



Opportunities for SMEs under EIP Water: concluding remarks and recommendations going forward



Lisbon, 25 September 2014.





- **Northern federated state of Belgium**
- Area: 13,684 km² (2007)
- Population: 6,117,440 (2007)
- Population density: 447 p/km² (2007)
- **Economy: companies 571.839/990.374 – FI/B**
SME's 292.618/519.275 – FI/B

- **Capital: Brussels**
- Currency: euro (EUR)
- Flanders Day: 11 July
- Language: Dutch

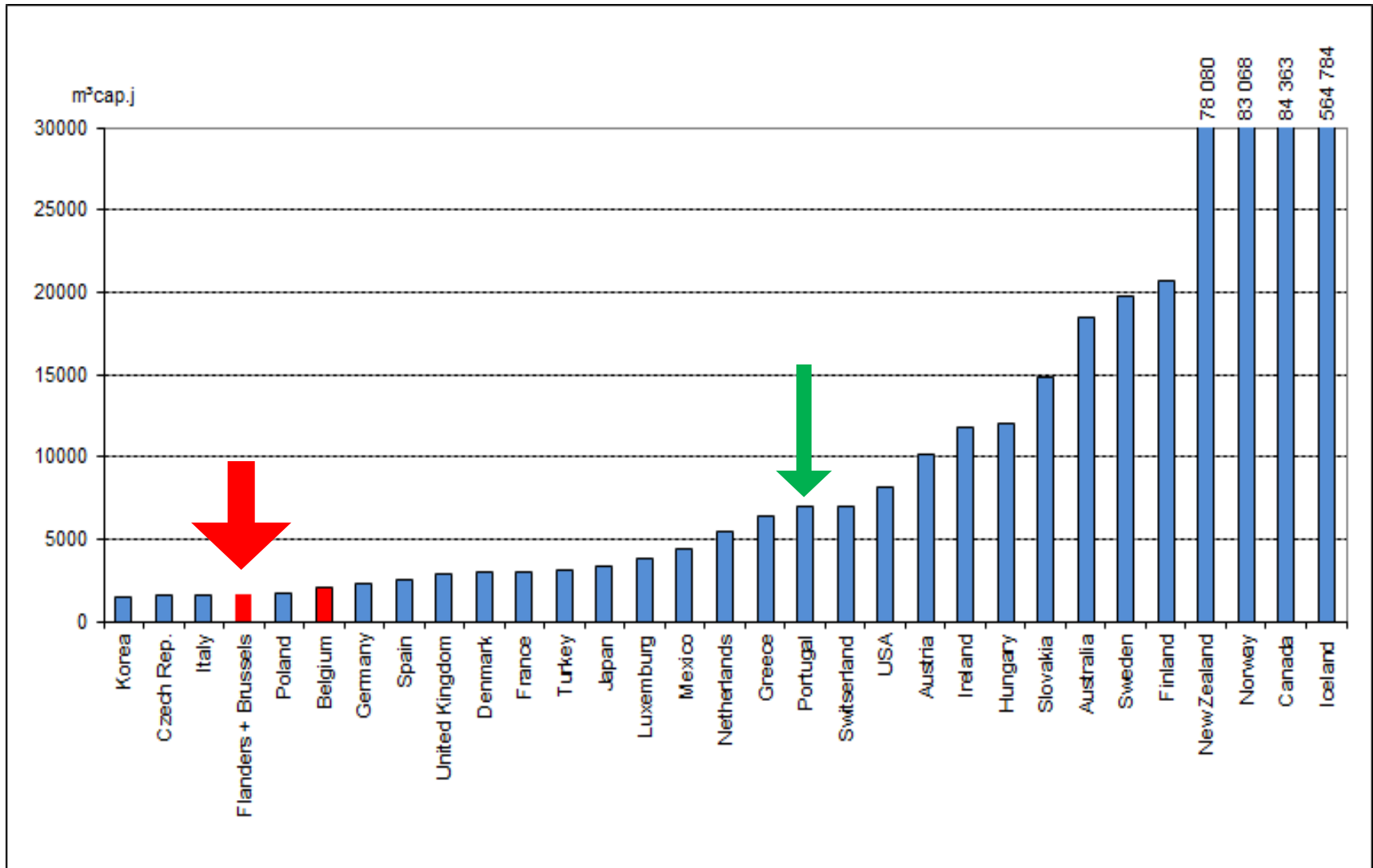


Flanders Knowledge Center Water (VLAKWA)

