



E r
i k *er* **Action**

Upgrading the Innovation Capacity of Existing Firms



European Union
European Regional Development Fund

FOREWORD FROM THE REGIONAL MINISTER OF TUSCANY

The conclusion of the ERIK ACTION project comes at a particularly delicate period for the European continent. Recent discussions on the future of our common currency have emerged at a time when an economic crisis has created severe problems in terms of development and employment.

In the face of these problems, regional and national authorities have a responsibility to provide a coordinated response. We need to provide a response that is capable of mobilising available resources and energy in order to safeguard jobs, economic development and innovations. These are the elements that allow our regions, our enterprises and our economies to face up to the challenges of globalisation and, therefore, to reverse the current negative economic climate.



In recent months, the Regione Toscana has worked in this direction, with an anti-crisis package providing support for our workers and for our enterprises. The new Regional Cabinet has confirmed this commitment. Among President Rossi's decisions, one important choice has been to unify the two funds that can finance human capital (ESF) and enterprises (ERDF), within one single Regional Ministry for Production, Employment and Training. This choice will allow us to support workers right up to the phase of innovation support to enterprises, offering funds that contribute to re-launching development.

In addition to actions put in place by individual regions, we must also be capable of looking at what is happening outside of our regional boundaries. We must be able to create relations with other regions, to identify and transfer Good Practices into our daily work, and to construct new Good Practices together. Over recent years Regione Toscana has cooperated successfully in various sectors. In addition to the concrete impact at regional level, these experiences should be used to put pressure on the European Community in order to ensure that the fundamental role of the

regions in economic development is ever further recognised and supported, in terms of legislation, resources and concrete actions.

The ERIK ACTION Project is a concrete demonstration of this commitment to European cooperation and of the ability of regional governments to rise to the challenge of ensuring territorial development through innovative measures. By bringing together 11 regions in a structured cooperation system, the project has allowed us to experiment with and adapt a number of different initiatives.

For example, Regione Toscana will introduce the TIP Coaching experience from the Region of Lower Austria into our working mechanisms. This experience will be funded from the ROP 2007-2013 with a figure of over 1 million euro. In parallel, we have made some of our innovative experiences available to the partnership. These two Good Practices, PRA VINCI and Fabbrica Ethica, were of interest to a number of project partners that have committed to implementing them in their region.

It is important to underline that, through this transfer process, ERIK ACTION will eventually mobilise around €40 million and involve over 1800 SMEs, 200 research centres and 1000 workers. This data already provides us with the sense of the importance of this project in the current climate.

I believe that this work has been enriching for all of us. In this moment of crisis it represents a precise indication of the kind of activities that we should be taking forward. The Regione Toscana is keen to do so and strongly believes that the connections created during this project will continue well into the future.

Gianfranco Simoncini

*Regional Minister for Production, Employment and Training
Regional Government of Tuscany*

FOREWORD FROM THE REGIONAL MINISTER OF LOWER AUSTRIA

Within the ERIK ACTION project, Lower Austria has benefited greatly from exchange of experiences and knowledge in order to find new means of upgrading the innovation capacity of our regional firms.

Interregional cooperation in our region already has a long term tradition. Nearly 15 years ago the regional government initiated development of the Regional Innovation Strategy, which was at the same time the point of departure for experience exchange and profound collaboration with other European regions.

Within ERIK ACTION we have built on this tradition, by moving to the concrete transfer of Good Practices. Indeed, Lower Austria will import a Good Practice from Tuscany named Fabrica Ethica, the regional programme of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

CSR is important for Lower Austria, especially for small and medium enterprises, as it touches on key themes such as human resources; environment and energy efficiency; and value chains with links to the regional fabric. To this end, we are actively supporting activities in this field.

One recent initiative, Entrepreneurial Dialogue, illustrates this commitment. Entrepreneurial Dialogue has been implemented to provide an opportunity for entrepreneurs to discuss current business challenges with politicians. This provides us with important information about necessary fields of action and helps us to evaluate and optimise our economic aid measures. When suggested measures can be undertake easily, we are committed to implementing them immediately. Other more complex issues are incorporated into considerations about our future economic strategy.



We have set our focus not only on aspects of sustainability and responsibility, but also on technology, research & development and education. We believe that a continued dialogue with science and research actors, interregional cooperation between different industry fields and exchange of experiences within the economic sectors, are key elements for sustainable business success.

The Regional Government of Lower Austria creates an optimal environment for investments and offers a wide range of support to enterprises for developing innovative and sustainable projects. This strengthens Lower Austria as a perfect business location and helps us to set the course for our politico-economic future.

However, we were still keen to take the opportunity to learn from the experiences of the different ERIK ACTION regions. This project was an excellent example of interregional collaboration and will have considerable impact on our region: single Good Practices and approaches will be reflected in our evolving economic strategy.

