Project SMART-ER – Executive Summary

The ECIU University Research Institute for Smart European Regions (SMART-ER) is a research, innovation and education alliance, enabling all member universities to jointly address complex societal challenges under the UN SDG11 (Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable).

SMART-ER, organized as a virtual research institute, designs and implements research, value-captures and delivers solutions to SDG11 challenges, identified by the ECIU University Erasmus+ project. SMART-ER, together with stakeholder groups at a local and international level, showcases and works according to a shared R&I Agenda, focused on social needs, and its implementation plan. SMART-ER will align and bring together research capacities, both scientific and management capacities, bring together researchers and share a common vision, creating a virtual research institute as an example of how to overcome the limits of each single institution.

It means, in fact, to implement a new model of doing research and innovation without walls, because:
• is a way to leave behind the ivory tower, promoting dialogue with society
• it will overcome the limitations of disciplines, sectors and countries
• it will be mainly based on setting a virtual collaborative environment

All partners will join efforts to develop and test transformative approaches focused on R&I that are so needed:
• Mapping relevant information regarding ECIU University resources and infrastructures, practices and actors needed to move to the second phase
• Developing the internal plans, procedures, training contents and platforms that will allow the creation and the operability of the SMART-ER
• A capacity building programme (Seed Programme and SMART-ER Academy) and citizen science initiatives that will be used as a testbed to put into practice all built mechanisms and structures
• Validating the pilots and procedures
• Producing guidelines and toolkits for tested models replication and practices of reference

List of participants
1 University of Twente (UT) NL (Coordinator)
2 Aalborg University (AAU) DK
3 Dublin City University (DCU) IE
4 Kaunas University of Technology (KTU) LT
5 Linköping University (LiU) SE
6 Tampere University (TAU) FI
7 Hamburg University of Technology (TUHH) DE
8 Universidade de Aveiro (UAVR) PT
9 Universitat Autonoma de Barcelona (UAB) ES
10 University of Stavanger (UiS) NO
11 Università degli Studi di Trento (UNITN) IT
12 Institut National des Sciences Appliquées (INSA) FR
Workplan

The project is broken down into 7 work packages and will have a duration of 36 months.

- **WP 1 (Research & Innovation Shared Agenda and Infrastructure Plan)** and **WP2 (Creating the SMART-ER Virtual Research Institute)** starts working in a parallel manner to establish the foundations of the ECIU SMART-ER Virtual Research Institute. After a thorough analysis of partners’ existing structures and practices for R&I, a co-creation workshop will bring together members of the university research community, in co-defining key aspects of the SMART-ER Institute’s research priorities. Based on the knowledge co-created in the workshop, the governance framework and the operating models of the Institute will be defined, along with its sustainability.

- **After the definition of the operational strategy and structure of the SMART-ER Institute,** the WP 3 SMART-ER Capacity Building will be focused on the operational implementation of pilot activities of the SMART-ER Action Plan. This is central to the project, and is a key for real transformation of the R&I system. It requires the commitment and participation of all partners in its development, as well as a number of researchers leading pilots. This WP is articulated in two main axes: a programme to promote joint research activities, including networking and mobility (both physical and virtual), and incentives for co-supervising doctorate theses (cotuteles/joint doctorates). The second axis is based on upskilling the research community, by training and mutual-learning activities.

- **WP4 and WP5 are committed to promoting and reinforcing dialogue with society.** Using the knowledge of partners and previous experience, the WP4 SMART-ER framework for Public Engagement sets up a basis for public engagement, referring to a series of activities focused on fostering interaction between scientists and various publics, including a broad range of participatory processes. One of these processes of public engagement is Citizen Science, specifically aimed at the participation in research and co-creation of knowledge. WP5 Citizen Science in practice within SMART-ER implements CS pilots to testbed the SMART-ER Institute strategy.

- **In parallel, and lasting throughout the project, WP6 Communication & Dissemination involves the design and implementation of SMART-ER strategy, plan and activities for general stakeholder engagement, dissemination, awareness raising and communication and coordinates synergies and actions with relevant projects, initiatives and networks.** WP7 Management and Quality Assurance entails the project’s management and coordination activities, which are related to the handling of all the administrative, academic, technical, financial and legal aspects of the project as well as to the meaningful data collected and/or generated over the course of SMART-ER.

A brief overview of the workplan is provided in the following figure, showing interdependencies of tasks and deliverables: