



Varna economy is primarily hospitality, construction, chemical industry, transportation, storage and other auxiliary activities in transport, trade and services. Though fast-growing, digital companies are not structurally identifiable for Varna - more than 70 percent of these companies in the country are based in Sofia, a national survey shows. In this picture, the digitization of the local economy means, above all, efforts among local low and medium-tech sectors.

70% of low-tech companies in Europe have invested in digital technologies from 2016 to today. How many are the digitally-literate companies from the leading traditional industries in Varna, how prepared and interested are they to respond to the tendencies for digitization? What are the products and services offered by local digital companies, what new territories are open to developing digital projects to meet these needs, and how future procedures under the Operational Program Innovation and Competitiveness can fund such initiatives were the topics of the second meeting of the regional multi-stakeholders group of project #Interreg_DEVISE held at May 30 in Varna.

The meeting gathered together representatives of chambers, branch associations, clusters and educational establishments of different rankings, as well as entrepreneurs and managers of large companies, with the participation of a representative of the Ministry of Economy This stakeholder meeting was part of the series of initiatives that the Business Agency

Association organized within the DEVISE project.

A macro analysis and a matching exercise between the digital supply available and the digital demand coming from the S3 sectors in the was presented. Interviews, meetings and workshops conducted with companies from traditional industries and digital companies show that companies do not know much of the opportunities that their digitisation offers in the long run as a guarantee for better performance. The digital companies themselves are mainly oriented to external markets and outsourcing and do not actively offer digitization services to the Varna companies. The participants united around the idea that there is a need for urban digitization as a starting point for Smart city, IoT, health tech or other focus. In addition to the expected delivery of vouchers for the implementation of ICT tools from OPIC, other possibilities for supporting digitization were discussed through new or extended OPIC procedures as well as local initiatives and tools. Businessmen presented good practices for a special focus on urban digital specialization, which they learned during a joint visit to Laval, France - a city that has achieved a tremendous growth in the local economy, zero unemployment and growing population growth thanks to its specialization in technology from the sphere of the virtual and the added reality.

The Stakeholder Group has identified concrete steps for joint actions and planned further meetings. The regular informational Industry 4.0 Tuesdays for preparation for Industry 4.0 continued, organized by the Industry and Trade Association in association with Business Agency Association. Every Tuesday from 14 to 15 hours in the Chamber of commerce concrete solutions for the preparation of the companies for the digitization are presented by the experts of Business Agency.