To this end, I hope that that we have the opportunity to build on this success and to collaborate in other interregional projects like ERIK ACTION in the future.

Petra Bohuslav

Regional Minister for Economic Affairs, Tourism and Sport

Regional Government of Lower Austria

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW AND PROJECT RESULTS

Morning session - Key Words from Regional Politicians and Project Partners

THE TWO KEY WORDS EMERGING FROM THE MORNING SESSION OF THE ERIK ACTION FINAL CONFERENCE WERE COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION.

Politicians, project partners and other entities involved in the project made it clear that COLLABORATION offers a win-win situation for regional players: it is an instrument both to share experience and to learn about what happens outside of one's regional territory. This vision of other areas is necessary to broaden views on regional policies. Regions may face similar problems but they have different approaches to solving them. By studying these different approaches, they can gain important inputs for their own initiatives.

Through ERIK ACTION a platform of strong relationships with high added value was created to exchange and build on in depth information. These relationships were both interregional and intraregional, in that the project bridged different worlds in the region, for example bringing together those who manage the money and those who are working on the field. The trust built up through the project has facilitated exchange and transfer, and helped to make innovation happen.

In fact, INNOVATION is the second key word. Increasing innovation within SMEs, upgrading the innovation capacities of firms: these were the project's challenges. But how? One way is to adapt aspects of Good Practices to other regional characteristics and needs. A well structured transfer process can help regions to identify the most effective instrument for implementing innovation policy and to make those instruments more efficient. Innovation does not just concern high tech enterprises. Instead, it covers a whole regional fabric including traditional sectors, universities and all entities involved in increasing learning, productivity and competitiveness.

Indeed, innovation is also necessary for the public sector, which must adapt to today's world by changing organisational and management systems and by improving their existing instruments. Despite this awareness, Europe

continues to fall behind in innovation. Thus, more focus and more commitment are needed.



This extra effort, including investing time and resources in intensive capitalisation projects, is worthwhile, as innovation and collaboration can be a key part of strategies to grow even in times of economic difficulty.

Thematic Sessions: Challenges and Successes of Good Practice Transfer

WITHIN ERIK ACTION A RANGE OF GOOD PRACTICES WERE ANALYSED, AND EVERY PARTNER FOUND AT LEAST 1 INITIATIVE TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN THEIR REGION. THE 4 CONFERENCE THEMATIC SESSIONS WERE DEFINED ON THE BASIS OF THESE GOOD PRACTICES. THEY DEALT WITH THE CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES OF TRANSFER AS WELL AS FUTURE ISSUES.

- **Responsible and Sustainable Solutions**

This session, born from the Fabrica Ethica transfer group, addressed a various key questions including the link between environmental and social responsibility and increased innovation, challenges to promoting CSR in enterprises and how cooperation can overcome them, and the lessons learned from projects such as ERIK ACTION. Furthermore, the session focused on the shift from a local to a global context and the new challenges that this shift brings. In order to improve competitiveness, SMEs must think globally and push sustainability as a driver for innovation, and vice-versa.



Therefore, in the realm of global economy and increased consumer power, harmonisation of CSR standards becomes important, particularly in the fields of: transparency and accountability, in order to be open towards consumers and responsible for ones actions; respect for human rights; maintenance of high standards of ethical behaviour. This includes pursuing and applying social responsibility even in an international context where not all countries respect similar standards of human rights.

In this context, a common strategy should link CSR and innovation to provide real economic and social return. Social responsibility can be a tool for upgrading the innovation capacities of firms, for building new experiences and for developing means of addressing market dynamics.

European interregional cooperation can play a crucial role. It can help SMEs to build long lasting networks, thus boosting their operations through critical mass. It can help to build a common understanding of CSR, thus facilitating the practical implementation of legislation, policies and initiatives.

There are many open questions on CSR for SMEs, and these should continue to be addressed in a coordinated manner, involving public and private actors from all over the European and Global context.

- ***New Member States: Challenges & Opportunities***

This session, based on the positive experience of collaboration between regions from both old and new member states, highlighted the increasing need to develop a culture of innovation and creativity as the core of regional development.

On the one hand, thinking and acting in the field of innovation in Europe means not focusing on large multi-nationals, but on the SMEs that form the basis of our economies. Local and regional governments in new member states must develop

innovation policies that take this into account. Difficulties faced by SMEs must be addressed on a local basis through local actions.

These policies must be supported by concrete strategies. Nowadays, there are many tools to define and build strategies at a regional level. However, these strategies will only succeed if they have support from the institutions that can bring together the business world, academia and public administration. Indeed, these strategies must take into account a whole spectrum of actions, must invest on several levels, and must use creativity and constructive dialogue in order to improve the learning process.

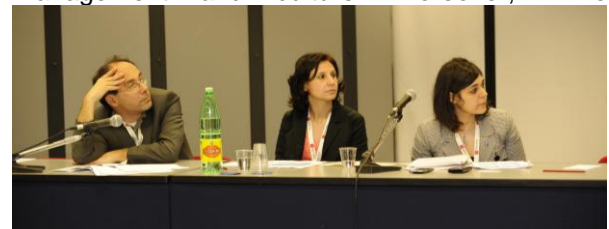
In this framework, there has been a shift in the way of looking at innovation in new member states. It is no longer seen as a mere boost of infrastructures, but now involves a whole idea of culture of innovation, of social capital and of human resources.



- ***Investing in Youth and Human Resources***

The session, based on the Innovation Assistant Good Practice, focused on the need to identify and implement opportunities to bring together SMEs, young graduates and experienced seniors.

SMEs face a number of challenges in this field, including questions of investment and use of human resources, improved innovation management and culture. Moreover, while



young graduates have been identified as possible innovators, with the potential to take SMEs to a new level, they are seldom employed by SMEs. Instead, highly qualified staff tend to be

considered too expensive. This is aggravated by weak links between universities and SMEs.

Therefore, helping companies to overcome these barriers is a both a key focus and a challenge for public authorities, some of whom have committed to providing SMEs with financial support to employ graduates on specific innovation projects. This support can be backed up with coaching on innovation management and monitoring. The Innovation Assistant programme in Lower Austria has had an important impact on developing or improving innovation strategies within companies, on promoting long term collaborations with research institutes and on creating new jobs with interesting career possibilities.

This experience, being transferred into various ERIK ACTION partner regions, is a real Good Practice but there is still room for improving human resource investment. Indeed, in some cases, importing regions have integrated it with another Good Practice Trainee in Time, in order to optimise the possible activities.

Other improvements could include, for example, designing programmes that include experienced seniors in innovation projects. The multiplier effect would be maximised if such programmes were integrated in a holistic regional system, creating a mix between services and financial support. Any such strategy should be developed by public authorities through interaction with SMEs.

- **Investing in Enterprise Cooperation**

In the 21st century's economy working hard is not enough to remain competitive. Companies must learn how to work in a network, to use platforms as a key element to implement an extended enterprise business model. Such platforms can offer a variety of functions, which include partner searches or publications of successful experiences. Regional agencies can play an important role in encouraging collaboration on regional, national and international level.

While recognising the benefits of enterprises cooperation, it is vital to recognise the challenges: lack of awareness of potential benefits among companies; lack of a common agenda on sector specific issues; failure to design and implement targeted and coordinated actions addressing specific needs (e.g. training, marketing strategy to create international profile, quality assurance of products and services, R&D funding). These measures must be supported by improved development policies in the field of innovation.

In this context, the main goal of enterprises cooperation is to develop a common mechanism

capable of integrating capacities and competences in different fields, in order to increase competitiveness.

Interregional cooperation can address these issues by adapting successful GPs from other European regions, thus increasing understanding of the value of cooperation; providing coordination and targeted support for initiatives of common interest; pushing Strategic Marketing Plans for



products and services in new markets and exports; and establishing a common research agenda with universities and research institutes.

- **Final Session – Experiences from the USA, Signatures and Conclusions**

THE FINAL SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE SAW THE SIGNATURE OF THE 11 ERIK ACTION REGIONAL ACTION PLANS. THROUGH THESE PLANS, PROJECT PARTNERS COMMIT TO MAINSTREAMING ASPECTS OF GOOD PRACTICES INTO REGIONAL PROGRAMMES. THIS SIGNATURE REPRESENTS A KEY STEP IN GUARANTEEING THE ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY OF THE WORK CARRIED OUT IN THIS PROJECT.

As an introduction to this session, the audience had the opportunity to learn about what happens in other areas of the world. Cooperation should not stop at the borders of the EU, but should push the boundaries. Thus, Richard Bendis, President of Innovation America, presented some Good Practices from the United States of America.



There are certain similarities between initiatives in the two continents. For example, road maps for key innovation issues developed in the USA are similar to road maps at EU level to define regional innovation strategies. However, there are different approaches in terms of targets, speeds and funding. For example, innovation intermediaries in the USA are usually industry driven and funded by corporate and community foundations. In the EU, incentives generally come from public authorities.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the key points of the innovation paradigm are common to all: cultivation, collaboration, capital, careers and commercialisation. Furthermore, financing is a problem for SMEs everywhere. Yet, there is no one success model, but multiple models with variations, which need to be assimilated and adapted to different local contexts.

The ERIK ACTION project has fully embodied this need for diversity. The European Commission highlights the need for green and integrated growth. ERIK ACTION is a front runner following that approach. Within the project, appropriate tools were provided, regions capitalised on their strengths and decided the best strategy for their own situation and future development.

Overview of Project Results

ERIK ACTION's overall objective was to improve the effectiveness of regional development policies in the field of innovation and the knowledge economy and, specifically, in upgrading the innovation capacity of existing enterprises. This project promotes additional value for firms by

improving regional innovation support services and infrastructure.

The project proved to be of high quality both in the evaluation phase and during the implementation phase. Project partners addressed important and current themes such as:

- Employment of young graduates in innovation projects within SMEs;
- Systems of innovation awareness raising, tutoring and consultancy for SMEs;
- Corporate Social Responsibility;
- Innovation in traditional manufacturing sectors;
- Organisation of specific events to promote triple helix cooperation.

Some indicators to quantify performance include the fact that over 1000 people were involved in project activities, over 30 events were organised and the project was presented at 22 conferences and seminars.

But these indicators are not enough. ERIK ACTION wanted to ensure concrete transfer of a policy or a tool from one region to another, activating ROP resources to support regional economic systems. This objective has also been achieved.

Within the project, each region has developed a Regional Action Plan for this transfer. Together, the 11 Action Plans will mobilise over € 25 million in this programming period alone, will involve over 1800 enterprises, 200 research entities and 1000 workers and professional figures.

This figures are illustrated in the table below.

Partner	Description	Budget (€)	Enterprises
Tuscany Region	<p>The POR CREO 2007-2013 financial plan outlines the following level of funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Line 1.2 Support for the Qualification of the Transfer System to Promote Innovation in Enterprises – for the creation of Innovation Poles - € 4.950.315,78; • Line 1.3b – Support to SMEs for the purchase of Qualified Services – both for the audit and for advanced services. – € 42.395.924,37. <p>Taking into consideration the current status of Line 1.3b and scouting activities for Innovation Poles, the following estimated allocation is proposed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • € 1 M for activities on line 1.2; • € 600.000,00 for activities on line 1.3b. 	1,600,000	350

Partner	Description	Budget (€)	Enterprises
Lower Austria	<p>Parts of Flanders' ParentHood Projects will be implemented in the new Social Network for Innovators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the current programming period a budget of € 300.000 has been allocated. The concept will be implemented within priority axis "Enhancing regional competitiveness through innovation and knowledge economy", action 1.2. "Industry, Innovation and Technology" of the Operational Programme 2007–13 with 50% ERDF co-financing. For 2014-10 a total budget of € 350,000 is foreseen. 	300,000	600
	<p>Tuscany's Fabrica Ethica will be used within companies' CSR / sustainability reports and to define CSR indicators as additional assessment criteria for state aid applications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A budget of € 400.000 has been allocated until 2013 (including a running pilot action on sustainability strategies and reporting), 50% ERDF co-financed. The additional CSR criteria for the selection of applications for regional state aid for investment have a huge potential influence on implementation of the respective programmes. Remaining budget until end of 2013 is around € 5 M, 50% ERDF co-financed. 	400,000	50
Emilia Romagna Region	<p>Innovation Assistant: the total amount of resources coming from the ESF-ROP 2007-2013 will be € 35.000,00. This budget is used to integrate calls for proposals of Measure 3.1-A of the PRRIITT – "Industrial research and pre-competitive development projects".</p>	35,000	6
ADRAL	<p>TIP Innovation Coaching will cost € 340.815,27, for an implementation schedule of 2 years.</p> <p>It will be co-funded by INALENTEJO in the framework of the call for proposals "Support System to Scientific and Technologic Parks".</p> <p>This call for proposals is funded by ERDF - European Regional Development Fund, with a funding rate of 53.1%.</p>	340,815	100
	<p>Campus (FINICIA EIXO 3.1.) will have an allocation of € 325.000, 5% of the total FAME regional fund.</p> <p>This amount is supported 80% by bank institutions and 20% by local councils involved.</p> <p>There are no ERDF funds allocated.</p>	325,000	30

