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AUMENTA

D4.5 Summary of virtual matchmaking meetings organized

Speeding up network internationalization of food, ICT Industry 4.0 clusters and their SMEs towards strategic third countries beyond Europe in field of emerging industries and Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG 4.0)



The project is co-funded by the European Union's COSME Programme

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1. Executive Summary

The present deliverable *D4.5 Summary of virtual matchmaking meetings organized* has been prepared within the Task 4.2 Virtual X-Industry Meetings (meet & greet) that was related to coordination and facilitation of cross-industry meetings between European and third countries' clusters and companies.

This document is aimed at elaborating a summary of virtual matchmaking meetings organized in the frame of the AUMENTA project - a novel and interdisciplinary project directly by the European Innovation Council and SME Executive Agency (EISMEA) under the powers delegated by the European Commission under COSME Programme. The project is aimed at speeding up network internationalization of food, ICT Industry 4.0 clusters and their SMEs towards strategic third countries beyond Europe in field of emerging industries and Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG 4.0).

To achieve its objectives, AUMENTA implements a pioneering X-Industry Internationalization Programme that will support European SMEs in their fast internationalization to three continents, creating new cooperation and business opportunities to support growth, jobs and wealth. Virtual X-Industry Meetings (meet & greet) are part of X-Industry Internationalization Programme and aimed at facilitating the signature of business agreements between European SMEs and international SMEs from:

- Uruguay - as a strategic gate to Latin American markets.
- Morocco - as a strategic gate to North African/ South-Mediterranean (MEDA) markets;
- Georgia - as a strategic gate to Caucasus, Central Asia (as former USSR) markets.

The meetings were organized at different levels:

- Business-to-business (B2B) - between companies and private sector;
- Cluster-to-business (C2B) – between clusters and companies;
- Cluster-to-cluster (C2C) – between clusters, network and intermediary organizations

and were aimed at building relationships between AUMENTA project and potential SMEs from Europe and third countries. The scope of the meetings included both sectoral and cross-industry partners to foster their matchmaking potential and facilitate partnerships. Virtual X-Meetings were done by using online platforms.

By submission of this deliverable, 211 virtual matchmaking meetings have been organized between European clusters and small and medium enterprises and business, network and cluster potential partners from Uruguay, Morocco and Georgia, but also from neighbouring countries of selected geographical regions.

The total of 56 virtual meetings took place at cluster-to-cluster (C2C), at cluster-to-business (C2B) 35 virtual meetings were organized. Finally, 120 business-to-business virtual meetings were facilitated for food and ICT companies.

In the organization of virtual meetings, the figure of project Ambassador played a crucial role, as AUMENTA project envisaged the establishment of network of Ambassadors in each of the target countries to support the identification and relationships building between European and third countries entities.

2. Project context

AUMENTA is a novel and interdisciplinary project funded directly by the European Innovation Council and SME Executive Agency (EISMEA) under the powers delegated by the European Commission under COSME Programme and is aimed at speeding up network internationalization of food, ICT Industry 4.0 clusters and their SMEs towards strategic third countries beyond Europe in field of emerging industries and Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG 4.0).

It promotes simultaneous international expansion to consciously selected third countries beyond Europe:

- Uruguay - as a strategic gate to Latin American markets;
- Morocco - as a strategic gate to North African/ South-Mediterranean (MEDA) markets;
- Georgia - as a strategic gate to Caucasus, Central Asia (as former USSR) markets.

The novel aspect of the project consists in connecting product-oriented (food products and food equipment) and service-oriented (ICT/Industry 4.0) clusters and its members to jointly explore international opportunities and also potentially offer joint products and services to partners.

AUMENTA is powered by 5 European organizations (innovation networks and clusters) from complementary sectors - food and ICT/Industry 4.0 - that jointly represents 739 companies, including small and medium enterprises. It interconnects partners from four countries: Spain (Mediterranean Europe), Poland (Central Europe), Latvia (Baltic States) and Lithuania (Baltic States)

uniting high-technology clusters and innovation business networks:

- Digital Innovation Hub and ICT/Industry 4.0 cluster (OnGranada Tech City and Latvian IT Cluster)

with traditional sectors:

- Smart Food Cluster (food & beverages) – coordinated by LITMEA
- Food Products Quality Clusters (food & beverages) – coordinated by LFFC/FPQC (food federation)
- AgroBioCluster (agrofood & bioeconomy) – coordinated by UNIMOS (cross- cluster alliance).

