



Background

The cross-border GR-IT areas face significant social challenges such as a high number of NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), unequal access to education/employment and high unemployment level, which highlight the need for improved social policies to bridge the gap between education and labor market.

Furthermore, the digital divide hampers the knowledge spread and the labor access and the weak business-green-digital skills hinder the digital resilient transformation of related societies.

Against this, project areas present a rich cultural-creative heritage, whose full potential as generator of sustainable tourism remains underused as shown by the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic that was a hard hit for this sector mainly for its weak green-digital maturity. In this framework, SMART-HUBS is significant for Programme areas as it aims at enhancing NEETs' employment access developing new entrepreneurial-green-digital skills in cultural-tourism.

Project outputs

A cross-border analysis of common educational and professional needs, to be presented through a jointly developed video.

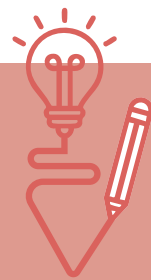
Six innovative facilities that will allow for the improvement of the management, conservation and enjoyment of identified cultural assets, where creative, educational and professional training paths will be tested.

A joint innovative e-learning platform for the cultural-tourism sector, which will provide cultural educational services to enhance the unique potential of the cultural identities of the regions.

An integrated Skills Empowerment Programme with the participation of public and private actors and six creative cultural events that will attract visitors through the combined virtual and physical experience.

Two Training Programmes to be implemented by CCIs knowledge HUBs for the development of improved digital services in tourist destinations, for the benefit of NEETs.

The project idea arose from PBs ambition to foster cluster-to-cluster cooperation for good practices exchange, capitalizing on their previous projects results, as CREATIVE@HUBS, ADRION CCIs Cluster and CCIs Basilicata Cluster.



Project Aim

SMART-HUBS aims to address regional disparities, empower youth, making opportunities more accessible to a wider audience. The project promotes the dissemination of digital technologies in cultural assets - tangible cultural heritage (libraries, museums and buildings), local traditions, creative theatrical and entertainment performances - supporting the digital and social transition of the participating regions.

Expected results

The creation of new professional, entrepreneurial, green and digital skills for NEET groups that will increase their opportunities to access the labor market in the sectors of tourism and cultural and creative industries in the Greece-Italy program areas.



kick-off meeting

The SMART-HUBS kick-off meeting successfully took place in Patras on Tuesday, September 23, 2025, at the CREATIVE@HUBS – Hub of Patras (former Agricultural School of Patras).

It was the internal official first gathering for the project, designed to align the team on the project's vision, goals, scope, timeline, and individual roles. Its purpose was to create a shared understanding, set clear expectations, build buy-in, and establish a strong foundation for collaboration, ensuring everyone is prepared to move from planning to execution.



The key purposes was to:

Establish a Shared Vision:

- To unite everyone around the project's purpose and goals, ensuring a common understanding of what success looks like.

Clarify Roles and Responsibilities:

- To define who is responsible for what, improving communication and coordination within the team.

Outline Project Details:

- To discuss the project's scope, critical milestones, timeline, and key deliverables.

Identify Constraints and Risks:

- To openly discuss potential challenges, constraints, assumptions, and risks that could impact the project's success.

Set Expectations:

- To establish how the team will work together, including communication methods, meeting cadences, and the overall "rules of engagement".

Generate Enthusiasm and Buy-in:

- To create initial energy and excitement for the project, securing commitment from all participants.



It accomplished:

• **Clarity:**

Attendees left with a clear understanding of the project's goals, their individual tasks, and the plan for achieving them.

• **Alignment:**

All team members aligned regarding the project's direction and expectations.

• **Actionable Next Steps:**

The meeting identified immediate tasks and assigned owners to ensure smooth progress from the start.

It started with the welcome address made by the lead partner and Coordinator of the project Mr Christos Tzomakas. Then the introductory speeches took place by Joint Secretariat online (Mr Gianfranco Gadaleta – Joint Secretariat Coordinator, Ms Anca Daniela Simion – Project Officer and Ms Maristella Mantuano Joint Secretariat Communication officer).

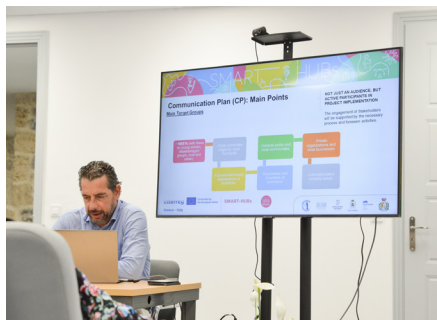
Then the kick-off meeting went on with Presentation of objectives – project overview by LP, Workplan & interdependencies of Work Packages by LP, Management & financial issues by LP and Current status per SMART partner by all PPs.

