

**3<sup>rd</sup> NEWS LETTER**



December 2025 - February 2026

## Bridging Culture, Tourism and Future Careers: the SMART-HUBs Infoday in Matera

How can we transform cultural heritage into a concrete engine for youth and NEET employment? This question was the heartbeat of the **SMART-HUBs Infoday**, held the **28th of November in Matera**, in the prestigious **Cultural Foundation Le Monacelle**.

Starting at 10:00 am, the event, aimed at officially presenting the roadmap of the SMART-HUBs project, welcomed a diverse audience of young people, regional and local stakeholders, CCIs and cultural tourism professionals all along with engaged community members.

The Infoday, conducted by Tiziana Carlino, started to refer to the **SWOT analysis** conducted in the cultural and creative sector at the local level, as well as the educational and professional needs identified in this sector, in light of the analyzed trends of the labor market in the Basilicata region, especially in the province of Matera. This crucial analysis underpins the project's strategy, ensuring that the training provided through both the physical and digital hubs is directly relevant to closing the existing skills gap and maximizing employment opportunities for young people and NEETs in the region's cultural tourism landscape.

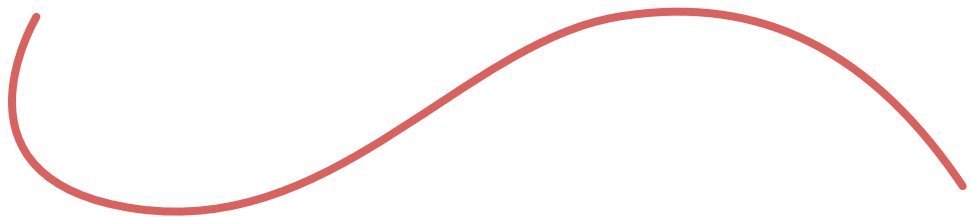
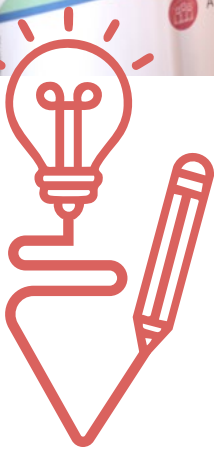
A second highlight of the session was the dive into the **"Physical Hubs"** concept. Attendees learned that SMART-HUBs is establishing also six strategic hubs across Italy and Greece, with **Matera-hub hosting in Matera one of these crucial centers**. The presentation showcased how the hub in



Matera will facilitate both hands-on workshops (offering direct, on-the-job training experiences) and **immersive technology** (granting access to innovative tools which are becoming essential for modern storytelling in tourism). Infoday also introduced the project's **Digital Learning Platform**, a pillar of the initiative designed to improve essential soft skills—specifically entrepreneurial, green, and digital competencies.

For the attendees in Matera, the Infoday held at Le Monacelle Cultural Foundation was not just a presentation, but an open invitation to participate in a transition that values both their cultural roots and their professional future careers.

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# SMART-HUBS in the "DIGI-CONTENT" Project Exchange of Experience (EoE) Meeting - Vilnius, Lithuania

Following the invitation of the **Regional Development Fund of the Region of Western Greece and the Computer Technology Institute and Press (CTI) "Diophantus"**, the Chamber of Aetoloakarnania participated in the 2nd Exchange of Experience Meeting of the **DIGI-CONTENT Project** (INTERREG EUROPE 2021-2027 Programme), held in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 2-4 December 2025.

During the meeting, the Chamber presented its contribution - alongside the **SMART-HUBS project** - to the digital transformation of businesses, the promotion of youth and NEET employment, and the development of the **Cultural and Creative Industries** sector in the Region of Western Greece.

The meeting offered a valuable opportunity to exchange innovative practices in **VR and AI**, explore accelerator programmes and funding opportunities for the creative and cultural industries, and strengthen collaboration among participants.

