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Operaciones Cofinanciadas

Line of aid for SMEs of Extremadura to incorporate innovation into their processes

The Spanish Chamber (Cáceres and Badajoz)

Programa Operativo Plurirregional de España

Fondo Europeo de Desarrollo Regional

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Line of aid for SMEs of Extremadura to incorporate innovation into their processes

Brief description

The Spanish Chamber of Commerce, through the Chambers of Cáceres and Badajoz and thanks to the European Regional Development Fund, has earmarked a line of aid for SMEs to incorporate innovation as a key competitive tool into their strategies, during 2017. To do so, through the programme InnoCámaras, it has driven forward the adoption by these companies of methodologies which allow them to incorporate innovation into their normal activity systematically.

InnoCámaras can be characterised by its approach to the specific demands of SMEs, by developing a mixed methodology of diagnosis, support for the process of innovation and disseminating knowledge. This is a national project, although with a clear territorial focus, this being understood to be the best system for tackling the specific problems of the SMEs of each region.

Over the course of 2017, the Chambers of Commerce of Extremadura published the funding calls for aid in developing these plans for putting innovative solutions into service, 80%-financed by the European Union's European Regional Development Fund (FEDER). The remaining 20% is financed by the Chambers of Commerce of Cáceres and Badajoz and the beneficiary companies themselves.

The total budget in Extremadura for the funding calls mentioned was 945,040.53 euros. Of this sum, FEDER contributed 756,032.42 euros. Thanks to the European Regional Development Fund, 143 Extremadura companies participated in the InnoCámaras programme during financial year 2017 in the diagnosis phase, while 104 did so in the phase of implantation of innovative solutions.

Among these beneficiary companies, we will present the particular cases of **UNGENE BIOTECH, 3EVENTS (THECHATTERBOX) and TROIL VEGAS ALTAS as examples of good practices**. The eligible cost for each of these three companies was €7,000. The aid from the European Regional Development Fund was €5,600.

These are deemed to be exemplars of Good Practices because they meet the requirements defined for the purpose:

1. High level of dissemination among the beneficiaries and the general public

The companies **UNGENE BIOTECH, 3EVENTS (THECHATTERBOX) and TROIL VEGAS ALTAS**, have given wide publicity in different media to the aid from the European Regional Development Fund.

The communication activities carried out, among others, were the following:

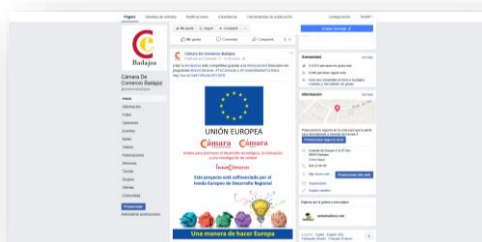
OFFICIAL WEB of the Chamber of Badajoz. The Chamber of Commerce of Badajoz published, **on its official web** <http://www.camarabadajoz.es/web/es/innovacion-y-proyectos-europeos/programas-de-innovacion-empresarial/programa-innocamaras>, specific information about the financial aid from FEDER for the case studies of financial year 2017, presenting them individually, and showing written and audiovisual information about them, in an accessible and agreeable way.

SPECIFIC WEB. Similarly, the Chamber also created a webpage designed specifically for enhancing awareness of the Programme, under the domain www.innocamarasbadajoz.es, where the beneficiaries **UNGENE BIOTECH**, **3EVENTS (THECHATTERBOX)** and **TROIL VEGAS ALTAS** described their actions under the auspices of the InnoCámaras programme, together with 19 other success stories, making clear the support of FEDER and the utility of the programme for solving the problems faced by participating companies at each moment.



#SOYINNOCÁMARAS. Under the hashtag **#soyinnocamaras**, the reach of the communication effort has been extended in different media:

- **Twitter:** Under the profiles @CamaradeBadajoz (with more than 4000 followers), and @camarasextremadura (with over 11,000 followers), the Chamber has given appropriate publicity to these success stories, as well as the InnoCámaras programme and the support of FEDER in general.
- **Facebook:** Badajoz Chamber of Commerce (@CamaraBadajoz - with over 7000 followers) has given appropriate publicity to these success stories, as well as the InnoCámaras programme and the support of FEDER in general.
- **Linkedin:** Through its LinkedIn account, Badajoz Chamber of Commerce, with nearly 900 followers, has given appropriate publicity to these success stories, as well as the InnoCámaras programme and the support of FEDER in general.



