

# SMART-SPACE –Deliverable D.T1.4.3 “Summary Report: Concept to promote Cooperation among AS Stakeholders to strengthen SMEs’ digitisation”

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**Project Acronym: SMART-SPACE**

**Project title: ASP478**

## D.T1.4.3 “Summary Report: Concept to promote Cooperation among AS Stakeholders to strengthen SMEs’ digitisation”

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## 1. Deliverable History

This deliverable history should be removed from the document once it has been finalized. It can then be stored as a separate document on the server, next to the final version.

Version	Date	Status	What’s new
1	07/02/2018	Draft	First release
2	30/05/2018	Draft 2	Adding information from the PP (findings of the round tables)
3	22/05/2018	Draft 3	Adding information from the PP (findings of the round tables)
4	29/06/2018	Draft 4	Adding information from the PP (findings of the round tables)
5	30/06/2018	Final	Finalization of the document

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## 2. Executive Summary

Within the SMART SPACE project, the activity T1.4 “The Digital Single Market and smart technologies for AS growth” looks at policies, strategies and practices to set-up cooperation platforms with regional authorities, innovation stakeholders, cross-sectoral agencies, etc.

After setting up a benchmarking report concerning the policy contributes to digitalize the AS industry (D.T1.4.1), a methodology for the consultation of policy makers and stakeholders was developed (D.T1.4.2) and regional round tables were held in Germany, France, Italy, Slovenia and Austria to identify the policy makers’ and innovation stakeholders’ needs, expectations and opportunities of cooperation in the field of the Single Digital Market and the digital innovation addressed to Alpine Space SMEs. The main aims were to assure the involvement of the regional and national policy makers and innovation stakeholders, to give them an overview of the SMART SPACE project and to gather input for future steps.

This summary report lists the outputs of each regional round table and aims to identify the common problems/needs as well as some possible solutions and actions that can be implemented to assist SMEs in their digitalization processes.

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## 4. Actors EU Networks

	Industrial Modernisation Thematic Platform (S3 Platform)	EUSALP Action Group 1	EUSALP Action Group 2	KIC EIT Digital	KIC Added Value Manufacturing	I4MS initiative (ICT Innovation for Manufacturing SMEs)	Factory of the Future initiative	Other EU initiatives or networks	COMMENTS
CCIAADL Italy									See Veneto Region line
AI France								EEN; Member of the innovation working group	
ARIIPACA France								EEN	
TPLJ Slovenia								VANGUARD	
bwcon Germany								VANGUARD	
ITG Salzburg Austria								Trans-European projects in the field of digitalization	
AFIL Italy								VANGUARD; 4 motors for the European Industry 4.0	
UASRo Fermany								none	
CSP Italy									Not Filled
ARDI Rhone-Alpes France								VANGUARD; EEN; 4 motors for the European Industry 4.0; SPIRE; ERRIN; SAE; COLAE; TETRACOM; CEA LETI; EUROCP; CPSELABS	
Aws Austria Veneto Region Italy									See ITG Salzburg line
								EEN	
Color legend:									
		yes							
		no							

The grid shows the partners’ involvement in different EU initiatives, as the deliverable T1.4.1 (“Benchmarking report concerning the policy contributes to digitalize AS Industry”) aimed at having a clear picture of the different measures in the regions and the involvement of the project partners in different initiatives.

It was found that all partners’ regions have a strong focus on digitising their industry and all of them make a coordinated use of their strategies and their funds, particularly concerning ERDF. Since the beginning of EUROPA 2010, many regions set up initiatives to reinforce the actions started by the EU Commission. In some cases, national and regional funds are allocated to strengthen the efforts to drive local industry toward digitization.

