



Upgrading the Innovation Capacity of Existing Firms

Newsletter March 2009:

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Dear Regions,

As lead partner of the ERIK ACTION project, I am delighted to send you this first project newsletter.

The ERIK ACTION project is committed to limiting its environmental impact and to ensuring socially responsible practice in all its communication activities. To this end we have chosen not to print our newsletters, but instead to send you the electronic version on this USB stick, produced under guarantee of workers rights and certified by CE, RoHS and FCC standards.

ERIK ACTION is an INTERREG IVC Capitalisation Project born from 4 years of networking experience within the ERIK Network. ERIK ACTION builds on a consolidated experience of exchange by promoting concrete transfer of identified good practices into mainstream Structural Funds programmes.

ERIK Action's overall objective is to improve the effectiveness of regional development policies in the field of innovation and the knowledge economy. Specifically, the project aims to upgrade the innovation capacity of existing enterprises by improving regional innovation support services and infrastructure.

The project consortium is composed of the following 11 regions from 10 European countries:

- Regione Toscana (IT) - *Project Coordinator*
- Lower Austria (AT) - *Technical Coordinator*
- Regione Emilia Romagna (IT)
- ADRAL, Development Agency of Alentejo (PT)
- IDEA, Agency for Innovation and Development of Andalusia (ES)
- Banska Bystrica Self Governing Region (SK)
- Bretagne Innovation (FR)
- Flemish Government Agency for Economy (BE)
- South East Romania Development Agency (RO)
- LTC AB, Development Agency Jönköping (SE)
- University of Western Macedonia, Department of Research (EL)

In addition to being an INTERREG IVC Capitalisation project, ERIK Action is supported by the European Commission as a Fast Track project, contributing to the Regions for Economic Change initiative as set out in the European Commission Communication COM(2006)675 of 8 November 2006) and the Presidency Conclusions of the Informal Ministerial meeting of 21 November 2006.

The ERIK ACTION project would be delighted to further the involvement of other regions in project activities in the status of observers. ERIK ACTION Observer Regions can participate in training sessions, good practice transfer groups, study visits and Fast Track Committee meetings. They will also be continuously updated on project initiatives and events and will have access to key project documents. Observer Regions participate in these activities with their own financial and human resources. For all further information on this opportunity, please do not hesitate to contact us as: erikaction@eriknetwork.net

This first newsletter includes an update on the current status of the project with special focuses on the transfer process and the Fast Track work, news of next steps and events, and a description of the good practices being transferred within this project.

I hope that you enjoy reading it and that you will become actively involved in ERIK ACTION activities.

Yours sincerely,

Simone Sorbi

Head of Sector for Innovation and Technology Transfer

Regional Government of Tuscany

Project status at 8 months

ERIK ACTION kicked off on the 7th – 9th of July 2008 in Brussels. The first project meeting saw the participation of all partners, representatives from the INTERRGE IVC Joint Technical Secretariat and the Commission services involved in Fast Track activities. A representative from the region of South West England, the lead partner of another Capitalisation project named RAPIDE, was also invited to present the project and discuss future synergy and cooperation between the two projects.

The meeting served to go over and discuss the project work plan and the role of each partner in the project. Furthermore, the first of 5 project training sessions was held during the kick off meeting and concentrated on Innovation Strategies.

Specific sessions were dedicated to the transfer of good practices. In preparation for the meeting each partner had received a document describing the good practices available for transfer from each region and had made an initial expression of interest. During the kick off meeting, partners were able to gain more detailed information on the good practices in order to make an informed decision on transfer.

The final decision on good practices for transfer was made by the 15th of September. Partners have chosen 16 good practices in all. In some cases the interest is bilateral. In other cases a group of regions is interested in the good practice. Partners participate in transfer activities throughout the project (workshops, study visits, staff exchange, bilateral contact, etc) for the chosen good practices. Following these activities, they will decide whether to transfer the entire good practice or some aspects of it into their regional policy.



RfEC Conference – Workshop 3a Erik Action / Rapide

Following the kick off meeting, each partner developed an individual stakeholder involvement plan. For each good practice to be imported (transferred into the region) and exported (transferred out of the region), partners identified the political and technical stakeholders and provided information on each one's priorities and interests of stakeholder in relation to the selected GP and the activities proposed to involve them in the ERIK ACTION project. These documents will be constantly updated throughout the project.

