

YEAR IN REVIEW



SMERF Diagnosis Tool

The SMERF Diagnosis Tool is one of the core results of the SMERF project, designed to help SMEs evaluate their readiness for transformation across four key pillars: **Innovation Culture, Digital Manufacturing, Open Innovation & Sharing Economy, and Green & Circular Economy & Sustainability.**



Throughout 2024 and early 2025, the SMERF Diagnosis Tool underwent a **three-phase pilot testing** process engaging both project partners and **SMEs from diverse sectors and regions**. The testing confirmed the tool's potential to act as a strategic self-assessment platform guiding SMEs in their transformation journey.

Phase 1 focused on verifying the tool's technical functionality and user experience; Phase 2 involved **16 SMEs** in the first round of external testing, validating question clarity, navigation, and the relevance of transformation scenarios and Phase 3, the final round, included **160 SMEs** from all partner regions, with feedback indicating that the tool was generally user-friendly, relevant, and insightful.

Some of the key achievements include that **93% of SMEs** involved in the testing reported that the questions prompted valuable reflection on their current practices, while **92%** stated they would recommend the tool to other businesses. Additionally, a majority of SMEs found the transformation scenarios particularly useful in identifying key focus areas for future development.

How does it work?

Step 1



Register or Login

Start your journey by creating an account or logging in

Step 2



Complete the quiz

Answer questions to competencies and operational aspects

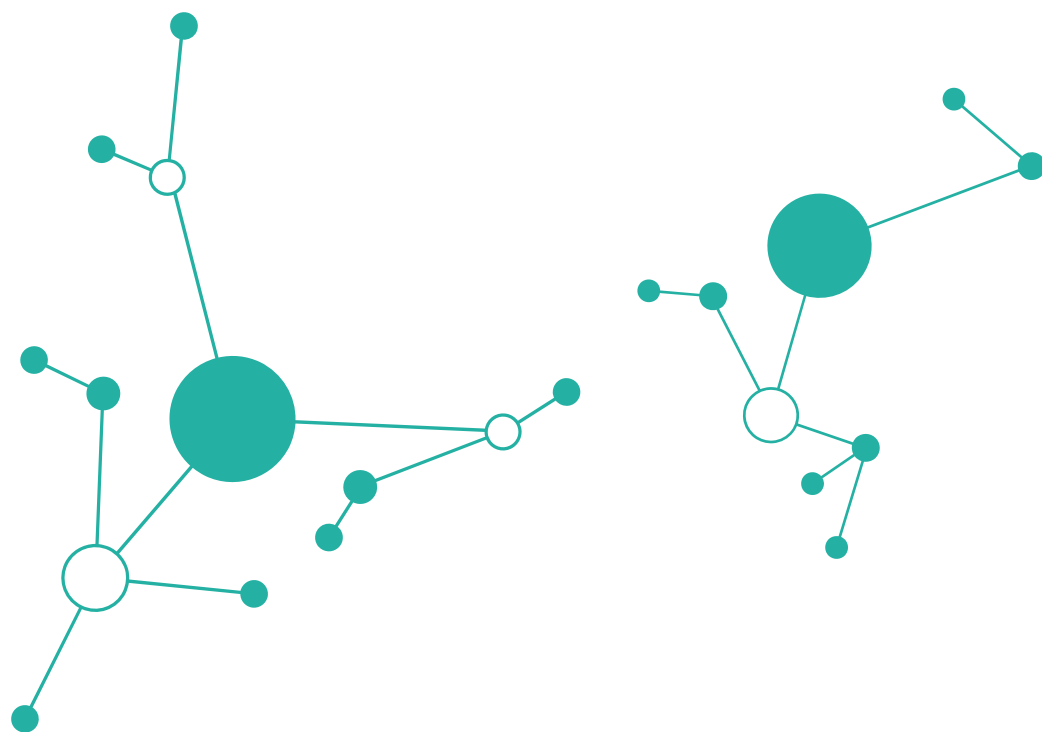
Step 3



Receive Tailored Insights

Get personalized recommendations and actionable strategies

The SMERF Diagnosis Tool will continue to evolve. Final refinements, based on SME and partner feedback, will enhance user experience and ensure that the tool becomes a scalable, sector-flexible digital companion **for transformation readiness**. The upgraded version is expected to be fully available by the end of 2025.



LOOKING AHEAD



SMERF Training for Promoters *(starting June 2025)*

The main aim of these trainings is to empower SMEs with high-quality transformation support by training Higher Education Institutions and intermediaries (support organizations) to become regional mentors. The mentors will be able to support SMEs in navigating and using SMERF Diagnosis Tool and interpret outputs and transformation scenarios from the SMERF Diagnosis Tool. These trainings will take place online and will be organized separately in each project partner regions.

SMERF Trainings *(starting June 2025)*

SMERF Trainings are a set of 8 online trainings designed to support SMEs in implementing transformation scenarios across the four SMERF pillars. They are supposed to provide real-world guidance, expert insights, and tailored solutions based on challenges SMEs identified in the SMERF Diagnosis Tool. Each Training will include expert panels, interactive discussions. Trainings will be held in English and will be free of charge.