Within the EUSALP Strategy, some linked aspects were emphasised in T1.4.1 and shall be quoted here<sup>1</sup>:

- the need to prioritise investment in digital infrastructures and the importance of ensuring quick and efficient access to high-speed internet, and, thereby, to digital and online services, such as e-commerce and the use of digital market channels and

<sup>1</sup> D.T1.4.1. Benchmarking report concerning the policy contributes to digitalise AS industry

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- teleworking, as well as other opportunities for people living in areas remote from large urban centres, while promoting where possible alternatives to physical travel;
- the lack of effective digital connections within mountain areas; urges the Commission and the Member States to facilitate better connections at regional and local level in order to enhance the quality of life and promote the development of new activities and the creation of job opportunities in these areas, and to encourage resettlement;
  - the importance of public investment in mountain areas in order to tackle the failure of the market to provide digital connectivity in these areas; emphasizes the importance of complete and universal coverage with broadband internet, including in mountain regions, in order to ensure the long term viability of remote settlements and economic areas; calls on the Commission to propose concrete solutions for this issue.

In conclusion to these findings, it was important to gather more insights on the view of the policy makers and innovation stakeholders. Therefore, the focus of deliverable T1.4.2 was on “Policy Makers' and Networks representatives’ public consultation” and as a result, round tables were organized in each country within the SMART SPACE partnership (Austria, Germany, Slovenia, France, Italy). The findings of the regional round tables set up to achieve this goal shall be presented in the following section.

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## 5. Organization of the Round Tables from Each Partner Country

To gather useful input on the policy makers’ and innovation stakeholders’ needs and expectations as well as to define opportunities of cooperation in the field of digitalization, the launch of a consultation was initiated.

Therefore, regional round tables were organized in order to assure the involvement of regional/national policy makers and innovation stakeholders. At these round tables, the SMART SPACE project was presented to make sure the participants were involved in the project and informed on the overall goals of SMART SPACE. Discussion rounds were held to gather input for future steps.

At first, five round tables were supposed to be held – one in each partner country. However, as it turned out, some project partners were facing more difficulties than expected at first in bringing together all the relevant stakeholders and policy makers. Therefore, different approaches were implemented to gather information from the policy makers. However, by the end of June 2018 all project partners had managed to organize one or more round tables in their countries to get in touch with the relevant groups.

The following pages show the outcomes of the consultation of the local and regional policy makers and innovation stakeholders and give an overview of the expectations as well as the problems identified when it comes to digitalization processes of SMEs. Finally, possible actions that could help SMEs in their digitalization processes were identified.

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## 5.1. Germany

The German regional round table took place on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 2017. Authorities and innovation stakeholders were invited. Ten participants received further information on the SMART SPACE project and discussed about the digitalization of the area. The round table was designed to be an exchange platform for regional stakeholders and provide possibilities for them to network. The participants talked about their needs as well as their ideas on the topic of digitalization and gave feedback on existing initiatives. Furthermore, the Entrepreneurship Centre and the strategy followed were introduced and the next steps concerning digitalization were presented.

Some main results could be identified by the participants: It is required to get additional support of the university, whose resources are currently bound on education and research. It would be useful to install some kind of “innovation scout” or digitalization manager at the university, whose main aim is to connect the university with SMEs as well as other stakeholders or people interested in that topic.

It was found that the capacities for supporting SMEs are non-existing, which is seen as one of the major problems. There would be enough expertise within the university to support SMEs, but the university lacks the resources – concretely the manpower as well as the financial support – to do so.

It was also found important to identify politicians and other people of interest to reach a higher level of consultation/commitment.

The internal resistance to change, and therefore to digitalization, is the biggest inhibitor for SMEs when it comes to adapting to a new environment and meeting new challenges. The universities are struggling to find the capacities necessary to support the SMEs on their digital journey. It would nevertheless be possible to demonstrate the technologies available and to create a physical supporting point. One idea was to open up the university to demonstrate technology on a neutral ground.

Several next steps were identified: It is useful to create a political colloquium to express the needs of the area towards authorities. That could be a possibility to engage the political authorities and bring them closer to the topic. Moreover, a digitalization manager shall be installed to boost networking and innovation in the area.

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The idea of a competence centre designated to educate SMEs in new technologies was brought up. This could be a contact point for companies who have questions about digitalization.

