



Newsletter #01

October 2019

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Dear Reader,

Welcome to the first Newsletter of the BETTER project!

BETTER is an Interreg Europe project that focuses on the promotion of e-Government solutions. With our project we aim to create a win-win situation for everyone by enhancing the use of e-Government solutions. These solutions will help local and regional authorities to stimulate regional innovation while private individuals and businesses gain better public service.

In the following pages we would like to give you a short overview of our initiative. You will find information on the BETTER partnership, objectives and methods, and the steps we will make to reach our objectives.

The BETTER Newsletters will be published every semester over a 3-year period. With these materials we will keep you updated on the progress achieved as well as elaborate on plans for the next period of the project.

Please visit our website to get our latest news! You can also find us on social media, where we welcome your questions and comments.

We hope you enjoy reading our newsletter!

The BETTER project team!

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THE PROJECT IN A NUTSHELL

BETTER supports public authorities to develop their regional innovation strategies and improve them with e-government services to stimulate regional innovation chain.

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The BETTER project

“BETTER” offers an innovative approach to a crucial priority for the EU: encouraging Public Authorities to develop Regional Innovation Strategies in which e-Government solutions can stimulate Regional Innovation chains, as well as improving their services.

The main problem addressed by this project is the need to support Public Authorities in the development of innovation infrastructures and be the drivers of smart specialization strategies; Insufficient public sector investment in innovation activity poor adaptation to specific needs, particularly in less developed countries has contributed to the 'technology gap' between EU regions and tends to perpetuate or increase the 'cohesion gap'.

Information Communications Technologies (ICT) are crucial in ensuring that citizens have easy access to local government information, services and decision-making processes as well as in helping and improving citizens' participation and consultation of towards local governments. However, the level of innovation among EU regions is not measured only by ICT tools but by the general strategies that regions put in place in order to support and enhance innovative local dynamics and improve the performance of their regional innovation systems.

The EU regions show a wide diversity in regional innovation systems. The

implication of this diversity is that there is no one-size-fits-all policy that can be applied to any region.

Rather, policies need to be adjusted to specificities of the industry, innovation culture, political system, and the level of autonomy held by regional authorities.

The CONSORTIUM

The partnership includes 5 partners from 5 Member States covering a balanced geographical spread from North (SE&EE) to West (UK), South (IT) and East (HU).

The partners are all Public Authorities selected for their specific abilities related to the project topic. Genoa and Birmingham are already working on digital tools in the IE “Pure Cosmos” project and want to strengthen their competence in regional innovation strategies; Tartu, Gävle and Nyíregyháza have specific skills in Digital Transformation and RIS strategies.

WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO

BETTER will link e-Government with the “innovation chain” to create a win-win initiative. On the one hand, municipalities and regions need to improve public services, while cutting costs: e-Government is one way to do this. On the other hand, adopting e-Government solutions could be used in turn to stimulate the local or regional innovation chain: for example the design, supply and maintenance of specialist services, such as Artificial Intelligence.

The consortium will:

- analyse partners' plans through four Thematic Events;
- identify good practices that will improve these plans, studying them through Study Visits, importing them via special workshops and Regional Action Plans;
- build the capacity of all relevant public authorities including ERDF Managing Authorities;
- increase the societal impact of the innovation process outcomes.



Project objectives

With BETTER - as an overall objective - we aim to: strengthen the role of Public Authorities as stimulators of regional innovation chains by improving e-Government solutions by 10% by 2022. This goal will be focused along with the sub-objectives as follows:

- 1) develop by 2022 at least 3 innovative instruments (e.g. digital platforms, Artificial Intelligence) that will improve municipal services
- 2) increase by 10% by 2022 the societal impact of the innovation process outcomes thanks to the development of new e-Government services.
- 3) increase by 20% by 2022 the effectiveness of key decision makers' involvement in Regional Innovation chains and related investments in order to meet their innovation objectives
- 4) increase by 20% by 2022 the horizontal and vertical cooperation between the different levels of government and relevant actors (including investors) in the development and implementation of the RAPs



Sub objectives 1 and 2 are related to the progress that the partners can make in the field of research and innovation infrastructures. Here ICT systems play a strategic role in ensuring that citizens have easy access to local government information, services and decision-making processes. They are the focus of Public Authorities. They will improve the level and the quality of Public Authorities services in the partners areas.

Sub objectives 3 and 4 are specifically related to the Involvement of stakeholders and Managing Authorities in the decision making. BETTER will not only actively empower the Regional Stakeholders to offer concrete improvements to the policy instruments via the RAPs, but will also empower them through building their capacity – both the key decision makers and the organisations themselves – for continuing effective action after the project-end, applying to R&I programmes and Smart approach.

