

SMERF continues to advance its mission of supporting SME transformation by strengthening regional innovation ecosystems and enabling cross-border knowledge exchange.

During this period, project partners tested how the **SMERF Diagnosis Tool**, combined with coordinated regional services, can provide clear and practical guidance to companies that want to grow and modernise. By linking diagnostic results with concrete follow-up actions, we made it easier for SMEs to recognise their strengths, identify priority areas, and translate recommendations into real development steps.

This tested approach now forms the basis of two key implementation instruments: the Individual Support Programme and cross-regional study visits, both designed to turn assessment into practical transformation support.

## CURRENTLY ONGOING



### Individual Support Programme

Building on the results of the SMERF Diagnosis Tool, the Individual Support Programme (ISP) now translates analysis into action. Based on each company's diagnostic results, SMEs receive tailored mentoring, expert consultations, and access to cross-regional services aligned with their priority areas.

Instead of generic advice, each participating SME works with mentors to develop a concrete transformation plan with clearly defined next steps. This approach directly connects diagnostic insights with practical measures that strengthen innovation capacity, resilience, and long-term sustainability.

Thanks to its structured and data-driven methodology, the model is easy to replicate and can be adapted by other regions and support organisations that work with SMEs.

## CURRENTLY ONGOING



### Study visits

In parallel, SMERF implemented a series of cross-regional study visits that allowed participating SMEs to experience innovation in practice. Participants visited leading companies, research institutions, and innovation hubs to observe how advanced technologies and transformation strategies are applied in real business environments.

These visits created direct dialogue with experts, fostered peer exchange, and opened doors for future collaboration across regions.



## PAST HIGHLIGHTS

### SMERF Final conference



On 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2026, the SMERF consortium gathered in Stuttgart, Germany for the final in-person project meeting, held alongside the Transferability Conference "Skills for Transformation: Empowering Change in the Creative & Entrepreneurial Ecosystem."

**TRANSFERABILITY CONFERENCE**  
Stuttgart, 4.2.26

**Making transformation reach people**  
Bringing people with different skills together  
Communication skills: how to start and run a cooperation  
Successful learning format  
Communication that reaches SMEs  
how to save money by investing in sustainability → SMEs are listening

**Emerging skills for future**  
motivation & creativity  
helpful for confidence in future  
local alliances to learn and communicate  
political support is important  
two sides of AI: tool or threat?

**Cultural heritage & tourism**  
#romanswinedanube  
75% of trips to Europe are for culture  
EU mandatory for future funding  
Pact for Skills  
digital new technologies  
important to be on the boat  
social media importance  
SOCIAL SKILLS  
base for cooperation

**Voices of transformation**  
only collective actions can bring impact  
ESG-criteria are important for big companies  
green business models  
Calculator how to save CO<sub>2</sub> by cycling  
Who is willing to pay for our business model  
communicating the risks of not working with you

**Ensuring legacy & sustainability**  
project results last longer  
it is important to consider sustainability right from the beginning  
soft power trust  
think as if you were your ancestors  
IMPACT we have to talk about: Did somebody's behaviour change because of the project?