Individual Support Programme *(starting September 2025)*

After identifying common needs of SMEs based on the SMERF Diagnosis Tool data, at least 3 SMEs per project partner will be supported. They will be grouped based on SMERF Pillars or other similarities. The Individual Support Programme will help SMEs implement their transformation scenarios through individual mentoring programme (aimed at low-tech SMEs), expert consultations and cross-regional services (aimed at low- and medium-tech SMEs).

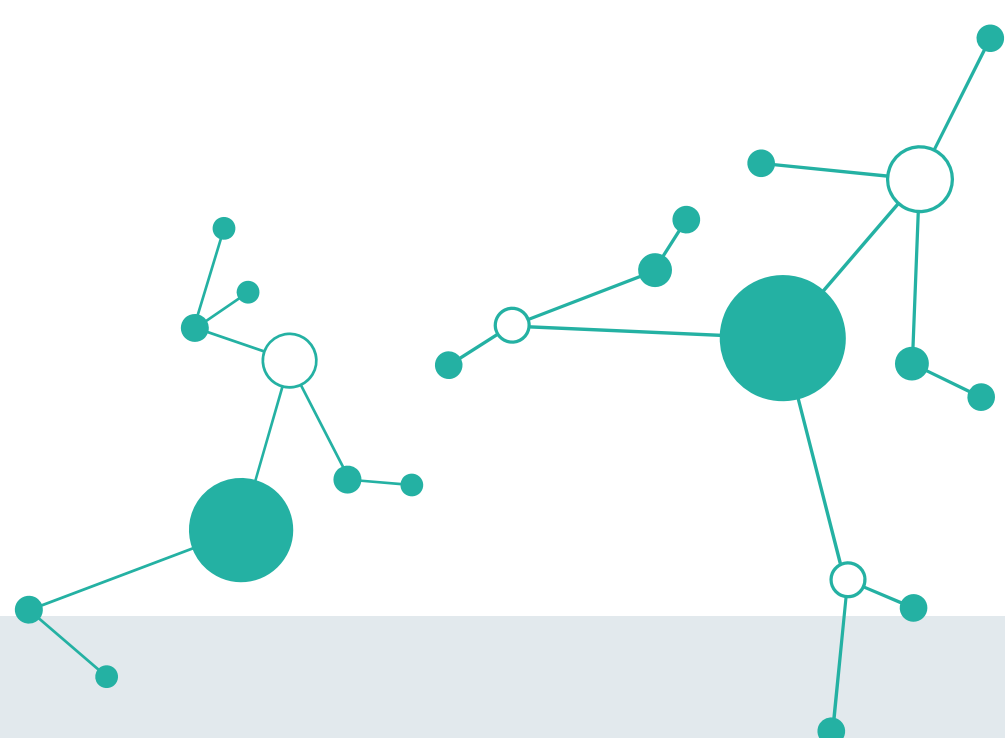
InnoGreen Market *(starting September 2025)*

To foster meaningful connections between SMEs and large companies across the four SMERF transformation pillars, the project has launched the InnoGreen Market initiative. This includes two key actions: an international InnoGreen Market event in Austria

and a series of 16 study visits. The event will bring together SMEs as service/product providers and large companies as demand drivers, creating a unique space for sharing needs, challenges, and solutions. Meanwhile, study visits to mature enterprises and HEIs/RTOs will give SMEs valuable insight into future market expectations and access to cutting-edge research. These activities aim to enhance cross-regional cooperation, support transformation readiness, and strengthen the innovation ecosystem across Central Europe.

Innovation ecosystem development - transfer of best practices from more innovative partner regions *(starting November 2025)*

To strengthen the innovation ecosystem and support SME transformation indirectly, SMERF will host a unique Behind the Scenes Workshop for Policymakers. This cross-regional international event will bring together at least 40 participants from 7 countries and 8 Central European regions, focusing on the transfer of best practices from more innovative countries (Germany and Austria) to less innovative ones (Poland, Croatia, Italy, Slovakia, and Hungary), as defined by the EU Innovation Scoreboard. The workshop will feature open dialogue between public authorities, business support organizations, and representatives from advanced regions, who will share proven models and solutions that effectively empower SMEs. The format fosters interactive exchange, where participants can raise questions and concerns.



PROJECT PARTNER MEETINGS



Meeting in Karlsruhe

The SMERF consortium gathered at Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) during January 21st and 22nd for the 4th in-person meeting, focusing on key advancements in the project. The two-day discussions covered significant progress in the SMERF Diagnosis Tool, trainings for SMEs, and strategies for boosting innovation ecosystems.

The key takeaways from the meeting were further planned activities like improvements to SMERF Diagnosis Tool, preparation of the guidelines for the SMERF Training for Promoters, process of SMEs for the SMERF Individual Support Programme, planning the InnoGreen Market and upcoming study visits as well as setting up A Behind-the-Scenes Workshop for transferring the best practices.