AUMENTA is one 24 new cluster Partnerships that supports clusters from Europe to work together and look for trade and investment opportunities and cooperation partners in third markets for the benefit of their members, especially Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs).

3. Approach and methodology

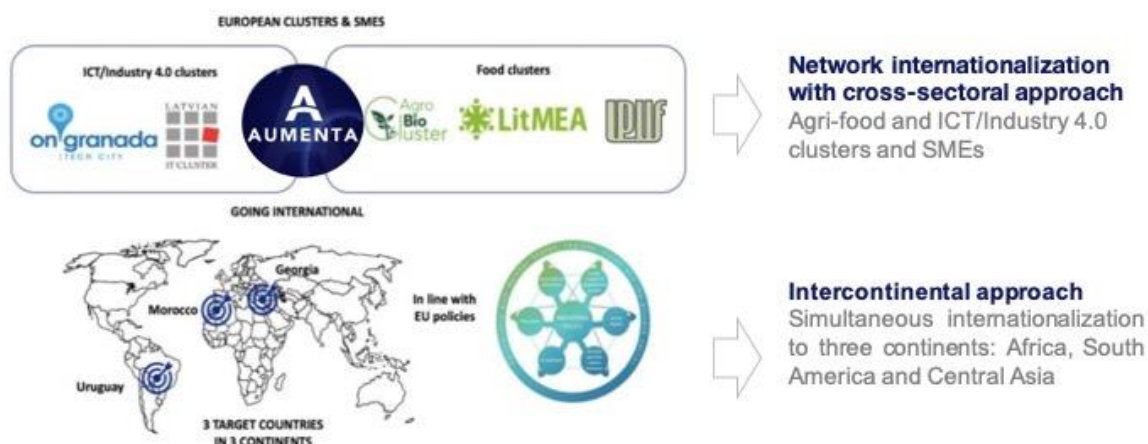
AUMENTA is a vibrant and pioneer project co-funded by the European Union and aimed speeding up network internationalization of European small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Focused on agri-food, ICT and fast-moving consumer goods (FMGC) sectors, AUMENTA implements a novel X-Industry Internationalization Programme that supports fast international expansion simultaneously towards Latin America, North Africa, Caucasus and Central Asia

Main objectives of the AUMENTA project are the following:

- to develop a joint 'European' strategic vision with a global perspective and common goals towards specific third markets and support an initial implementation, testing and further development of European Strategic Cluster Partnership - Going International (ESCP-4i) AUMENTA;
- to intensify cluster and business network collaboration across European countries (LT, LV, ES, PL), across sectorial boundaries (food and ICT/Industry 4.0) to lead international cluster cooperation in fields of FMCG towards third countries beyond Europe: Morocco, Georgia and Uruguay, supporting the development of emerging industries related to FMCG 4.0 and specifically, digitalization and Industry 4.0 applied to food sectors and international food value chains;
- to reinforce growth, enhance competitiveness and support the long-term sustainability of companies from food and ICT/Industry 4.0 sectors;
- to unlock business and cooperation opportunities for European SMEs and clusters in third countries;
- to help SMEs find access to global value chains and build new ones based on common competences in emerging industries;
- to support SMEs in the identification of growth opportunities worldwide, raise their excellence, innovation capacity and their overall competitiveness;
- to facilitate interregional cluster collaboration and promote excellence in cluster management to improve the quality of services to SMEs members;
- to boost intercluster, interregional and intersectoral interactions to enable cross-fertilization, exploiting synergies, reinforce international growth and SMEs competitiveness;
- to increase cooperation towards across regions and continents, facilitating synergies between EU policies and instruments and better interconnection between EU trade policies, innovation actors and internationalization facilitators;
- to disseminate project activities through ECCP platform and other channels.

To achieve its objectives, AUMENTA implements a pioneering X-Industry Internationalization Programme that will support European SMEs in their fast internationalization to three continents, creating new cooperation and business opportunities to support growth, jobs and wealth.



