Project Title	**Boosting Smart Specialization and Encouraging Spin-offs in IT across Danube Region**
Call	**Danube Region Programme**
Project number	**DRP0200277**
Coordinator	**ZEDA**
Project duration	**30 months 0 days**
Project website	***https://interreg-danube.eu/projects/spinit***
Specific objective	**Setting up, implementing, and validating pilot measures in IT sector and smart technologies in DR**
Activity	**Next-gen Pilot Projects for Smart Specialization and IT**

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D.2.2.2: Selection of Pilot Projects

Deliverable D.1.2.1 Development of the Framework for knowledge exchange and benchmarking			
Due date of deliverable:	30.06.2025	Actual submission date:	03.03.2025
Organization:	**DEX Innovation Centre, DEXIC**	Author:	Adam Červenka
Status: Final (F) Draft (D) Revised draft (RV)	F	Dissemination level: Public (PU) Confidential, only for members of the consortium (CO)	CO

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1 Approach and Methodology

The methodology for pilot project selection and implementation within the SpinIT initiative is designed to ensure alignment with the project's overarching objectives, focusing on skills development, digital innovation, and smart specialization. While the Local Action Plans (LAPs) provided valuable insights into regional priorities, it became evident that some proposed pilot actions required further refinement to meet the strategic goals of the project.

To address this, a set of standardized requirements has been established, ensuring that all pilot projects align with the regional S3 strategies, EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), and SpinIT's focus areas. Rather than directly linking LAPs to pilot actions, each partner is encouraged to adapt and refine their pilot projects to meet these criteria. This approach is particularly necessary where pilot actions were not clearly defined or where engagement levels varied among territorial partners.

By implementing this structured methodology, we aim to maximize the impact, scalability, and transferability of pilot projects across the Danube Region, ensuring that they contribute meaningfully to digital transformation and innovation in the participating territories.

The selection of pilot projects for SpinIT is not just about meeting predefined criteria; it is about finding initiatives that inspire, innovate, and align with the project's broader goals of fostering smart specialization and bridging territorial disparities. Building on the knowledge from the **D.1.2.2 Best Practice Report**, this deliverable provides partners with a roadmap to identify projects that address local challenges while capitalizing on transnational synergies. The process involves asking key questions, drawing lessons from successful examples, and building a coherent strategy tailored to each region.

2 Framing the Selection: Where to Start?

When beginning the selection process, partners should consider: ***What are the pressing challenges in your region?*** Local Action Plans (LAPs) serve as the foundation, highlighting specific needs and opportunities. For instance, does your region lack digital infrastructure in agriculture? Or are SMEs in your area struggling with adopting Industry 4.0 technologies? By grounding the selection process in the realities of each region, partners ensure relevance and impact.

From there, partners should evaluate how the **defined Requirements** (D.2.2.1) shape their focus. For example, if the requirements emphasize the integration of AI in small businesses,

how can this translate into actionable pilot ideas? What industries could benefit the most from such interventions? This step ensures alignment with SpinIT's objectives while maintaining flexibility to adapt to local contexts.

3 Drawing Inspiration from Best Practices

A powerful way to develop pilot ideas is to learn from projects that have already proven successful. For example, **PRAGMATIC**, a precision agriculture initiative, provides a compelling case study. This project integrated IoT, big data, and satellite imaging to help farmers optimize resource use and improve yields. Beyond its technical achievements, PRAGMATIC demonstrated the importance of creating accessible, user-friendly tools that directly address end-users' pain points. As a partner, ask yourself: *Could a similar approach work in our local industry?* If agriculture isn't relevant, what about other sectors where data-driven decision-making could drive efficiency, such as manufacturing or logistics?

Similarly, **LandSense** highlights the value of engaging communities in innovation. Its CropSupport app not only provided farmers with real-time crop monitoring tools but also involved them in contributing data to broader scientific research. This dual benefit of empowering users and advancing knowledge is a model for projects that seek to combine local impact with broader relevance. Partners should ask: *How can we engage end-users as active participants in our pilot projects?* What tools or platforms can facilitate this engagement?

4 Thinking Big: Where Could Innovation Lead?

When reviewing potential pilot ideas, it's essential to think beyond immediate goals. The **AI4SI initiative in Slovenia**, for example, shows how fostering collaboration between academia, policymakers, and businesses can create long-term change. By transferring AI research into practical applications, the project strengthened national competitiveness and paved the way for a cohesive AI strategy. This raises an important question: *Is there a technology or methodology that your region has yet to fully embrace?* Could your pilot project serve as the starting point for broader adoption?