To sum up the German round table, the key findings were the following:

- There is a certain **resistance** of most of the SMEs when it comes to changes, including digitalization.
- **“Digitalization manager”** could help the SMEs with digitalization by helping them understand how digitalization works and optimizing their processes.
- There is enough **expertise about new technologies and digitalization in educational institutions** such as the University of Applied Sciences Rosenheim to help SMEs with their digitalization processes. Nevertheless, the **lack of resources** (both financial and personnel) minimizes the opportunities of these institutions to provide all the support they had the knowledge to provide.
- Installing **competence/information centres** for new technologies would be a useful measure to support SMEs.

In addition to the regional round table, the FH Rosenheim also participated at an information event for the political authorities, giving input on the SMART-SPACE project.

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## 5.2. Italy

The Italian project partners were facing some difficulties bringing together all the important policy makers and stakeholders at one table. After some time, it was therefore decided to organize round tables at a regional level, which took place in Venice on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2018, in Torino on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June 2018, and in Milan on the 29<sup>th</sup> of June 2018.

The round table in Venice was organized as a workshop with the title: “Is there an Italian Digital Manufacturing? Indications and suggestions for new support policies”.

The participants talked about the fact that Veneto companies, which decide to acquire digital technologies, do not buy them, but develop projects to get economic results. They do not take all digital technologies, but choose those, that fit their core business the most. When purchased, new digital technologies are customized to fit the technologies the company already possesses (hardware, software of managing solutions already in use).

Another fact or problem stressed was that companies are not aware of the fact that they could reach new markets or offer new products through digitalization. They do not understand new technologies and therefore are afraid of using them or not being able to use them at all. For these reasons, it is important to develop instruments which assist companies in the digitalization process. 4.0 projects need to be planned, and the companies must be assisted in the selection of the right partners, who can distinguish among the various technologies.

There is a strategic as well as a cultural problem, as companies do not seem to understand how important digital technologies are. This is because they do not use the technologies and therefore lack insights. They have to learn more about the advantages and see that there are no more boundaries in the market thanks to digitalization.

The companies’ partners are seen as the main suppliers of technology, whereas universities are considered less important. Moreover, micro and small businesses are sometimes afraid to address universities directly. They have to get to digital technologies via simple structures, such as FabLab. It is easier for them to start a more confident relationship in this environment. So, Fablab is seen as a very helpful way to assist companies to start the digital innovation process.

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Nevertheless, universities are seen as a useful source concerning education on the topic of digitalization. The exchange between companies and technical schools and universities is useful in order to have new employees who understand the importance of digital technologies, and who know how to use them. Universities can be seen as important resources for the companies, as it is very important to transfer knowledge even among young people.

The participants of the round table defined several main difficulties concerning digitalization, which are the lack of internal and external experienced and trained employees, the lack of broadband to connect to external or foreign partners, the absence of trained and experienced project managers and limited financial resources.

The adoption of new digital technologies does not result in an increase in the number of employees, but in an improvement of employees’ training. More knowledge leads to better products. The question is, which tools can be used to train companies, as there obviously is a lack of training and competences within the workforce. A new form of training must be invented including new digital skills and competences to be taught.

Another problem identified is that the definition of Industry 4.0 is very diffuse. It must be adapted in the various sectors, technologies and dimensions. The “real” Industry 4.0 will develop the moment present millennials start to work and form the new working generation.

Very often, companies are overwhelmed by information concerning digitalization and they have problems distinguishing which are technologies are more important. It is necessary for companies to find some sort of desk, where they can ask for support and get feedback on which technologies are useful for their organization, production, or market.

Veneto Chambers of Commerce together with the Ca’ Foscari University set up PID (Desk for Digital Business), which aims at helping micro and small medium-sized enterprises that are not aware of the solutions offered by the digital technologies. They are now trying to cooperate with entrepreneurs associations to reach most of the businesses. An information service will support companies on the opportunities of Industry 4.0 and funding.

Clusters were seen as a main advantage when it comes to digitalization. Companies in clusters can provide assistance to those who do not know digital technologies. Furthermore, two companies in the same cluster can buy a digital technology together and learn how to use it together. Micro businesses can use technologies if they connect each other, so, if they network.