Exhibition #soyinnocámaras: The Chamber has created the #soyinnocámaras exhibition as a good practice, consisting of a travelling display of 21 informational panels, 1.00 x 1.2 m (WxH) each, which rotate around more than 15 regional centres all over the province of Badajoz, which covers over 22,000 km², bringing the InnoCámaras programme, the support of FEDER and the success stories to rural environments where digital communication does not reach so readily. **UNGENE BIOTECH**, **3EVENTS (THECHATTERBOX)** and **TROIL VEGAS ALTAS** are three of the 20 companies highlighted. The display is on show in the entrepreneurial assistance buildings that exist in each of the regional centres. Once the panels have visited all these centres, they return to the headquarters of the Chamber and are placed so as to decorate the whole vestibule of the building.

PRESS. The Chamber of Commerce of Badajoz engaged the publication of a full-page special in one of the regional outlets of the highest circulation, “El Periódico de Extremadura”, which explained the InnoCámaras programme and the results obtained thanks to funding from FEDER, highlighting as a success story the project of the company UNGENE BIOTECH, which gave an accessible portrait of the extent to which InnoCámaras benefits SMEs.



PRIVATE DISSEMINATION. The beneficiary companies **UNGENE BIOTECH**, **3EVENTS (THECHATTERBOX)** and **TROIL VEGAS ALTAS**, among others, have likewise themselves publicised how they have benefited from the InnoCámaras programme and the support received from FEDER:

UNGENE BIOTECH: has put up a poster declaring that it is a beneficiary on its premises, just as required by the conditions for the aid received. It does not have its own webpage.

In addition, during the Innovation Forum organised by the Extremadura Science and Technology Park held on 29 November 2017, with over 250 attendees, UNGENE BIOTECH described during its intervention how, thanks to the aid received from the InnoCámaras programme, it had managed to save almost a year in the experimental planning of its project, a factor of great importance, bearing in mind that the work involves proofs of concept for antiviral treatments for different pathologies.

3EVENTS (THECHATTERBOX): has put up a poster declaring that it is a beneficiary on its premises, just as required by the conditions for the aid received. It also publicises its participation in the programme on its own web: <http://www.thechatterbox.eu/3vents-beneficiaria-innocamaras-2017/>

TROIL VEGAS ALTAS: has put up a poster declaring that it is a beneficiary on its premises, just as required by the conditions for the aid received. It also publicises its participation in the programme on its own web: www.troil.es



YOUTUBE CHANNEL: The Chamber has its own Youtube channel where it has published the videos of the companies **UNGENE BIOTECH**, **3EVENTS (THECHATTERBOX)** and **TROIL VEGAS ALTAS**, among others. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTpg8TBqFc1CqvSth5iq-TA/featured?disable_polymer=1

OFFICIAL DOCUMENTATION. All the beneficiaries, among whom are to be found **UNGENE BIOTECH**, **3EVENTS (THECHATTERBOX)** and **TROIL VEGAS ALTAS**, receive notification of admission, Programme Participant Conditions Document, Annexes and other documents enumerated in the official funding call, which in all cases bear the emblem of the European Union and the phrases “European Regional Development Fund” – “A way to build Europe”, as publicity elements, together with a detailed description of the cofinancing contributed by FEDER for the action described in each specific case.

SENSITISATION MEETINGS: The Chamber of Badajoz has held 10 sensitisation meetings during 2017, with real impact of 488 companies attending. The regional press covered some of them. The Chamber, for its part, publicised them by mailings, social networks and the web.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIAL: The Chamber designed a “pocket” manual which sets out the different kinds of expense that are eligible under the Programme, so that SMEs can quickly learn about this aspect of such importance, and which also serves as an informational guide to all the processes of innovation a company can engage in within its organisation to improve and be more competitive. The material complies with the publicity requirements demanded by FEDER.



MERCHANDISING. Small promotional gifts are a tool for building loyalty and branding for their recipients, and constitute an innovation in the commercialisation of a product or service. The Chamber, to draw attention to the InnoCámaras Programme and the support of FEDER, has prepared merchandising proper to the programme for distribution among its beneficiaries, consisting of mugs, bags, flyers, etc.

2. The action incorporates innovative elements

UNGENE BIOTECH:

The action is an innovative element in itself, as it has enabled synthesis of the genetic building blocks necessary for trials with a biallelic gene-editing mechanism. In summary, it consists of developing a genetic tool which could be used both to generate mutations that cause pathologies in cell models and to correct mutations causing the same in lines derived from patients.

To date, editing both alleles has been a very slow and tedious process with a very low probability of success, while this action embarks on developing this genetic tool that could for the first time give priority to biallelic gene-editing, which would constitute a quantifiable advance if applied to the development of antiviral therapies, for example.

With regard to the territory, it should be highlighted that Extremadura is the least developed region of Spain and does not have a scientific-technological ecosystem specialised in this type of process, so that in this case the FEDER funding has constituted an important facilitator for innovation and territorial cohesion.

With respect to the methodology employed, it should be said that it was necessary to resort to a company in the United States to synthesise and assemble part of the genetic building blocks designed, as in Europe the offering is scant and its prices are not competitive.