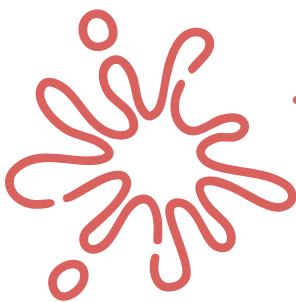


Discussions focused on improving the measurement of CCI's economic impact, while highlighting the growing potential of **AI and immersive technologies** in preserving and promoting cultural heritage.

Through international cooperation and the exchange of good practices, the initiative strengthens efforts towards innovation, digital skills development, and sustainable regional growth.



Vilnius 2-4/12/25





# The first Co-ordination Meeting on Co-Design Laboratories (D3.2) took place on Thursday, 18th December 2025, from 11:00 to 13:00 (CET) with the following agenda

- Lab 1 Methodology – Presentation and Comments
- Lab 1 – Finalisation of Agenda and Approach
- Labs 2 & 3 – Proposed Structure and Partner Preferences
- Planning – Dates and Timing for Labs 1, 2 and 3, and General Q&A

During the meeting Zoom whiteboard was used in order to collect comments and preferences from all partners in a more interactive way

The first Co-Design Lab (Lab 1) was presented during the **Coordination Meeting**, where partners received the full methodology and structure of the session.

## SMART-HUBS Project Lab 1 Methodology: Strategic Framework and Structure From Needs to Action – Co-creating the SMART-HUBs Capacity Development Programme

### 1. Strategic Context and Compliance

This methodology document outlines the structure of Lab 1 – From Needs to Action, which ensures an efficient and coherent transition from the diagnostic phase (D3.1) to the strategic design phase (D3.2). The Lab is structured for, and involves, all Project Partners.

| Element         | Description   | Strategic Rationale   |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Lab Objective   | To achieve full partner consensus on validated needs and co-create a high-level strategic blueprint (CANVAS) for the Capacity Development Programme.  | Achieves compliance and partner ownership of the D3.2 foundation, mitigating risk in subsequent implementation (WP4/WP5). |
| Project Linkage | D3.1 Validation feeds the initial data; the Lab's output is the D3.2 Draft Blueprint.   | Ensures a traceable, data-driven link between the project's diagnostic and design deliverables.                           |
| Next Steps      | Lab 1 provides the strategic framework for Lab 2 (defining the executive educational program) and the context for Lab 3 (building new project ideas). | Confirms the Lab's critical role in maintaining the overall Work Plan progression.  |

### 2. Theoretical and Conceptual Foundation

The Lab's methodological rigor is ensured by three complementary strategic frameworks that together form the project's strategic design engine.

#### A. Foundational Framework: Human-Centered Design (HCD)

The entire Lab 1 structure is anchored in a Human-Centered Co-Design approach, which is directly derived from the Design Thinking process. This ensures that the final Capacity Development Programme is not designed based on assumptions but is instead driven by the verified needs of the end-users (NEETs and CCI).

Lab 1 is specifically dedicated to the crucial Empathy and Definition phases of this process.

- **Service Design Principle:** The templates used for Empathy Mapping and Persona Creation in Phase 2 will be guided by established Service Design principles, ensuring a focused, high-impact approach tailored to the specific needs of Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) and their target audiences.



#### B. Systemic Capacity Development Framework

This model is the object of the Human-Centered Design process. The Lab shifts the focus from simple training to systemic change by defining the program across five dimensions.

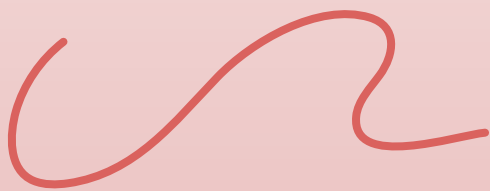
- **Capacity Development (CD) vs. Training:** Capacity development uses training and other learning experiences as means, not ends. Its goal is to achieve sustainable change by strengthening the underlying system – Policies, Processes, Tools and Partnerships – and only then designing the appropriate Learning Experiences to support them.

