Good Practice template

- In order to submit a practice, you will have to register in the Interreg Europe website. You can submit your practice through your user dashboard ('Good practices' tab).
- Optional fields are shown in orange. All other fields are compulsory.

1. Author contact information	
[Technical: Contact information comes from your community profile. You can edit it by visiting your user dashboard] Ideally, the owner of the good practice should fill in the form. Indeed, if you submit a good practice, your personal and organisational profile in the Interreg Europe community will be linked to it.	
Name	**Susanna Peura**
Email	susanna.peura@savonlinna.fi
Telephone	+358 40 152 5111
Your organisation	
Country	Finland
Region	Etelä-Savo (South Savo)
City	Savonlinna

2. Organisation in charge of the good practice	
[If your organisation is not the one in charge of the good practice, you can indicate the relevant organisation in this section of the form. But your contact details will still be linked to the submitted good practice.]	
Is your organisation the main institution in charge of this good practice?*	*NO*

In case 'no' is selected, the following sections appear:

Location of the organisation in charge:	*Country*	*Finland*
	Region	*Etelä-Savo (South Savo)*
	City	*Mikkeli*
Main institution in charge	*Kaakkois-Suomen Ammattikorkeakoulu (South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences)*	

3. Good practice general information	
Title of the practice	*Digital steps - Growth to the business*
Does this practice come from an Interreg Europe Project	*YES* *[Technical: Good Practices outside the IR-E projects relevant to the topics and validated by the Policy Learning Platforms experts will also be included in the database]*

Please select the project acronym	Digiportaat (in Finnish) / Digital steps (In English)
Thematic objective of the practice	*Drop-down list of the 6 specific objectives* 1: Establishment of the regional digital mentor model.

	2: Education of the company advisers of the area to the digital environment and to the new business models 3: Survey of SME's digital skills in province. 4: Improvement of the digital readiness of small and medium-sized companies by offering training, workshops and coaching in beginner, user and master levels 5: Enhancing digital marketing and utilising of videos in SME's
Geographical scope of the practice	*Finland / Eastern-Finland / South Savo region*

Location of the practice	Country	*Finland*
	Region	*South-Savo*
	City	*Enonkoski, Heinävesi, Hirvensalmi, Juva, Kangasniemi, Mikkeli, Mäntyharju, Pertunmaa, Puumala, Savonlinna, Sulkava (cities/municipalities involved)*

4. Detailed description

Short summary of the practice	*Digital steps project supports local SME's in developing their staff's digital skills and the company's business in digital business to grow and adapt new more efficient working methods by using digital tools. In the beginning, a business developer meets the company representative to survey company's digital skills and needs for training. The aim is to survey altogether 300 companies in the province. By following the needs of the companies, Digital Steps looks for experts to train them and offers short workshops and webinars. Digital steps project helps companies in different levels: beginners, users and in master level. Master level courses are for local advertising and IT agencies.* *Business Advisors in the province are educated to understand digital business environment better.*
Detailed information on the practice	In the South-Savo region there are 10 000 SMEs and most of these businesses are not using the full potential of the digital marketing channels. Digital Steps took the challenge of educating the use of digital tools and strategies to help these businesses to make more profit and to have more efficient processes. Digital Steps compiled a list of the possibilities that digitalization offers to our local businesses and used that as a base for digital skills survey. The businesses were interviewed and given information about the digital business possibilities. It increased their motivation to learn and improve their business and working habits. Digital Steps offered practical short courses on how to make better business through digitalization. Courses were build from the needs that rise from the interviews and were offered in three levels: beginners, users and master. Some businesses got individual help from the digital business advisors for their digital projects. Master level courses were aimed to local advertising and IT agencies. By improving these agencies know-how they can serve the local SMEs more professionally. These master level companies also forms a digital skills network where the local SMEs can look for digital expertise. Additional support to businesses were provided by educating the local business advisors at local business promotion agencies or municipalities. Aims were to survey 300 companies and educate 150 persons. At the moment 224 surveys are completed and over 300 persons have participated at least in one course.
Resources needed	*Project budget: 1 318 998, revised budget 18.09.2020 1 750 820 with extention of the project period till 31.12.2021.* *Salaries: 1 196 890* *Outsourced services: 350 450* *HR:* *- Project manager 100%* *- Media Expert 30%* *- Marketing Lecturer 30%* *- IT Expert 30%*

	- Training coordinators 2 persons, both 50% *- RDI Expert 50%* *- RDI Expert/researcher 20%* *- Business Advisors: 1 advisor 100%, 4 advisors 50%*
Timescale (start/end date)	*October 2018 – December 2020/ongoing; applied for extension until September 2021.* Continuation of activity after the project period to be negotiated with regional and local business promotion agencies.
Evidence of success (results achieved)	*- Digital skills surveys: 224 / goal 300* *- Courses organized: 128 / goal 120* *- Participated in courses: 224* *- Business Advisors trained: 75* *- Data driven Business development: 11 companies couched* *- Using of videos in internal processes: 7 companies* *Most of the companies have given outstanding feedback and recommended our service to others. According to feedback SMEs have improved their digital marketing skills and knowledge of the digital business possibilities. Project has gathered a lot of valid information and tools for SMEs and information is open for everybody online. Several start-ups have benefited from possibility to update their business model and digital skills.*
Challenges encountered	*Companies need to have proper resources when learning digital skills. The skills can be tricky to implement and they may need more support to do this. The courses need to be practical. It's vital to get experienced coach from the field. The skill levels need to be defined when interviewing companies. It is also essential to ensure longer term support and check-up opportunities for the SMEs for implementing change, this can be difficult to arrange in terms of resources and continuity of action.*
Potential for learning or transfer	*The project has been important for the SMEs' competitiveness. Digital marketing and SEO have offered a lot of unused potential to the local businesses. They have been able to get new skills for reaching new clients with better content. Digital tools have improved the companies' internal processes to be more efficient. The more advanced early adopters have made progress from their own skill level. Digital starters have started to take digital steps with the support of start-level courses. Motivating the companies with the benefits of digitalization has been important from the beginning of the communication. An emergence of interest in developing new business on the basis of digital opportunities is visible now in the region.* *Digital Steps project model has been efficient and a good practice. The interviews are made by digital Business Advisors and the interview itself can solve questions in the company. The project group, even working from different locations, works efficiently and closely together by using shared digital platforms eg. Ms Teams. The project has been successful due to project staff's motivation to give excellent service to clients.* This practice is transferable as a model for training and coaching SMEs to achieve change (starting level survey as trigger, entry-level courses with possibility to advance in different directions and consultancy concerning choices). For increased regional impact and penetration a networked model as in Digiportaat is recommended.
Further information	*www.digiportaat.fi* *Research by Digital Steps (digital skills surveys as research material)* *https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/267891/URNISBN9789523442245.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y*
Keywords related to your practice	*Digital skills, digital business, survey, digitalization, small and medium sized companies (SME), digital tools, digital business models, business advisors*

Upload image	
Expert opinion	[1500 characters] *[to be filled in by the Policy Learning Platforms experts]*

The image shows a cyclical process with the following elements:

- Maintain contact with the businesses
- Reduced business cost
- More efficient business processes
- Revenue growth via digital marketing
- Digital skills survey with business
- Discover skills gaps together
- Hands on training in workshops and webinars
- Coaching and mentoring