

CLAY project - Interreg Europe High-Level Political Dissemination event

**Umbria Regional Office in Brussels (Belgium)
October 11th and 12th 2022**

October 11th and 12th, 2022 - The partners of the Interreg Europe CLAY project (Cross Sector support for Innovative and Competitive Artistic Ceramic SMEs) have met in Brussels (Belgium) to present the project results to an audience of policy makers, directors, officers and stakeholders of various institutions and colleagues.

The main objective of the CLAY project is to show that with product, process and marketing innovation it is possible to make tradition competitive in a globalized world. In this frame, the project partners have presented their work and their regions in the 2 days event in Brussels.

The project partners:

1. Regione Umbria / Regional Government of Umbria (Lead Partner - Italy);
2. AEUCC - Agrupaciòn Europea de Cooperaciòn Territorial Ciudades de la Ceramica, AECT limitada / European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation Cities of Ceramic, EGTC with limited liability (Advisory Partner, legally based in Spain, with headquarters in Italy);
3. ADRSV - Agentia pentru Dezvoltare Regionala Sud Vest Oltenia / Regional Development Agency South West Oltenia (Romania);
4. Etelä-Pohjanmaan liitto / Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia (Finland);
5. CTCV Centro Tecnológico da Cerâmica e do Vidro / CTCV Technological Centre for Ceramics and Glass (Portugal);
6. Association pour le développement et la promotion du pôle européen de la céramique / Association for the development and promotion of the european ceramic center (France).

The first day of the event (Tuesday October 11th, 2022 - 16:30 – 19:30) saw the partners presenting their “Ceramic Corners”, to provide a glimpse of tradition and innovation in the ceramic sectors of the CLAY Regions: Umbria (IT), South-West Oltenia (RO), South Ostrobothnia (FI), Centro (PT) and Nouvelle-Aquitaine (FR).

More than 50 people interested in learning more about the solutions (projects, videos, ceramics) on display turned out to be present, especially officials from regional offices stationed in Brussels (see list of participants).

During the second day of the event (Wednesday October 12th, 2022 – 09:00 – 16:00) CLAY partners held a conference titled “Ceramics: a crucial sector for Europe”, with participants both in presence and online.

Moderator Diletta Giovannelli (Foreign affairs and Communication manager for Regione Umbria) opened the session introducing Michele Fioroni (Umbria Regional Deputy President for Economic Development) who welcomed the participants and stated that technology can provide new opportunities to the ceramic sector, as innovation can boost tradition by developing new skills and products. Michele Fioroni stated that presenting such great results of a programme about one of our patrimony sectors, in Bruxelles was of moment of great pride for Umbria, the lead partner of Clay project .

Emanuela Bossi (CLAY project manager for Umbria Region) presented the 5 years project stating that the work never stopped, despite the global situation.

Ilaria Piazza (Interreg Europe Joint Secretariat representative), welcomed the participants and provided useful information about the future developments of the Interreg program.

Donatella Tesei (Umbria Region President) remarked the importance of CLAY project, as the importance of the ceramic sector. *It is important, Tesei stated, to conjugate tradition and innovation in processes and products, together with sustainability linked to new practices.*

The conference proceeded to the following session, during which the project partners presented their action plans, and the work done during the project:

- Emanuela Bossi, Lead Partner - Umbria Regional Government
- Alexandra Sîrbu, Regional Development Agency South-West Oltenia
- Pia Kattelus, Sanna Inkeri, Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia
- Regina Santos, CTCV – Centro Tecnológico da Cerâmica e Vidro
- Alexandra Beaudrouet, Pôle Européen de la Céramique
- Giuseppe Olmeti and Oriol Calvo EGTC AEUCC

After a brief coffee break and networking session in the frame of the Ceramic Corners, the event moved to the round table moderated by Regional Deputy Fioroni: Ceramics in Europe, conversations with Members of the European Parliament, Representatives of Institutions and Experts.