Projects like **Ladies in AI**, an example from Croatia, which focused on equipping women with AI and entrepreneurial skills, also demonstrate the potential for addressing social inequalities through innovation. Partners might consider: *Are there underrepresented groups in your region that could benefit from targeted skills development?* How can technology act as an enabler for social inclusion and economic growth?

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5 Building a Strategy for Selection

The selection process is about balancing inspiration with practicality. Partners should approach this by asking:

1. *Does the pilot idea align with the strategic goals of SpinIT and S3 priorities?*
2. *Is it feasible within the resources and timelines available?*
3. *Does it offer clear and measurable outcomes, such as improved digital adoption or increased competitiveness?*

Partners should also think about scalability and adaptability. For instance, the **Danube Energy+ initiative**, which targeted young innovators to pioneer energy efficiency solutions, created a replicable model for engaging youth in sustainability. Could your pilot idea be scaled to other regions or industries? What structures would need to be in place for this to happen?

Finally, promotion and visibility are crucial. Ask: *How can the results of your pilot project be shared effectively?* Developing a communication plan that includes workshops, reports, and digital outreach ensures that the project's impact extends beyond its immediate participants.

5. 1 Encouraging Collaborative Creativity

Partners are encouraged to think collaboratively, sharing insights and brainstorming ideas that combine regional expertise with transnational perspectives. For example, combining lessons from **PRAGMATIC** and **LandSense** (both from Serbia) could result in a pilot project that applies IoT not just in agriculture but in water resource management, an equally critical area for many regions in the Danube.

Similarly, cross-sectoral collaboration, as seen in projects like **DanubePeerChains** (from Bosnia and Herzegovina), can inspire partners to look for synergies between industries. Could ICT solutions for manufacturing also address challenges in healthcare or education? Asking these types of questions encourages out-of-the-box thinking and maximizes the potential for innovation.

5. 2 Guiding Questions for Partners

To make the selection process more engaging, here's a set of guiding questions:

- *What specific regional challenges does your pilot project address?*
- *What tools or methodologies will you use, and are they accessible to all stakeholders?*

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- *What outcomes do you expect, and how will you measure success?*
- *How can your project be adapted for other regions or scaled for broader impact?*

By combining structured analysis with inspiration from proven initiatives, partners can select pilot projects that not only meet the requirements of D.2.2.2 but also embody the transformative spirit of the SpinIT project.

5. 3 Requirements of the selection based on the D.2.2.1

Pilot projects within the SpinIT initiative must focus on **skills development** in **ICT, AI, AR/VR, Industry 4.0, Edtech, and cross-sectoral collaboration**, ensuring alignment with **regional Smart Specialization Strategies (S3)** and the **EU-Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)**. They must deliver measurable benefits, such as increased IT sector employment, and contribute to the long-term objectives of SpinIT.

All pilot projects must be **feasible, well-defined, and completed by June 2025**. They must engage **10 participants (including 3 SMEs)**, develop a **transferable curriculum/methodology**, and be **properly documented and promoted**. Pure application or platform development is not eligible—projects must emphasize education, innovation, and new methodologies.

Projects should integrate **emerging technologies** (AI, IoT, blockchain, big data) and **innovative approaches** (gamification, virtual hackathons) to enhance engagement and effectiveness. Additionally, they must ensure **scalability and transferability**, allowing successful initiatives to be replicated across different regions and sectors.

Practical part - Selection of Pilot projects

A) Based on the Local Action Plans (via D.2.1.4.)

SpinIT_LAP template_FINAL.docx

B) Based on the Best Practice reports

D.1.2.2. Best practice report_FINAL.pdf

C) Based on the Defined Requirements (via D.2.2.1)

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D2.2.1 Definition of requirements for pilot projects in smart specialization and IT sector

Annex 1: Drafting the Pilot Project

Pilot Project Template

1. Project Title

The 3P – Smart Business Processes (3P – Pametni poslovni procesi)

2. General Information

The 3P – Smart Business Processes pilot project will be implemented in Varaždin, Croatia, a regional center for digital transformation and innovation. The city is strategically positioned within Croatia's Smart Specialization Strategy (S3) and the broader EU digitalization framework, making it an ideal location for fostering the digital development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The leading organization responsible for implementing the pilot project is Optimizacija d.o.o., which will coordinate activities, ensure alignment with the SpinIT project goals, and manage stakeholder communication. Optimizacija d.o.o. will oversee the design and execution of workshops, ensuring they are practically applicable and focused on delivering concrete results.

Key stakeholders include a diverse group of academic institutions, industry leaders, and public sector representatives. Makerspace Varaždin will be responsible for facilitating workshops and providing technical support to SMEs, while the Faculty of Organization and Informatics (FOI) will contribute academic expertise and research resources. The Technology Park Varaždin will provide infrastructure, mentorship, and business incubation support.

Industry leaders, including SICK Mobilisis and Atinel, will offer expert knowledge and real-world case studies, particularly in business process automation. The City of Varaždin will support the project by aligning it with local and national economic strategies, creating a supportive environment for SME digital transition.

Finally, small and medium-sized enterprises and entrepreneurs will play a central role as direct beneficiaries, actively participating in training and implementing digital tools to improve business processes and market competitiveness.

This structure ensures a collaborative and cross-sectoral approach, fully aligned with the SpinIT project requirements and RIS3 priorities, emphasizing digital skills development, innovation, and sustainable regional economic growth.

3. Impact of the Local Discovery Group workshops

The Local Discovery Group (LDG) workshops played a crucial role in shaping the 3P – Smart Business Processes pilot project. These workshops brought together key stakeholders from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), academia, industry, and public institutions to assess regional needs, identify skill gaps, and define priority pilot initiatives aligned with the Smart Specialization Strategy (S3) and the goals of the SpinIT project.

During the first and second workshops, stakeholders identified key challenges in SME digitalization, emphasizing the need for structured support in business process automation, CRM integration, and digital marketing. Discussions revealed that, while some SMEs were aware of digital tools, many lacked practical knowledge and resources for effective implementation. This feedback highlighted the importance of hands-on training and real-world application, rather than purely theoretical education.

The third workshop, which included startups and SMEs, further refined the focus of the pilot project. Participants emphasized the need for scalable solutions tailored to SMEs, with priority areas identified as business process optimization, IoT-based solutions, and enhanced competencies in AI-driven automation. After assessing feasibility and potential impact, the 3P project was selected as the most relevant initiative due to its potential to drive long-term digital transformation within the regional SME ecosystem.

The fourth workshop, held at Technology Park Varaždin, finalized stakeholder commitments and refined the project structure. Participants agreed that the pilot must ensure measurable improvements in digital skills, practical implementation of tools, and strong mentorship components. The City of Varaždin, FOI, Makerspace Varaždin, and industry leaders such as SICK Mobilisis and Atinel expressed their commitment to actively supporting the project by providing infrastructure, mentorship, and networking opportunities.

By incorporating these insights, the 3P pilot project was designed to bridge the digital skills gap, enhance SME competitiveness, and foster a collaborative innovation ecosystem. The structured approach ensures that SMEs not only receive training but also implement digital tools in their business processes, leading to tangible improvements in efficiency, automation, and market reach.

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4. Project Details

The main goal of the 3P – Smart Business Processes pilot project is to equip small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with essential digital tools and skills to optimize business processes, increase efficiency, and enhance market competitiveness through digital transformation and automation.

The project addresses a critical gap in practical knowledge and the adoption of digital technologies among SMEs, particularly in business digitalization, process automation, CRM system integration, and digital marketing. Many companies struggle with inefficient workflows, outdated systems, and a limited understanding of how to leverage digital technologies to optimize operations and scale their business.

The expected outcomes of the project include:

- Increased digital competencies among SMEs, enabling them to integrate digital tools and automation into daily business operations.
- Improved efficiency and productivity through the adoption of CRM systems, workflow optimization, and data-driven decision-making.
- Greater competitiveness in the digital economy, allowing SMEs to strengthen their online presence and digital marketing strategies.
- Strengthened collaboration between SMEs, academia, and industry leaders, fostering a sustainable innovation ecosystem in Varaždin.
- The development of scalable and transferable training methodologies, ensuring that digital transformation strategies can be successfully replicated in other regions.

