



# FOREIGN EXPERT TRAINING PROGRAMME



EUROPEAN  
CLUSTER COLLABORATION  
PLATFORM



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**MAGIA**

Medtech Alliance for Global Internationalization

**WP2. Training activities  
and fact-finding missions**

**DELIVERABLE D2.4**

**Foreign Expert Training Programme**

## Disclaimer

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## Foreign Expert Training Programme

*This deliverable report is going to be accessible to the general public. 18 months into the project, the MAGIA project team would like to take this opportunity to reveal to the European Commission, participating companies, and other interested individuals what steps have been taken along the course of this project and what outcomes have already been generated through MAGIA. A particular spotlight will be put on the foreign expert training programme and what resources are already available.*

### **A. Context – A Brief Recap on the Project**

The team of MAGIA – MedTech Alliance for Global InternAtionalisation is a conglomerate of four leading Life Science clusters in Europe, namely bioPmed from Italy, BioWin from Belgium, Life Science Nord from Germany and Lyonbiopole from France.

Besides being leading Life Sciences Clusters in Europe, there is a number of shared characteristics among these four clusters that prompted them to join forces. All of them consist to a large extend of SMEs with innovative and forward-thinking products that are worth being introduced to international markets. At the same time, these SMEs across all four clusters face the same challenges, specifically dealing with a complex regulatory environment, a lack of experience and contacts in the desired target markets, as well as constraints in terms of human resources and limited funds.

Naturally, bringing together SMEs across four European regions creates a heterogeneous group of different specialities and individual challenges and interests that are in addition to the more common limitations that are named above. Thus, a major task at the very beginning of the project was to produce a mapping, reflecting clusters of interest within this meta-cluster and to identify two target markets that are appealing to a large number of SMEs. A questionnaire revealed that the most appealing target markets for small and medium-sized MedTech companies are China and the USA. Additionally, four main indications could be identified to gather the interest of many participants, which were Orthopaedics, Oncology, Cardiovascular, and Dentistry. These findings are reflected in the educational material. At the same time, the MAGIA team emphasised that the outcomes of the project should provide a benefit for companies within and outside of these indications.

The overall project goal of MAGIA is to give tailwind to the SMEs, providing not only market intelligence and resources to keep up to speed with current market trends, but also insights

from trusted market experts in form of video material and interactions, such as personal discussions and webinar sessions, to get a first orientation in the new and complex market environments of the US-American and Chinese markets. To truly create a 'soft-landing-zone' and to support SMEs in gaining traction in the new target markets, the MAGIA team has travelled to both, the US and China, to establish contact networks that can help the companies along their first steps and act as a contact facilitator.

Working on a common internationalisation strategy also creates a strong synergy within the regions. Most companies have had a chance to gain international experience to some extent. In some cases, it might be in either of the target markets, in others it might be outside of these regions. Both create specific lessons-learned and best-practices that are worth being shared with other like-minded SMEs. This type of peer-learning will be achieved through regional focus groups.

In the following sections, we will elaborate further the specific sub-sectors of the foreign expert training program.

## **B. Market Studies**

The market studies were the first step of our knowledge enhancing and preparatory actions and were published in February 2019 on the websites/intranets of each of the four clusters, as well as the cluster collaboration website, making it available to the general public. For every company willing to approach a new foreign market in a strategic manner, a certain amount of information about market size, opportunities, regulatory particularities, and information on the health system overall are necessary in order to make an informed decision. To ensure that these important topics are covered, the MAGIA team conceptualized a general guideline to be provided to the authors of each of the studies. Beyond that, the expert authors added aspects that they deemed important and worth knowing before entering the market or intensifying the market activity. Due to that, both market studies follow the same structure, using the three core pillars

- General Market Information
- Regulatory Environment
- Market Access

Yet, as individual focus areas were added, the final structure of both reports are quite different from one another, also reflecting how different both target markets are. Beyond that, the studies additionally tap into the four main indications.

Thus, the market studies provide an excellent starting point for companies, regardless of what their speciality might be, reflecting on the market overall, the regulatory landscape, and potential sales structures. Any Life Science company has to question similar things at the very beginning. Hence, rather than each company researching for their own account, the market studies achieve a lot of resource saving and sharing.

### **C. Expert Videos and Personal Interaction**

The expert videos and personal interaction are at the cornerstone of the Expert Training Programme. During the conceptualisation phase of the MAGIA project, we have added two dimensions to this section – train the cluster and train the SMEs. Reflecting on the first 18 months of this project, it was a good decision to do so. While many questions that arise when dealing with these two target markets are identical, e.g. on the regulatory framework and processes, there are some questions that are very specific to the cluster representatives. This was particularly true in the lead up and throughout our fact-finding mission in China, which we will elaborate on below.

Having studied the market reports as a first step, the expert videos and subsequent communication with the market experts are the perfect supplement when it comes to intensifying and deepening the knowledge and, eventually, make an informed decision about whether or not to pursue the target markets.

The expert videos are online learning sequences of about 20 - 40 minutes each. There are four videos for the US market and five videos for China, providing abundant valuable and practical insights. In both cases, the content is strongly intertwined with the information provided in the market study, as they were provided to the creators of the videos beforehand to be able to build and comment on what the reader has learned previously.

The format of a video allows the expert to make important connections and point out particularities that would not have been possible in a written manner. Obviously, this requires that the basics have been learned through the studies and the expert can proceed on a more advanced level.

On a more practical note, the format of expert videos is a very time-efficient resource, especially if the basics on a target market are already familiar. In a working environment where time and availability are increasingly scarce, being able to gain a great deal of insights on a particular target market in under two hours should be an added value to the representatives of the SMEs.



