

Input/Output Paper “Digitalization”

The written presentation of cases selected for the on-line meeting
and the output of the Policy Table discussion

October 7th, 2020



Index

Introduction	3
Support for Digitalisation and Digital transformation in Slovenia	4
Integration of digitalization for SMEs	6
Digitalisation – the EU perspective DG CONNECT legislative proposals	7
<i>Good practice examples</i>	9
Companies good practice: digitalisation of SMEs & supporting activities	9
Technological innovation paths of manufacturing SMEs in the context of Industry 4.0.....	11
Go Digital, Go European – the presentation of the EKOI case.....	15
<i>Further Inputs from Stakeholders and Partners</i>	16
Quick testing and prototyping of digital innovative products: t2i best practice	20
Marco Galanti, Innovazione e trasferimento tecnologico, t2i – trasferimento tecnologico e innovazione s.c. a r.l.	20
Challenges for SMEs	20
PoC lab.....	20
Open innovation: the role of trust.....	21
Industry 4.0 Austria – the Platform for Smart Production	22
Innovative start-ups can boost traditional SMEs digital transformation.....	24
Practical example digitization	25
Conclusion.....	26



Introduction

How can digitalisation boost mature SMEs in launching their second life project? Digitalisation is without doubt one of the most frequently mentioned aspects of SMEs' transformation processes. Success stories related to digitalisations are abundant and in a certain sense one could come to believe that the second life of mature SMEs lies often only a click away. And indeed, there are examples in which digitalization appears to be the natural evolution for a business to grow spontaneously into new opportunities. But as with all transformation processes, opportunities from digitalisation behave a bit like icebergs. There is a tip of the opportunity visible to everyone, laying open in the sea for businesses to tap into. But the big bulk of the transformation potential remains underwater, hidden behind waves of challenges and market failures of all sorts. In short, while there might be cases in which the opportunities from digitalisation naturally and spontaneously lead to a second life for mature SMEs, in most of the cases this road is paved with stumbling blocks requiring smart strategies to make the opportunity available on a wider scale. This is what we designate by "policy interventions". It is nevertheless important to note, that policies are understood in a broader sense than simply as state support. They include the complete set of solutions that can be identified to overcome identified challenges. A strategic approach to identifying opportunities, challenges and required solutions, at the level of all involved actors, public and private, is what we could call a typical policy development process.

In order to maximize the opportunities at hand, to reveal as much as possible of the iceberg, so to speak, such a policy development process needs to be interactive and rely on a participation of actors from the quadruple helix – businesses, research, policymakers and society. And it needs to benefit from mutual learning interactions. Challenges are often shared across different regions. And only in an open policy dialogue can successful solutions be multiplied. This is precisely what the series of policy tables of the BE-READI ALPS project aims at. Its Advisory Board, composed of the Observers of the project, constitutes the frame for cross-regional exchange on opportunities, challenges and solutions – to start with digitalisation as a first concrete topic identified as key in the second life projects of mature SMEs in the Alpine Space.

The characteristics of a fruitful policy development process also give this paper its shape: a collection of contributions aimed at mutual learning in a policy dialogue and addressing the opportunity digitalisation represents on the way to a second life for mature SMEs, from the perspective of diverse actors of the quadruple helix.



Support for Digitalisation and Digital transformation in Slovenia

Alenka Marovt, Ministry of Economic Development and Technology of Slovenia

The following challenges of the ministry have been pointed out by the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology of Slovenia:

How to increase the value added in enterprises?

How to increase international competitiveness of Slovene economy?

How to motivate enterprises to implement digital transformation of their business processes (preparation of digital strategies, increase level of competences, business re-organisation, implementation of digital technologies)?

To give the best possible answer on these challenges the ministry is providing the following activities: support digital and innovative environment, where the enterprises can develop, ensure and increase internationalisation by using ICT technologies, strengthen competences of employees and executives in digital transformation and cyber security and promote implementation of Industry 4.0, including automatization and robotisation.

The ministry has defined the following goals for their actions in 2020: at least 150 enterprises will implement digital transformation; at least 300 enterprises that go international by using digitalisation; 30% higher income of them in three years; at least 15% higher value added/employee in three years.

Measures in time period 2014-2020 are including the following actions: Digital innovation hub, Digital transformation in SMEs, E business in SMEs, Digital voucher and Digital transformation of industry.

Digital innovation hub presents a Supportive environment for digital transformation and development of competences. It works as „one-stop-stop“ for digitalisation and:

establishes ecosystem,

connects (EU DIH, best practices from abroad) and Promotes digitalisation,

advises and mentors enterprises and

offers free-of-charge services for enterprises.

Digital vouchers aim for SMEs is: to increase the digital competences, preparation of digital strategy in companies, ensuring cyber security, introducing digital marketing activities and providing easy support in small amounts – from application to approval in 15 days.

SPOT info points offer free of charge information and help when preparing the application.

DIH Slovenia is providing a list of mentors and expert's support.

E Business actions aims are: enterprises support when establishing e-business with the purpose to do business abroad (e-exchange among partners, digital fairs, web pages for foreign markets, online selling, etc.