The 3P – Smart Business Processes pilot project is directly aligned with Croatia's Smart Specialization Strategy (S3), which prioritizes digital transformation, Industry 4.0, and the development of digital products and platforms. The project supports regional RIS3 priorities by focusing on enhancing SMEs' digital competencies, fostering innovation through automation, and strengthening cross-sector collaboration between businesses, academia, and industry leaders.

One of the key RIS3 priorities in Croatia is the digitalization of business processes to increase SME efficiency and competitiveness. The 3P project directly contributes to this goal by enabling businesses to adopt automation, CRM systems, digital marketing strategies, and process optimization. This ensures that SMEs can adapt their operations to modern digital workflows and remain competitive in both domestic and international markets.

The project is also aligned with RIS3 objectives related to integrating new technologies into business operations, particularly the use of artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and data analytics for decision-making. By equipping SMEs with practical knowledge and real-

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world experience in digital transformation, the project strengthens the regional innovation ecosystem and contributes to sustainable economic growth.

Additionally, the initiative supports cross-sector collaboration, a core principle of RIS3. The project connects SMEs with the academic sector (Faculty of Organization and Informatics), industry leaders (SICK Mobilisis, Atinel), and innovation hubs (Technology Park Varaždin, Makerspace Varaždin). This quadruple-helix approach ensures that the project is not only theoretically sound but also practically applicable, creating scalable and replicable solutions for business digitalization.

5. Technical Information

Digital and Innovation Tools Used:

The 3P – Smart Business Processes pilot project combines digital tools, automation platforms, and innovative methodologies to help SMEs optimize business processes, undergo digital transformation, and enhance competitiveness. As part of the project, SMEs will be introduced to customer relationship management (CRM) systems, including HubSpot, Zoho CRM, and Odoo, which enable better customer engagement, sales tracking, and business process automation. For business process automation, platforms such as Zapier and IFTTT will be used to eliminate repetitive tasks, optimize operations, and increase productivity.

In the field of digital marketing and online visibility, training will cover Google Ads, Facebook Ads, SEO tools (Google Analytics, Ahrefs, SEMrush), and social media management platforms like Hootsuite and Buffer, allowing SMEs to strengthen their digital presence and expand their customer reach. Participants will also explore e-commerce and digital sales using Shopify, WooCommerce, and Stripe integrations to develop effective digital sales strategies and improve online business models.

For project management and team collaboration, SMEs will use Trello, Asana, Slack, and Microsoft Teams, enabling better project coordination, more efficient task management, and remote collaboration. Additionally, training will introduce participants to AI-driven business analytics tools such as Tableau, Power BI, and Google Data Studio, helping them make data-driven business decisions.

The project also includes IoT and smart business applications, where SMEs will explore IoT solutions for real-time monitoring and automation, ensuring the optimization of business processes. Furthermore, special attention will be given to design and digital content creation, using tools like Canva and Adobe Express to help SMEs produce high-quality promotional materials and enhance visual communication and branding.

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Methodology:

Implementation begins with the planning and preparation phase, where key stakeholders, including Makerspace Varaždin, the Faculty of Organization and Informatics (FOI), Technology Park Varaždin, and industry partners, will define their roles, finalize the training curriculum, and establish the framework for SME selection. An open call for participation will be announced, aiming to include at least 10 SMEs with high potential for digital transformation and process automation. The selection process will ensure diversity among participating sectors, maximizing the overall impact of the program.

Once participants are confirmed, the training and implementation phase will begin. The core of the project consists of six structured workshops, each focusing on a key aspect of digital transformation, including business process optimization, CRM systems, workflow automation, digital marketing, and data analysis for business decision-making. These workshops will be interactive and hands-on, combining expert-led training with real-world business applications. SMEs will be required to implement at least one digital tool or automated process in their business operations as part of their practical learning experience.

Throughout the program, mentorship and industry networking sessions will be conducted. Experts from SICK Mobilisis, Atinel, and other industry partners will provide guidance, helping SMEs tailor their digital strategies to their specific business needs. These mentorship sessions will ensure that the pilot project goes beyond theory and leads to tangible, measurable improvements in business efficiency.

At the end of the training phase, the pilot project results will be presented in June 2025 at the SpinIT event in Hungary. SMEs will showcase concrete examples of digital transformation, demonstrating how they have implemented digital tools and automation in their businesses. This event will facilitate cross-border knowledge exchange, allowing participants to share best practices and insights with stakeholders from other regions.