SMERF

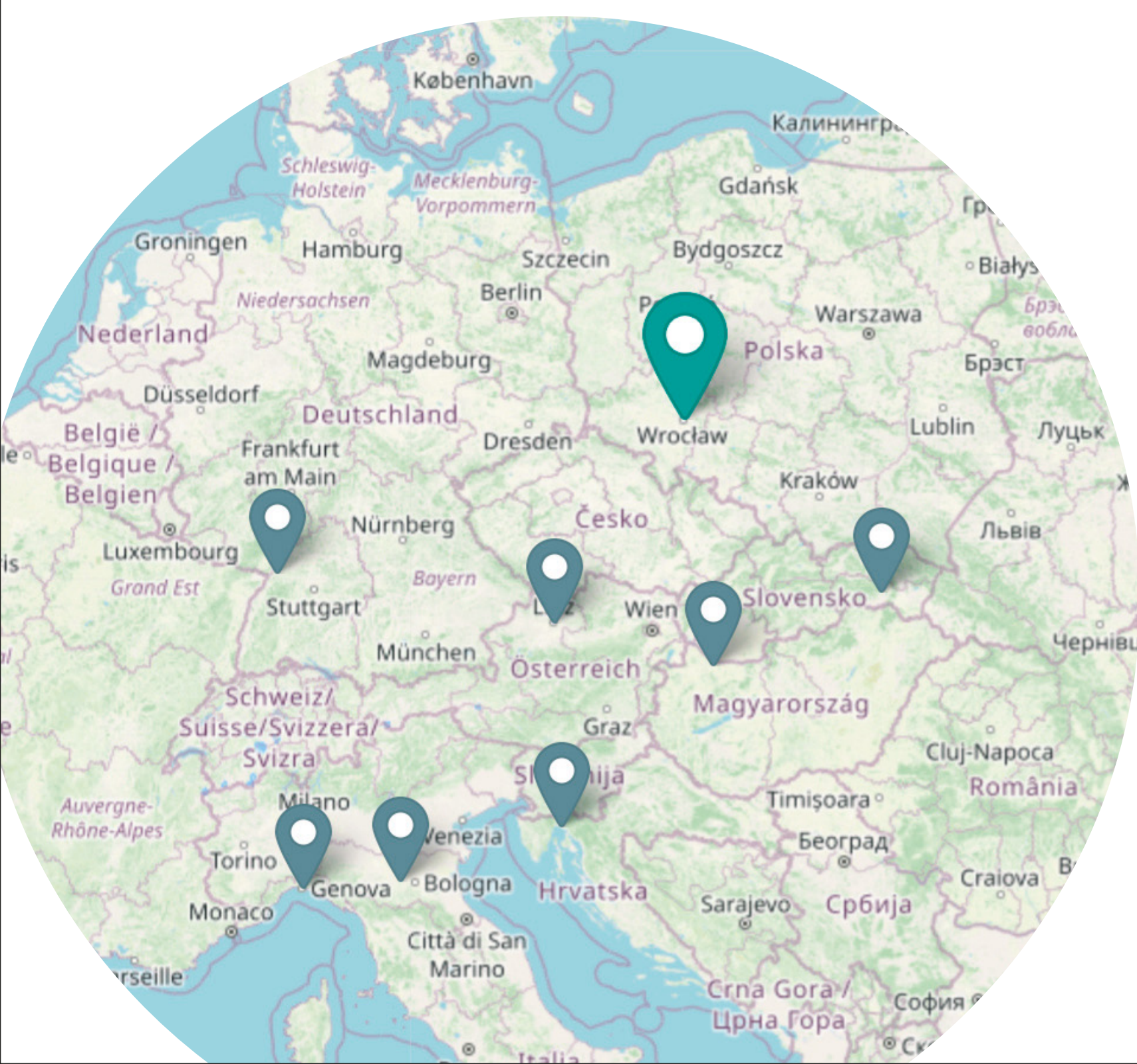
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What is SMERF?

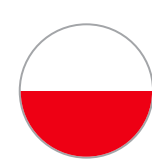
SME Ready for the Future is an international project supported by Interreg Central Europe (Priority SMART), with its main mission to support low-tech and medium-tech SMEs' transition towards SMERF: SME Ready for the Future and providing new services to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Innomediaries (entities either supporting SMEs or closely cooperating with SMEs on innovations development) that will enhance their competences and equally support SMEs.

This project is co-financed by the Inter-reg Central Europe programme and is set to run from April 2023 to March 2026. The project is being implemented by 8 partners from 7 countries (Poland, Italy, Austria, Germany, Croatia, Hungary and Slovakia).



Partnership

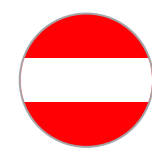
Lead Partner



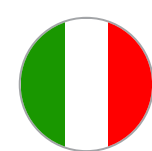
Wrocław University
of Science and Technology

Wroclaw University of Science and Technology

Project partners



Business Upper Austria



Center of Research and Technologic Innovation s.r.l.



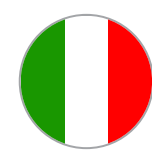
Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT)



Pannon Business Network Association



Science and Technology Park
of the University of Rijeka Ltd.



**Università
di Genova**

University of Genoa







**TECHNICKÁ UNIVERZITA
V KOŠICIACH**

Technical University of Kosice



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