Aims of the digital transformation of SMEs actions are:



investments in production and business, using digital business in supply/sales chains and raising management capacity in SMEs,
implementation of digital strategy,
enterprises must implement the digital transformation in three years after approval of funds.

Best practice examples of two SMEs have been presented at the end of presentation as well as next generation – new EU funds to be available for Slovenia and their use for purpose of digitalisation.



Integration of digitalization for SMEs

Danijel Lamperger, managing director, Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia

Mr. Danijel Lamperger described the current situation in Slovenia. Although Slovenia ranks close to the EU average regarding digital skills, a major source of concern is the low level of inclusion of digital skills in the curricula of primary and secondary schools. The adoption of digital technologies and business models is generally well advanced, but some sectors are lagging behind. The digital transformation is strong in the automotive sector, e-commerce, tourism, innovation of composite materials and companies integrated into foreign value chains. Slovenia is strong in some niche areas such as robotics, fin-tech, cyber security and artificial intelligence (also block chain). The Covid-19 crisis presents a big boost in digitalisation of businesses in the country.

The chamber is providing: awareness raising and education of SMEs (also mentioned in the planning and strategic documents - workshops, congresses, etc.), cooperation with school and training institutions, information and assistance at the use of incentives for digitalisation. The cooperation with the Slovenian Digital Coalition (SDC) is an example of good practice in EU; it involves the participation of all stakeholders. SDC is implementing its national digital strategy and currently drafting a comprehensive artificial intelligence strategy.

In order to improve the current situation, the chamber suggest to

- improve the approach of vocational and technical schools (skills) - more cooperation and better equipment for learning competencies,
- provide better exchange between science and SMEs (more systematic and consistent approach),
- strengthen the education through digital channels - public actions, employment office, etc.; it should educate about digital competencies and implement it with new digital tools,
- to provide further digitalisation of the administration (supportive environment) - for easier access of SMEs to formal procedures.



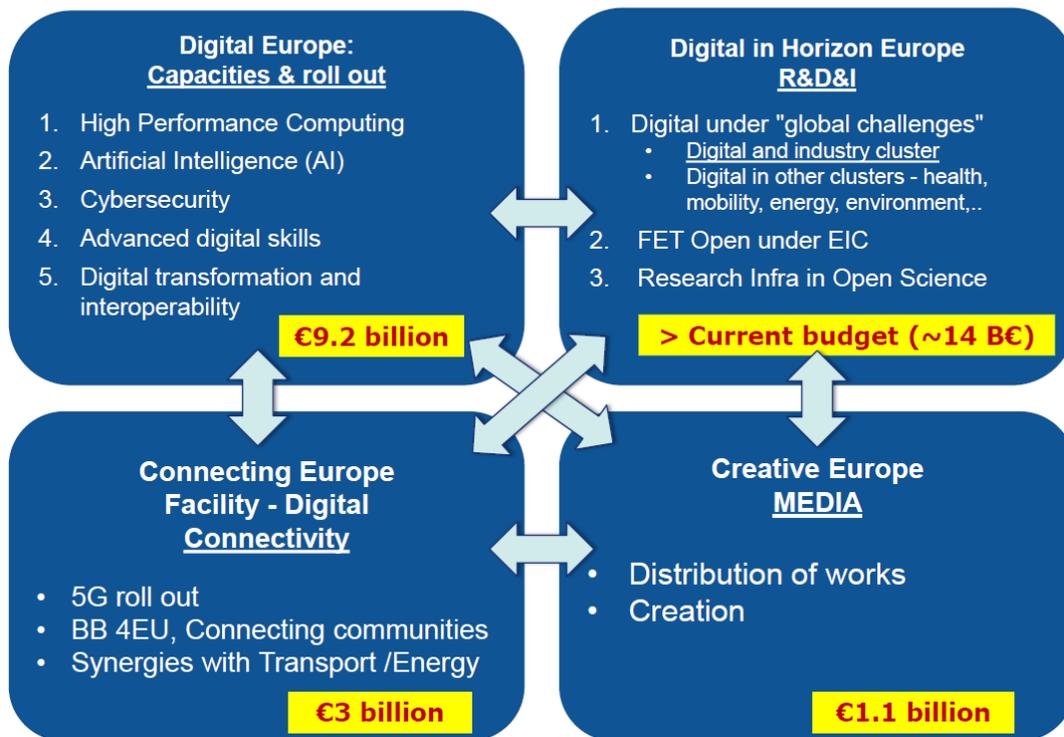
Digitalisation – the EU perspective DG CONNECT legislative proposals

Ziga Bahovec, EC Directorate-General for Communication Networks, Content and Technology

Mr, Bahovec presented the Digitalisation actions in MFF 2021-2027, where the main objective is to ensure that Europe drives the digital transformation of society and economy, bringing benefits to all citizens and businesses. More specifically it aims to:

- reinforce the EU’s digital capacities (computing, data, cybersecurity, AI,..),
- ensure their widest possible roll out and maximise their benefits (to all citizens and businesses including SMEs in all regions in all sectors),
- prepare for and lead the development of next generation technologies and
- build a world-leading connectivity infrastructure

DIGITAL IN THE NEXT MFF: OVERVIEW



The Digital Europe Programme funding focused on building the strategic digital capacities of the EU and on facilitating the wide deployment of digital technologies, to be used by Europe's citizens and businesses.