The post-implementation phase will focus on validation, scalability, and long-term impact assessment. From July to December 2025, SMEs will continue refining their digital strategies with additional support and ongoing mentorship. Data will be collected on the effectiveness of digital adoption, including improvements in skills, business efficiency, and growth. Based on these results, a final impact report will be compiled, summarizing key successes, lessons learned, and recommendations for replicating the pilot model in other regions.

Innovative Aspects:

The 3P – Smart Business Processes pilot project stands out for its hands-on approach to SME digitalization, ensuring that participants not only acquire theoretical knowledge but also actively implement digital solutions in their businesses. Unlike standard educational programs,

which often focus solely on learning, this project integrates real-time business challenges, guiding SMEs step by step through the adoption of digital tools, automation, and optimization strategies tailored to their specific needs.

A key innovative element of the project is cross-sector collaboration, bringing together academia, industry leaders, and SMEs in a structured learning and mentorship process. This quadruple-helix model, which includes Optimizacija, Makerspace Varaždin, FOI, Technology Park Varaždin, SICK Mobilisis, and Atinel, ensures that participants gain direct industry insights, access to mentors, and real-world case studies. This makes the training highly relevant and immediately applicable.

Another unique aspect of the project is its focus on business process automation and SME digital transformation. While many digitalization initiatives primarily target large enterprises, this pilot project specifically addresses the needs of SMEs, which often struggle with limited resources and expertise. The program guides SMEs through the implementation of CRM systems, business process optimization, workflow automation, digital marketing, and AI-driven data analytics, making digital transformation more accessible and scalable.

The project's modular and scalable methodology also contributes to its uniqueness. A structured model of six training sessions, combined with mentoring and post-training evaluation, allows for replication in other regions. This aligns with the goal of the SpinIT project, which aims to develop transferable and scalable digital transformation models for SMEs.

Finally, the system for tracking measurable results ensures that the project delivers concrete and tangible outcomes. Unlike conventional business workshops, which often lack mechanisms for tracking impact, this initiative includes pre- and post-program assessments. SMEs are required to implement digital tools in their operations and present their results at the SpinIT event in Hungary, ensuring accountability and the long-term adoption of digital solutions.

6. Scope and Impact

Scope:
The 3P – Smart Business Processes pilot project is focused on the digital transformation and automation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), targeting sectors that require business process optimization, improved customer engagement, and increased workflow efficiency. The primary industries involved include manufacturing, IT services, retail, and business consulting, where adopting digital solutions can significantly enhance competitiveness and operational efficiency.

The project is based on key digital technologies, including CRM systems, business process automation, AI-driven analytics, and digital marketing, enabling SMEs to improve their business models and market positioning. Additionally, the project fosters cross-sector collaboration

between academia, industry leaders, and SMEs, ensuring a practical approach to business digitalization while aligning with Croatia's Smart Specialization Strategy (S3) and the goals of the SpinIT project.

Expected Results:

The project will deliver tangible and measurable results, ensuring that SMEs actively apply digital tools and strategies. Key outcomes include:

- At least 10 SMEs trained in business process automation, digital marketing, and customer engagement.
- 80% of participants demonstrating measurable improvement in digital skills through pre- and post-training assessments.
- 70% of SMEs implementing at least one digital solution, such as CRM systems, automated workflows, or AI-driven analytics.
- Three or more mentorship and networking sessions with leading industry experts, connecting SMEs with mentors to ensure long-term sustainability in business digitalization.
- At least five SMEs developing and implementing structured digital marketing strategies to enhance their online presence.
- The development of a scalable and replicable training methodology, allowing the program to be adapted to other regions and future digitalization initiatives.
- A final presentation of the pilot project at the SpinIT event in Hungary, where SMEs will showcase real-world examples of digital transformation and business case studies.

Who Will Benefit?

The direct beneficiaries of the project are SMEs and entrepreneurs who lack the knowledge, resources, and infrastructure needed for digital transformation and business process automation. By participating in the project, SMEs will gain practical skills, access to advanced digital tools, and mentorship from industry experts, enabling them to improve efficiency, reduce operational costs, and enhance their market competitiveness.