The second ERIK ACTION meeting was held in Kozani (GR) on the 20th-21st October 2008. During this meeting partners attended a further 2 training sessions on Innovation Finance and Innovation Friendly Environment. They also continued with in-depth exchange on good practices and established a work plan for each of the transfer groups.

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The third ERIK ACTION meeting was held after the Regions for Economic Change Conference in February 2008. During the conference, on the 17th of February, a joint workshop was held with the RAPIDE project. Project leaders wanted to promote an innovative means of presentation, to move away from the standard power point presentations that we have seen so many times before. To this end, aspects of both projects, with particular focus on good practices, were discussed openly between project partners. See the web site for more details: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/networking/home_en.cfm

The project meeting itself included in depth transfer workshops and the 2nd European Commission Fast Track Committee Meeting (*described below*). The meeting was the first time that regional stakeholders were actively involved in the international transfer process. Around 40 stakeholders were successfully involved in animated transfer sessions.

The following dates are confirmed for the next meetings and events:

- **26-27th March 2009 in Tuscany** – Study visit in Livorno related to the good practices Fabrica Ethica and PRAI VINCI (described below) and specific session on developing regional action plans..
- **4-6th May 2009 in Lower Austria** - Steering Committee and 3rd Fast track Committee meetings; Study visit and training session on R&D Funding, Innovation Assistant and TIP Coaching (*described below*)

ERIK ACTION has been presented at a number of events at regional, national and European level, including the INTERREG Seminar at the Open Days in Brussels (October 2008). On this occasion the focus was on why the project was successful and how to build a good capitalisation project. For more information: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/od2008/index.cfm?nmenu=1&sub=200

In the meantime, these first months of project activities have highlighted a number of issues on which the project coordinator and all partners must concentrate if objectives are to be achieved.



Kick off meeting - Welcome from Dirk Ahner, Director General DG Regio

While there has been a wide interest in ERIK ACTION in all partner regions, it is a challenge to turn that interest into effective, active participation. All partners are working hard to ensure an active involvement of economic and political stakeholders from the start of the project. The stakeholder plans described above identify individual ways to do so.

Another challenge is the concrete transfer of the good practices: identifying where in ROPs they can be integrated and what modifications are needed, identifying and mobilising funds. These issues should be addressed in part before the next meeting in February.

For further information, the ERIK ACTION web site is available at: <http://www.eriknetwork.net/erikaction/>

FOCUS ON: The Transfer Process

Within ERIK ACTION, a detailed methodology has been developed to facilitate the transfer of good practices from one region to another. The first step of the methodology concerns the selection of good practices. It began with inter-regional exchange within ERIK Network and the ERIK Database, following which each partner decided on the regional good practices to be offered for transfer. Before the Kick Off meeting all partners received a description of these good practices. During the meeting a Transfer Matching Session allowed partners to hear detailed presentations and to request more details in order to aid on decision on which initiatives were best suited to their region. Partners were supported in their decision through a series of training sessions on key innovation factors in enterprises.

The second step of the methodology is the development of transfer actions. In this phase partners work in close contact in order to prepare the groundwork for transfer. This process is facilitated by transfer workshops for selected good practices, study visits, help desks and staff exchanges.

Following this development phase, each partner will develop an individual regional action plan for transfer. The action plans will include all the necessary actions, key stakeholders and budget and will be ratified by the managing authority of the Regional Operational Programme. Partners have also foreseen a potential fourth phase of the methodology; that of concrete good practice transfer and tool implementation or improvement. This is not an official part of ERIK ACTION, in fact it goes further than what is requested from Capitalisation project. However, it would be welcome as additional step forward for those regions who can already commit to certain transfer activities. These actions would be paid for by the Regional Operational Programmes and not directly by INTERREG IVC.

After 8 months of project activities, all partners find themselves at the second stage of the methodology. Having each identified before 1 and 5 good practices of interest, partners are now working in close contact within their transfer groups in order to collect all the necessary information and to relate it to their specific regional context. Partners are analysing aspects of the good practices which could easily be transferred, they are selecting and contacting the necessary stakeholders and are identifying and troubleshooting any potential obstacles to transfer. In depth transfer workshops are being held at regular intervals. Between meetings, partners can receive information from the transfer help desks set up for each good practice.

So far this means of working has provoked positive reactions, with partners feeling that they are really learning about initiatives in other regions, and how they could be adapted to their specific context.