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It was mentioned that there is a lack of information among stakeholders and facilitators and more general the whole economic system concerning digitalization. Intermediaries therefore must be trained and prepared. Concerning public administration, it was discussed that public policies have to be communicated better. There is a problem of economic funding. European Social Funds cannot be used to train companies for digital technologies. They are too complicated and companies do not want to waste time. It is necessary to map how Veneto companies are moving in the digital sector.

The title of the event in Torino was “Digitalization and Smart Manufacturing in Piedmont – State of the Art and Perspectives”. The goals of the workshop were to share a picture of the regional SME systems among the stakeholders in order to harmonize different actions, and to reach an engagement of the target group into the SMART SPACE project and its objectives.

The participants made some recommendations on several topics. Concerning authorities, it was found that a cultural change is needed. The data collected has to be considered, the focus has to be put on the results. Furthermore, overlapping between the different actions must be avoided. To reach this goal, collaboration was seen as an important factor. A regional network shall thus be created. Moreover, there have to be coordination activities between the different actors (intermediaries).

For SMEs it is important to overcome barriers and support the transfer of information. There should be matching activities to learn from others. Good practices can be used, too. It is important to exchange knowledge with more mature companies. Also, research organizations can be of assistance.

It is very important for SMEs to be curious and open-minded concerning new technologies. Moreover, the ecosystem has a high impact on the success of digitalization processes. SMART SPACE can act as a system integrator for different initiatives from different actors and can therefore function as an ecosystem for SMEs. An (self) assessment for SMEs, including micro companies, shall be implemented.

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At the Lombardy Digitalization Round Table had two sections, the first one being on the discussion of regional measures to support companies in the digitalization of their processes, the second one focusing on the importance of intermediaries in their supporting role.

It was found that there is a need for two different types of measures: restrained actions for SMEs’ innovation projects, such as vouchers, and flagship projects for the entire supply chain. It emerged that only when supporting the entire value chain, the competitiveness of the economic system will increase.

The regional authorities underlined the importance of public consultation in the field of Open Innovation. “Participatory” policies, that involve the territory, are highly appreciated. Also, it is important to involve the “big players”, which are leading actors for SMEs. Collaborating with other stakeholders is challenging. This is why the future measures will stimulate and incentivize the creation of partnerships.

From the preliminary results of local measures (Digital Voucher from the Chamber of Commerce), it emerged that most of the companies still highly require training and consultancy on digitalization. Furthermore, the training of employees themselves is very important. Staff that is specialized and can transfer know how about how to use new technologies, especially in the field of digitalization, is crucial.

Awareness and assessment activities still play an important role and most of the intermediaries’ actions are addressing these goals. It is important not to stop here, but to work on road mapping activities in order to help companies forward-looking.

In the next time, measures for strengthening innovation will be implemented, particularly labs, facilities, and infrastructure. Tools to support SMEs will be set up. Also, new measures will be developed that focus on start-ups, for the creation of solutions for the needs of so called “big players”.

The next step will be to install new working groups with local innovation stakeholders to foster regional and interregional collaboration.

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The participants highlighted the importance of having a trustful relationship with intermediary organisations. They agreed that SMART SPACE can act as a system integrator on different initiatives from different actors and can therefore create a useful ecosystem. The round table was a first step to initiate a valuable collaboration among the innovation stakeholders of the region and to start collecting the policy makers’ interest in the definition of an interregional strategic partnership.

To sum up, the findings of the regional round table in Italy were the following:

- Most companies are **not aware of the advantages** that digitalization can bring and do not see how important digital technologies are. They find digitalization “useless” with regard to their activities.
- It is important to develop **instruments**, which assist companies in the digitalization process.
- There is a **lack in employees trained in matters of digitalization**. Therefore, staff must be educated and a new forms of training must be invented.
- The companies’ **partners** are seen as the **main suppliers of technology**.
- **Universities** are considered important regarding education and knowledge transfer.
- The **definition of Industry 4.0** is very **diffuse**.
- **Working groups** with policy makers and local innovation stakeholders shall be installed to foster collaboration.

