



I-CON PROJECT NEWSLETTER N° 3, NOVEMBER 2017



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IMPROVING COMPETENCES AND SKILLS THROUGH FOOD SECTOR INNOVATIONS

Welcome back to our I-CON newsletter, a half-yearly updating about what's going on at I-CON, upcoming events and activities.

What happened?

"Certain problems have been observed in the functioning of the EU food supply chain regarding transparency, sub-optimal business-to-business relationships, lack of attractiveness for skilled workers and low market integration across EU countries" (Food and drink industry, Growth, European Commission website - October 2017).

Let's resume where we left off...

The partners have shared the first half of the road that will lead them to effectively contribute in step-changing the innovation power and impact of the European food industry to the benefit of a sustainable society. Regional sector related diagnosis merged and trend analysis showed how similar countries positioned in Central Europe have different advantages that we can all learn from.

But this story is not made just of research and analysis.

What happens when companies ask for concrete solutions? Technical solutions, services, products, processes team up towards cost efficiency, quality assurance, risk management and functionality. Towards a new business model.

The improvement and innovation mechanism has been

Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme supports regional cooperation among central European countries: Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, as well as parts of Germany and Italy. The programme aims to make central European cities and regions better places to live and work by implementing smart solutions answering to regional challenges in the fields of innovation, lowcarbon economy, environment, culture and transport.

launched to act full circle on skills, materials and technologies, and involve the companies of the food sector and those connected to it through its supply chain, in particular those belonging to the sectors of mechatronics, food safety, quality, labelling and design.



In this issue, we discover which steps have been taken towards a system integrating solutions from the suppliers to the companies, aiming at improving the quality and effectiveness of products and services.

Keep following!

Tools and techniques for companies' sustainability

Food SMEs in Central Europe are facing a shortage of skilled labour force in relation to the requirements posed by the technological progress and the economic innovation. In order to mitigate these disparities, existing and advanced tools and techniques were collected by the I-CON partners, which are able to support food SMEs in the areas of food safety, quality and labelling, mechatronics and food design.

Seventy existing, advanced tools and techniques were collected: 50 tools/techniques from the food safety, quality and labelling areas, 11 tools/techniques from the area of mechatronics and 9 tools/techniques from the food design area.

From this large list of tools and techniques, some were selected which satisfy the needs and requirements of the regions. Then good practices were developed to present their beneficial impact on the companies operation in terms of cost efficiency, quality assessment, risk assessment and risk management, regulations compliance and its assessment, product performance and its assessment, information for users, user satisfaction and its assessment, user's feedback and reaction and other benefits.

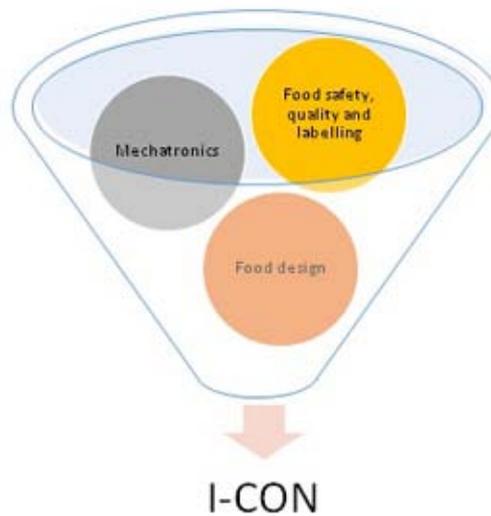


Figure 1: cross-sectoral support for SMEs

Importance of knowledge transfer

Within the framework of the I-CON project, the collected regional needs and large number of available tools, techniques and solutions to meet them highlighted a well-known problem associated to the knowledge transfer between research and industry, especially to SMEs.

In the last years, there were clear efforts and commitment in Europe to foster knowledge transfer for food producer SMEs, but there is still much work ahead and the central problems like trust, language, legal and educational issues, are still impeding the processes.

As the Campden BRI UK report shows, a particular innovation driver, like skill and knowledge, creates different needs at different points in the supply chain.



Figure 2: Drivers of innovation creating the needs along the whole supply chain (modified after Campden BRI 2014-Innovation for the food and drink supply chain)

To reply to these complex issues, the I-CON project has developed a new and innovative consultation approach, which includes face-to-face consultations and web-based help through good practices collected in a Handbook tool.

Traditional machinery with IT support in service of rural fruit and vegetable processing

Völgység Kincse (“Treasure of Völgység”) Social Cooperative is located at Kisvejke, Hungary, based on traditional rules and economic operation models of cooperatives, manufactures and sells apple, apricot, pear, cherry, sour cherry, carrot, beetroot, buckthorn, herb-fruit, vegetable, fruit-vegetable juices made with 100% pure fruit/vegetable content,

without using any preservatives or additives. Raw materials are cultivated and harvested at different local farms and plantations at a cumulated size of 300 hectares. Main markets are domestic: main Hungarian cities (Budapest, Győr, Miskolc, Pécs), and occasionally foreign markets.



Figure 3: A shift of apple pressing at Völgység Kincse Social Cooperative.

Since this cooperative has a social nature, it is enhanced to support the local unemployed or people who are in disadvantaged social situations. The technological line is both traditional and modern: the Austrian “Vorán” technology operated is made up of one elevator with pivoting centrifugal mill, one packing press with rotary cage. The following stage is the heat treatment of the fruit/vegetable juice using a 530 liters container, and the packaging (Vorán bag in box) machine closes the line. The whole system is controlled by a central IT module, which registers raw material, production, final product flows, and is also able to keep track of the energy consumption, and take account of the stock of products for selling at the retail shops or by further channels.

More information: <https://volgysegkincse.hu/>

Who we are

Partners from seven central European countries join their forces to improve entrepreneurial competences and skills in remote areas through food innovation potentials, led by the Pomurje Technology Park (Slovenia).

Slovenia

- Pomurje Technology Park
- Chamber of Agricultural and food enterprises

Austria

- Business Upper Austria

Hungary

- Campden BRI Hungary Ltd
- South Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency

Germany

- Hohenheim University

Poland

- Polish Chamber of Food Industry and Packaging

Slovakia

- Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Who funds us

Our project is funded by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme, which encourages

Italy

- CNA National Confederation of Crafts and Small and Medium Sized businesses - Regional Association of Emilia Romagna
- UNISEF - Industry Association Service & Training of Treviso and Pordenone

cooperation on shared challenges in Central Europe. With 246 million Euros of funding from the European Regional Development Fund, this programme supports institutions to work together beyond borders to improve cities and regions in Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.



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