

## **RODOPI CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY**

### **Provision of Technical Consultant Services for the Implementation of Working Package1: “Project Management and Coordination” in the framework of INTERREG V-A Greece - Bulgaria 2014-2020 Cooperation Program**



#### **Deliverable 1.1.2: Project Management and Coordination (Interim Report)**

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## 1. Introduction

This Deliverable is the interim report of “Deliverable 1.1.2: Project Management and Coordination” and concerns the support of the Project Management Team at the organization and implementation of the project “SeeG”. It is submitted in terms of the contract between the Rodopi Chamber Of Commerce And Industry and “S.M.R. Consultants” for the project entitled **“Provision of Technical Consultant Services for the Implementation of Working Package1: “Project Management and Coordination”** which is implemented in the framework of INTERREG V-A Greece - Bulgaria 2014-2020 Cooperation Program. More precisely, this Deliverable refers to the actions and activities implemented during the first three months of 2022, that is, from 18/01/2022-17/04/2022.

## 2. Description of the Project “SeeG” and the Support Services

### 2.1. Description of the Project “SeeG”

The project entitled “Empowering businesses Seeking Growth” with acronym “SeeG”, aims to create - promote an ecosystem that favors entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs as well as to promote an environment that supports entrepreneurs (including start-ups), adapt services to their real needs, take advantage of their “wide” visibility and cultivate cooperation and networking conditions. The challenges that triggered this initiative are:

- lack of horizontal and personalized support services for providing guidance and support mechanisms for making the use out of funding opportunities. To be addressed through the development of an entrepreneurship support system.
- limited access of entrepreneurs to business know-how, as knowledge is not shared and ‘spilled over’ effect does not benefit horizontally all enterprises as it is usually limited amongst innovators. To be addressed through knowledge and knowhow exchange tools.
- limited access to general information and contacts, as not all enterprises have access to the same up to date information sources. To be addressed through awareness raising activities and use of informative tools and channels.
- lack of support services for developing competitive products-services. To be addressed through the development of an entrepreneurship support system.
- lack of access/know-how regarding cost saving technologies. To be addressed via horizontal and personalized support services.

- inadequate human development and skills. To be addressed through activities enhancing skills and capabilities on thematic relevant to entrepreneurial knowledge.
- lack of collaboration

The chosen approach that will be adopted involves the following pilot elements:

1. Creative exchange: use of processes (such as workshops, round tables etc.), including ‘cross-cutting’ beyond sectors, regions and / or scientific disciplines, in which possible partners – beneficiaries are invited to articulate their needs, opportunities and expectations.
2. Matchmaking: challenge of attempting to combine the stimulating interest of entrepreneurs (and to be ones) with the academic society.
3. Theory in practice: the academic society out of its usual scope of activities, that is expanding their target of audience which is normally limited down to graduates and researchers, but hardly ever to business community itself.
4. Not just publicity: use of dissemination tools, not for solely promoting the project and its results – outputs but in favor of the actual beneficiaries, by aiming to promote the ‘entrepreneurship culture’ all together to the wider public.
5. Self Confidence: inclusion of activities for building self-confidence and personal growth of those coping with the idea for creating a new business, as it seems that this a drawback factor influencing or limiting dramatically taking the next step for newcomers in business. We usually meet such type of actions included in projects and initiatives targeting unemployed and vulnerable groups, underestimating the impact that low confidence has in the decision making of an entrepreneur or of a person in the process of a business idea.
6. Flexibility: initiatives in the field of employment or entrepreneurship support services, normally follow a ‘concrete’ predefined structure, that is specified activities directed to specific beneficiaries. The proposed, in our case, grid of activities is based, however on the provision of a wide variety of activities – services to a general public, consisted of entrepreneurs, individuals in the process of starting own business, individuals wondering if they are able to do so etc. The introduction of a profiling procedure at all stages of the project’s lifecycle enables to address identified needs (of those in interest) and proceed in provision of the right mix of services. At the same time the flexibility of providing services via personalized or group sessions, enhances the achievement of better and definitely more effective results.

The target group of the project includes newly established SMEs (up to 3 years' operation) including those organized as cooperatives, self-employed individuals, social enterprises, potential entrepreneurs (especially female) and graduates on the field of Business Administration and relevant departments (youth entrepreneurship).

The proposed grid of actions, to be implemented over a 24month period, includes interventions in the scope of enhancement of the entrepreneurship culture, assisting business creation, building new skills and supporting new and/or existing enterprises. Actions that aim at promoting an ecosystem that nurtures entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs in the cross-border area (CB) and so on to the improvement of entrepreneurship SME support systems. More specifically, it will foster an environment, supportive of entrepreneurs (incl. startups), by tailoring services to their real needs, promoting positive media coverage and bringing them together. Partners agreed to take an initiative, in order to tackle a common barrier, that is SMEs' limited, if any, access to existing support services. At the same time, they also admit this as a factor influencing or discouraging business creation overall.