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### 5.3. France

The project partners from France were also facing difficulties when it comes to getting in touch with the policy makers and organizing a round physical round table.

Therefore, the project partners decided to involve policy makers and innovation stakeholders and get feedback from them through the activities of the project: The project was presented during the regional Steering Committee on Industry of the Future to more than 20 people. The aim was to have people informed and show potential synergies. Also, the project was presented directly to the person at the Region Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes in charge of Industry of the Future, as the region is also an observer of the project. Furthermore, during the regional meeting for intermediaries, innovation stakeholders were asked for their needs and expectations concerning digitalization.

On June 19<sup>th</sup> 2018, however, there was also a regional round table of local authorities and policy makers in partnership with ViaMeca, which is the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes partner of the Alpine Space project BIFOCAlps. The focus was «How to make FoF-oriented support programs for SMEs more efficient SMEs Auvergne Rhône-Alpes region?». The aim of combining two projects in the workshop was to mutualize the effort in order to have more participants.

After a presentation of the BIFOCAlps Project and the current tasks, ViaMeca underlined some conclusions as well as good practices from the analysis and harmonization of policies and strategies for Factory of the Future (FoF), which could trigger further discussions.

After that, the SMART SPACE project was presented including the defined target groups (SMEs, policy makers, intermediaries) and the pilot actions planned. The following time was used for gathering expectations, needs, and opportunities of cooperation regarding FoF and support for SMEs.

Concerning diagnosis tools for SMEs, the common finding was that there is no need to create new diagnosis tools, but to deepen those that already exist in the region and on national/European level. Examples are stratégie PME, Diag 360 CETIM, Diag Excellence Mont Blanc, Diag BPI, etc. The quality of the tools depends on the organization administrating it. Moreover, each organization talks about its own tool but they do not want to share their outcomes in detail.

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The French government is going to launch a national plan on the digital transformation of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). In particular, an online platform will be established to connect the MSMEs and the so called “activators”, that are councillors, chambers of commerce, national agencies, policy-makers and so on of the program. These “activators” will accompany the MSMEs on their digitalization processes. This national plan/platform will be linked with the existing similar initiatives into the regions. There is a need for a good coordination of all the initiatives.

With regard to the Digital Innovation HUB (DIH), the participants pointed out that many organizations call themselves DIH while in reality they are “only” platforms or competence centres. Maybe, a European label awarded by the European Commission for actual DIHs would be useful. In France, there are lots of equipment and platforms, but they are mostly dedicated and/or shared to research and not to industrial companies. In the Auvergne Rhône Alpes region, some programs such as IRICE or PIA aim to make these platforms more accessible to industrials.

The European Commission wants the SMEs to be accompanied by a hub and not by a single actor. By definition, a DIH should have a coordinated and formalized governance in order to accompany the SMEs the best possible way according to their needs. There should be one entry point to all services (funding, coaching, training, infrastructure...).

There was a thematic discussion on the topic of “Readability of FoF-oriented support programs for SMEs: how to link the different levels (European, national, regional and local)?”. The content on the discussion was how to make support programs at the different levels more “readable” and complementary.

For example, at the European level there are initiatives for the setting up and networking of Digital Innovation Hubs, at the national level there is an online platform to support MSMEs in their digital transformation, and at the regional level there are also several platforms and programs. There are some funding programs using governmental funds, but working with a regional management. The format “Fonds unique interministériel” (FUI) has an approach, that could be interesting for other countries as well. The state makes a pre-selection and then shares the funding with the region. This kind of “mixed” program with a double-selection encourages the coordination between the national and regional levels.

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The participants raised the question how to make all the existing instruments visible for the SMEs. There has to be one entry point and a clear coordination of the ecosystem for the SMEs, so the hub can support the companies accordingly.

