

HoCare project extended for an extra year

The four-year-long Interreg Europe HoCare project (01/04/2016-31/03/2020) in which project partners elaborated policy recommendations and action plans to boost innovative solutions and services in the field of home care, has been prolonged for an extra year.

HoCare project contributed to the optimization of Structural Funds' investments and strengthened regional innovation systems in the health care sector by fostering quadruple-helix cooperation in regional innovation chains.

The extension of the HoCare project was granted in the framework of IE's 5th Call for proposals to collect potential best practices or solutions that proved to be effective responses and could be incorporated into regional/national policies to decrease the impact of COVID-19 crisis in social and health care services in line with the original objective of the Hocare project (delivery of Innovative solutions for Home Care by strengthening quadruple-helix cooperation in regional innovation chains).

As a result, the objectives set for this new initiative are:

- to further exchange experiences on the way the crisis impacts the issue addressed and on possible measures to face and recover from the crisis,
- to further improve regional development policies for better facing and faster recovering from this unprecedented situation.

The exchange of experiences will continue based on the flow of the HoCare project 1st Phase's activities. The aim is to address the impact of the crisis and tasks include the preparation of 1 regional report per project partner (PP) to measure and estimate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the delivery of innovative home-care solutions, in line with the smart specialization strategies of the partner regions.

The extended HoCare partnership is coordinated by the Nicosia Development Agency (ANEL), as lead partner from Cyprus. Further Project Partners are: Development Centre of the Heart of Slovenia - SI, Business Agency Association - BG, National Institute for Research and Development in Informatics - RO, Lithuanian Innovation Centre - LT, National Directorate General for Hospitals (former National Healthcare Service Center) - HU, IDERAM Business Development Institute of the Autonomous Region of Madeira - PT and DEX Innovation Centre - CZ.

The HoCare project that successfully ended in 2020, was divided into 2 phases. Phase 1 focused on capacity building through interregional exchange of experiences. Core of the learning journey was sharing of 33 good practices (available at: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/hocare/>) with replication potential in other regional settings to improve the delivery of innovation policies in the e-health sector. HoCare project's main outputs were specifically: 8 Regional Situation Analyses, 59 policy learning events (incl. 3 International Thematic Seminars and Workshops), 3 Joint Thematic Studies, 3 Policy Transfer Reports and 8 Regional Action Plans transforming the project learnings into implementation-oriented actions to improve regional ecosystems by empowering citizens and contributing to a healthier society. Phase 2 concentrated on the monitoring of Action Plans' implementation by the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) Managing Authorities targeting the improvement of their respective national Policy Instruments (ESIF OPs). The Aim was to improve the strategic focus, management, or implementation of new projects of 8 ESIF Policy Instruments (PIs) to positively impact the regional utilization of a total of €22,500,000 for the benefit of the socio-economic sector (citizens & SMEs).

The objective of the 1-year-long prolongation is to further improve regional development policies for better facing and faster recovering from the unprecedented situation of the Covid 19 epidemic by preparing a Regional Report containing information collected from the region about:

- a) the status of Home Care R&I
- b) the status of quadruple-helix cooperation in R&I.

The information included in Partners' Regional Reports as well as the identified Regional Good Practices will be the basis of the new exchange of experience process, actually to measure the crisis impacts on the delivery of innovative services and collect possible measures proved to be effective to face and recover from the crisis.

Methods of collecting information will be:

- Meetings / Workshops with stakeholders
- Desk research
- Meetings / Workshops with the Managing Authority of your Policy Instrument
- Participation in regional events relevant to the subject
- Relevant recent reports, articles, strategies, or any other relevant document

In Hungary the extended HoCare project results will address selected priorities of the Economic Development and Innovation Operative Programme Plus (EDIOP+). The project will explore measures that can strengthen and link key ingredients of the health innovation value chain at regional or interregional level, as well as different types of financing schemes, which encourage matching of public and private funds especially thanks to involvement of Quadruple-helix approach to EDIOP governance structure.

As a smart specialization sector, innovation in health is a priority under both PA2 and PA3 of EDIOP+. Tailoring of funding schemes to specific needs of the health sector and care system through improved governance will thus contribute to more efficient implementation of EDIOP+. The project aims to deliver improvement of governance by:

- Introducing additional measures / incentives in calls to contribute to an increased uptake of innovation applying the quadruple-helix approach
- Improve monitoring procedures by addressing the needs and demands identified by Formal and Informal caregivers through Public driven innovation identification processes

National Directorate General for Hospitals will keep stakeholders involved in the project through regular meetings. Selected members of this Multi-stakeholder group will be invited to participate at projects' events. Priority will be given to policy decision makers at different levels of hierarchy of the Ministry of Finance, involved in the planning and implementation of the Economic Development and Innovation Operative Programme Plus (EDIOP+).