

With this 6th and final edition of the SMERF Newsletter, we are proud to look back on three years of intensive collaboration, learning, and transformation. What began in April 2023 as a shared ambition to strengthen innovation capacity of SMEs has now grown into a comprehensive system of tools, methods, and partnerships that will continue to support companies well beyond the project's formal end.

Throughout the journey, SMERF partners were looking for new ways of diagnosing SMEs needs, developed tailored support, facilitated cross-regional study visits, and exchanged practices across seven European countries and eight regions. More than two hundred SMEs, experts, and stakeholders actively contributed to shaping approaches that are now ready to live on in regional ecosystems.

As the project concludes in March 2026, we are pleased to present the final versions of our core outputs:



**SMERF Handbook**



**SMERF Diagnosis Tool**



**Individual  
Support Programme**



**Inspiration  
Knowledge Base.**

Together, they form a practical and interconnected ecosystem that enables SMEs to better understand their needs and guide them through meaningful transformation processes as well as equip higher education institutions, business support organisations and public authorities with tools to be able to help SMEs through this journey.

Thank you for following our work — and for being part of building an ecosystem where SMEs are truly ready for the future.

You can now also watch our **official podcast** featuring Dr. Joanna Helman representing our Lead Partner, Wrocław University of Science and Technology, where she reflects on the SMERF project — its results, achievements, key lessons learned, and what it truly means for an SME to be future ready.



## SMERF Handbook

The **SMERF Handbook** brings together the project's full methodology in a clear and user friendly format. It serves as a practical guide for higher education institutions, business support organisations, and public authorities who want to replicate or adapt SMERF's approach in their own regions. The handbook outlines the complete transformation support journey: from conducting a structured diagnostic assessment, through designing customised support services, to facilitating cross regional collaboration and monitoring SME progress. With step by step guidance and real examples from pilot regions, the SMERF Handbook ensures that the knowledge generated throughout the project remains accessible, transferable, and ready to be used long after the project's close.



## Individual Support Programme (ISP)

The Individual Support Programme helped 25 SMEs across Central Europe turn their diagnostic insights into practical transformation steps, supporting both low and medium-tech companies, with more than one third companies classified as low-tech and therefore receiving full depth mentoring. Companies represented a diverse set of

SMEs, most operating in manufacturing, mobility, environmental technologies and related sectors. Based on the SMERF Diagnosis Tool results, SMEs most frequently requested support in Digital Manufacturing, followed by Innovation Culture, Open Innovation & Sharing Economy, and Green & Circular Economy, highlighting digitalisation as the most urgent need. The programme blended tailored mentoring, expert consultations, and cross regional services, with SMEs valuing the clear prioritisation of actions and mentors emphasising the importance of regular follow ups and practical guidance. Overall, the ISP proved to be an effective mechanism to translate assessment into action and strengthen SMEs' readiness for the future.



## SMERF Diagnosis Tool

The final version of the **SMERF Diagnosis Tool** represents a robust, data driven framework for assessing SME transformation needs. Throughout the project, the tool was tested and refined with companies across partner regions to ensure clarity, usability, and practical value. It provides SMEs with a structured self assessment of their capabilities, challenges, and strategic priorities, generating personalised recommendations that form the basis for targeted support. The tool's updated version includes enhanced scoring logic, improved user experience, creating an efficient link between diagnosis and action.



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SMERF

## Welcome to the SMERF Diagnosis Tool

Empowering SMEs for Future Readiness in Innovation, Digitalization, and Sustainability

### WHO IS IT FOR?

The SMERF Diagnosis Tool is designed for European small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Whether you're just beginning your transformation journey or looking to enhance an existing strategy, this tool adapts to your specific needs.

### WHAT DOES IT DO?

This self-assessment tool enables SMEs to evaluate their current level of transformation readiness and receive a customized development roadmap based on their strengths and areas for improvement.



## Inspiration Knowledge Base

To help SMEs and business support organisations explore new opportunities, the SMERF consortium has fine-tuned the **Inspiration Knowledge Base**. The final version of the database brings together good practices, insights from Trainings, Webinars, expert presentations, and partner regions' innovation ecosystems. It enables users to browse inspiring practices, discover relevant services, and identify approaches that can be adapted to their context. By making this knowledge openly accessible, the Knowledge Base ensures that inspiration and good practices continue to circulate long after the end of the SMERF project.



## WELCOME TO THE INSPIRATION KNOWLEDGE BASE!

online repository where you can find



Good practices



Innovative services



Webinars



Trainings



Workshop for policymakers



SMERF Diagnosis Tool



# SMERF 6th 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

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

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

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