Partner	Description	Budget (€)	Enterprises
IDEA	SIDEUM: € 2 M will be allocated to cluster policy related to the imported SIDEUM Good Practice.	2,000,000	50
Banska Bystrica Self Governing Region	HeliceNet project proposal has an estimated budget for the pilot phase of € 150,000, to be co-financed by the Operational programme Competitiveness and Economic Growth, or alternatively the Operational programme Research and Development.	150,000	16
	Innovation Assistant in Time project proposal has an estimated budget of € 500,000, financed by Operational programme Competitiveness and Economic Growth, measure 1.3 “Support of Innovation Activities in Companies”.	500.000	20
	Innovation in Wood Sector project proposal has an estimated budget of € 500,000 for first pilot period (if successful other additional financial resources will be allocated) to be financed partially by the Operational programme Competitiveness and Economic Growth, measure 1.1 Innovation and Technological Transfers.	500,000	5
Bretagne Innovation	<i>Innovation Assistant:</i> For the transfer process only, meaning expected costs related to the Implementation of the scheme in a pilot phase, the estimated budget is between € 20,000 and € 30,000 for 2010.	30,000	50
Flemish Government Agency for Economy	<i>Fabrica Ethica:</i> The budget used to launch a project call will be the one of objective 2 ERDF, priority 2 Entrepreneurship. At this moment there is a budget of € 13.7 M available for future calls of which a part will be dedicated to CSR.	2,000,000	400
	Innovation Assistant: The budget used to launch the project call for the extension of running projects is from objective 2 of the ERDF Regional Operation Programme 2007-2013, priority 1 Innovation and knowledge economy. For this extension call a budget of € 8 M was reserved. The total cost of the extended LED project will be around € 500,000, of which 40 % ERDF co-funding.	500,000	100
South East Romania Development Agency	Technology Events: Allocated budget is € 5.400 from own funds or from the Joint Operational Programme Romania-Bulgaria, as part of a larger project.	5,400	data not yet available
	SIDEUM: € 5 M is allocated from ROP, priority axis 1 - Support to Sustainable Development of Urban Growth Poles, focusing on: Integrated urban development plans.	5,000,000	50

Partner	Description	Budget (€)	Enterprises
LTC AB	A maximum of € 500.000 from own resources for the pole of excellence.	500,000	data not yet available
	Fabrica Ethica: The initial phase will be funded by involved stakeholders (Regional Councils and the Regional Structural Fund: Estimated project budget: € 2 M over a 3 year project cycle.	2,000,000	data not yet available
	Helice Net: The initial phase will be funded by involved stakeholders (Regional Councils and the Regional-Structural Fund: Approx: € 4 M over 3 years.	4,000,000	data not yet available
University of West Macedonia	Innovation Assistant / Trainee in Time: The total cost of the programme is expected to reach € 1 M.	1,000,000	10
	PRAI VINCI: Funding from the ROP Axis 'Digital Convergence and Entrepreneurship', as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First stage: Development of Cluster Business Plan, € 150 - 200.000,00 • Second stage: Cooperation and R&D, up to € 3-4 M • Third stage (post 2013): Horizontal Actions and funding of specific innovative activities, all of which include aspects of the PRAI VINCI concept, € 20-30 M. 	4,200,000	data not yet available
TOTAL		25,386,215	1,837

Mainstreaming Session

PRESENTATION OF THE ERIK ACTION MAINSTREAMING GUIDE

WHAT IS IT? *A description and analysis of the Transfer Process designed and implemented within ERIK ACTION*

WHO IS IT FOR? *Anyone interested in undertaking transfer activities, within Capitalisation projects or other initiatives*

WHY IS IT USEFUL? *Because ERIK ACTION, along with 5 other projects, was one of the first INTERREG IVC Capitalisation projects, and lessons can be learned from the strengths and weaknesses of the experience.*

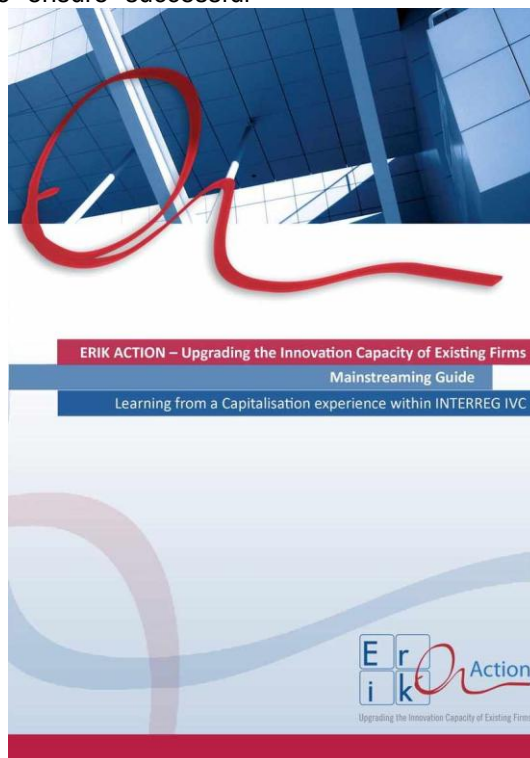
The ERIK ACTION Mainstreaming Guide illustrates the process developed within the ERIK ACTION Project in order to ensure successful transfer of Good Practices from one partner region to another.

Given the novelty of this type of project, the two years of cooperation within ERIK ACTION have represented a steep learning curve, both from the Regional Government of Tuscany as lead partner, and for the project partners. The project has included trial and error; it has been an experiment for all partners involved.

