are dedicated to starting their own business and implementing an entrepreneurial initiative.

The purpose of the questionnaire itself is multiple. Namely, for the purposes of creating and adjusting customer support programs, we want to obtain relevant information on the needs expressed by SME companies, which are related to improving cross-border cooperation and strengthening trade between countries in the region. The questionnaire will be active during the project of realization of support through INFOPOINT.

A detailed Support Program has been designed and created, which consists of the following elements:

Management; Marketing; Finance; Accounting; Project Management; Business plan; Digitalization & Internationalization.

Active communication has been established with more than 50 companies and their representatives, followed by a series of direct interviews, consultation and mentoring sessions, that were conducted in the premises of the Chamber of Economy of Montenegro, which designated a special office for this activity.

Communication and cooperation were established with most companies, which included many working meetings and sessions, on the above topics. The companies and entrepreneurs expressed a

special focus on topics related to their business improvement, especially considering the effects that the COVID19 pandemic had on the national economy and its factors.

Cooperation with companies was in most cases based on mentoring sessions, mostly due to the specific problems that companies face.

Among the topics of interest to INFOPOINT users was Management, with a special focus on Critical evaluation of family owned SMEs, behavior and motivations and arrive at informed conclusions relating to current and proposed international business futures. Also considered are issues related to assessing the nature of the business environment as it affects family-owned small business and evaluate business opportunities and threats. The participants also showed special interest in the issues related to the assessment of the relevance of creativity and innovation to family-owned SMEs and to the development of business opportunities.

When it comes to Marketing, in addition to key postulates and principles, most of the activity was focused on digital marketing and tools that could improve the sales and communication systems of micro and small enterprises. In that sense, the users were also mentored about the development of efficient marketing actions, which would be based on flexibility and adaptability, considering the intensive changes in the market. In the context of the negative externalities caused by the COVID19 crisis, users have shown particular interest in expanding the potential market, with an emphasis on internationalization. A significant number of users do not have adequate digital marketing performance, which significantly adversely affects their recovery and entry into new markets.

Another topic that aroused special interest was Project Management. This topic was discussed in the following context: Clearly defined goals and general directions; Willingness of top management to provide the necessary resources and authority / power for implementation; Detailed specifications of individual action steps for system implementation; Communication, consultation and active listening to all parties; Recruitment, selection and training of the necessary personnel for implementation; Availability of technology and expertise to accomplish specific technical steps; Selling the final product to its ultimate intended user; Timely provision of comprehensive control information at each stage; Provision of an appropriate network and necessary data to all key stakeholders; Ability to handle unexpected crisis and deviate from plan.

Considering the needs of further development and the need to establish new investment cycles in their companies, users have expressed an enviable interest in generating knowledge about the development of the Business Plan. When it comes to this module, the most attention was paid to the following topics: The purpose of the design and development plan section is to provide investors with a description of the product's design, chart its development within the context of production, marketing, and the company itself, and create a development budget that will enable the company to reach its goals. What is the current status of your product, and what needs to be done before it is market ready? What is the estimated amount of time to complete each phase or

task? (State the time in man hours, days, or months, not elapsed time.) Who are the primary competitors selling to and what are their average revenues? What regulatory, permitting, or licensure issues might my business encounter? Who should I have on my management team and what do they bring to the table? How much money do I need and how will I use it?

Cooperation with users is based on two-way principles, which includes an analytical approach to the expressed needs for support. Due to the impact of COVID19, the process has slowed down significantly, but there are indications that it will be significantly intensified in the coming weeks.

Numerous participants in the mentoring sessions singled out the problems related to human resource management as very important, so during the work with them the following topics were discussed: Age discrimination; Cost of living; Employment law; Disability discrimination; Discipline and grievance; Equality and diversity; Flexible working; Health and safety; Motivating employees; Organisational behaviour.

As one of the results of this project is the establishment of a single platform INTERREG-BRE project, which is intended for business users, more precisely business owners who are primarily interested in exchanging information, experiences and data, which aim to improve mutual economic cooperation. The platform is made according to the "tailor made" model, which makes it even more valuable and functional. The focus of this platform is the business entity, which aims not only to promote its capacities and potentials, but also to obtain adequate information about potential business partners and possible ideas for cooperation.

The platform enables users to create their own profiles, by which they will be recognized, which in turn will allow them to build their own identity and a unique way of presentation in relation to potential partners, associates and competitors.

Based on preferences and characteristics, each of the users can join certain and specific groups and thus further specializes their profile and recognizability on the platform. On the other hand, this opportunity provides the potential for easier cooperation and faster collection of necessary information, which are crucial in many phases of business analysis, all for the purpose of making adequate business decisions.

The advantage of forming groups lies in the fact that it is possible to create a large number of them, and on the other hand that each of the participants in these groups can have different attributes of recognition, but also the roles they will "perform" within these groups. This creates a multidisciplinary approach that allows a greater degree of functionality when it comes to potential models of cooperation, between business entities.

The platform with its functionality nidi users and the ability to create Pivot reports, enabling the ability to create summary tables and graphs related to issues created, dynamically. The user is able to build pivot graphs from two data sources:

- Basic, or simple. If this type of report is selected, it will display basic data about the issue created without including details about the status or creator of the issue, etc.
- Detailed, or detailed. It offers you the opportunity to use in the report of each field of information stored for a ticket, such as general data and those for the date of creation of the ticket, the status. This to build reports and graphics with an even greater level of detail.

Users are introduced to the complete functional picture and possibilities of the Platform, which provides many possibilities. The paper especially emphasizes the possibility for micro and small enterprises that the Platform provides, viewed through many attributes and specific characteristics, which are managed by the user, and in the background are the "networking process" of potential associates and business partners.

Considering that the epidemiological situation has significantly affected the implemented activities, as well as the manner of their implementation, it can be concluded that the project results are in line with the planned, but that the achievements of this project will positively reflect on end users, but also numerous other factors of society in Montenegro, Italy and Albania.

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