Inadequate uptake of digital solutions is present nowadays. Europe is slow in adopting and diffusing digital innovations, the adoption is uneven between Member States, solving the issue only at national level likely led to fragmented approach due to different starting points and public sector does not play its role of "first mover" in deploying latest technologies to offer best services to citizens and business. Today 81% of EU citizens use the Internet regularly.

Concerning the growth 30% of all economic growth in the EU for 2001-2011 can be attributed to ICT investment. Additional 2.7 million new ICT specialist posts in the EU (since 2005). More than 50% of companies in the EU are trying to recruit ICT specialists.

New business models are appearing, e.g. online platforms (e.g. amazon), they enable new useful interactions; 70% of "unicorns" are online platforms.

E-commerce has been growing by 20% a year for a decade; 8% of the world's retail spending

Building essential digital capacities involves:

High Performance Computing

- Acquire exascale and new petascale machines while upgrading existing supercomputers
- Develop European access to supercomputers and federate European HPC and data resources
- Widen the use of HPC and applying it across sectors

Artificial Intelligence

- Establish EU-wide common data spaces
- Develop Large-scale Testing and Experimentation Facilities
- Scale up the European AI platform

Cybersecurity

- Key capacity building: the cybersecurity shield
- Accelerate cybersecurity certification
- Widen the deployment of cybersecurity tools
- Support the NIS Directive implementation

Advanced Digital Skills

- Develop Master's programmes or modules in key capacity areas
- Develop short term training courses in key capacity areas
- Support job placements in key capacity areas
- Maintaining and populating the platform for Skills and Jobs



Good practice examples

Companies good practice: digitalisation of SMEs & supporting activities

Tomas Kokot, Flawless Code

- Digital event is a modular virtual platform for organizing events at the highest possible level. It is adapted to different requirements, advises on implementation, and provides a new user experience for visitors. It allows the execution of a wide variety of virtual events and uses a unique modular design that changes the rules of the game in the market. The platform can connect, include, customize every element of the platform, just like in the real world, and make every event unique.
- Digital event was created as a project by experienced event organizers who were forced by the COVID-19 pandemic to look for new opportunities. They combined their IT team with international experience and references and together they developed the Digital event. They realized that with virtualization they can raise events to a higher level and capitalize on rich experiences from the physical world in the digital.
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- The platform was developed with special attention to:
 - unique graphical interface with infographic interface which allows to easily adapt to the content and graphics of each event,
 - the platform allows to organize everything from fairs to conferences and online presentations. You can involve different partners, invite participants, organize a conference...,
 - specific set of functional activities for visitors enriches visitor's user experience,
 - modular design allows to fully adapt to the wishes of the client in cost effective way.
 - their inhouse designed CMS system is designed specifically to organize virtual events, is intuitive, simple and easy to use,
 - they can track user behaviour and analyse every aspect of the event with advanced analytics.

Different event, that can be organized with the platform are: Fairs, Career fairs, Conferences, Web presentations Open days, Walkarounds. They can present client business to B2B or B2C target audience in an interactive and engaging way.

platform builds on the visitor's real event experience. It does not provide a simple website version of different exhibitors' pages; but makes the virtual event feel like the real thing. It guides the visitor with layered information delivery and experience of discovery. It provides entrance to the venue, with subsections, departments or halls and a basic element, that works as a carrier of functionality for the interaction with the visitor. Their user experience is the one of a wanderer, that cruises between digital exhibitors and engages with their content.





At the same time, they use every advantage that digital world can provide. Users can browse and search, add events to calendars, save their favourite features and use the online catalogues. Exhibitors can provide information in every available form (text, images, media) and engage with visitors in real time. They can organize live streams, webinars and chatrooms. They can generate leads, animate them with simple widgets and book appointments or simply communicate with visitors.

Adaptability of the platform allows to uniquely specify colour schemes, adapt fonts and other graphical elements so they can faithfully represent visual identity of client's business. Exhibitors can edit front-end content with a custom interface in real time, accordingly to their wishes and comprehension of the event. Great deal of effort was put into registrations and ease of use for participating partners or exhibitors. That greatly improves client's involvement in the organizational part of the event. They can easily determine conditions of participation in the event and specify rules for the visitors as well as limit the event only to invitees, organize registration fees, limit participation by age, create users, and customize the accessibility of content. Like in a real event.

Each events are unique, so they can provide advice what is best for its implementation, provide counselling and instructions for the staff and exhibitors. The flexibility also provides them with a range of cost- effective options to really comply with client's wishes.

An important feature of the digital world is its measurability. They can analyse different aspects of visitor's data and provide their clients, exhibitors or even users with comprehensive and useful information. These information are gathered in real time, so they can adjust the event or exhibitor's engagement during the on-going event. Data and user information are stored with the compliance of current legislation and protected within the highest security standards.

Technological innovation paths of manufacturing SMEs in the context of Industry 4.0

Eleonora di Maria, University of Padova

Paths of digitization of SMEs in Veneto

Results of the study carried out by the Department of Economics and Management "Marco Fanno" for Unioncamere del Veneto (Action 2 - Digitization and SMEs - Veneto Region) – 2019

The study conducted shows a progressive increase in the number of companies in the Veneto region that are actively facing the digital transformation process. The quantitative surveys show how over the last three years the share of adopting companies has grown among the manufacturing companies in Veneto.

The company size seems to be a false problem. As we have seen from the data, even the small (and micro) enterprise shows attention towards 4.0 and has started its own path of digitization. From this point of view, the qualitative research allows to highlight how small businesses have a good capacity to face the challenges of digital. Naturally the medium-large enterprises have a greater number of adopted technologies altogether, a choice that is driven by the necessity to face the greater complexity and articulation of their own processes. Instead of the dimension, the element that seems to be more important in explaining the propensity to the investment is the vision and the strategic proactivity of the enterprise. Only the enterprises that have understood (big or small) the potentialities of the technology have decided to start a path of digital transformation.

Industry specificities also emerge in the choice of technological solutions to adopt, where companies adapt and customize 4.0 industry technologies consistent with their process or product. This aspect comes emphasized in evident way also from the qualitative analysis. Both the cases of studies that the focus groups show how enterprises inserted in different chains and operating within different industrial sectors and markets invest giving priority to those technologies industry 4.0 more adapted to overcome the competitive challenges (personalization, efficiency, traceability etc.) and allow to reach the prefixed results. In this sense, the demand for customization of industry 4.0 technologies (4.0 projects) is consistent with this scenario. The digital transformation towards 4.0 has allowed the adopting companies to achieve important results of growth and orientation of the work towards activities with greater added value, opening new market opportunities.

The digital transformation linked to industry 4.0 cannot take place if there has not been an upstream process of investment in ICT technologies. From the study it turns out like the adopting enterprises have developed a path that has often begun much before the advent of the so-called fourth industrial revolution and is connected to technological choices on the front of the integrated managerial systems or the digitalization of the informative processes towards the market (es. CRM). In this sense, the digital transformation more than a radical change represents a further evolution of the technological investment of the company to strengthen its organization and support its competitiveness.

Moreover, it is emphasized the ineluctability of change by those who have undertaken this path or even by companies that are aware of the potential of industry 4.0. If the objective is clear, the path to reach it (to implement the technologies industry 4.0) comes instead often seen like a difficult process, in which lacking above all competences and the management of the organizational change (cultural transformation). It is also important to be able to manage the integration with the technological



solutions already present in the company that represent an important resource - also from the point of view of experience in the management of digitization in the company - but at the same time can become a constraint to the adoption of innovative technologies.

Financial resources are an obstacle to investment, especially for smaller companies, which therefore perhaps need to be given more support in their adoption process. It is no coincidence that smaller companies have benefited significantly from the funding opportunities made available by the Chamber system, at regional and national level. Three categories of firms emerge from the study in this perspective:

- a) innovative companies (or those that have made investments in ICT in the past) that are proactive in seeking funding to support investment paths already planned.
- b) companies aware of the opportunities of 4.0, but with more limited resources, and that can be pushed to invest in relation to the opportunity to exploit a financial incentive.
- c) companies refractory to innovation that have difficulty understanding how 4.0 could help them to relaunch their business.

Casi di studio

Company name	Marmi Serafini
Activities	The company founded in the early 2000s has had a competitive repositioning process starting from the production of marble products to design furniture components. It has invested in marketing and design in order to be able to provide tailor-made and catalog products for national and especially international customers.
Headquarter	Chiampo (VI)
Turnover	1,3 Million Euro (83% export)
Employees	15 (8 in operations)
Technologies 4.0 adopted	Robotics and advanced automation (for cutting and processing - robot with 7-axis arm and finishing machine (polishing)), 3D printing (integrated with 3D model copying machine), cloud.
Motivations	In order to maintain international competitiveness and meet the demands of the reference market, the company needs to constantly renew its technologies (in the last 3 years they have been completely renewed) for the realization of complex products. Another important motivation has concerned the research of internal efficiency.
Results achieved	The company was able to achieve a reduction in production costs, an increase in productivity and above all an increase in the share of customized products as well as entry into foreign markets and an increase in the number of customers. The digital transformation has made it possible to serve both design studios that appreciate technological and productive skills and studies that enhance the interaction mediated by technologies (sharing projects in 3D). In addition, new technologies have improved the quality of the production process for employees.



Internal skills / organizational impact	The organizational impact of the digital transformation has materialized in a redefinition of business processes from design to production. The transparency and sharing of product and process information and traceability of production has increased. It increased the staff in production and the competitive strengthening allows to increase also the other functions (e.g. marketing).
Public funding for Industry 4.0	The funding to which the company has had access concerns both the Industry Plan 4.0 and funding at regional and Chamber of Commerce level. The resources made it possible to make the necessary investments that would not have been possible (or at greater cost). Through the funding the company has borne the costs of starting the digitization and then increase its autonomy.
Challenges	The critical issues concern the availability of suitable professionals in the market as well as the limited internal knowledge. It would also be useful to be able to count on support directly addressed to entrepreneurs to allow a more conscious understanding of the needs and consequences of digital transformation.