3VENTS (THECHATTERBOX)

Through market research of the sector of photo machines for events, and the viability study for a product unknown on the market to date, it has become possible to devise a clear strategic plan for the production of this new product in the medium term, endeavouring to be exclusive on the Spanish and European markets, offering services hitherto unknown and which would be innovative on the market. The creation of a photo machine with an LED screen sized 1.5 x 2 metres, to be operated by gestures, will make of it a product unique in the whole of Europe.

TROIL VEGAS ALTAS

“**Pomace**” is a subproduct of the pressing of olives to extract oil, consisting of a mixture of vegetable water, solid parts of the olive and greasy residues. Biomethanisation is a process in which a selection of naturally occurring microorganisms decompose organic matter into biogas and a stabilised solid waste. This is the first time that the biomethanisation of pomace has been studied with positive results, in such a way that a part of the subproducts of the olive oil industry could be used as a source of primary energy.

Carrying out this process in Extremadura is of great importance, the agricultural sector being the engine of the regional economy, as is getting positive results in the biomethanisation of pomace based upon the natural resources of the region.

In coordination with the RIS3 of Extremadura, and through the promotion of R+D+I endeavours, this initiative could be extended to other companies, helping them to position themselves, and thus the region itself, by enhancing their competitiveness and reinforcing the process of economic transformation of Extremadura towards a model of development based on the Circular Economy.

3. Match of the results obtained to the objectives set

UNGENE BIOTECH

The principal objective of the company is to develop a biallelic gene-editing methodology, for which it is indispensable to design and synthesise genetic building blocks which, once inside the cell, can perform this biallelic modification for the gene selected. Therefore, being able to avail of FEDER funds for the optimisation and subsequent synthesis of the genetic building blocks has been a decisive element in enabling the rapid advance of the project.

3VENTS (THE CHATTERBOX)

The company applied for FEDER funds under the InnoCámaras Programme to conduct a realistic study of the viability of launching a new product onto the market, to manufacture this and integrate it into its catalogue of products. Without the cited funds, the company would have been unable to decide whether to invest in this product, as its cost is very high and without knowledge of the possible return on the investment in the medium and long terms, so that the action has met the objective pursued.

TROIL VEGAS ALTAS

Thanks to FEDER funds from the InnoCámaras Programme, the company has been able to dimension its pilot plant for biomethanisation trials to determine its energetic potential and verify that the biological process was not inhibited by tracing the mixtures. In addition, the company meets several objectives: problems of excess and waste, environmental sustainability, circular economy, natural fertilisers, conferring value on agricultural subproducts and being more competitive.

4. It contributes to solving a problem or weakness detected in the territorial area of execution UNGENE BIOTECH:

Thanks to the aid from the Chamber of Commerce and FEDER, this company has been able to solve the theoretical construction, so that the contribution made to solving the problem has been nearly 100%, and it is expected that the conclusion of the R+D phase at the company should bring added value to the region and nurture the installation of spin-off companies in the biosciences area within the territory.

3VENTS (THE CHATTERBOX)

Extremadura is an eminently agricultural region, where the food industry is the leading player and the economic engine of the territory. Through the action conducted through the InnoCámaras programme, the company has been able to obtain aid for a sector which is under-represented in the region, and with whose participation the technology of Extremadura is rendered visible, and puts a completely innovative product onto the problem which is unique in Europe, in a sector with high potential for growth, the company turning from one that provides photo machine services into a manufacturer of

technology with exclusive services that the other companies in the sector will not have in the medium term.

TROIL VEGAS ALTAS

The problems of treating the subproducts of the olive oil industry are their high water content and their low value once treated. These are industries which will soon have to be considered “dischargers” and charge for the reception of the pomace. By generating biogas from the pomace, a lot of fuel for drying will be saved, which will make them competitive within the sector and this will reduce considerably both the costs of operation and the emissions of CO₂ to the atmosphere. Making the pomace plants more efficient and less contaminating foments the circular economy, as the final product of biomethanisation is a quality compost that can be returned to the lands of cultivation, which are highly deficient in organic matter in our region, thus raising their productivity.

5. High degree of coverage of the population to which directed UNGENE BIOTECH:

We can declare that this action has the highest level of coverage possible, as the biallelic gene-editing mechanism is going to be trialled in the company for the development of an antiviral therapy which affects 150,000 people around the country, or 37.6 million people around the world, 19 million of whom are receiving medication for chronic conditions.

The results derived from this action will be communicated in scientific publications of international stature, guaranteeing coverage not only for the population affected by the illnesses referred to, but also the scientific and healthcare community, and the chemical industry and “big pharma”.

3VENTS (THECHATTERBOX):

The accomplishment of this project positions the company as a benchmark in the national market, as it enables the launch onto the market of a unique product thanks to the analysis and viability study financed by FEDER allowing photo machine and video machine services connected to social networks in real time, so that the degree of coverage over the population is not just the users of the photo machine who attend the event, but extends to everybody connected to the social networks, to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc.