#### The Five Dimensions of Systemic Change:

1. **Policies:** Rules, strategies, and regulatory frameworks.
2. **Processes:** Workflows, procedures, and internal operational methods.
3. **Tools:** Digital platforms, manuals, templates, and shared resources.
4. **Partnerships:** Governance structures, working groups, and inter-institutional alliances.
5. **Learning Experiences:** Targeted training, mentoring, and peer exchanges.

#### C. The Golden Circle (WHY, HOW, WHAT)

This framework is used as a simple, shared logic to structure the discussion and maintain strategic alignment, ensuring that the project's intended impact (WHY) clearly drives the design choices (HOW and WHAT).





- **WHY (Phase 1/2):** The desired impact and systemic change, validated against D3.1 findings (why is the programme needed?).
- **HOW (Phase 3):** The strategic levers that will achieve this impact, represented by the five Capacity Development dimensions (policies, processes, tools, partnerships, learning experiences).
- **WHAT (Phase 3):** The concrete programme components that will be implemented within each dimension.

**3. Detailed Lab Structure: The Four-Phase Methodological Flow**

The Lab is divided into four sequential phases, progressing from data validation to the final strategic blueprint, ensuring every action directly contributes to the D3.2 deliverable.

| Phase   | Title                     | Primary Objective  | Methodology / Key Output  | Alignment (HCD / Golden Circle)     |
|---------|---------------------------|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| Phase 1 | Foundation and Validation | Confirm the D3.1 findings and establish partner consensus on the critical needs of NEETs and CCIs.       | Concise presentation of D3.1 data followed by an interactive digital poll for quantitative validation and prioritization.   | HCD: EMPATHY (Data Review) / WHY    |
| Phase 2 | Understanding the User    | Translate validated needs into measurable objectives by creating detailed, representative user profiles. | Stakeholder Mapping. Persona Creation via Breakout Rooms, using the Service Design principle of empathy mapping. Output is the Needs-to-Action Table defining WHO needs WHAT and WHY (the desired change), which feeds directly into the CANVAS blocks. | HCD: DEFINE / WHO & WHY             |
| Phase 3 | Strategic Co-Design       | Co-create the high-level Capacity Development Programme blueprint.                                       | Best Practices Warm-up to gather inspiring models mapped to the 5 dimensions. Collaborative completion of the CANVAS on the e-whiteboard, focusing only on the 5 Capacity Dimensions (deferring detailed curriculum design to Lab 2).                   | HCD: IDEATE/PROTO TYPE / HOW & WHAT |

| Phase 4 | Synthesis and Next Steps | Finalize the strategic blueprint and ensure explicit cross-border alignment for D3.2 implementation. | Review of the consolidated CANVAS. Discussion focused on two critical clarifying questions regarding commonality and local adaptability. | HCD: TEST (Validation) / ACTION |
|---------|--------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------|
|---------|--------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------|

**4. Major Deliverable Outcomes**

The structured methodology of Lab 1 guarantees the following formalized outputs, which are essential for advancing the project to subsequent WPs:

1. **Validated Needs & Objectives:** A documented consensus on the critical capacities required by target groups, structured into measurable objectives.
2. **Consolidated stakeholder personas:** A consolidated set of personas (e.g. NEET profiles, CCI hub managers, municipal officers, etc.), bringing together inputs from different regions so that goals, challenges and capacity gaps are understood in a shared, interregional perspective.
3. **Capacity Development Programme CANVAS:** The finalized strategic blueprint—a single, visual document defining the program's intended impact across the 5 systemic dimensions (Policies, Processes, Tools, Partnerships, and Learning Experiences). This serves as the **strategic framework** for Lab 2.
4. **Cross-Border Implementation Framework:** Clear decisions on which components of the program require mandatory cross-border commonality and which allow for local adaptation, ensuring coherence while respecting regional diversity.

**5. Digital Tools**

Lab 1 will be implemented fully online using a focused set of digital tools to maximise participation and ease of use.

Zoom will serve as the main platform for plenary presentations and small-group work in Breakout Rooms. Crucially, collaborative activities such as Stakeholder Mapping, Empathy Mapping, Persona Creation, and completing the Capacity Development Programme CANVAS will be executed on a shared e-whiteboard platform, using either the Zoom Native Whiteboard or a dedicated, feature-rich tool like Miro, depending on the complexity of the specific task.

Zoom polls and chat will be actively utilized to support quick validations, prioritization exercises, and short feedback moments, ensuring immediate consensus.

In addition, a simple interactive tool such as Padlet or Mentimeter will be used towards the end of the lab for a short, engaging wrap-up activity, helping to capture best practices or key reflections in a visual format that is easy to reuse.





## Press releases

The following press releases have been issued so far:

Press releases from the official site of the project about the Info Day in Matera:

<https://www.greece-italy.eu/culture-tourism-and-careers-6-strategic-hubs-across-italy-and-greece-announced-in-the-smart-hubs-infoday-in-matera/>

Press release from the official social media of Interreg VI-A Greece-Italy 2021-2027:

[Interreg VI-A Greece-Italy 2021-2027 \(@interregreeceitaly\) - Instagram - Info Day in Matera](https://www.instagram.com/interregreeceitaly/)

Links to the information that PB5 uploaded at the official social media of the project for the Info Day in Matera:

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/smart-hubs-interreg-gr-it/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61580525370637>

Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/smart\\_hubs\\_interreg/](https://www.instagram.com/smart_hubs_interreg/)

Press releases at social media by RDF-RWG concerning the Info Day in Matera:

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7428011769924743168/?originTrackin-gld=Eoo%2BiPyEwND%2F886NGhDwbw%3D%3D>

[https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid02V5iBfhTtnX65ccHzyZTnWKep-6DEd74PbmVd4y73JX3hPqjJBV6tSp1sZjwgBt-5d8l&id=61588042431613](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid02V5iBfhTtnX65ccHzyZTnWKep-6DEd74PbmVd4y73JX3hPqjJBV6tSp1sZjwgBt-5d8l&id=61588042431613)

Press releases at social media by RDF-RWG concerning the presentation of SMART-HUBS in the "DIGI-CONTENT" Project Exchange of Experience (EoE) Meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania:

[https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid0GP6j8LP5gBaP97c1F6Zdq7vvAB-mExkiP7W5y6PpsDgqWAdABHzDsZhtYbBBFhRj-Fl&id=61588042431613](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid0GP6j8LP5gBaP97c1F6Zdq7vvAB-mExkiP7W5y6PpsDgqWAdABHzDsZhtYbBBFhRj-Fl&id=61588042431613)

[https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7434965418517143552/?utm\\_source=share&utm\\_medium=member\\_desktop&rcm=ACoAAFTlttIBWk\\_AQl6-hlcLkIZI\\_gkl2EBNwlc](https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7434965418517143552/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAFTlttIBWk_AQl6-hlcLkIZI_gkl2EBNwlc)

Press releases at social media by RDF-RWG concerning the promotional action for the 1st & 2nd e-newsletter:

[https://www.linkedin.com/posts/smart-hubs-interreg-gr-it\\_smart-hubs-newsletter-issue-1-ugcPost-7429435993767710721-mRLs?utm\\_source=share&utm\\_medium=member\\_desktop&rcm=ACoAAFTlttIBWk\\_AQl6-hlcLkIZI\\_gkl2EBNwlc](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/smart-hubs-interreg-gr-it_smart-hubs-newsletter-issue-1-ugcPost-7429435993767710721-mRLs?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAFTlttIBWk_AQl6-hlcLkIZI_gkl2EBNwlc)

