



**INTERREG EUROPE PROGRAMME
THIRD CALL FOR PROPOSALS
Spa4Health PROJECT IDEA**

Project ACRONYM: Spa4Health

Project title: Health innovation in thermal spa regions

Lead partner: Thermauvergne (FR), an association of 11 spa towns in the Auvergne – Rhône-Alpes region.

Thematic objective of the Europe 2020 strategy: Strengthening research, technological development and innovation

Targeted specific objective of Interreg Europe programme 1.2.: Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes that support the delivery of innovation by players in regional innovation chains in areas of “smart specialisation” and innovation opportunity.

Context:

The World Health Organisation defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being.

The ageing society is a Europe 2020 societal challenge and represents a tremendous business opportunity for companies operating in the health sector. Developing and introducing innovative cure and care solutions have a huge potential in making care more efficient. Additionally, health, healthy lifestyle and prevention are supposed to be more and more relevant making wider the target group perspective.

Issues tackled by the project:

Most of the time the Operational Programmes of ERDF and ESF (mainstream programmes), in line with the first thematic objective of the Europe 2020 strategy, indicate “Strengthening research, technological development and innovation” as a major objective. This is for instance the case of the Operational Programme of the Auvergne region (France). This Operational Programme aims to boost economic growth, create jobs and reinforce productivity, and strongly focuses on research and innovation as a driving force for achieving the Europe 2020 targets for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

What policy instruments does the project address?

As the Cohesion Policy 2014–2020 strongly focuses on research and innovation as a driving force for keeping the EU competitive, Smart Specialisation has been chosen as the intended theme.

The project address the following policy instrument in Auvergne ERDF ESF Regional operational programme 2014-2020:

- Axis 1: Strengthening research, technological development and innovation – Investment priority 1b promoting business R&I investment, product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation and public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation,
- Specific objective: Increase the number of innovative and collaborative projects implemented by the regional SME's in the field of Smart Specialisation Strategy by the support of research projects, technology transfers and collaborative projects between searchers and SME's and by the support of the public/private partnerships.

With innovation, the Smart Specialisation Strategy of Auvergne is encouraging the development of economic sectors identified by concentrating the resources on five Strategic Business Areas.

The R&I policy in Auvergne aims to support excellence in the fields of smart specialization strategy, research structuration & visibility and supporting socio-economic benefits of research outcomes.

The first strategic objective of the Smart Specialisation Strategy of the Auvergne region is Preventative health and patients' well-being. And the first Strategic Business Areas (SBA) of this strategic objective is “Accelerate the putting on the market of goods and services related to preventative health and well-being”. The aim of this SBA is to focus

on a promising business area to 5 years (with a market potential), especially to push on the market products and services related to health prevention and for improving the living comfort of patients. This SBA focuses on preventative health and thermalism in link with the “Silver economy”, as a contributing factor to the delivery of innovation, as an area with a high development and growth potential, and this project focuses on this specific innovation area.

One can then consider that the role of a Managing Authority, in addition to the management of the programmes and the EU funds, can be to facilitate cooperation and joint initiatives between enterprises, R&D centres and higher education players in key regional areas of smart specialisation in order to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the structural funds by creating favourable conditions for innovation in the field of preventative health and thermalism within and between European regions, which means developing territorial policies.

Creating favourable conditions for innovation partners means to implement policies which encourage the regions, facing similar challenges, to organize themselves as places of open innovation, almost “living labs”. Cooperation between the partners is central to the construction of a common European space and a “culture of health” in the thermal towns considered as therapeutic landscapes due to their heritage, parks and green spaces.

What does the project aim to change by integrating the lessons learnt from the cooperation? What kind of territorial policies can Managing Authorities of the mainstream programmes develop to give rise to research and innovation strategies in the region? How can these research and innovation strategies, in addition to the ERDF, maximize the connection of knowledge and technology with the exploitation of market opportunities for new products in the field of preventative health and thermalism? These are the questions the project will focus on.

Main objectives of the project:

Global objective:

The objective of the project is to support innovation policies learning among the partners with a view to improving the performance of regional innovation policies.

The aim of the project, connected to the Smart Specialisation Strategies, is to facilitate the exchange of good practice among regional authorities (in charge of the management of mainstream programmes (mainly ERDF)), universities and innovation partners to develop methods to support knowledge transfer and strengthen opportunities for open innovation between the triple helix partners for innovation in the field of preventative health and thermalism.

Based on the sharing of experiences, the project will identify and transfer good territorial policies or instruments developed by Managing Authorities and dedicated to thermal innovation in the field of preventative health, with a strong focus on the involvement of public authorities, academic institutions and cluster organisations in the local decision making process. Relevant policies will then be transferred among the project partners.

Specific objectives:

The project will also:

- Capitalise practices among regional actors in order to strengthen regional policies,
- Facilitate cooperation and joint initiatives between enterprises, R&D centres and higher education players in key regional areas of Smart Specialisation and Innovation opportunity,
- Find solutions for improved innovation strategies,
- Increase development, growth and improve the quality of life in the regions involved.

Main expected outputs and results:

- Identification and exploration of innovation policies or instruments to be developed or transferred to reach the above mentioned objectives (priority given to structural funds policies) in the field of preventative health and thermalism. Thanks to interregional cooperation, managing authorities and other relevant bodies can find inspiration in the field of preventative health and thermalism in other regions and import new projects to be financed within their programmes. Inspired by partner experience, the regions can finance new initiatives within their operational programmes.
- Creation of an action plan with the stakeholder group of each territory partner of the project.

- Creation of recommendations in the field of preventative health and thermalism targeting public stake holders. Interregional cooperation can influence the way policy instruments are managed. New approaches in the field of preventative health and thermalism can be adopted thanks to lessons learnt in other regions and changes can be imagined in the management of the innovation measures of the policy instrument.
- Actual transfer of policies and/or practices in the field of preventative health and thermalism to improve the implementation of mainstream programmes in the partner regions (priority given to structural funds policies). To integrate the lessons learnt in the field of preventative health and thermalism from the cooperation, some managing authorities can modify existing measures or even create new measures in their programme. Thanks to the expertise of a partner in charge of preventative health and thermalism innovation, the region can create a new team in charge of these fields and fully integrated in the Smart Specialisation Strategies of the region.

In order to do so, the project will implement:

- Interregional exchanges and study visits on existing good practices in the field of Preventative health and thermalism. These transnational exchanges and study visits will increase professional capacity of the partners through their participation in the project,
- A network of stakeholders: all the participating regions will have an extensive partnership which brings together the relevant actors in the field of preventative health and thermalism, but always adapted to the local conditions,
- Studies and surveys analysing the current state of preventative health and thermalism in the specific region and revealing possibilities for further cooperation. Every participating country will conduct a study analysing the regional/local situation by focusing on the following aspects: relations between the actors of preventative health and thermalism, connections between the various fields of functioning, current conditions for market access, obstacles, difficulties and opportunities,
- Workshops and conferences will provide space for discussions among the stakeholders and partners of different countries. The results of the surveys conducted in each country will be discussed and relevant information and experience will be exchanged during of the workshops,
- Development of an action plan per partner territory specifying the implementation of innovative actions operating in the field of preventative health and thermalism. Based on the information gathered and taking into consideration the specific local conditions, each participant will work out its action plan,
- A communication and dissemination strategy in order to reach target audience and to raise the awareness of people focusing on preventative health and thermalism.