Indirect beneficiaries include regional innovation hubs, policymakers, and the academic community. Makerspace Varaždin, FOI, and Technology Park Varaždin will benefit from a strengthened innovation ecosystem, fostering collaboration between SMEs and educational institutions. Local policymakers will gain valuable insights into the challenges SMEs face in

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digitalization, allowing them to better shape future economic and innovation policies. Additionally, industry partners, including SICK Mobilisis and Atinel, will benefit from stronger collaboration with SMEs, encouraging faster adoption of new technologies within the local business environment.

By aligning with regional RIS3 priorities and ensuring scalability and transferability, the 3P pilot project will have a long-term impact on SME digital transformation, further strengthening Croatia's position within the EU smart specialization framework.

7. Timeline

The 3P – Smart Business Processes pilot project follows a structured timeline aligned with the milestones of the Local Action Plan (LAP) and the SpinIT project. The planned phased implementation, covering planning, execution, and evaluation, ensures a measurable impact on the digital transformation of SMEs.

January – March 2025: Planning and Preparation

- Organizing stakeholder meetings (Makerspace Varaždin, FOI, Technology Park Varaždin, industry partners) to define roles and finalize the methodology.
- Structuring the training curriculum, including modules on business digitalization, automation, and CRM implementation.
- Developing pre-program assessments and defining participant selection criteria.
- Launching an open call for SMEs, targeting at least 10 businesses with high potential for digital transformation.

March – June 2025: Training and Implementation

- End of March: Program launch with an introductory session, including a SWOT analysis of SMEs and setting digitalization goals.
- April: Start of core workshops covering:
  - Week 1: Business process digitalization and CRM integration.
  - Week 2: SEO optimization, digital presence, and web business strategies.
  - Week 3: Digital marketing, social media, and paid advertising.
  - Week 4: Process automation, AI-driven analytics, and workflow optimization.
- Throughout the training period, SMEs will receive mentorship from industry experts, ensuring practical implementation of digital tools in real business environments.
- May: SMEs begin implementing automation strategies, CRM system integration, and launching digital marketing campaigns.

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- May – June: Monitoring participant progress in adopting digital tools, measuring efficiency improvements, and optimizing business processes.

June 2025: Pilot Project Presentation and Evaluation

- SMEs will showcase their digital transformation results at the SpinIT live event in Hungary.
- Stakeholders will evaluate the effectiveness of implemented digital tools and the impact of the training.
- Collecting feedback to refine the methodology and prepare a scalable version of the program.

July – December 2025: Validation and Long-Term Impact Assessment

- SMEs will continue refining their digital processes with additional mentorship support.
- Conducting post-training evaluations, tracking long-term adoption of digital tools, and measuring business improvements.
- Finalizing the training methodology for replication in other regions.
- Compiling the final report, summarizing key successes, lessons learned, and recommendations for broader program implementation.

8. Promotion Strategies

Communication Channels:

The 3P – Smart Business Processes pilot project will be promoted through a multi-channel communication approach, ensuring broad outreach to SMEs, industry stakeholders, policymakers, and the general public. The primary communication channels include:

- Social media and digital platforms: Project updates, key milestones, and case studies will be shared via the official channels of Makerspace Varaždin, Technology Park Varaždin, and the SpinIT project. Communication will take place on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter, facilitating interaction with the business and innovation ecosystem.
- Website and digital publications: A dedicated section on the SpinIT project website will feature pilot activities, best practices, and SME transformation stories, ensuring that results are accessible for future replication. Key findings and reports will also be shared through partner websites and digital newsletters.
- Regional and EU conferences: Best practices and project results will be presented at regional innovation forums and industry events, including the SpinIT event in Hungary, to ensure visibility at the European level.
- Workshops and webinars: Interactive online sessions will be organized to disseminate project results and provide guidance to SMEs interested in digitalization.

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- Traditional media and print materials: Press releases and articles will be distributed to regional business publications and print media, increasing public awareness and engagement.

Engagement Activities:

To ensure active stakeholder participation and sustained SME interest in digital transformation, the project will include various engagement activities:

- Roundtables and stakeholder information sessions: Before the pilot project begins, meetings will be held with stakeholders to gather insights, define expectations, and establish a network of SMEs, industry mentors, and policymakers.
- Interactive workshops: A structured series of six training sessions will involve at least 10 SMEs, providing hands-on guidance on business process digitalization, CRM systems, and automation tools.
- Live demonstrations and case studies: SMEs will present their transformation stories at the SpinIT event in Hungary, enabling cross-border knowledge exchange and policy discussions on future digitalization initiatives.
- Post-pilot networking and mentorship: Additional sessions will be organized to help SMEs establish long-term mentoring relationships with industry leaders, ensuring the continuity of digital transformation even after the formal program ends.
- Final report and public webinar: The project will conclude with an impact report detailing lessons learned, best practices, and recommendations for scaling the initiative to other regions. A public webinar will be held to present key findings and encourage broader adoption of SME digitalization strategies.