[https://www.linkedin.com/posts/smart-hubs-interreg-gr-it\\_smart-hubs-newsletter-issue-2-ugcPost-7429443994989793280-prj3?utm\\_source=share&utm\\_medium=member\\_desktop&rcm=ACoAAFTlttIBWk\\_AQl6-hlcLkIZI\\_gkl2EBNwlc](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/smart-hubs-interreg-gr-it_smart-hubs-newsletter-issue-2-ugcPost-7429443994989793280-prj3?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAFTlttIBWk_AQl6-hlcLkIZI_gkl2EBNwlc)

[https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid02Uf999WUmwY8x9L1Bfs7LSzcamMN-NPm5rssfVhHx8qHRYstkJGWqX9umSpdu5aaM-l&id=61588042431613](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid02Uf999WUmwY8x9L1Bfs7LSzcamMN-NPm5rssfVhHx8qHRYstkJGWqX9umSpdu5aaM-l&id=61588042431613)

[https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid04nFPGhatiaz694T3EKZcVNznn-QQy6pNGGukukY54YWFdpgdtJHaUKnAVQNunw-pl&id=61588042431613](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid04nFPGhatiaz694T3EKZcVNznn-QQy6pNGGukukY54YWFdpgdtJHaUKnAVQNunw-pl&id=61588042431613)

Press releases at social media by Chamber of Aetoloakarnania concerning the promotional action for the 1st & 2nd e-newsletter, the 1st Infographic and the presentation of SMART-HUBS in the "DIGI-CONTENT" Project Exchange of Experience (EoE) Meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania:

<https://www.epimetol.gr/category/nea-anakoinosis-dimosiotita-toy-ergou-smart-hubs/>

<https://www.epimetol.gr/newsletter-07-01-2026/>

<https://www.epimetol.gr/newsletter-15-12-2025/>

[https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid02LaWuBWWqf4Bxb2kCFjhFwvQSQL-CQqcUHccT25dGAzDvXPLNHfG7G4WYKYFQez-Vkl&id=100064560074960](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid02LaWuBWWqf4Bxb2kCFjhFwvQSQL-CQqcUHccT25dGAzDvXPLNHfG7G4WYKYFQez-Vkl&id=100064560074960)

[https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid02kYS68s2XGYQiz4bo2cPixXFGGd-8fgE2xTJgPSKBnmQyDWPcUWUVZaJCWhvSd-5DJ8l&id=100064560074960](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid02kYS68s2XGYQiz4bo2cPixXFGGd-8fgE2xTJgPSKBnmQyDWPcUWUVZaJCWhvSd-5DJ8l&id=100064560074960)

[https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid0TmbF1xPQdGt78doDn9FX-28q2CwVMh9iQT1zPvuxzP4uATSZFbrizeJ657r-9wd57TI&id=100064560074960](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid0TmbF1xPQdGt78doDn9FX-28q2CwVMh9iQT1zPvuxzP4uATSZFbrizeJ657r-9wd57TI&id=100064560074960)

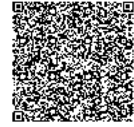
[https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid02QAEXGz2BfsRJarhtALUEukyh4cth-GqAXuhrmRt9WAFbiqzZduPK9VxrZkQePWU-jGI&id=100064560074960](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid02QAEXGz2BfsRJarhtALUEukyh4cth-GqAXuhrmRt9WAFbiqzZduPK9VxrZkQePWU-jGI&id=100064560074960)

Press releases at social media by MateraHub concerning the Info Day:

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7402759917603926017>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/materahub/posts/pfbid02wPn3nkL24ub2R4Qb2DFkgPdAA-i54T8x3LAhh5mpb3ZDLkP3f59rLnPrRXdd8wK2l>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DR4945Y-iAl1/?igsh=c2VpZW53ZG9ybfHFx>



Enhancing employment access developing NEET' skills and capabilities to sustain the economic-SMART transition of socio-cultural-tourist destinations by CCI's HUBs contaminations

