

Capitalization Actions for Sustainability

PB3 Contribution

Deliverable 5.3.4

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1. Introduction

The Project “Enhancing the Competitiveness and Sustainable Growth in the Agrofood Sector through the promotion of Circular Economy” with Acronym AGROFFICIENCY is financed by the Cooperation Programme “Interreg V-A Greece-Bulgaria” 2014-2020 and is related to the enhancement of Cross-Border Cooperation between Greece and Bulgaria with a main objective Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators.

AGROFFICIENCY aims to improve support services offered in the CB area by creating a One-Stop-Shop business support center (BSC) that will work in an incubator-like model for the newly established and potential SMEs. This center provided the necessary training, mentoring, one to one consulting and networking during the project’s implementation period, giving the means and opportunity to local agri-food SMEs to develop their business tools, generate new ideas, and equip them with all the necessary know-how, properly manage, communicate and plan their operations, while creating a competitive advantage that will make them more enticing to investors. Moreover, the BSC educated them on cost efficiency strategies and methodologies and promoted the integration of Circular Economy and Contemporary Logistics in their operations. The BSC followed a cooperation-based approach by acting as a bridge between the 2 countries and promoted innovation in the agriculture sector and its wider value chain, by promoting the value of information exchange and stimulate collaboration and synergies between the end-users of the 2 countries.

The innovative character of the project lies on the fact that it aims to offer a holistic set of services that will be complementary and result in a cohesive result, which is the direct support of newly established SMEs. Its focus on businesses operating in the agri-food chain and its wider ecosystem contributes to its innovative side. The main target group is the local newly established and potential SMEs, since they need holistic and effective support and guidance. Through this project they were greatly benefited since they acquired access to a safe environment, which provided them the necessary knowledge, cost-effective strategies and contacts, helping them lay strong foundations in order to survive and prosper.

In this context, the expected result of the project is the enhancement of support services offered to agrifood businesses in the CB area. The establishment the BSC cultivated a breeding ground for the creation, survival and development of SMEs. The BSC followed two main approaches, to effectively support in key places. Firstly followed the incubator approach that aims to train and consult the sector's newly established SMEs and equip them with all fundamental knowledge and business tools to seek funding. Secondly aimed to develop and provide the tools and guidance needed, to become cost efficient by integrating practices of CE and Contemporary Logistics, that will help them cultivate a competitive advantage and boost their growth. Both approaches used mentorship, training, ICT technologies and networking, to achieve maximum impact and offer applied, substantial support.

In the context of the present Deliverable we should make some introductory clarifications. Capitalisation¹ in Interreg can be understood as an integrated process that gathers valuable programme and project results in a specific domain of regional development policy, in order to share knowledge and to raise awareness among Interreg stakeholders about the achievements of Interreg in the particular field, and to support the (re-)use and/or transfer of these results, ultimately promoting improved performance and delivery.

Capitalisation efforts take place on different levels:

- On project level
- At territorial level
- On programme level
- On inter-programme level within Interreg
- With other European programmes or initiatives

and can have different purposes:

- Communication purpose: to increase the visibility of programme and projects results;
- Programme learning: as input to programme strategy development and for building thematic knowledge and expertise in Interreg programme bodies;
- Transfer of project-generated knowledge and outcomes: to promote the (re)use of project outputs, foster

¹ Described in: The 2014–2020 Interreg Programme Management Handbook- fact sheets, available at: http://admin.interact-eu.net/downloads/9306/_INTERACT_Programme_Management_Handbook_Factsheet_Knowledge_Management_and_Capitalisation_in_Interreg.pdf

the use of synergies and complementarities between projects and avoid double funding of similar project interventions and, ultimately, support a more coordinated and efficient deployment of EU funding;

- Support good policymaking: to transfer the knowledge generated by projects to the competent policy making bodies at different territorial levels.

It is evident from the aforementioned definition that capitalisation is a key aspect of Interreg projects in supporting the accomplishment of their objectives on local, regional, national and even EU level. The valorization procedure ensures that all possible channels and opportunities are used for the projects outcomes to reach as many potential final users as possible. It is significant to realize that longevity and sustainability of the project will be achieved only by providing benefits that meet the specific needs of a wider audience of beneficiaries.

The Capitalisation Strategy Plan of Agroefficiency project has been designed in such a way so as to allow the exploitation of the tangible and intangible results of the project, optimize their value, enhance their impact and facilitate their integration at multiple levels. The Plan thus pays particular attention to the sustainability of the results and the enhancement of their impacts on regional level through direct involvement of local and regional policy makers, stakeholders and enterprises in the implementation area.

The present document starts with a brief description of Capitalisation's aims and objectives as well as the programming documents of the Interreg programme and continues with a definition of the target groups addressed via the current capitalization plan. The different actions to be performed as well as tools to be utilized will be described afterwards.