Please find below the links to the different on-demand-learning sessions:

[China - The Chinese MedTech Industry 01 - Market Overview](#)

[China - The Chinese MedTech Industry 02 - Public Health in China](#)

[China - The Chinese MedTech Industry 03 - Regulatory Affairs: Medical Device registration in China](#)

[China - The Chinese MedTech Industry 04 - Market Access and Business Development](#)

[China - The Chinese MedTech Industry 05 - Best Practices for Market Access](#)

[USA - Product liability in the American Medtech market](#)

[USA - US Medical Device Regulation](#)

[USA - Intercultural Dos and Dents during US market entry](#)

[USA - Sales Channels in the US Market for Medical Devices](#)

Particularly for the US market, different experts have been involved in producing the videos by being interviewed. For example, the topic of product liability is, in a way, very unique to the US market and equally complex and alarming for SMEs willing to enter the market. This distinct topic is one that can best be commented on by either an insurance company or a lawyer, as they deal with these matters on a daily basis. Getting access to their insights is very valuable to SME decision-makers, as they need to determine if extra investments need to be made in insurance. Each of the videos contains contact information, if additional questions come up.

Naturally, a video or a written report can only comment on more general issues that are true for companies across different subsectors. However, as mentioned in the beginning of this section, the companies benefitting from the MAGIA project are a heterogeneous group of different specialities and individual challenges and interests. Therefore, particular and case-specific questions come up as decision-makers are considering their own market approach.

For that, we additionally required that the market experts would be available for up to two live web sessions of approximately 45 minutes each to discuss questions or provide alternative communication options to address additional questions.

For the US market, the first live webinar took place on March 27<sup>th</sup> 2019 across all four cluster regions, using the webinar tool Go-To-Meeting. The German-American Chamber of Commerce was able to gather their experts so specific questions could be addressed accordingly. Participants were encouraged to send in questions beforehand or ask the during the webinar session by using the chat tool. In some clusters, the webinar session was combined with an on-site focus group where the feedback on the session was very positive. Some of the participating SMEs were already put in contact with the named experts.

[Link to the Webinar Recording of the Session on March 27 2019](#)

Throughout the project so far, we have learnt that the US and Chinese markets are rather different in terms of what companies require to feel well prepared for it. While most companies feel they have a good understanding of the US market and business culture by now, the Chinese market appears more challenging. This is also reflected in relatively diverse questions that arise. Due to that, the communication between companies and our China market expert Dennis Wilkens has been predominantly on a 1-1 basis, addressing the particular questions. However, he has repeatedly offered to hold a live webinar when needed, which we intend in the future.

The MAGIA team has recently travelled to both target markets. For the majority of the China travel, Dennis Wilkens was present, interpreted in meetings, provided intercultural guidance and also a knowledge hour to reflect on the first meetings and general Chinese business customs. For the US travel, the GACC team was available for guidance prior to the travel as well.

Overall, we are very content with the guidance that both market expert teams have provided to the SMEs but also the clusters. Sharing now all the findings from our missions with the companies in each of the four regions, we are confident that future webinar sessions will be able to bring great benefit to all participants.

#### **D. Network-shaping in Target Markets**

Through the market studies and the different components of the Expert Training Programme, SMEs have received relevant resources for their desk research and strategic decision-making.

Once the decision has been made to approach one of the target markets, more practical considerations become prevalent. Any company that has internationalised, or even an individual that has stayed abroad, knows that all processes are easier if a good and trustworthy contact network is already in place. Hence, one major goal of this project was to establish strong networks with partners that have a good reputation and are able to assist European companies



in their first steps. Making these partnerships last is a subsequent goal that will ensure the sustainability of MAGIA.

Through the project, but also through regular interaction with our member companies, we have learned that especially in smaller company's internationalisation decisions and subsequent interactions in a target market are frequently based on random contacts that were made on events and trade shows.

As a project team, we aim to ensure that SMEs have a number of trustworthy institutions to reach out to, making them both independent but also arrange that expert for different topics are available for reach-out.

To achieve that, the MAGIA team has travelled to the US in April of 2019 and to China the following month, having been able to establish significant partnerships with well-known institutions such as Medical Alley in Minnesota or the China Association for Medical Device Industry (CAMDI), among others.

#### **E. Regional Focus Groups**

There is one more aspect that the MAGIA team wanted to provide to SMEs across all four regions to produce the best possible conditions for internationalisation: focus groups. To some extent they have already been described in section C.

Even though both networking-shaping and focus groups are not the classical components of an expert training programme, we wanted to include it in this report, which will be accessible to all interested parties, to paint the bigger picture of service offerings that are already available to companies today.

The focus groups are, on the one hand, an effective tool to present findings and new partnerships to the group of interested companies. At the same time, the discussions and remarks provide valuable feedback on our activities and insights to what is needed in the future. Particularly helpful was a focus group that took place in March and provided impulses on what topics to address during our project travels.

On the other hand, companies have the great opportunity to learn from one another. Already in past focus groups, but also considering the registrations for the upcoming discussion groups, we have a diverse group of companies, differing in size, maturity, experience levels, monetary funding, product categories, etc. Yet, they have a similar goal and are open to learn from their peers. The diversity might actually be an asset to these focus groups, as challenges are

considered from different angles and, also, participants might be more prone to exchange freely if participating companies are not competitors but rather from other fields.

#### **F. Concluding comments**

18 months into the project, there is a number of valuable and practical resources available to companies across the four regions today. Regardless of where in the process of internationalisation a company might be – at the very first steps or perhaps about to take action – they will be able to draw from the provided resources and can benefit from a strong net of partnerships that will assist them with the multiple challenges that may come their way.