During this session, policymakers and technical experts discussed key trends and topics shaping the European Ceramic sector.

Elisabetta Gualmini (member of the European Parliament and President of the European Parliament Ceramic Forum) participated online and introduced four main policy issues: 1. to accompany the ecological transition with fair compensations; 2. The importance to protect European ceramics from external competition; 3. To provide aids for the energy crisis; 4. To tackle the food contact materials issue. She

also called for greater collaboration, in particularly in the areas of innovation and sustainability, between the industrial and artisanal sectors of the ceramics industry.

Camilla Laureti (Member of the European Parliament) stated the importance of cohesion and modernization, as CLAY creates an opportunity to activate European dynamics fostering cooperation between regions, universities, and companies.

Fabio Donato (Scientific Counsellor Italian Permanent Representation) remarked that innovation should touch non only the deep tech sector, but also the ceramic sector, education, agriculture, and others.

Susanna Ceccardi (Member of the European Parliament) quoted a recent speech made by Ursula Von der Leyen about the model resilience of an Italian business in Modena during the energy crisis.

Nicola Procaccini (Member of the European Parliament) stressed out the importance of internationalization, stating that thanks to the CLAY project, Umbria Region and Italy itself had the chance to show their most beautiful products.

Leonardo Mosca (Cerame-Unie Trade Policy Manager) stated the importance of creating synergies among the nine subsectors of the ceramic in Europe, for instance about food contact materials, an increasingly important topic discussed among ceramic producers.

Guillem Cumella (Ceramist of Ceramica Cumella and innovator in ceramics applied in Architecture) intervened online giving to the audience practical examples of innovation and aesthetics in ceramics, sharing the portfolio of Ceramica Cumella, including architectural works all over Europe.

Nicola Danti (Member of the European Parliament) could not be present in person and sent a video, stressing out the importance of a geographical indication for non-agricultural products.

Massimo Vittori (Managing Director of “oriGin” Organization for an International Geographical Indication Network) suggested the possibility of a network of associations of producers in order to protect the ceramic sector at European level.

After a networking lunch the conference continued with a round table of the CLAY project partners, moderated by Irene Pettinelli (Resolvo, Technical assistance to the CLAY Lead Partner), in which the partners discussed how CLAY project has contributed to boost innovation in their territories.

The partners declared that, thanks to CLAY, they have become more aware of the possibility to indirectly support companies (with innovative policies); they shared the

importance and the success of the sharing of good practices and study visits (to understand innovation in other territories); they stated that it is clearer how to support the Cultural and Creative Industry in general, they have learnt what the issues are in their regions, supported the networking of the ceramic businesses and stakeholder groups; they understand better the importance to reach out to and support artisans and artists who in the majority of case own micro-businesses.

The event ended in the afternoon, with the Lead Partner thanking the numerous participants, online and offline: more than 40 in person and 19 online.

The CLAY project will continue its journey to officially end on the 31st of May 2023.

More on CLAY project

CLAY aims at supporting the ceramic sector by prioritising new technologies, strengthening brands and developing new services to maintain competitive advantage and face the challenge of globalisation. The interregional exchange will help CLAY partners to **improve regional programmes and policy instruments** that can strengthen tradition and boost innovation in the artistic ceramic sector.

The CLAY project gathers **5 regions** which have both important ceramics traditions and innovative small and medium enterprises and uses interregional exchange to identify solutions to the challenge of matching tradition and innovation, by improving regional programmes for innovation.

The CLAY project is implemented by **6 partners**:

- Regione Umbria / Regional Government of Umbria (Lead Partner - Italy);
- AEuCC - Agrupaciòn Europea de Cooperaciòn Territorial Ciudades de la Ceramica, AECT limitada / European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation Cities of Ceramic, EGTC with limited liability (Advisory Partner, legally based in Spain, with headquarters in Italy);
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Instagram | www.instagram.com/clayeurope/

Youtube | <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjqhhDmo5HmXfnI9a-Bd4RA>

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