The ERIK ACTION Mainstreaming Guide documents the individual transfer process of a concrete Capitalisation project as a means of providing input and stimulus for further interregional transfer activities at European level. It highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the ERIK ACTION experience. The Guide should motivate European authorities to initiate own interregional transfer activities on regional innovation and economic policy within the framework of a Capitalisation project or other initiatives.

The Mainstreaming Guide presents the actions undertaken to choose Good Practices for export and import, the methodology designed to learn about these Good Practices, the development of the Regional Action Plans by each partner and the

results in terms of proposals for implementation in different partner regions.



This process is illustrated with the ERIK ACTION Film, which includes an overview and comments from project partners, DG REGIO and INTERREG IVC. The film brings the words to life and shows that this transfer process has the potential to bring real improvements to regional policies.

During the Conference, the Mainstreaming Guide and the Film were presented for the first time. Representatives from each partner region, from DG REGIO and from INTERREG IVC were given the chance to expand on their own transfer experience.

The following is a summary of some of the key points emerging from this discussion:

- **Good Practices within the theme of innovation in enterprises vary widely, and are chosen for export and import for different reasons.** However, one of the key elements is transferability: can this Good Practice be easily explained and understood? Can elements of this Good Practices easily be integrated into existing programmes? This was shown by the PRAI VINCI initiative proposed by Tuscany. Operating in the field of Virtual Enterprise / Virtual Organisation, this represented a successful initiative at regional level, but in terms of transfer it suffered from its complexity and experimental nature.

Regarding Good Practices to import, choices may vary depending on what the partner is looking for: Is it a short term solution to an existing initiative that requires improvement or to a current problem? Or is it instead input to a mid to long term strategic perspective, such as CSR in Lower Austria?

- ***Involvement of regional stakeholders is essential to achieving consensus.*** Furthermore, stakeholder involvement can lead to raised awareness; improved planning process and management skills; better knowledge on regional needs; better coordination between national and regional policies and actors. The status of the partner can have an important effect on stakeholder involvement. For example, the Regional Development Agency of South East Romania has the role of intermediary in the region. Thus, contact with regional actors is part of their daily job. The same is true for the University of Western Macedonia, the key innovation player in the region, who was able to bring together a wide range of public and private actors. Partners must use their existing position and relationships to ensure wide scale regional participation;
- ***Different actions proposed within the transfer process, ranging from seminars and workshops to hands on study visits, are all essential for different reasons.*** Transfer workshops allow for in-depth discussion on project management, while bilateral events can show specific regional conditions and go into depth on issues of particular interest for each specific partner. Study visits, on the other hand, allow for real contact with people on the field. This can lead to multilateral transfer on specific themes, in which partners can share experiences from different regions;
- ***Development of the Regional Action Plans can follow a standard template, but each region will have their own regional obstacles to overcome.*** For example, the ERIK ACTION partner from Småland med Öarna actually represents 3 different councils, grouped together as a NUTS2 region. To this end, they were not operating with one Managing Authority, but with numerous. In Emilia Romagna, on the other hand, implementation had to involve two Managing Authorities (ERDF and ESF). In order to deal with such issues, open and transparent dialogue with all involved actors is essential from the project outset;

- ***Implementation of Good Practices into regional programmes will also vary widely from one partner to another.*** However, most partners integrated specific elements of Good Practices into existing programmes, rather than inventing entirely new initiatives. For example, in Andalusia and Western Macedonia, Good Practices were used to complement and consolidate a regional cluster policy. Other regions, such as Emilia Romagna and Tuscany, improved regions calls for proposals. When new initiatives were experimented, partners tended to mitigate against risk by starting with pilot actions, as in Alentejo. Partners that really created totally new initiatives include Banská Bystrica's new cluster in the wood sector, created through collaboration with Western Macedonia and from Småland med Öarna, and the launch of a project call regarding objective 2 ERDF, priority 2 Entrepreneurship in Flanders partly dedicated to CSR.

The ERIK ACTION Mainstreaming Guide and Film are available for consultation on the ERIK ACTION web site at:

www.eriknetwork.net/erikaction

Summary of Recommendations for Transfer

- ✓ Recommendations for the process of identifying the GPs for export - The decision for the choice of the Good Practices for transfer should initially be made on the basis of a consultation phase with all the relevant stakeholders of the region.
- ✓ Recommendations for the process of identifying the GPs for import - Initially the Good Practices that are most closely linked to the region's industrial and economic background should be short listed. A consultation among regional stakeholders should follow, in order to gain feedback on points of interest and possible processes for integrating the GPs.
- ✓ Recommendations for the process of learning about GPs selected for import - The study visits, staff exchanges and the interregional workshops of ERIK ACTION were essential for creating the knowledge base on key aspects of each GP. This was particularly true when regional SMEs, the final beneficiaries of the project, participated directly and created new business links. The success of integrating and customising characteristics of the GPs is dependent on the commitment of the partners exporting the GPs and the active participation of the Managing Authorities.
- ✓ Recommendations for the process of developing the RAP – by developing the RAP template gradually, partners were able to organise ideas on the transfer process and gradually understand necessary steps to design implementation. Furthermore, continuous review during the project offered deeper insight on the areas that needed further elaboration and consideration.
- ✓ Recommendations for implementing the RAP – it is nearly impossible to implement a GP exactly as it was implemented in another region. In accordance with regional stakeholders, they must be adapted to suit regional conditions. This leads to a range of transfer scenarios using different phases and different funding schemes.