The X-Industry Internationalization Programme has interdisciplinary components that includes:

- Creation of intercontinental network of Ambassadors as gate openers to selected markets to speed up SMEs;
- Preparation of online interactive catalogue based on common clusters and SMEs competences to showcase European SMEs potential and build international recognition;
- Implementation of pilot X-Industry & blended internationalization activities connecting virtual matchmakings (virtual introduction meetings) and traditional B2B matchmaking events;
- Cluster-facilitated coordination of business preparation with support in the identification of cooperation opportunities, funding sources and providing models of legally binding contracts;
- Hosting incoming visits from third countries at recognized international fairs in Europe;
- Establishment of intercontinental meta-cluster with network of soft-landing facilitates for international partners at project partners headquarters;
- Organization of online peer-reviews between project partners, Ambassadors, other ESCP-4i / INNOSUP and related projects, as well as partners in third countries.

The organization of virtual meetings is aimed at facilitating the signature of business and cooperation agreements, as well as preparation of joint cooperation projects and activities.

In the process of matchmaking partners from Europe, Caucasus, Latin America and North Africa special emphasis has been put on AUMENTA's proposed methodology regarding establishing network of well-selected Ambassadors as third country local experts with international expertise about selected target markets has been proved as success-leading working model in target markets.



Each Ambassador has been using tailored-made approach for each target market aligned with market specifics (culture, business, mentality) and trust building via Ambassadors contacts' network supported widening opportunities in the target regions for European companies and clusters.

Virtual meetings have also been organized within the event AUMENTA Global Matchmaking that took place virtually between 1-2 December 2021 on <https://aumenta-global-matchmaking.b2match.io/>.

The event was focused on providing a space for virtual brokerage and networking for business, clusters and other innovation and internationalization actors engaged in AUMENTA project.

4. Summary of virtual matchmaking meetings

By the day of submission of the present report, **211** virtual matchmaking meetings have been organized between European clusters and small and medium enterprises and business, network and cluster potential partners not only from primary markets Uruguay, Morocco, and Georgia, but also from neighbouring countries of selected geographical regions.

The objective of virtual meetings also to matchmake potential partners and provide an inspiring space for enterprises (including SMEs) and clusters from Europe and third countries explore common areas of interest via:

- B2B meetings - Business and commercial collaboration meetings between companies;
- C2C meetings - Exploration of innovation, R&D, and joint projects opportunities between clusters, network and business support organizations;
- C2B and other meetings - exploration of other business, R&D and multilateral cooperation between innovation and internationalization actors.

The process has an ongoing approach and is still implemented by AUMENTA consortium and their partners.

4.1 Virtual matchmaking meetings with Georgia

Within AUMENTA project, the total of 102 virtual meetings have been organized. Apart from Georgia, potential partners from Kirgizstan and Uzbekistan have met with European partners

At cluster-to-cluster (C2C) level the total of 10 virtual meetings took place.

In the ICT sector, the topics between European and Georgian and CIS clusters, network and intermediary organizations included, among others:

- Identification of ideas and potential areas of cooperation;
- Organization of virtual C2C and B2B events;
- Exchange of Information about on-going projects and initiatives that organizations are taking part;
- Identification of common member needs.

Additionally, European cluster participated in the Latvia-Uzbekistan Intergovernmental Commission official meeting to identify opportunities in the field of digitalization.

In the food sector, the topics between European and Georgian clusters, network and intermediary organizations included, among others

- Cooperation in future projects;
- Exploration of cooperation fields at cross-industry level between food and packaging sectors
- Cooperation within and across the value chains

The C2C virtual meetings were mostly initiated and facilitated by AUMENTA's project partners.

At cluster-to-business (C2B) level the total of 4 virtual meetings were facilitated.

In the food sector, the topics between European and Georgian business and private organizations are included, among others:

- Presentation of European products and companies looking to enter into Georgian market;
- Establishment of business relations facilitated by clusters and possibilities of distribution of food products in Georgia
- Product samples and marketing.

In the ICT sector, dedicated meetings between European clusters and Georgian business and private organizations included have not been organized so far.

The C2B virtual meetings were mostly initiated and facilitated by AUMENTA's project partners in cooperation with project ambassadors and as a result of activities organized within the project.

At business-to-business (B2B) level the total of 88 virtual meetings have been organized, including seven business meetings that have been organized between European companies and Georgian public institutions in the field of potential digitalization.

In the ICT sector, the topics between European SMEs and Georgian business and private organizations included, among others:

- Establishment of business collaboration with potential partners from logistic, ICT, health and other industries
- Assessment of document management systems used by organization from Georgia, information about selection principles for purchasing new
- Identification of business opportunities by digitalization of governmental and educational institutions

In the food sector, the topics between European SMEs and Georgian business and private organizations included s included, among others:

- Sharing contact information and requested information regarding product, pricing and additional details for further collaboration
- Distribution of food products in Georgian market
- Search for local and/or strategic partners for IT companies

The B2B virtual meetings were mostly facilitated by AUMENTA's project ambassadors.

In terms of the results achieved so far, AUMENTA's project partners and its members, especially SMEs have:

- Signed several business agreements

- Signed several cooperation agreements
- Organized joint events within AUMENTA's activities
- Prepared internationalization concepts to develop joint activities

Additionally, it has to be pointed out that from the above mentioned meetings, in total 9 bilateral meetings have been scheduled via b2match platform:

- 4 meeting cluster-to-cluster (C2C)
- 3 meetings business-to-business (B2B) and
- 2 meetings cluster-to-business (C2B)

The process of virtual meetings is an ongoing process are more virtual meetings and signature of agreements is expected in the near future.

4.2. Virtual matchmaking meetings with Morocco

Within AUMENTA project, the total of 38 virtual meetings have been organized.

At cluster-to-cluster (C2C) level the total of 15 virtual meetings took place.

In the ICT sector, the topics between European and Moroccan clusters, network and intermediary organizations included, among others:

- Identification of ideas and potential areas of cooperation;
- Organization of virtual C2C and B2B events;
- Exchange of Information about on-going projects and initiatives that organizations are taking part;
- Identification of common member needs.

In the food sector, the topics between European and Moroccan clusters, network and intermediary organizations included, among others

- Cooperation in future projects;
- Exploration of cooperation fields at cross-industry level between food and packaging sectors, as well as digitalization of food value chains in Morocco and identification of concrete technological challenges;
- Cooperation within and across the value chain

The C2C virtual meetings were mostly initiated and facilitated by AUMENTA's project partners.

At cluster-to-business (C2B) level the total of 15 virtual meetings were facilitated.

In the ICT sector, the topics between European clusters and Moroccan business and private organizations included, among others:

- Presentation of AUMENTA companies that are interested in Morocco to have a future meeting with the company

- Presentation of European cluster and exploration of possibilities of cooperation between clusters and companies

In the food sector, the topics between European and Moroccan clusters, network and intermediary organizations included, among others:

- Distribution of European products in Moroccan market and establishment of strategic partnership;
- Joint development of international research, development and innovation (R&D&I) projects and application for funding, like Horizon Europe
- Cooperation of Moroccan producers within AUMENTA's project
- Possibilities of establishing cooperation with strategic suppliers and providers for European companies

The C2B virtual meetings were mostly initiated and facilitated by AUMENTA's project ambassadors, project partners and as a result of activities organized within the project.

At business-to-business (B2B) level the total of 8 virtual meetings have been organized.

In the food sector, the topics between European SMEs and Moroccan business and private organizations included, among others

- Distribution of European products in Moroccan market;
- Business cooperation in the field of joint application for public procurement in the field of waste management;
- Possibilities of establishing cooperation with strategic suppliers and providers for European companies

In the ICT sector, the topics between European SMEs and Moroccan business and private organizations included, among others:

- Adaptation of the European ICT product and service to local needs and requirements
- Creation of joint (European and Moroccan) technician team of specialist to articulate the adaptation of the European ICT product to local public requirements.
- Exploration of business models aligned with Moroccan realities

The B2B virtual meetings were mostly facilitated by AUMENTA's project ambassadors. In terms of the results achieved so far, AUMENTA's project partners and its members, especially SMEs have:

- Signed several cooperation agreements
- Organized joint events within AUMENTA's activities
- Prepared internationalization concepts to develop joint activities

Additionally, it has to be pointed out that from the above mentioned meetings, in total 11 bilateral meetings have been scheduled via b2match platform:

- 1 meeting cluster-to-cluster (C2C)
- 3 meetings business-to-business (B2B) and

- 7 meetings cluster-to-business (C2B)

The process of virtual meetings is an ongoing process and more virtual meetings and signature of agreements is expected in the near future.