In order to improve the entrepreneurship SME support systems a set of activities is foreseen, that addresses two main types of factors, those determining the decision making for new businesses and those determining the success and viability of enterprises. In the first case, the activities are relevant to enhancement of knowhow, the procedure of generating a business idea, the ability to access financing tools, the networking opportunities especially the accessibility to supporting services and finally the development of skills related to issues such as risk management etc., in the second case, activities are oriented to entrepreneurial aspects such as skilled resources, quality and innovation tools and techniques' introduction into current procedures, marketing and promotion place in the business' strategy etc. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the mix of services to be provided, via the entire grid of activities foreseen, is designed to be flexible and adaptable to what is needed at the time as well as to who is in need of the specific services package (profiling).

The main outputs of the project that will significantly improve entrepreneurship conditions on the CB area, and contribute to the main objectives of the project are:

- ✓ the implementation of networking actions such as round tables, business forums, thematic workshops & a partnership opportunity platform, contributing to the promotion of the transnational cooperation
- ✓ the development of a business growth strategic framework containing a mapping study on a CB region and at EU level best practices on matters of innovation, extroversion and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

- ✓ enhancing the SMEs' support system through the development of a training material, including webinars & toolkits
- ✓ the implementation of trainings focusing on organization & management of SMEs with emphasis on crisis periods, viable financial management-debt recovery techniques, low cost IT efficient technologies, growth accelerators, constraint eliminators etc.
- ✓ the implementation of boosting business skills sessions focused on 2 main categories, upon profiling of the beneficiaries (a) promoting personal growth, self-confidence & networking skills for new or to be entrepreneurs & (b) business adaptation to new ISO standards requirements, risk analysis – management, Business continuity plan, GDPR etc.
- ✓ the realization of thematic workshops, including study visits, focusing on innovation management, extroversion, social economy, startups, evaluating funding opportunities, equal opportunities & non-discrimination in business, e-commerce & cyber security
- ✓ the development of an entrepreneurship support model including the provision of consultancy services at business level or group, personalized consultancy services & business coaching for entrepreneurs

Furthermore, the following outputs will contribute to the successful implementation of the project and the successful dissemination of its results:

- ✓ management and coordination of the project
- ✓ the dissemination of the project's aims, progress & results, through the communication plan

## **2.1. Brief Description of the support services**

The Technical Consultant will provide support services to the Rodopi Chamber Of Commerce And Industry at all activities that are related to management and coordination needs, provision of technical consultant services and meeting the increased requirements of support and information of the involved parties, in order to ensure the smooth implementation and completion of the Project within the approved timeline, always in accordance with the approved Application Form, approved Budget, but also the institutional framework of the Program as it is formed by the Call for the submission of project proposals, the Implementation-Manual of the Program and the other documents of the Program.

This will ensure the correct and timely implementation of activities and the achievement of interim and final results, both administrative and technical. In addition, the Technical Consultant will provide support regarding the financial management of the project funds of both the Rodopi Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the other partners and its related obligations to the Managing Authority (MA) / Joint Secretariat (JS) of the Program.

In more detail, the Technical Consultant undertakes the overall monitoring of the project which is multifaceted and will include the following:

- Project Management, Monitoring and Coordination Support Services
- Support Services in the Financial Management of the Project
- Support Services in the organization of the Technical Meetings of the Project
- Other Support Services

During the first quarter for the year 2022, the Consultant provided the following services:

- Technical and consulting support to cover the obligations of the Rodopi Chamber of Commerce and Industry to the Managing Authority, the Joint Technical Secretariat and the Project Partners
- Communication with the members of the Rodopi Chamber of Commerce and Industry Project Team, as well as with the Project Managers of the partners for issues regarding organization, management and implementation of the Project
- Communication with the Managing Authority for the implementation needs of the Project
- Exchange of information and data within the partnership

### **3. Detailed Description of the Support Services**

From the day the contract was signed between the Rodopi Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the company “S.M.R. Consultants” , the Consultant took active action for the smooth and timely implementation of the project activities and the required procedures. Initially, a member of the company was officially appointed by the the Rodopi Chamber of Commerce and Industry with a written authorization, as the person in charge of oral and written communication with the Managing Authority for all issues related to the project. Then the Consultant responded to Ms Dinkova's request from the Managing Authority regarding funding allocation by each partner in 2022 and 2023. They also reviewed the Communication Plan designed under Work Package 2 and suggested some additions and modifications. After its completion, they sent it to the Communications Officer for approval. Finally, they responded to all the emails of the partners and provided solutions to any issues that arose.

During the quarter under consideration, the Consultant provided support services the Project Management Team of the Rodopi Chamber of Commerce and Industry in all the necessary actions. In particular, they carried out the procedure for the appointment of the person responsible for the account of Project, which is necessary in order for the funding allocation requests to be made. In addition, they prepared the drafts of all documents such as the templates for the Decisions of the Board of Directors, temporary and final acceptance of deliverables, primary requests and commitment decisions. They had constant communication with the person responsible for the posting of the BoD Decisions and the other documents on the KIMDIS and DIAVGIA platforms. Finally, they contributed to the preparation of the tenders for the actions of Work Package 4 concerning skills development training, business capacity building, thematic workshops and the entrepreneurship support grid.