2. Objectives of Capitalization Strategy

The Capitalisation Plan foresees to:

- Involve the final beneficiaries with the strategy
- Match the capitalization and enhancement activities with the real needs of the project's beneficiaries

The Agroefficiency project partners are advised to use this plan not only as a reference base or a guide for their valorisation actions, but mainly as a pool of ideas for streamlining Agroefficiency impacts to potential beneficiaries by:

- Optimizing the value and the impact of the Agroefficiency project: It is a fact that an ongoing process nurturing interactivity between partners and potential users via adequate channels will produce more useful results targeting real needs.
- Wide-spreading dissemination: Creating awareness and attracting interest and involvement of a vast range of stakeholders will boost the quality and the usefulness of the project's results.
- Optimal use of resources: Using the right resources will optimize the involvement of the targeted groups (appropriate allocation of financial and human resources).
- Transferring results to upgrade innovation systems and practices: As a consequence, the outcomes will allow the enhancing of innovation policies and systems on regional and local level.
- Sustainable use of results: The results are taken and adapted by users. We don't want the results to be put in the drawers but instead to be creatively used by target groups and all the potential stakeholders

3. Target Groups

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Proposed target groups are:

- Local and regional public authorities & policy makers
- Policy makers are one of the most important target groups of Agrofficiency due to their influence on their local/regional/national policies. Policy makers who make decisions about defining strategies and policies relevant to and financing of entrepreneurial initiatives and organisations are targeted.
- Project stakeholders (newly established and small SMEs of the Agrifood sector, relevant business incubators so as to create synergies)
- Associations and NGOs devoted to the promotion of cyclical economy,
- Chambers of Commerce
- Research centres, universities, unions and all other organisation that promote cyclical and green economy in the agrofood sector and Innovation through their role and work (projects) are also a basic target group of the project.
- The entrepreneurial sector of small agrofood businesses is the “end user” who needs to be reached and invited to discuss about its needs and problems concerning incorporation of green techniques in their productivity line and innovation development (organisational culture, financing and funding finding, implementation of green techniques, etc).

4. Action plan

Capitalisation requires a common guiding principle that must be applied to all types of capitalisation actions proposed within the framework of this Plan. The different steps to be conducted are organised according to the following phases:

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- 1) Identification of the experience to be capitalised on
- 2) Organisation of a system
- 3) Capture of the experience to be reused
- 4) Valorisation of the experience by transforming into usable information (definition of a common format for all types of capitalisation)
- 5) Use/dissemination of experience gained.

The implementation of the Seminars, workshops etc. were designed and implemented in view of the needs of the final users of the project for sustainable development, therefore Capitalisation prospects are ensured: the participants themselves will continue using the project's outputs and will also promote them to their friends and colleagues respectively.

In order to ensure the proper dissemination of project results after project's completion the overall following actions are required:

- ✓ Regular updating of the Agrofficiency website with new information about progress made in green economy and activities on local, regional, national and EU level;
- ✓ Participation of partners in national and international conferences;
- ✓ Generation of new cooperation European programmes (projects) on issues relating with the project's objectives;
- ✓ Support of the application and of the monitoring of project results within the targeted area and other regions and of the incorporation of project's results in the future local / regional primarily and even national innovation strategies;
- ✓ Identification of other funding and institutional opportunities in the whole implementation area for continuation of support towards the utilization and integration of project's outcomes;
- ✓ Identification and cultivation of connections with other projects and organisations working in the same field for exchanging experiences and furthering concepts;
- ✓ Exploration of promotion of Agrofficiency outcomes and results beyond the areas directly linked to the project;
- ✓ Continuation of the operation of the Business Centers in Greece and Bulgaria by incorporating their operation in the day- to day operation of the participating partners
- ✓ Promotion of the platform developed in all exhibitions and public events that partners participate

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and continuous upload of data so as to keep the interest of the users vivid

- ✓ Information of the members of participating partners for the operation of the Business Centers and their benefits
- ✓ Selection of ideas from the participants that will attend the seminars and continuation of their support after the conclusion of the project through soft activities such as assistance for networking with other organisations within or outside their country, etc.;
- ✓ Continuation of the Hybrid Networking & innovation fora for Agrofood Sector Stakeholders, which created the linkage between farmers, and agrofood SMEs
- ✓ Inclusion of the results of the Capitalization workshop organized by PB4 in Blagoevgrad on 17/2/2023 in capitalization strategy
- ✓ Further consolidation principles of the Circular Economy in agri-food enterprises (Circularity Strategies for SMEs Handbook)

5. Capitalization tools

The following tools are proposed to be utilized for the promotion of project and its:

1. Agroefficiency website:

Each partner will incorporate a link on his/her organization's website to the project so that all possible visitors can access it. This tool is important as Agroefficiency's website can and should be reached by all target groups and could effectively offer a real support to the different actors involved. The website will be constantly updated with information and news and will remain online also after the project end for a period of at least five years.

2. Creation of contact lists:

Contact details such as phone numbers/faxes/e-mails/etc. of local and regional policy makers, liaison offices of local universities, local and national media, managers of large or medium sized enterprises, owners of firms, organizations conducting research, etc. is proposed to be recorded in a

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Contact Database. This Database will allow every member of target groups to be approached by e-mail, phone or any other available mean of communication.

3. Providing special materials to target groups:

The Agrofficiency project brochure together with the other promotional material to be sent to partner's local network in order to attract their interest and motivate them respectively.

4. Use of mass media:

The press or any other means of mass media – as long as feasible to be addressed after the project conclusion – could be addressed so as to inform the wider public about the results of the project and motivate them to visit the project's website and platform.

5. Building “bridges” with relevant projects:

Agrofficiency is part of a wider pool of projects elaborated in the implementation area that deal with entrepreneurship in agrofood sector and cyclical economy and it is recommended to be further capitalized as such.