4.3 Virtual matchmaking meetings with Uruguay

Within AUMENTA project, the total of 71 virtual meetings have been organized. Apart from Uruguay, potential partners from Argentina and Paraguay have met with European partners.

At cluster-to-cluster (C2C) level the total of 31 virtual meetings took place.

In the ICT sector, the topics between European and Uruguayan and Latin American clusters, network and intermediary organizations included, among others:

- Possibilities to organize joint activities to matchmake companies from Europe and Latin America;
- Exploration of sectoral and cross-sectoral business and collaboration opportunities
- Cooperation with public institutions responsible for economic and international development
- Identification of potential common R&D projects facilitated by clusters

In the food sector, the topics between European and Uruguayan and Latin American clusters, network and intermediary organizations included, among others:

- Definition of joint interests and identification of partners for cooperation
- Joint organization of AUMENTA's activities
- Network cooperation of clusters and umbrella associations

The C2C virtual meetings were mostly initiated and facilitated by AUMENTA's project partners.

At cluster-to-business (C2B) level the total of 16 virtual meetings were facilitated.

In the ICT sector, the topics between European clusters and Uruguayan, Argentinian and Paraguayan business and private organizations included, among others:

- Relationship and trust building to set foundation for cooperation
- Exploration and definition of business and cooperation opportunities between European companies and Latin American companies
- Cooperation regarding technologies and export development

In the food sector, the topics between European and Uruguayan, Argentinian and Paraguayan clusters, network and intermediary organizations included, among others

- Establishment of new connections Latin American producers and knowledge gathering about products
- Exploration of possibilities to promote Latin America products in Europe and European products in Latin America

The C2B virtual meetings were mostly initiated and facilitated by AUMENTA's project ambassadors, project partners and as a result of activities organized within the project.

At business-to-business (B2B) level the total of 24 virtual meetings have been organized.

In the ICT sector, the topics between European SMEs and Uruguayan, Argentinian and Paraguayan business and private organizations included, among others:

- Market exploration and identification of digitalization needs;
- Establishment of strategic partnerships and facilitation of key local contacts;
- Possibilities to find local distributor or strategic local partner

In the food sector, the topics between European SMEs and Uruguayan, Argentinian and Paraguayan business and private organizations included s included, among others:

- Distribution of European product in Latin American markets;
- Possibilities to extend portfolio of European companies by finding new/strategic suppliers and novel products and ingredients
- Strategic cross-sectoral cooperation with common aim of international visibility

The B2B virtual meetings were mostly facilitated by AUMENTA's project ambassadors.

In terms of the results achieved so far, AUMENTA's project partners and its members, especially SMEs have:

- Signed several business agreements
- Signed several cooperation agreements
- Organized joint events within AUMENTA's activities
- Prepared internationalization concepts to develop joint activities

Additionally, it has to be pointed out that from the above mentioned meetings, in total 26 bilateral meetings have been scheduled via b2match platform:

- 9 meeting cluster-to-cluster (C2C)
- 6 meetings business-to-business (B2B) and
- 11 meetings cluster-to-business (C2B)

The process of virtual meetings is an ongoing process are more virtual meetings and signature of agreements is expected in the near future.

5. Conclusion

This deliverable gives overview about AUMENTA virtual meetings organized at sectoral and cross-sectoral level between European clusters and enterprises within the implementation of project activities simultaneously in three different markets and continents.

The total of 211 virtual meetings took place. The process has an ongoing approach and project partners continue to implement this activity to foster international expansion of European clusters and SMEs.

The total of 56 meetings have been organized between clusters and other intermediary organizations (C2C), 35 between clusters and companies (C2B) and 120 at business to business (B2B) level.

The proposed methodology of X-Industry Internationalization and engagement of project Ambassadors “on the ground” made it possible to overachieve the indicators set and generate various benefits at cluster and business level that resulted in the signature of cooperation and business agreements, as well as cooperation project between European and third countries organizations.



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