FOCUS ON: Fast Track Networks

Fast Track networks are Capitalisation Projects which benefit from additional expertise from the European Commission in order to contribute to the Regions for Economic Change initiative (http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/cooperation/interregional/ecochange/index_en.cfm). The Commission currently provides support to 19 Fast Track networks. This support comes largely in the form of technical advice and communication initiatives.

The 1st ERIK ACTION Fast Track Committee was held in Brussels on the 9th of July 2008. The European Commission was represented by DG Regio, DG ENT, DG RTD and DG Info. This meeting provided the opportunity for these DGs to highlight what they are expecting from ERIK ACTION as a Fast Track Network and to give an overview of what are their priority themes at this time. For example:

- **DG REGIO** is particularly interested in promoting synergy between different types of funds (structural, CIP, national / regional). The planned action plans should go some way to addressing this issues. Furthermore, in such projects it is essential not only that each partner contributes to the outcome and the improvement of project actions but also that project activities and processes are open to other regions in Europe;
- **DG RTD** highlights the fact that, until recently, there has not been a specific attention to regional aspects within the framework programme. In FP7 this problem is now being addressed by the programmes Regions of Knowledge and Research Potential (in convergence regions). This should go further and should ensure synergy in order to gain added value from regional actions;
- **DG ENT** is particularly interested in promoting better services and tools for innovation in enterprises, hence the desire to follow the ERIK ACTION project. Much importance is also placed on cluster alliances;
- **DG INFO** highlights the necessity to improve and promote the European Innovation Model. To this end DG INFO supports Living Labs as part of a new way of doing innovation, which brings the user into the process. Overall, there is a lack of uptake of innovative ICT in businesses and public services and a need to raise awareness of the opportunities offered by ICT and the increased competitiveness which can be derived from it. One of the means to achieve better awareness is by integrating ICT into a more holistic approach in public policies.

The 2nd Fast Track Meeting was held on 19th February 2009 and was open to ERIK ACTION Observer Regions. During this meeting Commission representatives and ERIK ACTION partners analysed in details the Stakeholder involvement plans and discussed ways in which the Commission could support the project in ensuring commitment from various stakeholder levels.



Fast Track Committee, representatives from European Commission DGs REGIO, RTD, ENT, INFO.

Good Practices Transfer

All the good practices made available for transfer in the ERIK ACTION project were chosen from information previously inserted in the ERIK Network database, available at: <http://www.eriknetwork.net/database.html>

As described above, partners presented the regional good practices that they wished to share with the others, who were then free to choose those which were most suitable for their own regional context. 16 good practices were selected for transfer. For each good practice a transfer group was formed with a group coordinator. For more information on the activities of specific transfer groups, all interested regions are warmly invited to get in touch with the group coordinator (contact details provided for each).

Good Practice: *Innovation Assistant*

Region: *Lower Austria*

Innovation Assistant is the answer to the necessity to strengthen technological and innovation competencies in regional SMEs, especially for smaller firms and SMEs in rural areas. These target groups suffer from a lack of highly qualified staff due to the long distances from educational organisations, to doubts about contacting R&D institutions and to the perceived less attractive location of the SME. Furthermore, their strategic orientation and professional project management is often underdeveloped.

The idea of the Innovation Assistant is to stimulate SMEs to employ recently graduated staff in order to overcome the above mentioned barriers. The innovation assistant is employed on a specific, earmarked innovation project and is funded for a maximum of 15 months. The support consists: a grant for labour costs; mandatory training and grants for project related training; funding for coaching from an external consultant.



Meeting in Flanders

The action has improved competitiveness in participating SMEs by increasing their own innovation competence, by implementing successful innovation activities and by fostering the exchange/cooperation with other SMEs and education/research organisations. Furthermore, the establishment of innovation assistants is an effective tool to share the risks of R&D projects of SMEs in the early stage when the uncertainty of economic success and thus the risk of failure is at the highest. Innovation assistant has been widely accepted by SMEs and has received positive feedback from participants during and after the pilot projects. This project combines job immediate creation with long term competitiveness of regional SMEs.

The action is based on experiences from other regions (e.g. Upper Austria, Vienna, Carinthia, Schleswig-Holstein) and was tailored to the Lower Austrian requirements according the gathered needs and demands of the regional SMEs. Thus, the feasibility of transferring single parts of the action has already been proven. The GP has no specific technological requirements nor focuses on sectors which would restrict the transfer.