Company name	Francom SpA
Activities	Since the foundation of the company in the 60s' there has been a process of evolution and competitive repositioning: from the production of tool containers to the current offer developed since the mid 90s focused on the design and manufacture of vans (modular solutions for a customized product).
Headquarter	Cassola (VI)
Turnover	10 Millions Euro (60% Export)
Employees	50 employees (80 at the group level - 30 in operations)
Technologies 4.0 adopted	Robotics and advanced automation (laser and pantograph), cloud, cybersecurity technologies, IoT. The possibility to implement Artificial Intelligence solutions for the optimization of pallet preparation (configuration) starting from the shipment database (big data) is currently being evaluated. It is also investing to provide mobile devices for its employees and has completed the implementation of an automated warehouse. The company has also integrated its entire sales network through a proprietary VPN network and an internally developed integrated management solution with product configurator for the sales network.
Motivations	The main motivation for the investment concerns the increase of internal efficiency in the organization and management of production, within a framework of maintaining international competitiveness and partly also environmental sustainability (energy savings).



Results achieved	With the wide and systematic development and integration of different digital solutions the company has been able to improve the customer service (1 week between order and assembly), to obtain cost reduction and increase in production and maintain international competitiveness.
Internal skills / organizational impact	The digital transformation process required both an update of existing skills (employees with technical skills) and the hiring of new technical professionals (2 people).
Public funding for Industry 4.0	The company makes systematic use of public funding. It has been able to count on all the incentives provided by the Industry Plan 4.0 and vouchers of the Chamber of Commerce. Financing makes it possible to reduce the costs and risks of independently planned technology investments.
Challenges	The main criticalities found concern above all the process of integration with pre-existing technological solutions and implementation times that involve technology suppliers. The difficulty to find professional figures in the labor market constitutes another criticality as well as the transformation of internal processes that reduces the "historical memory" inherent in the process itself making the worker (less expert) less flexible in the case of errors and problems related to technology.



Go Digital, Go European – the presentation of the Ekoi case

Mathilde Mauvais, risingSUD

Ekoi is a SME created in 2001, based in Fréjus (France) specialized in cycling equipment (clothing, helmets, eyewear, shoes and other accessories). With a successful digital pivot, Ekoi has increased its turnover from 1 to 20 million euros.

Ekoi's successful digital pivot is based on the analysis of their value chain, as it has been described by Porter. The Ekoi team studied their key activities that had a real impact in terms of quality and costs and that'll give a company a competitive edge. They realized progressively that on their value chain, marketing and sales were a major source of gain, not only to maximise actual value but also perceived value for money.

Initially, Ekoi worked with the main retailers and wholesalers on the market to distribute their products. However, they faced several constraints: low bargaining power and hence low margins, difficulties to codevelop products with their partners and constraints regarding their stock management.

In 2008, they started with a showcase website, with a communications focus, as they used it to promote their products, their sponsors and their expertise. But they soon realized a commercial website would be better to increase their web traffic. However, they were still working with retailers and wholesalers. In only two years, 1.5 million euros of income was coming from the website. Ekoi decided to go fully digital. Since then, their income has been steadily increasing to reach 20 million euros today. In 2014, they decided to go international, starting by European markets. Their website made it possible to export their products to different international markets.

Thanks to this digital pivot, Ekoi has effectively cut out the intermediaries and has therefore been able to offer products to its customers at unbeatable value for money, generally 30% to 40% cheaper than the competition.

Not only Ekoi increased actual value, but also perceived value for money using several levers, including the collaboration of the cyclists and their teams that they sponsor. They sell to regular cyclists, products designed for professional runners. As soon as they are validated by them in competition, they are also sold to the general audience. Ekoi also worked a lot on its website in order to increase the value for their customers. Many of their products can be customised directly online using a configurator that enables the customer to customise its own helmet, eyewear, shoes etc. all with the design of their choice. The XXth century was the era of standardized mass production and mass consumption, symbolized by Ford's quote "you can buy a Ford in any color you want, as long as it's black". Today, Ekoi has well embraced the new era: the era of mass personalization.



Further Inputs from Stakeholders and Partners

Agreement for the Economic Development and Competitiveness of the Lombard System

E-COMMERCE CALL 2020

New markets for Lombard companies

Giada Bagattin, Unioncamere Lombardia

Given the emergency context due to the COVID-19 epidemiological crisis, in which physical participation in trade fairs is substantially hindered, it is necessary to identify alternative channels to ensure commercial opportunities for Lombard companies' products beyond the domestic market.

Based on this assumption, the Lombardy Region and the Chambers of Commerce of Lombardy, within the framework of the Agreement for the economic development and competitiveness of the Lombardy system, promote the present measure aimed at supporting SMEs that intend to develop and consolidate their position on the markets through e-commerce, by encouraging access to cross border platforms (B2B and/or B2C) and/or e-commerce systems (websites and/or mobile app).

Application could be transmitted from 10.00 on 25th June 2020 to 12.00 on 11th September 2020.

The total resources allocated to the beneficiaries amount to € 2.618.000,00 of which:

- € 1.810.000,00 to be paid by the General Direction Research, Innovation, University, Export and Internationalization of Lombardy Region.
- € 808.000,00 to be paid by the Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Crafts and Agriculture of Lombardy (hereinafter referred to as "Chambers of Commerce").

The benefit consists of a non-refundable grant to partially cover expenses incurred (net of VAT) as shown in the table below.

Grantable contribution	Minimum investment	Maximum amount
70% of eligible expenses	€ 4.000	€ 10.000

When submitting the application, the companies concerned must have already identified the product portfolio to be offered on the online sales channel, the foreign target markets and one or more specialized online sales channels, selected in accordance with the product objectives and target markets.

Companies may submit projects relating to the opening and/or consolidation of a commercial channel for exporting their products through access to specialized services for online sale b2b and/or b2c:



- provided by third parties, whether they are retailers, marketplaces, or private sales services, under the condition that the commercial transaction takes place between the company and the buyer final.
- made within the proprietary company portal.

At the end of the planned activities, the projects shall demonstrate the launch of the online sales activity unless the company, when describing the project, is able to demonstrate that the type of products and/or the markets of reference make it impossible or not convenient to carry out online commercial transactions. In this last case, the e-commerce portal must at least allow the possibility to request a quote or a purchase order.

The following expenditure items for the target markets are eligible for the contribution indicated by the company in the project description:

- a) access to online sales services on the chosen channels (registration fees and any quotas determined as a percentage of the transactions carried out, incurred during the period of validity of the project).
- b) project feasibility analysis, with particular reference to the needs of adaptation administrative, organizational, training, logistic, acquisition of tools and services.
- c) organization of specific interventions of personnel training.
- d) acquisition and use of forms of smart payment.
- e) implementation of a communication, information and promotion strategy for digital exports, with specific reference to the product portfolio, to foreign markets and to the sites of selected online sales (e.g. preparation of product sheets as well as tutorials, photo gallery, webinar, for the presentation of articles and related translations).
- f) design, development and / or maintenance of proprietary e-commerce systems (sites and / or mobile apps), also with regard to synchronization with marketplace channels provided by third parties.
- g) design, development and/or maintenance of AR Business commerce platforms, for example 3D holographic simulators, services, machining and products (visualizing the technical data of interest, examples of machining operations made, etc).
- h) support to the positioning of the offer on the chosen digital commercial channels towards the selected foreign markets.
- i) automation of the transfer, updating and management of articles to and from the web (API - Application Programming Interface).
- j) connection between the operational functionalities of the selected digital sales channel and its CRM systems.
- k) protection and/or registration of trademarks and/or articles included in the product portfolio in the target markets.
- l) digital marketing campaign and promotion activities on digital channels.

The admissible applications are submitted to technical examination, which is conducted by a special Assessment Board (2 representatives of Unioncamere Lombardia, 2 representatives of Regione Lombardia; 1 representative of the competent local Chamber of Commerce) on the basis of the criteria set out in the table below:

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation Parameters	Rating bands	Points
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A. Clarity and consistency in the definition of objectives (up to 50 points)	A.1 Level of clarity in the presentation of the project proposal with particular reference to the detailed indication of 1. planned activities; 2. time of realization; 3. objectives;	High	Up to 25
		Medium	Up to 16
		Low	Up to 8
	A.2 Qualitative level of the project proposal with reference to the coherence of the project with respect to the planned objectives: 1. nature and relevance of the requested services and planned events; 2. consistency with the technical and organizational skills and experience of the company;	High	Up to 25
		Medium	Up to 16
		Low	Up to 8
B. Preparation for export of the proposing party (Annex B) (up to 50 points)	B.1 Export experience;	Up to 15	
	B.2 Company organization;	Up to 20	
	B.3 Production capacity;	Up to 15	

To measure the actual level of achievement of the objectives related to this measure, the indicators identified are the following:

- Number of beneficiaries
- Interventions activated
- Interventions carried out
- Committed resources
- Resources disbursed

Results

As indicated in the call notice, the submission of applications closed at 12.00 on September 11th reporting the results shown in the table below. The contribution request was 5.5 times higher than the available budget.

Chamber of Commerce	Number of requests	Amount of grants requested
Bergamo	176	€ 1.540.316,09
Brescia	209	€ 1.786.036,17



Como-Lecco	198	€ 1.654.641,74
Cremona	36	€ 289.794,10
Mantova	69	€ 583.099,95
Milomb	771	€ 6.846.965,24
Pavia	67	€ 517.666,97
Sondrio	20	€ 166.231,00
Varese	104	€ 900.232,29
Total	1650	€ 14.284.983,55

For further information:

Imprese@lom.camcom.it.

<http://www.unioncamerelombardia.it/?/menu-di-sinistra/Bandi---contributi-alle-impres/Bandi-in-corso-di-rendicontazione/E-commerce-2020---Nuovi-mercati-per-le-impres-lombarde>



Quick testing and prototyping of digital innovative products: t2i best practice

Marco Galanti, Innovazione e trasferimento tecnologico, t2i – trasferimento tecnologico e innovazione s.c. a r.l.

