

## EU project

# EU project "Smart SMEs" in the Alpine region

**The aim of the Smart SMEs project is to understand to what extent SMEs that produce, process and apply natural fibres use digitalization tools and approaches. The project will also evaluate obstacles that prevent SMEs from exploiting the full potential of digital solutions. An international consortium for the project has been formed, comprising BIOPRO Baden-Württemberg GmbH and partners from Italy, Lower Austria, Slovenia and Switzerland.**

Every SME (small and medium-sized enterprise) routinely uses email addresses, but digitalization now offers enterprises a whole raft of solutions to make life easier and business more profitable - from electronic document management systems, promoting goods and services on social media to eCommerce and Big Data. Digitalization measures are only successful when company managers want and support them. SMEs, however, tend to have small management teams that are overwhelmed by other tasks, leaving them little time to identify and use the potential offered by digitalization. Businesses in rural areas have the additional problem of often unreliable internet connections.



The deployment of drones is manifold. For example, they can be used for the application of herbicides.

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The Smart SMEs project will contribute to finding solutions to overcome existing barriers. The project will be specifically focusing on enterprises in biobased value chains that produce, process and apply natural fibre-based materials, both cultivated and recycled from biological waste. The project is therefore tackling the idea of sustainable transformation in the Alpine region through the bioeconomy concept. This will involve gathering existing digitalization knowledge from research institutions, clusters, digital innovation hubs and other service providers, evaluating the digitalization level of SMEs, pinpointing issues that hamper the implementation of digitalization as well as demonstrating precise measures (technical and non-technical) to overcome existing barriers. Pilot cases will be developed for application in specific biobased value chains.

## BIOPRO's contribution to Smart SMEs

BIOPRO's task is to map the status quo of the digitalization "ecosystem" in participating regions (Baden-Württemberg, Italy, Lower Austria, Slovenia and Switzerland). BIOPRO will develop a methodology to analyze the needs of SMEs with a special focus on natural fibre-based value chains. It will also identify bottlenecks as well as key factors that would enable SMEs to exploit the digitalization potential. In addition to this, BIOPRO will host a Policy Action Forum to bring policy makers from different sectors (digitalization, rural development and bioeconomy) together to begin sharing experiences and to validate the roadmap.

## Partners in Smart SMEs

Smart SMEs was launched at a kick-off meeting in Bern in July 2019. The meeting took place at the Swiss Center for Mountain Regions (SAB), the lead project partner. The other partners are the Department for Economic Development, Research and Labour of the Autonomous Province of Trento (Italy), Hub Innovazione Trentino - Fondazione (Italy), ecoplus, the Business Agency of Lower Austria, the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at the University of Maribor (Slovenia), Poly4Eml - Anteja ECG (Slovenia), and BIOPRO Baden-Württemberg GmbH (Germany).

The project is funded with 309.833,33 Euro, incl. co-financing of 278.850,00 Euro by the European Commission through the Alpine Region Preparatory Action Fund (ARPAF), and will run 22 months until the end of May 2021. Along with [AlpLinkBioEco](#), [CirculAlps](#) and [ARDIA-Net](#), this is the fourth Alpine project involving BIOPRO.

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## Contact

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## Project partners

[↗ Swiss Center for mountain regions SAB \(Lead partner\)](#)

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[↗ Autonomous Province of Trento - Department for Economic Development, Research and Labour](#)

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[↗ University of Maribor, Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science](#)

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[↗ Poly4Eml - Anteja ECG](#)

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[↗ Hub Innovazione Trentino - Fondazione](#)

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[↗ ecoplus. The Business Agency of Lower Austria / Clusters](#)

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## Project results

[↗ Smart SMEs - Identified tools for SME's digitalization](#)

↓ [Synthesis Report | WP 2 - Mapping of actual state of play and needs \( PDF, 1.19 MB \)](#)

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↓ [Synthesis Report | WP 3 - Collection of good practices and existing tools \( PDF, 661.08 KB \)](#)

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↓ [Fact sheet - Policy makers.pdf \( PDF, 2.54 MB \)](#)

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↓ [Fact sheet - SMEs.pdf \( PDF, 2.31 MB \)](#)

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↓ [Fact sheet - Research centres.pdf \( PDF, 2.56 MB \)](#)

[↗ Good Practices and Tools for Digitalization of SMEs in the Natural Fiber-based Value Chains](#)

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[↗ Supporting the Sustainability of Natural Fiber-Based Value Chains of SMEs through Digitalization](#)

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## More information

[AlpLinkBioEco](#)

[CirculAlps](#)

[ARDIA-Net](#)