The coordinator of the Innovation Assistant Transfer Group is the University of Western Macedonia. For further information contact:

Paraskevi Giourka

Email: pgiourka@uowm.gr

Tel: +30 24610 56164

Good Practice: *TIP Innovation coaching*

Region: *Lower Austria*

Technology & Innovation (TIP) Innovation coaching supports regional firms in implementing innovation activities which help to bring an idea successfully to market. The target group consists of regional firms, particularly SMEs who have potential to innovate and have shown a particular willingness. The TIP consultants visit regional firms in order to gain an overview of the firm's technical/technological, financial, and organisational situation. The TIP coach then gives advice to the entrepreneur and refers him/her to potential collaboration partners, to appropriate funding schemes or to helpful services and events. Thus, the TIP Innovation Coach acts as a door opener for firms to gain access to the full Lower Austria innovation service portfolio and to services beyond the region.

The programme offers a proactive approach; on-site visits are not only initiated on the firm's request but also by coaches themselves following territorial research. Another important aspect of this initiative is its pronounced collaboration culture. TIP coaches promote strong networking with the regional innovation support system (public and private). The service was established nearly 20 years ago and is a sustainable part of the regional innovation supporting system. According to results of continuous monitoring, the impact of the service is positive and the satisfaction rate is high. The visits often lead to further innovation activities within the firms.

There are no specific constraints to transferring the results and experiences of this good practice to other regions. Innovation Coaching can be applied in regions that are more or less advanced in terms of innovation services. Thanks to the broad approach, there are no specific requirements in terms of regional R&D competencies or specific types of companies to be involved.

The coordinator of the TIP Coaching Transfer group is Bretagne Innovation. For further information contact:

Sylvie Huguet

Email: shuguet@bretagne-innovation.fr

Tel: +33 (0)2 99 67 42 00

Good Practice: Sideum

Region: Småland med öarna

Based on the awareness of a lack of regional focus on R&D related business development structures, the SIDEUM project created a common platform between academia, the public arena and the business sector. In the first project stage a plan was elaborated for the creation of a commonly (academia, business and public sector) owned structure. This plan, based on good practices developed in other parts of Europe (Tampere, Finland and Bavaria, Germany), was sent to the key regional stakeholders, involving around 100 decision makers in dialogue. As a result 8 councils, the County Council, the County Administration, business networks and Växjö university agreed to participate as members of the association, along with some banks and large companies. Within a year the project turned into a company named SIDEUM Innovation AB with public and private stakeholders.



Transfer session

In addition to addressing a real problem of limited cooperation in the region, SIDEUM also links key stakeholders to a common structure through joint ownership. This means that the cost of exiting from an initiative developed within the SIDEUM community is high. This tactic of ensuring stakeholders' commitment by making them responsible (in terms of money and time) has been an interesting and effective experiment.

In general terms the project can be transferred to other regions. The most important aspects to transfer are the preliminary processes of planning and stakeholder involvement. The SIDEUM process can inspire other regions, who must then adapt it to their own individual context.

The coordinator of the SIDEUM Transfer Group is the Development Agency for South East Romania. For further information contact:

Adriana Vaida

Email: adriana.vaida@adrse.ro

Tel: +40 339 401018

Good Practice: Fabrica Ethica - Corporate Social Responsibility

Region: Tuscany

Fabrica Ethica is the Tuscan programme of Corporate Social Responsibility and aims to make the regional economy more competitive by differentiating its production on the basis of material and immaterial quality. Fabrica Ethica hinges on worker and consumer rights and environment sustainability. It encourages an approach that anchors CSR in SME's strategies and management systems.

Operating in a legislative framework of the regional Statute and regional law n.17/2006 on CSR, Fabrica Ethica provides information and tutoring on CSR issues through the web site (www.fabricaethica.it) and specific initiatives such as regional conferences and seminars. It also covers 50% of SA8000 and

environmental certification costs and provides funding for other management system standard certifications. Enterprises certified according SA8000 are also entitled to a 0.50% relief on regional taxes. Furthermore, support is provided to specific projects which focus on spreading CSR in certain industrial sectors.

The project has successfully mobilised a huge number of actors at regional level. These entities have proved their commitment to Fabrica Ethica and to the principles of CSR. Fabrica Ethica has also created the Regional Ethical Commission, a multi-stakeholder forum which proposes and develops CSR initiatives.