EXHIBITION AREA

DURING THE ERIK ACTION FINAL CONFERENCE, THE EXHIBITION AREAS HOSTED 5 ENTITIES, WHO PRESENTED THEIR WORK IN PROMOTING INNOVATION WITHIN SMES. THESE IMPORTANT ACTORS ARE PRESENTED BELOW.

SA-RETE

SA-RETE is a not for profit organisation founded to promote Corporate Social Responsibility and ethical certification among SMEs. SA-RETE covers all the basic concepts of CSR, such as protection of labour rights, decent wages, freedom of association, collective bargaining, health and safety and prohibition of discrimination in the workplace. SA-RETE creates networking opportunities on issues related to ethics and CSR and, at the same time, optimises business processes connected to traceability of the supply chain, external communication and management of environmental risk. Particular attention has been given to the opportunity of sharing CSR experiences coming from public and private bodies. The final goal is not only that of promoting a new way of making business and being an

enterprise, but above all a new way of being actors, consumers and citizens at the same time.



SA-RETE believes that social responsibility and ethics can be levers for development and consolidation of small, medium and large companies, regardless of the sector they work in.

For further information: www.sa-rete.it/

THE ARAN PROJECT

Funded by Tuscan ROP-POR CREO 2007-2013 and by Tuscan PRSE 2007/2010, Support for Pre-Competitive Research in 2008, the ARAN PROJECT promotes research and innovation in the Stone Sector.

The ARAN (Antique-finish Sandstone) project saw production of goods made of Pietra Serena, which belongs to the geological formation of Macigno (hard sandstone).

Research focused on production of stone goods with innovative finishes, characterised by aesthetics comparable to that of the ancient stone. The new process can convey a finish that only accurate manufacturing and time can give to the stone.



The project optimised stone aging processes already in use, and created new ones to merge sporadic and hand-crafted production, in order to reach a semi-industrial level.

The project brought together:

- Frosini Pietre S.r.l, a company that has been extracting and working with stone materials for over twenty five years - www.frosinipietre.it
- Consorzio Interuniversitario per lo Sviluppo dei Sistemi a Grande Interfase (CSGI) - www.csgi.unifi.it
- Efferre S.r.l. - Centro di Ateneo per i Beni Culturali (C.A.Be.C) - www.frsl.it

CONSORZIO 100% ITALIANO



Consorzio 100% Italiano groups over 70 manufacturing firms (50 leather firms, and others from the fashion sectors) and around 3000 employees. Firms have an average of 20-30 employees.

The Consorzio started with the Made in Italy brand, ensuring that the whole supply chain is based in Italy and working the guarantee against counterfeit. They moved from guaranteeing solely where products are made, to guaranteeing how they are made; thus adding value in terms of quality and rights. The Consorzio brings companies together to reduce costs and coordinated industrial relations.

One of the most important achievements of the Consorzio is *I-Place*: a show room conceived as a space with distinctive elements in comparison to traditional exhibition areas. *I-Place* guarantees

new opportunities to companies working in the sector: a spacious building is at their disposal, with a display window for business to business activities and events throughout the year, and a sales point for business to consumers.

For further information:

<http://www.i-place.it/IT/consorzio.aspx>

CTAP

The Technical Stone Centre of Andalusia (CTAP) is a private, not for profit entity formed by 53 public and private bodies. CTAP



facilitates innovation and technological improvements in the natural stone sector.

CTAP promotes development of the stone sector by addressing challenges and fostering new projects and ideas. It supports enterprises in the fields of: sustainable development, quality, design, training, health and safety. CTAP triggers entrepreneurial activity and participation in cooperation and research programmes.

In particular, through its research activities, it introduces new methods, solutions and projects in the sector, assisting companies that need a strategic partner in order to increase market competitiveness, through research, new and more marketable products and improved design and quality.

For further information: <http://www.ctap.es/>

CITMA

The CITMA foundation is the Wood and Furniture Technological Centre of Andalusia, a young centre born to facilitate communication between wood sector companies and the public administration.

Its main objective is to contribute to increased competitiveness in the sector of wood and furniture, through presenting, communicating, informing and helping Andalusian companies in incorporating innovation into their working processes.