TROIL VEGAS ALTAS

The action extends in a significant way to the general population, because if we speak in environmental terms, it successfully reduces the emissions of greenhouse gases, the contamination produced by organic agricultural waste, sulphur dioxide and the dependence on fossil fuels. But in addition, in economic terms, it represents significant savings for the beneficiary, who can produce and put their products on the market at a much lower price, making them more competitive and in turn allowing the consumer to save and maintain their purchasing power.

6. Consideration of the horizontal criteria of equality of opportunities and non-discrimination, as well as social responsibility and environmental sustainability

UNGENE BIOTECH:

Non-discrimination: The development of these new strategies is aimed at all human beings everywhere, without encroaching on any form of gender inequality or racial discrimination. Internally, for the development of its processes, the company has only taken into account the professional competence and personal attitudes of those who have participated in the project in one way or another.

Environmental sustainability: With respect to environmental sustainability, it is well-known that chronic illnesses represent a drain on resources and lead to biohazardous wastes which must (by law) be incinerated, in turn representing contamination from the emission of CO₂ and dioxins generated during the incineration, as well as a very significant derived cost for the treatment and use of chemical products, with the environmental impact entailed by the same.

3VENTS (THECHATTERBOX):

Non-discrimination: The product concept accomplished by the company through InnoCámaras fosters social integration, getting people who meet at an event to interact together for an activity in the photo machine, without their sex, race or origin playing any role, as it incorporates innovations based on gesture sensors and other resources adapted to the general public and accessible to all kinds of disabled people. Along the same lines, in 2016 the company created the world's first accessible photo machine. This photo machine whose height can be regulated to match the person in front of it. Thus, whether the subject is a child, a wheelchair user or an adult, the photo machine can be adjusted to the height needed. Similarly, the new product has been devised so that the photographs it takes do not suffer from problems of this kind. Further, internally, the company guarantees equality of treatment and non-discrimination for the persons making up its workforce.

Environmental sustainability: The product developed is based on an LED technology and integrates the latest advances to guarantee the minimum energy consumption to the user, the product being environmentally-friendly, from the concept of the machine to the establishment of eco-friendly design requirements. It fosters a reduction in the consumption of paper and mitigates the impact of climate change by reducing the emissions of CO₂, compared to a traditional photo machine.

TROIL VEGAS ALTAS

Non-discrimination: Through this action, the company exercises its right to produce and consume its own energy in conditions of non-discrimination against producers of non-renewable energies. The company, for its part, promotes equality of opportunities between men and women within its organisation, especially in the tasks which affect this new pilot plant, where women are less well-represented. In addition, self-consumption is a question of social responsibility in the fight against climate change, and in addition, it allows the price of electricity to come down, without posing a threat to the sustainability of the system. The biogas pilot plant for energy self-consumption is one of the alternative energies which not only contribute to improving the environment but is also one of the best ways to recycle and make use of organic waste. This biofuel is capable of mitigating climate change because it does not emit sulphur dioxide, the principal cause of acid rain, and also reduces both energy dependence on fossil fuels and greenhouse effect gases

7. Synergies with other public intervention policies or instruments

UNGENE BIOTECH

Currently, the company is housed at the Extremadura Science and Technology Park, which in turn belongs to the Enterprise Europe Network, so the aid received helps the company to take another step in its growth, together with the instruments of public intervention which are the backbone of the Regional Innovation, Science and Technology System.

3VENTS (THE CHATTERBOX)

This action fulfils the requirements set out in the RIS3 and the Digital Agenda of Extremadura, by bringing onto the market an exclusive product from the ICT sector, which forms part of the 5 areas of specialisation of the region.

The company will be invited by the Chamber of Commerce of Badajoz to participate as a stakeholder in the Erasmus programme, by means of the project *Industry 4.0: Following Innovation*, as a success story to be analysed for improvement of professional competences and training plans with the new technological approaches.

TROIL VEGAS ALTAS

Vegas Altas was the beneficiary of an FEDER INTERCONECTA grant, with a project called CH4Alperujo "Harnessing the energy of pomace from olive presses to produce biogas", where the R+D+I activities were contracted from the CTAEX Technology Centre and the University of Extremadura, different pretreatments being developed in the laboratory to reduce the concentration of polyphenols in the pomace, which are inhibitors of anaerobic digestion, and optimising the conditions to maximise the energy performance and the security of the biological process.

In addition, this action is aligned in coherence with the policies and strategies being applied in Extremadura, and contributes to strengthening their positive aspects. More specifically, with the following: Regional Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation, Extremadura Rural Development programme and Green and Circular Economy for Extremadura (Extremadura 2030).