The “societal” dimension is very present in European programs, in contrast to the national and regional ones. Maybe this dimension should be integrated to mix societal challenges with technology. Moreover, in France, some industries are excluded from FoF programs, mainly because of administrative and institutional burdens. Maybe FoF should be seen from other angles as well, such as HR, training, mobility, environment, and not only the classic technological domains (additive manufacturing, cybersecurity...). There is a global lack of coordination between the actors/levels.

The most important thing is that the SMEs understand the different programs and “levels” (national, regional,...). They have to be able to find the right program and interlocutor for the projects they want to realize. Sometimes, the timeframe is a problem too, as the content of the programs are not clear in advance.

The second discussion focused on “How to build more efficient support programs in the next few years: strategies and priorities” in terms of strategy. In the Auvergne Rhône Alpes region, the strategy is more oriented towards individual and direct funding for SMEs. There are however, some models supporting SMEs through shared platforms. The region is funding investment, but also some “collaborative” projects. For example, the goal of the IRICE program is to provide the region with structured platforms. The range of FoF domains must remain large in order to reach as many SMEs as possible.

There are several projects that are interesting for the policy makers. However, they have to be provided with more precise and qualitative information about the tools to be able to compare and understand the scope of intervention and what they are funding or supporting.

It would be interesting to have a strategy and incentive initiatives to promote the co-investment and cooperation between European regions.

Therefore, the key findings of the French regional round table were the following:

- There already are **many tools for SMEs**, but the **content has to be deepened** to provide more useful information. Also, the quality of the tool very much depends on the organization administrating it.

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- There will be a **national plan** focusing on the digital transformation of MSMEs by connecting companies with so called “activators”.
- There are many so called “Digital Innovation Hubs” but not all of them really provide useful support. A “**European label**” to mark real DIH would be useful.
- SMEs are facing **difficulties finding the right support**. It is therefore important to make the existing support/instruments more visible for the SMEs. The most crucial thing is that the SMEs understand the different programs and “levels” (national, regional,...).
- The approach of “Fonds unique interministériel” (FUI) could be interesting for other countries as well. It is a “**mixed**” **program with a double-selection** (regional/national).

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### 5.4. Slovenia

The round table in Slovenia took place on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 2017 in Ljubljana with 104 registered participants. The roundtable was organized in the frame of *Opportunities for the Slovenian R&I Stakeholders in the European Thematic S3 Partnerships and in Vanguard Initiative Transregional S3 Collaboration*. The first part of the conference was related to S3 and Vanguard initiative, whereas the afternoon part was about Digital innovation hubs, digitalization and smart processes. The event lasted from 7:30 AM until 18:00 PM.

The processes of digitalization and transfer to Industry 4.0 are ongoing. However, the structure of SMEs in Slovenia and the vibrant market hinders these processes especially in micro and small SMEs. The reasons for that are the fast changing pace of technologies development, high investment costs, need to respond to market needs and lack of specific financial support mechanisms that would enable quick transformation. In general, larger companies are already involved in digitalization and smart processes transfer. More advanced solutions are however still needed.

The S4 strategy, together with Strategic research and innovation partnerships is dealing with digitalization in the following priorities: Factories of the future, Smart cities and Smart homes. However, there is also a horizontal SRIP – the ICT network and digitalization – that will work with all the partnerships in this domain. Good practices from Slovenia and abroad are needed and should be promoted to motivate micro and small companies to get involved in digitalization.

Another opportunity is related to creation of value chains of suppliers of digital solutions not only in Slovenia but also through formation of networks from abroad. Digitalization processes would also enable companies to get involved in global value chains due to real time info of the production capacities.

The main conclusions of the conference were the following:

- Especially **micro and small SMEs** are facing problems when implementing digitalization processes.
- **Good practices** would help SMEs to digitize themselves.
- **Networks and creation of value chains** of suppliers of digital solutions are seen as an opportunity to engage in digitalization activities.

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### 5.5. Austria

The Austrian round table took place in Vienna on the 19<sup>th</sup> of February 2017. Regional and national policy makers as well as innovation stakeholders and experts on digitalisation were invited to learn more about the SMART SPACE project, to discuss the topic of digitalisation of SMEs and to provide input for further steps.