CITMA forms a bridge between historical tradition and the changes, challenges and opportunities of the present. Thus, CITMA constitutes a meeting point for the different entrepreneurial requirements,

offering a broader range of development opportunities and, above all, internationalisation.

The technological centre is an everyday guide for companies that want to move from their niche market and acquire a wider perspective on sector possibilities, collaborating in order to be more competitive and develop a range of new products.

For further information: <http://www.citma.org/>

COOPERATING TO INNOVATE

A OPEN COMPETITION FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD

A brand new international photography competition, the **Cooperating to Innovate Photography Competition**, highlighted innovation in our everyday lives, and the means in which innovation can be achieved through cooperation.

The Competition was also split into 4 categories:

1. *Innovation through Responsibility*
2. *Innovation in Convergence Objective Regions*
3. *Innovation and Youth*
4. *Innovation and Enterprises*

OVERALL PRIZE
O grande Aquário
The Great Aquarium®
Carla Pereira Nunes, Portugal



INNOVATION THROUGH RESPONSIBILITY



City Bike®
Gejza Legen
Slovakia

INNOVATION IN CONVERGENCE OBJECTIVE REGIONS



Future Road®
Kuei Yin Chou
France

INNOVATION AND YOUTH



Natural Swing®
Tineke Bout
The Netherlands

INNOVATION AND ENTERPRISES



La Grande Distribuzione - Large Scale Distribution®
Antonella Masi
Italy

RAPIDE IN ACTION



RAPIDE

RAPIDE is a Fast Track project for trans-national cooperation on innovation policies. It was approved on the first call for INTERREG IVC projects, and has cooperated since the beginning with ERIK ACTION as a partner project.

The RAPIDE network brings together European regions committed to the innovation agenda. The network is made up of regions from across the European Union, a mix of old and new Member States. The 13 RAPIDE partners include Regional Development Agencies, Structural Fund Managing Authorities and universities from 12 European regions.

As RAPIDE is a Fast Track project, the Commission has been directly involved throughout and a genuine dialogue has been built between some of the European Commission DGs and regional stakeholders. This unique situation helped the RAPIDE network to identify and capitalise on new ideas and developments. In return, the Commission directly benefits from the testing, implementing and developing of new ideas by the RAPIDE regions.

Three selected actions to be implemented by the RAPIDE network partners are:

- **Pre-Commercial Procurement:** Public procurement is considered a key driver to bring innovation to the market. RAPIDE gives regional innovation a boost by testing new ways of procuring. RAPIDE partners worked together with the EC to include research and innovation in the procurement process. Therefore procurement is becoming part of the innovation system in partner regions and in the EU.
- **Assessment tool for innovative start-ups:** RAPIDE tests innovative tools. Funders normally assess the history of companies, but by definition start-ups do not have a company history. The new RAPIDE tool evaluates the potential of new businesses. The success of this tool will help to close an important gap in the regional funding structure. The potential of this tool is shown by the fact that local banks will take it up to evaluate their small business creditors.
- **Digital Story Telling to bring innovators to finance:** The first access to public funding is always via written application forms. RAPIDE accepts new ways of communication and shows new methodologies of online pitching to bring innovation faster to funding. Initial examples of this experiment will be presented at the RAPIDE final conference on 15th -16th June 2010, in Magdeburg/Germany.



These are very exciting areas of work that RAPIDE partners are testing and delivering through their mainstream programmes.

The RAPIDE partners have proven that they can genuinely go beyond Good Practice as promised at the start of the project. We are hopeful that some of the lessons learnt will help us boost competitiveness in Europe at a time when it's most needed. Innovation is core to the future to our

businesses and our communities.

For more information on the RAPIDE project, please see: www.rapidenetwork.eu

Benjamin D. Kuschner

RAPIDE Project Manager

PROJECT PARTNERS

- **Regional Government of Tuscany, Sector for Attracting Investments**, Italy
- **Lower Austrian Government, Department for Economic Affairs, Tourism and Technology**, Austria
- **Regional Government of Emilia Romagna, Sector for Economic Development**, Italy
- **Alentejo Regional Development Agency (ADRAL)**, Portugal
- **Agency for Innovation and Development of Andalusia (IDEA)**, Spain
- **Banská Bystrica Self Governing Region**, Slovakia
- **Bretagne Innovation**, France
- **Flemish Government - Agency for Economy**, Belgium
- **South-East Regional Development Agency**, Romania
- **LTC AB, representing Småland and the Islands**, Sweden
- **University of West Macedonia, Research Committee**, Greece

PROJECT OBSERVER REGIONS

- **Regional Development Agency of Cantabria (SODERCAN)**, Spain
- **Regional Government of Molise**, Italy
- **Opolskie Centre for Economic Development**, Poland

For further information:

www.eriknetwork.net/erikaction

erikaction@eriknetwork.net

