



# PROJECT FACTSHEET

New EU Member States Division January 2019

Swiss Agency for Development  
and Cooperation SDC

## FUNDING AND SUPPORT PROGRAMME FOR CROATIAN SMES SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL R&D COOPERATION IN CROATIA



The founder and managing director of lighting company REFLECTA, Hine Alex Vrtačnik, presents his Swiss-backed lighting project to the public. © SDC

Croatia ranks above average in terms of investment in new technologies compared to other EU member states but lags behind in the development of new products. Innovation is a key driver of economic development and therefore important to a country with a high unemployment rate. Switzerland is therefore contributing CHF 1 million to support Croatia's Eurostars programme. This programme promotes international R&D cooperation between Croatian SMEs and European partners.

The Eurostars programme comes under the auspices of the research initiative EUREKA, which involves over 40 countries and the European Commission. The programme promotes transnational cooperation and makes businesses more competitive by facilitating access to new partnerships and funding. Successful applicants can use the funding to develop innovative products, processes and services and launch them on the market. These new developments help to improve people's day-to-day lives and also create new jobs.

### TECHNICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR CROATIAN SMES

When submitting Eurostars applications, Croatian SMEs often face difficulties as they do not have sufficient experience in developing projects and making a persuasive business case for their innovations. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), in cooperation with the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI), provides assistance to SMEs to help improve the quality of the applications submitted. Switzerland provides training courses and advice to help up-and-coming Croatian SMEs acquire the necessary skills and expertise. It also helps to establish partnerships between high-potential Croatian and Swiss SMEs.

### SUCCESSFUL PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

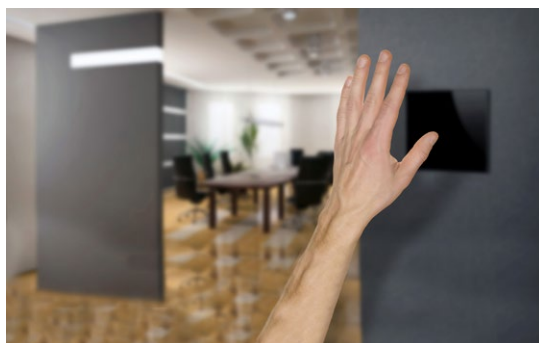
For the period 2017–22 Switzerland intends to attract five Croatian SMEs, which will receive funding for their projects if they meet the Eurostars eligibility criteria. Three years before the end of this period, four Croatian projects, focusing on biotechnology, energy and ICT, have already received Eurostars funding. This demonstrates the success of the Eurostars project in action with the backing of Switzerland's contribution to the enlarged EU.

### EXAMPLE OF A PROJECT: NEW TECHNOLOGY IN LIGHTING CONTROL

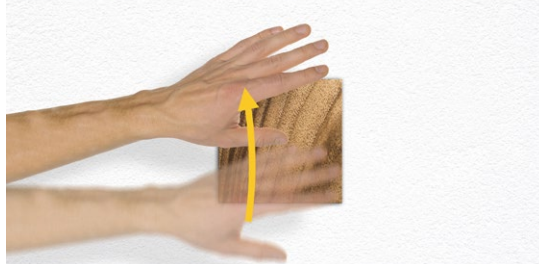
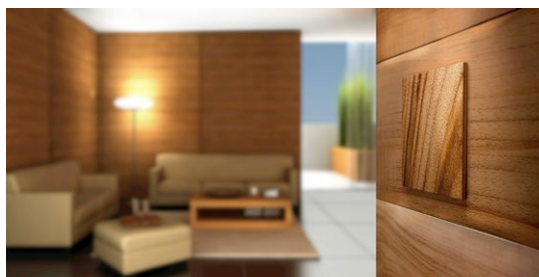
Lighting company REFLECTA is a Croatian SME receiving support from Eurostars. It is working on cutting-edge technology in lighting control. This innovative technology deploys touchless control units, instead of standard light switches, which can be mounted behind furniture or entire walls. These hidden panels can be controlled by hand movements. Sophisticated control system technology and considerable research into individual components are

required in order to realise the project. Large apartment blocks or buildings, such as banks, would potentially benefit from this enhanced technology. A major advantage of this technology, as well as the innovative design, is that it conserves energy. This project demonstrates how a startup's initial project proposals can be elevated to international level through the advice provided by SERI and its Croatian partner agency, HAMAG-BICRO. Eurostars approved the funding for the lighting company in 2018. The ambitious and dedicated team at REFLECTA are planning to launch their product in 2020.

With the touchless gesture recognition sensors, lights and electrical installations can be controlled by way of hand movements. © REFLECTA



This technology offers an innovative design that is easy to use and conserves energy. © REFLECTA



## THE PROJECT IN BRIEF

### TOPIC

Promoting economic growth and improving working conditions

### COUNTRY

Croatia

### PARTNERS

Contracting partner:  
Foreign state institutions (National State Institute North)

Implementing partners:  
Universities and other research institutions in the partner country

### CURRENT PHASE / BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Croatia lags behind other EU member states in the development of new products. This is an indication of the low level of innovation in the corporate sector. Up-and-coming businesses play a key role in regard to unemployment.

### PURPOSE

- Step up the level of international cooperation with Croatian SMEs in regard to R&D innovation.
- Create new jobs and launch innovative products on the market.

### ACTIVITIES

- Promotion of the Eurostars programme
- Organisation of communication and awareness raising events in Switzerland and Croatia
- Identification of high-potential SMEs for a partnership in Croatia and in Switzerland
- Coaching sessions and workshops to train SMEs in project preparation
- Guidance for improving the quality of applications
- Financial support for successful applicants in developing their projects

### TARGET GROUPS

Innovative R&D-intensive SMEs

### COSTS

Swiss contribution: CHF 1 million

### RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Croatian Agency for SMEs, Innovations and Investments, *HAMAG-BICRO*

### DURATION

2017–2022

SWITZERLANDS CONTRIBUTION  
TO THE ENLARGED EU  
January 2019  
[www.erweiterungsbeitrag.admin.ch](http://www.erweiterungsbeitrag.admin.ch)