Digital technologies are becoming widespread embedded in a large range of products. The reduced costs of digital sensor and actuators, as well as the compatibility ensured by open standards that became prevalent in the last few years allows to create “intelligent” products of any kind. This represent an opportunity but also a challenge for SMEs: in fact, products are becoming more and more complex, and their development requires a broader range of skills and know-how.

Challenges for SMEs

The first critical challenge that SMEs face is the concept design and first prototyping of the new digital products. It is quite common that, when a traditional SME decide to embed technologies such as IoT in their new product, they find a technical specialist such as an electronic engineering company, and they co-develop the new product.

This approach has some important downsides: the technology become the starting point, replacing the market needs and the user needs. This often leads to a product that doesn't reach the results that were hoped. The challenge is to support SMEs in understanding the technology potential on its own, and also on its own developing the concept, and quickly prototyping it.

PoC lab

T2i activated a PoC (proof-of-concept) lab to solve this problem. The PoC lab was activated in collaboration with a major IoT player (ST Microelectronics), to help SMEs understand the potential of IoT and embedded AI technologies and take benefit from them. The POC approach does not require that anyone presenting the idea of a new application need to have knowledge of microelectronics or electronics.

The lab has several demos of IoT application in various sectors (equipment maintenance, furniture, lighting, etc.), in order to “inspire” possible applications. T2i can also provide support services such as design thinking sessions to support the development of new product or service concepts. The PoC lab is equipped with several demo boards, that can be used to easily prototype the concept once defined, without needing advanced understanding of how these technologies work.

Once the prototype is ready, the company can get in touch with an engineering specialist of its choice for the final design. The preliminary activities ensure a more fruitful collaboration between the companies and the digital technology specialists: the desired results are better defined, as are the requirements, and the feasibility is mostly verified. This translates in a product that better satisfy the



market's needs (i.e. more successful) and often that has a lower time-to-market and development cost.

Open innovation: the role of trust

The collaborations that start between the companies and the technology providers fully qualify as Open Innovation, and as such all the related best practices should be put in place.

Establishing working relationships and, more importantly, subscribing to a work agreement requires a very high level of trust. However, building a mutual trust agreement often represents a very important challenge. For example, the company may think that the technology provider is only trying to force a specific technology into the new product to increase its own profit, not because the final product is improved. Also, the companies may be unwilling to discuss in detail their ideas with the technology providers since they sometimes fear that the technology specialist could develop it on their own or with a competitor. Historically, the lack of trust is one of the most important obstacles in the Open Innovation dissemination process, as many companies are afraid of sharing their own innovative ideas to the global network, allowing competitors to unearth their marketing strategies.

The PoC approach allows companies to have an increased "ownership" of their ideas. Often the concept developed reaches a stage that, even if not ready for IPR protection, can at least ensure an actual proof of priority.

Additionally, Innovation Intermediaries act "trust builders", supporting collaboration in order to overcome the lack of trust by establishing a trading situation inside their networks. The role of intermediaries' analysis in the European context suggests that "trust builders" constitute an interesting mechanism to promote new products, processes, and technological and market opportunities through knowledge sharing.

The role of Innovative actors, as Clusters, is increasing in European scenario, because they help SMEs to reach and to expand their networks. Since geographical proximity and regional clustering seem not to be sufficient to guarantee a better OI performance, such organizations need to have easy access to technical tools and expertise, as well as a formally recognized capability and trust of knowledge transfer. An increased collaboration with transregional and transnational external partners is seen as strategic in order to better confront a global competition and gain a direct advantage on the market.



Industry 4.0 Austria – the Platform for Smart Production

Nikolina Grgic, Plattform Industrie 4.0



The association “Industry 4.0 Austria – the Platform for Smart Production” has successfully managed to bring together different stakeholders both from the national and the regional level.

Industry 4.0 Austria is established as a nonprofit organisation and has set itself the following targets:

- Utilize future developments and innovations in industrial production and minimize risks at the same time
- Create competitive production and high-quality employment at the same time
- Strengthen Austria as a sustainable production location
- Coordinate industry, policy makers, science and media for a successful implementation of Industry 4.0
- Develop strategies and measures for increased research, development and innovation
- Sensibilise and mobilise the community
- Accompany the changes in the production and working environment in collaboration with all major stakeholders
- Identify necessary framework conditions (e.g. in the working environment, qualification, etc.)
- Create synergies by coordinating regional national and international activities
- Exchange experiences, ideas, studies and analyses

The digital transformation of industry has a big impact on the production system and represents a major social and economic challenge. Therefore a strong collaboration between industry, science, regional and national policy makers, trade unions and NGO’s is needed to generate a sustainable added value for all participants. To fulfil those needs and wants of Austrian companies the Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology (BMK) and representatives of the Austrian social partnership (employee and employer associations) set up a national Platform on Industry 4.0.

We believe that Industry 4.0 is a societal challenge, because we need a societal accepted development of digitalisation (you have to take the workers also with you, otherwise they might be afraid of losing their jobs.)



The OECD Report „Digital Innovation: Seizing Policy Opportunities“ was published last year in London and our Platform Industry 4.0 is one of the Best Practice examples of this report.