The participants of the round table agreed that the main problem is that many companies are not aware of the high importance of digitalisation in their industries. It is difficult to get in touch with the companies that should be reached and that need to learn about digitalisation, as they do not seem to see the necessity to digitalise their processes or to even know about the importance of digitalisation in their fields. Furthermore, most SMEs do not seem to understand that digitalisation is an ongoing process. There has to be a lot of awareness building in that field.

Therefore, it was considered as helpful to offer best practices and case studies to show the SMEs how companies “use” digitalisation and optimise processes as well as to organize trainings about the digital transformation. Certain companies, that have already implemented a successful digitalisation strategy, could tell the SMEs about it and/or show them around. That would make it a lot easier for others to understand the topic as it is much more convincing to listen to someone who has already implemented a useful and working strategy. It is also important to show the SMEs that even small steps can have a huge impact.

A mixture of best practice workshops and individualised consulting was considered be the best, as every SME has different requirements. A bigger group of SMEs could do the study visit and after that, some SMEs could be teamed with digital experts.

It was also pointed out that – event though there are lots of similarities when it comes to digitalisation – you need different approaches for smaller and bigger companies. Smaller companies with less than 100 employees usually can’t show the ROI of digitalisation whereas bigger companies can.

There are different aspects or levels of digitalisation. It is important to give the companies some insights on what is happening in this field. Therefore, workshops could be provided. Nevertheless, the participants agreed that it is important to select a specific subject, as there already are lot’s of general, not so specific, initiatives. People have to have a clear view of that

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will be presented and what are the advantages of attending those workshops. It is important to offer very specific workshops. The SFG in Steiermark, Austria, could help organizing those workshops. The FH Joanneum at Kapfenberg is going to develop a research centre, which could also be used as an information platform.

The participants of the round table agreed that it is important to define key persons in the companies and to show them the possibilities and advantages of digitalisation. These key persons can then implement certain strategies in their companies. It is important to find the right people to address. Sometimes some kind of “translator”, who knows how to explain certain things, is needed. So not only the management, but also for example engineers should be addressed to present them all the possibilities they have, otherwise they will not implement anything. It is important to create awareness in the management and then transfer the information it to the employees.

A very important factor to deal with is the fear of people losing their jobs. The implementation of new technologies often leads to fear amongst the employees. People should know that the process of digitalisation is not mainly about replacing people by machines. That is why it is crucial to show positive examples and keep those psychological aspects in mind.

The participants also pointed out that the market might regulate itself up to a certain level. The industry itself works as a benchmark. Other companies are likely to follow if one of them implements certain new technologies. Still, especially some crafts and the service industry seem to lack behind. There are crucial changes, for example the new regulation on data protection, that force companies to adapt their business models.

Concerning the “train the trainer”-sessions, the participants pointed out that it is important to train someone who can get in touch with the SMEs and educate them on the topic. It is also necessary to define the content of the sessions, which should not be too basic, but also not too detailed so that the average trainee can follow.

The participants of the Austrian round table pointed out some initiatives, models and examples that could help SMEs concerning digitalisation:

One of the participants presented a maturity model, which helps companies to evaluate where they are standing concerning digitalisation. The model is neutral to both provider and

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technology. It is supposed to be used in the whole of Europe. The more companies evaluate themselves, the more conclusive the model will be. The tool supports companies that want to digitalize and rates the methods used. It does not however rate the company itself, which makes it possible to compare processes regardless of the industry. It would be helpful to provide a workshop for the SMEs to teach them about the tool and encourage them to evaluate themselves.

Also, a promotional instrument of the WKÖ (Austrian federal economic chamber) was mentioned. With „KMU Digital“, consultants are being educated on digitalisation and potential analyses for SMEs are offered. Furthermore, next steps for a successful business model are developed together with the companies, and employees can be educated in matters of digitalisation. The programme will run until 2018 or as long as there is a budget.

There is a paper, which makes certain suggestions to the politics concerning digitalisation (“Ergebnispapier Qualifikation und Kompetenzen in der Industrie 4.0”). The participants pointed out that the educational system should focus on the topic of digitalisation, too. The paper aims to give input for implementing actions to educate people on digitalisation. It provides 81 recommendations for politics, education and economy to make Austria “fit for digitalisation”.

