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ADRION **ADRIATIC-IONIAN**
European Regional Development Fund - Instrument for Pre-Accession II Fund

CREATURES



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
O T1.1 “JOINT ACCELERATION PROGRAMME
FOR CCI-RELATED SMES & START-UPS”

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Version	1.0
Date	26/07/2022
Pages	4

Executive summary

Report “Joint Acceleration Programme for CCI-related SMEs and start-ups” is one of the deliverables in the project CREATURES (Promoting Creative Tourism through new Experiential and Sustainable routes), which is funded by INTERREG V-B Adriatic-Ionian ADRION Programme 2014-2020. The Project aims to promote the sustainable valorization and preservation of natural and cultural heritage as growth assets in the Adriatic Ionian area. The particular focus of the project CREATURES is the promotion of experiential tourism in the ADRION region by exploiting the potential of Cultural & Creative Industries (CCIs). The project CREATURES strives to generate threefold benefits in the ADRION region: economic (increased CC SMEs-startups’ competitiveness and tourist flows attracted by CREATURES routes); cultural (greater valorization of cultural heritage); and strategic (improved policies promoting a more integrated vision of CCIs).

The project consortium consists of eight project partners (PPs) coming from six countries:

- 1) Metropolitan City of Bologna (PP1: MCBO, Lead Partner, Italy),
- 2) Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region (PP2: FVG AR, Italy),
- 3) Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia (PP3: UIRS, Slovenia),
- 4) Patras Science Park S.A. (PP4: PSP, Greece),
- 5) Athens University of Economics and Business Research Center (PP5: AUEB-RC, Greece),
- 6) Regional Development Agency Dubrovnik – Neretva County Dunea (PP6: DUNEA, Croatia),
- 7) The Regional Directorate of National Culture, Vlorë (PP7: RDNC, Albania), and
- 8) School of Economics and Business in Sarajevo, the University of Sarajevo (PP8: SEBS, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

This report aims to present the main steps of setting up and running the Joint Acceleration Programme (JAP) across six project countries in the Adriatic Region (Italy, Slovenia, Greece, Croatia, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina). The Report integrates the main features of the local version of JAP implemented by seven project partners (PP1: MCBO, Lead Partner, Italy, (PP2: FVG AR, Italy, PP3: UIRS, Slovenia, PP4: PSP, Greece, PP6: DUNEA, Croatia, PP7: RDNC, Albania, and PP8: SEBS, Bosnia and Herzegovina). Also, this Report summarises the experiences and lessons learnt in the implementation of JAP.

The Report was produced by the School of Economics and Business Sarajevo (SEBS) based on the comments of the Athens University of Economics and Business – Research Centre (AUEB-RC) team on the draft version of O T1.1 “Joint Acceleration Programme for CCI-related SMEs and Start-Ups and the information provided in the reports of all project partners.

The Report includes the following parts:

- 1) Overall goal
- 2) Methodology for Establishing the local versions of the Joint Acceleration Programme (JAP)

- 3) Implementation of local JAPs per Project Partner
- 4) Comparative analysis of local versions of the Joint Acceleration Programme (JAP)
- 5) Good practices and lessons learnt
- 6) Conclusions

Joint Acceleration Programme (JAP) aimed to speed up (accelerate) the development of innovative business ideas into viable business projects for both start-ups and existing businesses in Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) across six countries in the Adrion Region (Italy, Slovenia, Greece, Croatia, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina). The main features of the Joint Acceleration Programme (JAP) are summarised in the table below. Common features include:

- ✓ Interactive working methods complemented with tailor-made expert advice based on the business needs of participants;
- ✓ A small number of participants (up to 10) to allow interactive sessions (and finding common points of interest)
- ✓ The curriculum structure takes businesses through the whole start-up process: from identifying needs and innovative ideas to presenting a final pitch or new business plan /model. Thus, participants in the JAP received ‘fast track’ support in all aspects of business development.

Table 1 Main features of the Joint Acceleration Programme (JAP)

What is the Joint Acceleration Programme (JAP)?	
Joint Acceleration Programme (JAP) aimed to speed up (accelerate) the development of innovative business ideas into viable business projects for both start-ups and existing businesses in Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) across six countries in the Adrion Region (Italy, Slovenia, Greece, Croatia, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina).	
What are the main aspects of the Joint Acceleration Programme (JAP)?	
Expert involvement	A team of local experts, coaches, researchers and leading practitioners supported early-stage start-up entrepreneurs and established SMEs in growing their businesses.
Content	The integrated curriculum of the JAP was delivered through four modules, each with themes representing the courses within it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Module 1: Introduction to the Culture and Creative Sector – Module 2: Business Development – Module 3: Personalised support – Module 4: Funding – Fundraising – Pitching
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bottom-up capacity building with peer-to-peer knowledge exchange all along the acceleration process – Innovative pioneers and leading practitioners gave inspiration and provided transferrable practices – Peer-to-peer and one-on-one mentor sessions to coach participants through conceptual learning and provide feedback
Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A holistic approach to business innovation in CCIs (strategy development and solving technical, organisational, financial or marketing problems)
What is the main added value of the Joint Acceleration Programme (JAP)?	

- ✓ JAP stimulated peer learning and provided inspiring examples of innovative business models in CCI
- ✓ JAP improved the innovation capacity of participating start-ups and established businesses in CCI across six countries in the Adrion Region (Italy, Slovenia, Greece, Croatia, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- ✓ JAP improved the marketing skills of participating start-ups and established businesses in CCI across six countries in the Adrion Region (Italy, Slovenia, Greece, Croatia, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina) and raised their self-confidence leading to innovative entrepreneurship in CCS
- ✓ JAP acted as an exchange and learning platform to openly discuss and pursue innovative ideas in CCI.

Based on the lessons learnt from setting up and running the local version of JAP, some key lessons and recommendations can be drawn:

Lesson 1: Know the context! An acceleration programme in CCI should be designed to be anchored in the local cultural and creative entrepreneurship ecosystem, complementing other services provided and ensuring the uniqueness and competitiveness of the emerging acceleration programme. Moreover, acceleration programmes in CCI should also be designed to target specific gaps in the local cultural and creative entrepreneurship ecosystem and provide a clear value proposition that needs to match the target audience(s). Thus, a unique acceleration programme tailored to meet the business needs of entrepreneurs/SMEs/start-ups in CCI should begin with assessing the business needs of potential participants in the acceleration programme. The host institution/organization responsible for setting up an acceleration programme in CCI should assess its specific capabilities and resources, as well as limitations, and consider them when designing an acceleration programme. The host organization may use a leverage model to create partnerships and utilize the resources of its partners.

Lesson 2: Build Partnerships and Engage Stakeholders! The acceleration programmes should develop new and strengthen existing partnerships with various players to collaborate on delivering education/mentoring modules. Host institutions responsible for setting up and running acceleration programmes in CCI should work with key stakeholders that could become long-term advisors and supporters of the acceleration programmes.

Lesson 3: Define Service Offerings! The portfolio of services offered makes up a core element of an acceleration programme, and the participants should be informed about the structure and content of the acceleration programme at the beginning.

Lesson 4: Be ready to adapt! As the context, stage/module, resources, and other elements of the acceleration programme may continuously evolve, acceleration programmes should evolve and adapt, and accelerator managers should adopt a mind-set that allows for continuous design and development.

Lesson 5: Define objectives and Key Performance Indicators! Rationale for the acceleration programme should be clearly articulated, along with the specific objectives, covering the desired results or outcomes of the acceleration programme and its Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)