Not for profit organization with Government, Academia, Water companies and Employers/industry (no individual company members)



Water availability in Flanders/Belgium (OECD)



- **Status:** More than 23 mln of SMEs in the EU
 - ✓ > 99% of all European businesses are, in fact, SMEs
 - ✓ SMEs provide 2 out of 3 of the private sector jobs and contribute to > ½ of the total value-added created by businesses in the EU
 - ✓ > 136,000 SMEs (,5%) directly involved in the value chains of the water-related economy
- **SMEs need:** financial investment + advice and support help in accessing new markets/new market opportunities

How EC supports SMEs?

- **Legal framework**
 - ✓ [Small Business Act](#) followed by Green Action Plan for SMEs - **to turn environmental challenges into business opportunities**
- **Financial support**
- **Improve business environment:**
 - ✓ Starting, running & growing an SME business
- **Promoting entrepreneurship** : Education, training
- **Access to markets**
 - ✓ [EEN](#), Standardisation of SMEs,
 - ✓ Internationalisation - [Your European Business Portal](#) for expanding business abroad
- **Regional SMEs Policies:**
 - ✓ to support SME Policy initiatives from Structural Funds (ERDF & ESF), **Guidebook Series**



Horizon 2020 and COSME are complementary programmes to generate growth and jobs

- **Different focus:**

- **Horizon 2020 = innovation-driven growth**



- **COSME = support to create favorable business environment and competitiveness** : for 2014: 38 actions, €260 mln.

- Improve access to FINANCE for SMEs: LGF- Loan Guarantee Facility, EFG – Equity Facility for growth, Risk to Finance, etc → **EIF calls**
- Improve access to MARKETS: Enterprise Europe Network → **EEN calls**
- Improve framework CONDITIONS for BUSINESS creation & growth
- **SUPPORT** entrepreneurs: Education&business environment



- **COSME**
 - to strengthen the competitiveness & sustainability of the EU enterprises
 - to encourage an entrepreneurial culture
 - to promote the creation and growth of SMEs
- **H2020 for SMEs – a wider scope!**
 - **SME participation in collaborative R&D or innovation projects**
 - Target: R&D topics (min. 3 participants)
 - **Eurostars (II) – Enhancing Innovation Capacity Market-driven Innovation**
 - Target: R&D intensive SME (min. 2 participants)
 - **Enhancing the innovation capacity of SMEs H2020 SME Instrument**
 - Target: Innovation in SME (min. 1 participant)
 - **Exchange and mobility of researchers involving SMEs - Marie Sklodowska-Curie actions**



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- The EU provided good legal and financial framework conditions for:
 - the existing SMEs, and for the creating new SMEs, and
 - supporting them to grow financially and professionally with the extensive EU network – EEN.
- However, we need to increase a ‘critical mass’ of SMEs to use and implement this framework

- The main challenge remains
 - to reinforce the links of EU level conditions and opportunities, and to implement those at national/regional/local level
 - Namely, to strengthen the links between National Contact Points (NPCs) for SMEs and develop thematic links (e.g. water) with NPCs at national level and, thus, strengthening national/regional partnerships for water involving all actors
 - to facilitate further the creation of national/regional water partnerships (NWPs) and learn from the know-how of the existing-ones (e.g., the members of EIP water Action Group - for SMEs);
 - to create more targeted actions within NWPs to strengthen the backbone of the EU economy – more than 23 mln of SMEs

- Local actors and local/regional partnerships are close to the local demands and priorities, thus can act first, involving and facilitating new SMEs to boost economy and reflect the changes of the economic activities
- Innovations in water at regional /local level opens new opportunities for smart specialisation - this gives new ideas for new water SMEs

Some examples

- Vlakwa as a growing example for the functional SME support system in Flanders with the aim into a spinning wheel for cross national matchmaking:
 - Aim of Vlakwa actions in Flanders is to be a driving force in linking all stakeholders in water sector becoming a national active platform to initiate, facilitate and implement new opportunities for water-related SMEs via bilateral contacts, brokerage events, advise to involve SMEs in European and Regional projects for partnership and ensuring the link between European – regional NCP and local partners
- WssTP acts also at the European as well as regional level, and its regional level members acts as a facilitator of involving EU-level SMEs