Swarovski’s approach is interesting and could be used to address companies. They have a new SmartWatch. They won’t share the core data, but everything else is open innovation. SMEs should open their doors and show best practices, not only to Austrian, but to international companies, too. Large enterprises could show trends. It is important to promote exchange.

To sum up the Austrian round table, the key findings were the following:

- It is crucial to find **a way to address the SMEs** that need to digitalise.
- **Best practices and case studies as well as study visits** are a useful tool to show SMEs how important digitalisation is and to help them finding the right strategies for their companies.
- It is important to define **key persons** that can then inform and implement the strategies in their companies.
- A very important factor to deal with is the **fear of people losing their jobs**.
- Even though the market seems to regulate itself up to a certain level, **some industries seem to lack behind**.
- It is important to **pick trainers that are “in the field”** and know how to communicate with the SMEs.
- There already exist some **useful initiatives, workshops and papers on digitalisation**. It is important to inform the SMEs about them.

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## 6. Summary of the Outcomes and Conclusions

Within the deliverable T1.4.1 (“Benchmarking report concerning the policy contributes to digitalize AS Industry”) it was found that all partners’ regions have a focus on digitising their industry and all of them make a coordinated use of their strategies and their funds. Despite the diversity of the regions and stakeholder participating of the round tables, many similarities could be identified when it comes to the digitalization processes of SMEs.

The common problems/circumstances identified by the participants of the regional round tables were the following:

- **Lack of awareness/consciousness:** Many SMEs are not aware of the advantages digitalization can bring. As some companies just do not see any use in digitalization, it is very hard to address them in the right way or to even get in touch with them.
- **Resistance:** There is a certain resistance of some SMEs concerning digitalization. They do not see the necessity to engage in digitalization processes and fear changes.
- **Scepticism/fear:** Many employees fear that digitalization will lead to job losses.
- **Company size:** Especially micro and small SMEs are facing problems with digitalization processes. Larger companies, on the contrary, seem to have fewer concerns.
- **Resources:** There often is a lack of resources concerning digitalization processes, not only in the companies, but also at universities, which could actually provide useful input and support.
- **Lack of knowledge about supporting programs:** Some SMEs face difficulties finding the right support. They are overwhelmed by the variety of programs and do not know where to turn to in order to find assistance.

The following measures are seen as useful when helping SMEs to digitalize:

- **Best practices:** Best practices as well as case studies can explain the advantages of digitalization to the SMEs and help them understand why it is useful and also necessary to stay up to date.
- **Digital experts:** Digital experts or “digitalization manager” could help the SMEs in matters of digitalization by helping them understand how digitalization works and optimizing their processes. It is important to pick trainers that are “in the field” and know how to communicate with the SMEs.
- **Key persons:** It is important to define right persons in the company which can then transfer the knowledge to the rest of the staff.

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- **Networks:** Networks for SMEs where they can gather useful input are seen as an opportunity to encourage the companies to engage in digitalisation processes.
- **Universities:** Universities are seen as important partners concerning the education on digitalization, which is a crucial factor when it comes to digitalization processes in SMEs.
- **Competence centres:** Centres that focus on the presentation of new technologies would be useful to support SMEs in their digitalisation processes.
- **Instruments:** It is important to develop the right instruments for education and knowledge transfer for SMES.
- **Deepening of the tools/services provided:** There are many tools, but the information provided has to be deepened to be really helpful. Most of the platforms only provide information that is very superficially.

To be able to help SMEs in their digitalization processes, it is important to look at already existing initiatives and to work together with partners at a regional, national and transnational level. There already are some very strong projects concerning the assistance of companies, but they have to be displayed and brought to the target group. Within this report, the overlapping issues could be defined and first initiatives and measures identified. The goal of the SMART SPACE project will be to find a suitable approach to address the problems mentioned and to provide working solutions to assist SMEs with their digitalisation processes.