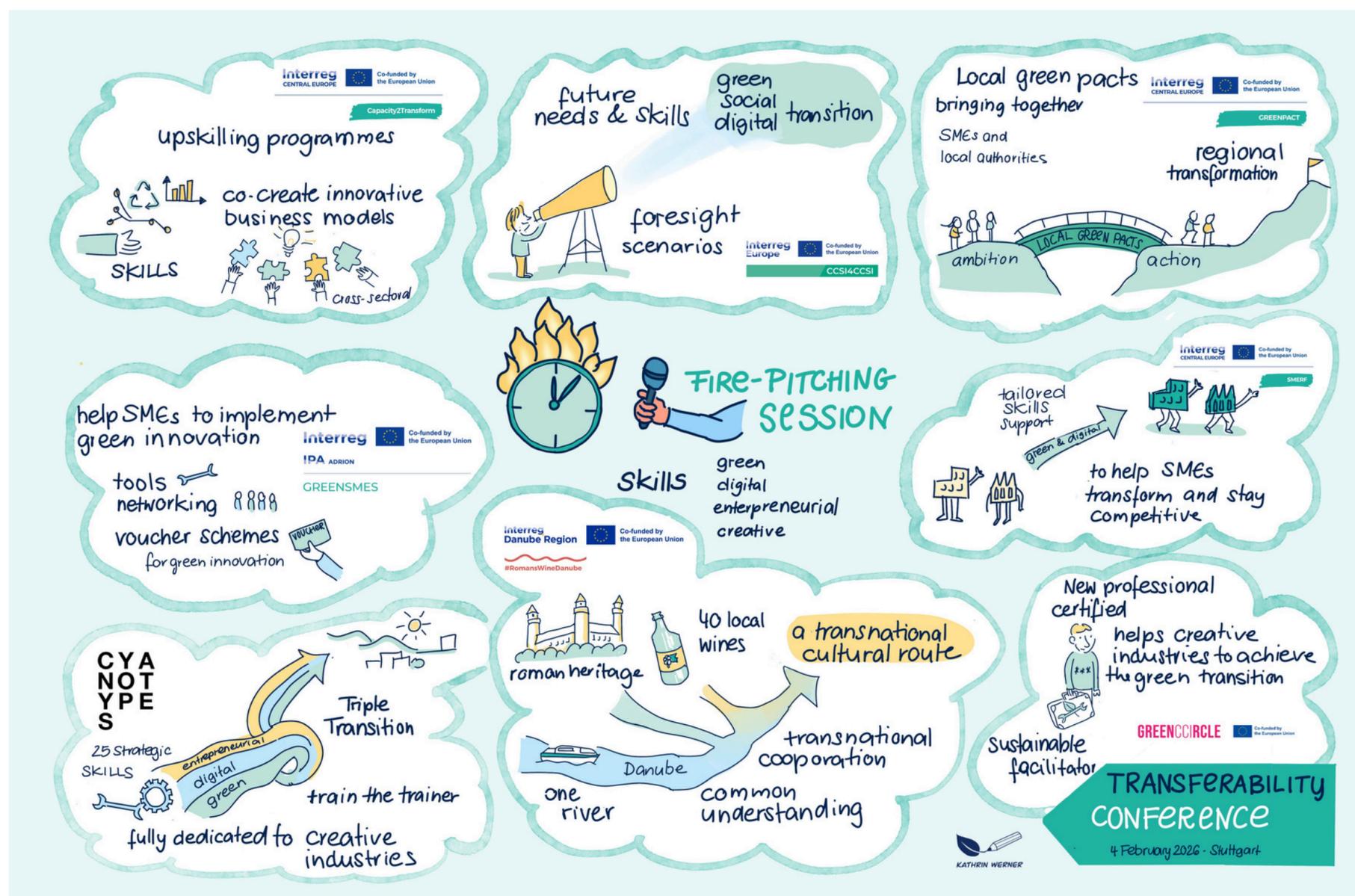
**Creative Skills Lab**  
innovation by multi disciplinary groups

**Key Messages:**  
engaged in transformation  
Cooperation is in the DNA beyond borders between people  
structural support to be successful  
Power of creative industries: become meaningful  
We need Creatives to show us Possible futures  
Make Central Europe better!

INTERREG

KATHRIN WERNER

Graphic by: Kathrin Werner



Graphic by: Kathrin Werner

The event brought together representatives from eight European projects, including SMERF, and welcomed 120 participants from 17 countries, each contributing perspectives from the creative, cultural, entrepreneurial, and skills-development sectors.

Participants explored how skills drive transformation within creative and entrepreneurial ecosystems, strategies for empowering organizations and individuals, and practical insights shared directly by SME representatives. The SMERF team also presented the project's results, tools, and impacts, while engaging in meaningful networking and exchanges of good practices.

# SMERF 5th newsletter

Interreg  
CENTRAL EUROPE

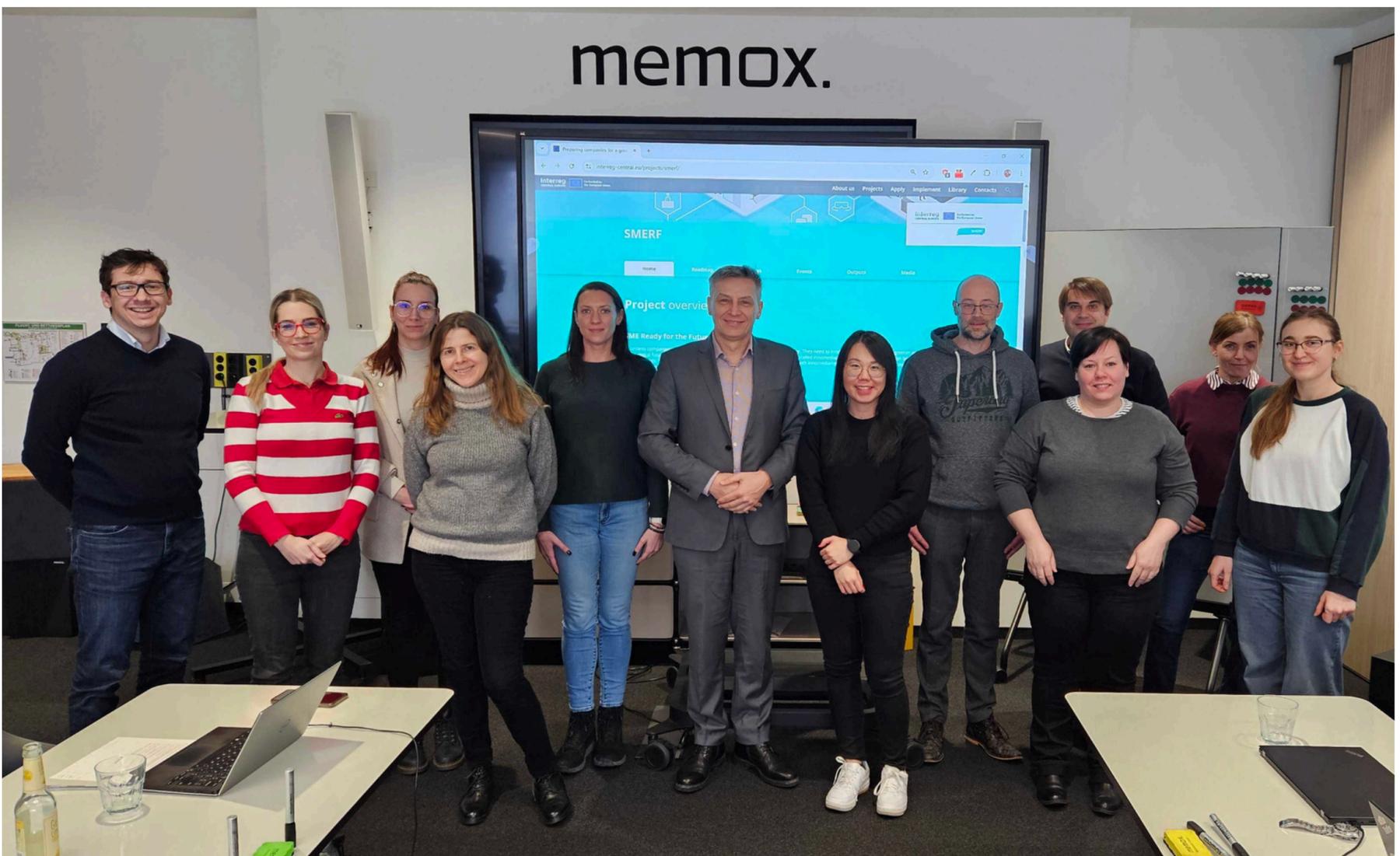


Co-funded by  
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SMERF



As the project approaches its conclusion, these discussions reaffirm the value of SMERF's mission and highlight how its outcomes will continue supporting SMEs across Europe in their transformation journeys.



# SMERF 5th newsletter

## 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 Interreg 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

Wrocław 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.



University of Genoa



TECHNICKÁ UNIVERZITA  
V KOŠICIACH

Technical University of Kosice

## CONTACT INFORMATION

 <https://www.interreg-central.eu/projects/smerf/>

 <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100093135880935>

 <https://www.linkedin.com/company/interreg-ce-smerf/>

 <https://www.youtube.com/@InterregCESMERF>