Advice from association Industry 4.0 Austria: CEOs should continuously join further education, because with better Know-How concerning technical topics they're able to act strategically and make more effective decisions.

Expert Groups of association Industry 4.0 Austria:



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Innovative start-ups can boost traditional SMEs digital transformation

Maria Sole D’Orazio, Veneto Innovazione spa

The matching among young and innovative providers and experienced and traditional companies can give a significant boost to the digital transformation.

Public support schemes can leverage the establishment of such cooperation, reaching at the same time the double goal of supporting start-ups in expanding their market and providing mature companies of new technologies and solutions ready to be used to increase their business.

This year the Veneto council approved over 2,000,000 euros of funds for the call for proposal “Support for young digital companies to develop Artificial Intelligence services for the manufacturing sector and beyond”.

The initiative is intended to support start-ups in the development of services / applications / solutions based on Artificial Intelligence to be applied in the made in Italy sectors such as, for example, home furnishings, mechanics, fashion and agri-food.

The call will make it possible to finance projects up to € 120,000 for a maximum of 50 percent. This means that, thanks to the public contribution, about 20 new solutions in the field of Artificial Intelligence could be developed, doubling the funds made available and thus leading to a total investment exceeding 4 million euros.

The services and / or applications based on Artificial Intelligence may refer to various technologies and application areas such as, for example, those related to the following sectors: Robotics, Planning, Speech, Vision, Expert Systems, Natural Language Processing (NLP), Machine Learning.

In addition, the call specifies that applicants must have acquired at least two expressions of interest from companies in the Made in Italy manufacturing sector, such as: home furnishings, mechanics, fashion-fashion, agri-food, etc. and the contract must be signed and attached to the fund request.

The financial support will consist of grants.



Practical example digitization

Dr. Gudrun Umbauer, IGE Institute for Health & Development



The company **offers holistic health concepts** for companies and their employees. Services: Health check based on personal interviews, development of personal concepts work&balance and follow up workshops and personal meetings.

In recent years, well-known companies in Austria have been its customers who deal with the topic of <healthy employees> and they offered in-house service a health expert for their employees. More and more companies recognize the necessity of health promotion in the company as a strategic factor (health management).

The services were exclusively carried out personally on site in the customer's premises, i.e. one-on-one or group discussions were held with a varying number of people. Subsequently, concepts were developed and communicated in personal meetings at the customer's premises.

Due to the COVID19 situation the necessity arose **to find new ways and possibilities** to continue the business activities economically. These were found in the course of **a series of digitalization measures**. Together with digitization experts a concept was developed and as a result a holistic digitization process was started and implemented.

- The total services were digitized – basis is a new platform

It starts with tests (Laboratory chemical analysis= a set for self testing with instructions) and personal questionnaires – customers become an “online programm” for nutrition based on the results of tests and may book online supporting lectures, workshops, seminars via a platform which includes all activities from questionnaires to online workshops, videos and online contacts/conversations

Benefit=replace on-site visits to customers - the services became more independent and flexible of time- the website became an online store for health products

- facebook activities were professionalized

- ImmunXund.Challenge was developed for online use and is already being implemented by first customers (e.g. city of Leoben and city of Kapfenberg) with 50 persons.

At the moment they work on an **E-book which will be a kind of knowledge library** including weekly plans, healthy food combination etc.

These steps made it possible for the company - which exists since 2006 - to continue to work profitably.



Conclusion

The cases presented in this paper and discussed during the policy table on October 7 2020 provide an interesting portfolio of identified challenges and solutions in using digitalisation to boost mature SMEs in launching their second life projects. The figure below summarizes the discussed issues, as documented ad hoc during the policy table.

Figure: Challenges and solutions discussed at the policy table on digitalisation. On-line meeting, October 2020.



Slovenia provided an interesting case study of dedicated support for digitalisation and digital transformation. Success of the programme was significantly associated with a need-based and bottom up approach. The importance of a need-based approach was confirmed by other best practices during the discussion in the on-line policy table (Digital Innovation Hub Western Austria, <https://dih-west.at/>, Digital Tirol, <https://www.digital.tirol/>). In addition, the crucial role of the legislative framework has been stressed during the policy table. Finding ways to fully benefit from the European legislative framework has been identified as an important task for policy makers at the level of member states and regions. While public support and policies have been considered as the basic framework during the discussions, it has also been a recurrent topic to stress the role of markets and private solutions in overcoming digitalisation challenges for SMEs. Learning from other actors on the market, from mature SMEs having used digitalisation successfully to tap into a second life opportunity, often proves to be most effective. Cases of private platforms available to offer digitalisation support for mature SMEs have



also been mentioned. In particular with respect to the set-up of peer learning networks and consulting services, public-private partnerships have appeared as successful approaches. In a similar vein, cluster initiatives can become important tools in addressing digitalisation challenges for mature SMEs.

Overall, a clear picture has emerged from the discussion, which confirms the relevance of the BE-READI ALPS approach. As diverse as the identified challenges, as diverse the required solutions. To tap into the opportunity of digitalisation requires much more than a one-size fits all approach. What is needed to use digitalisation to boost mature SMEs in launching their second life project, are tailor-made services, as they are currently developed within the BE-READI ALPS project.