1 Jointly developed solution



300

Participants

in joint actions promoting gender equality, equal opportunities and social inclusion



6

Pilot actions

developed jointly and implemented in projects



3

Co-Design Laboratories to exchange best practices & define the Capacity Building & Educational Programmes



PB 5 MATERAHUB CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES CONSORTIUM SCARL

PB 6 MUNICIPALITY OF MAIDA

PB 4 MUNICIPALITY OF NARDO

PB 2 CHAMBER OF AETOLOAKARNANIA

PB 3 ZAKYNTHOS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

LB REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND OF REGION OF WESTERN GREECE

1 well-structured co-designed Capacity Building Programme



6

Focus Groups with the main public-private stakeholders



6

Creative theatrical, entertainment cultural events including book-trailers laboratories



2

Co-designed Educational & Training programmes





# Coming next...

## 1st Stakeholders Meeting & 1st Co-Design Lab are a fact!!!

As part of Deliverable 3.2 of Work Package 3, the implementation of the **Co-Design Laboratories is prepared**, where partners and stakeholders will collaboratively define the Capacity Building and Educational Programmes of SMART-HUBS. The Regional Development Fund of the Region of Western Greece is organizing the **1st Stakeholders Meeting** within the framework of the SMART-HUBS project, aiming to gather evidence-based input for the design of the project's local actions and programs in Western Greece.



### Event Details:

**Date:** Thursday, February 26, 2026

**Time:** 11:00 a.m. (Arrival)

**Location:** CREATIVE@HUBS - Hub of Patras (former Agricultural School of Patras)

### Key Discussion Points:

- Sector needs and prioritization of key objectives.
- Target groups for local programs.
- Framework for the selection process of participants in the local programs.
- Highlighting and recording best practices from domestic and international experience, for utilization/adaptation in local programs (training, target group approach, selection process, connection with market needs/real applications). The conclusions of the meeting will be utilized to shape the next steps of the project and to specify local interventions in the Region of Western Greece.





# Coming next...

## 1st Stakeholder Meeting - SMART-HUB

### MEETING AGENDA

- Welcome & meeting framework (Regional Development Fund of the Region of Western Greece)
- General project presentation (Regional Development Fund of the Region of Western Greece)
- Presentation: Support of the Co creation / Co design Labs (Lever Development Consultants S.A.)
- Good practices from the field - Invited stakeholders will be asked to present 1-2 short examples/experiences
- Open discussion / Q&A

Lab 1 will be implemented as a collaborative co-design workshop involving all partners. It will be focused on validating needs, shaping user personas, and co-creating the initial SMART-HUBS Blueprint and **it will take place on Monday 2nd of March 2026.**

These activities will ensure a solid methodological foundation for the capacity-building actions that will follow throughout the project.

The outcomes of **Lab 1** will form the basis for **Lab 2**, which will define the detailed Educational Programme, and **Lab 3**, which will focus on developing new project initiatives.



## The second project meeting is a fact!!!

The project partnership will gather together on **Thursday, 5th of March 2026, 10:00-14:30 (CET)**. The meeting is organized by the **Chamber of Aetoloakarnania in Agrinio**, at Conference hall of the Chamber of Aetoloakarnania, Papastratou 53 & Smyrnis 1, 1st Floor.

Stay tuned !





## Project links

The official link of the project is  
[SMART-HUBS - Enhancing employment access developing NEET' skills and capabilities to sustain the economic-SMART transition of socio-cultural-tourist destinations by CCIs HUBs contaminations - Interreg VI-A Greece-Italy 2021-2027](#)



The social media of the project:

[www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61580525370637](https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61580525370637)

[www.linkedin.com/showcase/smart-hubs-interreg-gr-it/](https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/smart-hubs-interreg-gr-it/)

<https://www.youtube.com/@Smart-HUBs>

[www.instagram.com/smart\\_hubs\\_interreg/](https://www.instagram.com/smart_hubs_interreg/)

