## PRESS RELEASE

**The SMART-HUBs Opening Conference was successfully completed in Patras**

With great success and the participation of numerous stakeholders, the **Opening Conference of the European project SMART-HUBs** took place on **Wednesday, September 24, 2025**, at the **Amphitheatre of the Archaeological Museum of Patras**.

**Opening Remarks**

The event was honoured by greetings from:

* **Mr. Charalambos Bonanos**, Deputy Regional Governor of Western Greece, who referred to the importance of cross-border cooperation and innovation for local development, highlighting that Western Greece can become a hub of cultural creativity and youth entrepreneurship.
* **Mr. Dimitris Karagiannis**, representative of the **Chamber of Achaia**, who emphasized the importance of linking the creative economy with entrepreneurship and new markets, underlining the Chamber’s support for such initiatives.

**Presentations and Interventions**

During the Conference, the following presentations were delivered:

* **The SMART-HUBs project: goals and objectives** by **Mr. Christos Tzomakas**, Director of the **Regional Development Fund of the Region of Western Greece (RDF-RWG)**.
* **The Creative@Hubs project contribution** by **Ms. Marisofi Mavroulia**, (RDF-RWG).

Scientific and professional interventions followed, focusing on creative economy, digital transformation, cultural heritage, and tourism, with contributions from:

* **Mr. Andreas Tsiliras**, Cultural Manager MSc, Co-founder of **Mosaic // Culture & Creativity**, with **Creative Economy: Between Dynamics and Obstacles**
* **Mr. Aris Mamasioulas**, **Special Management Service of OP Western Greece, Unit A’**, with **Entrepreneurship support actions from the Regional Operational Programme "Western Greece 2021-2027"**
* **Dr. Konstantina Askouni**, **Museologist – PhD in Museum Education**, **Former Deputy Mayor of Finance, Culture and Social Policy, Municipality of Western Achaia,** with **Digital Society and Cultural Heritage: Skills, Educational Programs and New Challenges in Culture**

In addition, partners from Greece and Italy presented good practices and European projects, including:

* **EMOUNDERGROUNDS case study: Emotional exhibits for experiential tourism and a new transnational CCIs cluster**, presented by **Ms. Ida Carolla** (representative of Municipality of Nardò),
* **Building SMART-HUBs: Transversal and Digital Competences for innovating CCIs and tourism economy in the Euro-Mediterranean region**, presented by **Ms. Tiziana Carlino** (representative of Materahub Cultural and Creative Industries Consortium Scarl),
* **CB4E-Exhibits case study: Capacity building for the development of emotional technological exhibits to support CCIs**, presented by **Ms. Denise Greco** (representative of Municipality of Maida).

The **keynote speech** was delivered by **Ms. Xenia Kaldara**, Chairwoman of the Board and General Director of the **Michael Cacoyannis Foundation**, on the topic: *“Digital Skills Development in Cultural and Creative Industries.”*

In the afternoon, the conference continued with presentations of **research and technological applications** in the fields of culture and tourism, featuring projects such as:

**HERIT ADAPT Pilot: Photogrammetry of the Temple of Epikourios Apollon** presented by **Christos Anagnostopoulos, Industrial Systems Institute**,

**SPARC, a sparc that never goes out** presented by **Vassilis Papaioannou, Department of Digital Systems Design and Studies, Municipality of Patras**,

**The "CHERRY" project and its contribution to the field of CCI - The role of RWG as a project partner** presented by **Sofia Karveli, Head of the Department of Regional Policy Planning, Programming, Innovation & Project Evaluation of Region of Western Greece**,

as well as contributions on **Smart Tourism Destinations and Digital Transformation in Culture**, presented by **Alkiviadis Panagopoulos, Professor, Director, Laboratory of Information Systems and Forecasting in Tourism, Department of Tourism Management, University of Patras**.

The event concluded with an open discussion, Q&A session, and exchange of views among participants, confirming the crucial role of the **creative and cultural industries** in local and regional development.

After the lunch break, participants also had the opportunity to visit the **Archaeological Museum of Patras** and the art exhibition **“Alive Heritage: Matter and Memory – Greek Diaspora Artists.”**

The **SMART-HUBs project** aspires to create a dynamic ecosystem that will foster sustainable regional development, offer new opportunities for young people, and strengthen cooperation between institutions in **Greece and Italy**.