Project activities

BETTER brings together 5 partners from 5 countries, offering an innovative approach to a crucial priority for the EU: encouraging Public Authorities to develop Regional Innovation Strategies in which e-Government solutions can stimulate Regional Innovation chains (as well as improving their services). To reach this aim and - more specifically - the abovementioned objectives, the project includes a wide range of activities. such as:

Stage 1. ASSESS NEEDS, ASSEMBLE GOOD PRACTICES by

- THEMATIC EVENTS that involve staff and Regional Stakeholders, focusing on: Physical and virtual infrastructure/assets to support the process for innovation; Development and application of new innovative products and services; Processes to support new business models and ways of working across private public sector and with citizens; People and skills to make it happen
- a REGISTER OF GOOD PRACTICES to collect and document the good practices that are relevant to partners' needs.
- BETTER RIS Matrix as a management tool to ensure that Project Partners' learning needs are met, and to provide a guide on good practices to enable policy makers to decide upon investment priorities.

Stage 2. OBSERVE GOOD PRACTICES by

- 10 in-depth STUDY VISITS using the register of good practices. The good practices will be selected by the partners for their relevance to the identified specifications.

Stage 3 ADOPT GOOD PRACTICES by

- 'IMPORT WORKSHOPS'. Experts from other partners will assist the importing partner and regional stakeholders to import their good practices and draft their Regional Action Plan.

Stage 4 IMPROVE POLICIES by

- policy owners using the Regional Action Plan (RAP) to "improve its policy instrument", with continued support from project-partners.

Stage 5 MONITOR POLICY IMPROVEMENTS by

- partners monitoring the adoption and implementation of their RAP.
- a European-level conference to disseminate experiences. Partners will undertake an impact survey #2 to measure impact to 2022.

Project partners

BETTER WILL BE IMPLEMENTED by



Municipality of Genoa (IT)



Tartu City Government (EE)



Municipality of Nyíregyháza (HU)



Gävle Municipality (SE)



Birmingham City Council (UK)

PROJECT DURATION

Phase 1 - Interregional Learning (3 years, semester 1-6) August 2019 - July 2022

Phase one will include activities to help each partner develop a regional action plan to improve European Regional Development Fund policy instruments.

Activities comprise:

- thematic events for interregional learning
- study visits
- an import workshop where the good practice is transferred from one region to another
- a regional event
- 6 stakeholder meetings

Phase 2 - Monitoring (1 year, semester 7-8) August 2022 - July 2023

Phase two will involve monitoring the results of the policy change. The objective of the project is to obtain an increase of 10% in regional innovation activity stimulated by eGovernment initiatives by 2022.



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Kick-off meeting

LET THE WORK BEGIN!

On the 5th of September 2019, the Municipality of Genoa hosted the kick-off meeting of the project, with the participation of a delegation of all partners.

It was the very first opportunity for partners to get to know each other, share relevant experiences and finally start working together on the project topics. After a short welcoming speech by the host, the participants officially started the discussion and had the opportunity to identify the policy instruments they intend to work on in the months to come, discussing individual strengths but also areas where the improvement is needed and desirable, hopefully with the collaboration of the consortium.

We also agreed on a common approach regarding the activities in preparation to the upcoming Thematic Events and focused on the best Communication and Dissemination strategy, trying to find together original ways to share the project's goals and outputs.

The partners' delegation took part in a brief visit of the "Liguria Digitale" headquarter, that offered many ideas to work on. "Liguria Digitale" is a regional agency that develops the digital strategy of Liguria Region by designing, implementing and managing present and future digital infrastructure for the public administration.



Upcoming events

Coming up – the Thematic Event N1 in Gävle!

The Municipality of Gävle is happy to host the first Thematic Event of BETTER; **"Physical and virtual infrastructure and assets to support the process of innovation"** on the 29th-30th of October!

Gävle is a vibrant coastal city of 100 000 inhabitants, a logistic hub with the largest container terminal of the east coast of Sweden and a strong industrial tradition in forestry and metal, now a developing node for ICT and sustainable digitalisation with Microsoft building three mega data centres in the region. Gävle is the regional capital and administrative centre, a green city with ambitions and cultural/sports leisure activities. A great place to live, work & do business and visit.



The BETTER Thematic Event will be organised at the newly opened **Gävle Innovation Hub**, in the centre of the city, and we are looking forward to sharing and learning together with all the partners!

Joakim Skog from Vinnova, the Swedish Innovation Agency, will open the event and he suggests to *"take us from the theory behind open innovation to practical examples of methods and environments that enables innovation and then all the way to some recently supported datalabs which will fuel Sweden's data thirsty AI innovation activities"*.

BETTER partners will share their activities, good examples and challenges and the experts joining from all partner cities will contribute with input from their areas of expertise – interesting outlooks and good practices from near and far. Time also to reflect together and in city groups on the takings from the event, possible activities and the potential benefits for our respective cities.

To close the event, we propose a study visit to **Mackmyra Whisky**, the first ever Swedish whisky producer, to learn more about their approach to innovation and how they have used AI in the development of new products and the **University of Gävle and their Open Lab**, which is under development and that should be a creative environment where new ideas can emerge and be tested, people meet and new knowledge is generated. A hotspot for learning, cooperation and innovation!

Welcome to Gävle!

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