9. Scalability and Transferability

Potential for Expansion:

The 3P – Smart Business Processes pilot project is designed with a focus on scalability, ensuring that its core methodology, digital tools, and automation strategies can be expanded to other regions and industries. Since business process optimization and digital transformation are universal challenges, this approach can easily be adapted to different SME sectors beyond its initial focus on manufacturing, IT services, retail, and business consulting.

The training model can be extended to other industries such as tourism, healthcare, and logistics, where automation, CRM integration, and data-driven decision-making play a key role in improving operational efficiency. Additionally, the methodology can be tailored for cross-border initiatives, allowing SMEs within the Danube region and the broader EU Smart Specialization Strategy (S3) framework to adopt similar digitalization and innovation strategies.

The project can leverage existing partnerships with academia (FOI), industry leaders (SICK Mobilisis, Atinel), and innovation hubs (Makerspace Varaždin, Technology Park Varaždin) to replicate the model in other regional development programs, Interreg projects, or EU-funded digital transformation initiatives.

Replication Opportunities:

Several key elements make this project highly applicable in other regions:

- Structured digitalization training model: The six-session training format covers business process digitalization, CRM systems, automation, and digital marketing, providing a clear framework adaptable to various SME environments. This methodology can be replicated in other Danube region areas and similar economic ecosystems across the EU.
- Mentorship and industry collaboration approach: Engaging technology experts, innovation hubs, and academia creates a scalable mentorship model that connects SMEs with key industry leaders and knowledge centers. This model can easily be transferred to other regions and industries.
- Mandatory practical implementation: Requiring SMEs to implement at least one digital tool or automation process ensures tangible business transformation. This approach can be adapted to other digitalization initiatives, ensuring that training programs lead to real impact rather than just theoretical learning.
- Pre- and post-program evaluation framework: The use of initial and final digital skills assessments allows for tracking progress in digital adoption. This makes the project's success measurable and comparable across different regions and industry sectors.
- Final impact report and case studies: The project will produce a comprehensive impact report, including best practices, challenges, and recommendations for expanding digital transformation efforts. This report can serve as a guideline for future regional and European digitalization projects.

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10. Budget (Optional)

Provide an estimated budget and indicate funding sources.

No.	Description of activity	Unit	Amount per Unit (in euro)	Total (in euro)
Pilot preparation				
1	**Planning & SME Selection (January – March)**			**1.500,00**
1a	Stakeholders coordination	0,5 month	1.000,00	500,00
1b	Program preparation	0,5 month	1.000,00	500,00
1c	Launch open call ansd SMEs selection	0,5 month	1.000,00	500,00
Pilot implementation				
1	**Training & Implementation (April – June)**			**4.500,00**
2a	Education and training program implementation	1 month	1.000,00	1.000,00
2b	Evaluation of training and stakeholder feedback	1 month	1.000,00	1.000,00
2c	Experts mentoring sessions	5 persons	500,00	2.500,00
Meetings & conferences				
3	**Live Demonstrations & Case Studies**			**1.500,00**
3a	Stakeholder meetings organization	0,5 month	1.000,00	500,00
3b	Demo Day - organization of presentation event in Croatia	0,5 month	1.000,00	500,00
3c	Equipment & Venue	0,5 month	1.000,00	500,00
Awareness raising				
4	**Promotion & communication activitioes**			**1.200,00**
4a	Social media	0,5 month	1.000,00	500,00
4a	Project website	0,4 month	1.000,00	400,00
4a	Traditional media	0,3 month	1.000,00	300,00
	TOTAL			**8.700,00**

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Instructions for Submission

Each Partner will prepare the presentation for the consortium to present the pilot idea, proposal, and implementation plan. This plan will be presented in the middle of March (via DOODLE voting results) and later it will be decided if all is planned well, eligible, and possible to do.

Sample of PPTX: Pilot Presentation Template

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