The last part of presentations was about the work packages analysis. A presentation and analysis per work package was made by each responsible beneficiary.

The meeting ended with the Q&A session, revised workplan and next steps, where all PPs contributed.



kick-off meeting



kick-off meeting



Opening Conference

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 Carolia** (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.

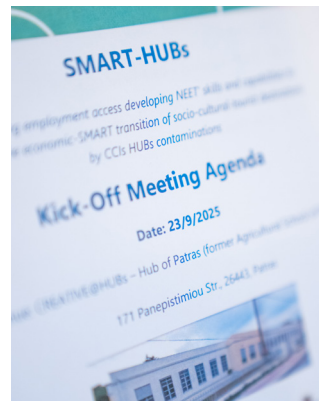
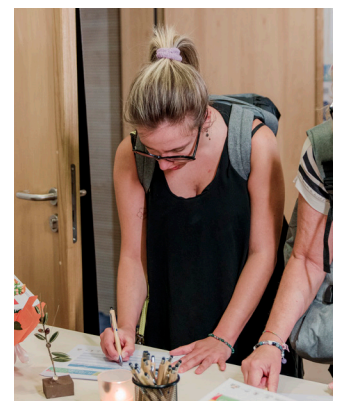
The event concluded with an open discussion, Q&A session, and exchange of views among participants, confirming the crucial role of the **creative and cultural industries** in local and regional development.

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**.



Opening Conference





Press releases

The following press releases have been issued so far:

Two press releases before <https://www.thebest.gr/article/805100-enarktiria-sundiaskepsi-tou-ergou-smart-hubs-stin-patra> and after <https://www.thebest.gr/article/806854-oloklirothike-me-epituchia-i-enarktiria-sundiaskepsi-tou-ergou-smart-hubs-stin-patra> opening conference, made by RDF-RWG.

Also press releases at social media by RDF-RWG:
<https://www.ptapde.gr/%ce%b4%ce%b5%ce%b6%cf%84%ce%b9%ce%bf-%cf%84%cf%85%cf%80%ce%bf%cf%85-smart-hubs-en-hancing-employment-access-developing-neet-skills-and-capabilities-to-sustain-the-economic-smart-transition-o/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7382026482489143296/>

Press releases at social media by Chamber of Aetoloakarnania:
<https://www.epimetol.gr/category/nea-anakoinoseis-dimosiotita-toy-ergou-smart-hubs/>

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid02KcJ37X2G12q9bkPc4QevJJwyo-sm7nW7qnBCsCSmJgYtCUTwEeqD1EZ8i67Qb-f9VI&id=100064560074960

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid035LwPWTXNxGv6VUzx8uAWRS-DYU8Qz9bhSvtVCXFvqB5nfyh34cibdfiyboPPY-fE88I&id=100064560074960

Press releases at social media by Municipality of Nardo :
<https://www.comune.nardo.le.it/notizia/smart-hubs-un-ponte-con-la-grecia-per-sostenere-i-giovani/>

<https://www.facebook.com/comunenardo/posts/pfbid028dwib2hTYhhna9czm8nAqNtQMhqKGVY-jtDoj4Q21AsevcNgGUf6fkvbSXXoygEhl>

https://www.instagram.com/p/DPgMCj1jMpy/?img_index=1

Press releases at social media by Materahub Cultural and Creative Industries Consortium Scarl :
The SMART-HUBS Project: Cultivating New perspectives for NEETs within the Cultural Tourism Sector

Press releases at social media by Municipality of Maida :
<https://www.lameziainforma.it/inprovincia/2025/10/07/a-patrasso-il-kick-off-meeting-del-progetto-europeo-smart-hubs-tra-i-partner-il-comune-di-maida/63862/>

https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1228606752631628&id=100064469450550&rdid=GUJ-OGYBixBtIH1ro

Coming next...

A Local Info Day will take place in Nardò on 16 October 2025.

The project partnership is expected to gather together by end of January 2026.
The meeting will be organized by the Chamber of Aetoloakarnania.

Stay tuned !



Project links

The official link of the project is

<https://www.greece-italy.eu/project/smart-hubs-enhancing-employment-access-developing-need-skills-and-capabilities-to-sustain-the-economic-smart-transition-of-socio-cultural-tourist-destinations-by-ccis-hubs-contaminations/>



The social media of the project was created by PB3:

www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61580525370637

www.linkedin.com/showcase/smart-hubs-interreg-gr-it/

www.youtube.com/@Smart-HUBs

www.instagram.com/smart_hubs_interreg/