The structure of the strategy is simple but effective. It rests on 3 pillars: support for enterprises, information and awareness raising campaigns, dialogue with involved stakeholders. This strategy involves all the necessary players and gives them the tools necessary to participate actively. The strategy also recognises that while studies and reports are important, it is necessary to focus on real practical tools which can be of use to SMEs. Furthermore, the strategy responds to real regional needs, identified through the constant dialogue with the territory. The success of Fabrica Ethica was recognised by being awarded the European Enterprise Award for Responsible Entrepreneurship in 2007.



Regione Toscana presentation

This initiative is highly transferable in terms of participative planning and in-depth territorial research, management and strategic structures and results.

The coordinator of the Fabrica Ethica Transfer Group is Bretagne Innovation. For further information contact:

Francoise Restif

Email: frestif@bretagne-innovation.fr

Tel: +33 02 99 67 42 08

Good Practice: Innovation Cycle - Promoting Science and Technology **Region: Alentejo**

In Portugal, particularly in rural areas, a high level of resistance to cooperation has long been noted among companies and academic institutions. This situation is, however, showing signs of change at a political level, at the level of business associations and indeed among companies and institutions. The more the cooperation levels increase and prove successful, the greater the force for change.

The Innovation Cycle project fits into this context. It created conditions for increased cooperation, especially among companies and institutions with the ability to plan, test and implement innovative solutions. Project activities included the organisation of 8 workshops and 1 final conference, which summed up workshop results. The central theme of these workshops was innovation. Each workshop tackled innovation within identified clusters, such as tourism, education, health care, environment and energy, traditional products (agro-food), information society and entrepreneurship and business innovation.

This project led to the establishment of a diversified regional partnership, which integrates organisations such as local development associations, business associations, educative associations and regional development agency. The regional partnership includes a variety of competences and abilities related to strategic clusters in the region. The project promoted cooperation among the business sector and knowledge and innovation institutions and led to important debates and reflections on the theme of innovation and its place in various social and economic sectors.

This project has greatly supported the regional development process in Alentejo and contributed to the multiplication of innovative initiatives in the most important identified regional clusters. The planning and process used by the Alentejo partnership to implement this project can easily be transferred to other regions, particularly concerning the formation of the partnership and management of activities.

The coordinator of the Innovation Cycle Transfer Group is LTC AB (Region of Småland med Öarna). For further information contact:

Stefan Lind

Email: stefan@ltc.se

Tel: +46 36 30 57 12

Good Practice: Technology Events**Region: Andalusia**

In present day society, where knowledge is the basis of development and innovation must be the engine for economic growth and social development, technology transfer takes on special significance alongside investment in research. Therefore, it is essential to combine efforts to promote and strengthen industry-science relations, in order to achieve better industrial use of large public investments in R&D.

To this end, four important actors in the Andalusian Knowledge System collaborate to organise workshops focusing on Technology Transfer in strategic sectors. These actors are: the Centre for Innovation and Technology Transfer of Andalusia (CITANDALUCÍA), the Agency for Innovation and Development of Andalusia (IDEA), the Technology spaces Network on Andalusia (RETA) and the technology transfer results offices network from the Andalusian Universities (RED OTRIS). The main objectives of these events are to promote innovation through technology cooperation and exploitation of research results and to facilitate collaboration between research groups and companies in Andalusia.

All over Andalusia there is a very important problem about the lack of knowledge and technology transfer between Universities and enterprises and the ignorance on how the research groups were able to solve industrial problems and generate competitive solutions for them. Thus, the technology events provide these research groups and companies with the opportunity to meet each other in a facilitative environment.

Each year since 2006, technology events divided into different sectors have been organised. After these meetings an in-depth follow up process has been created to provide support to those companies that did not find the right solution for their requests.

The coordinator of the Technology Events Transfer Group is SERDA (RO). For further information contact:

Adriana Vaida

Email: adriana.vaida@adrse.ro

Tel: +40 339 401018

Good Practice: R&D Funding Scheme**Region: Lower Austria**

The R&D Funding Scheme aims to increase innovation and R&D activities in Lower Austrian firms (SMEs and large firms) and, thus, their international competitiveness and profitability. The scheme belongs to Regional Structural Funds Operational Programme of Lower Austria and has been part of mainstream regional innovation/R&D policy since 1979.

The funding scheme provides financial support for concrete research and development projects covering basic research, industrial research and experimental development. The funding scheme is not focused solely on high technology. Instead, it not only supports technology related R&D activities but also feasibility studies and process related / organisational activities in order to promote innovation in its broadest sense. This helps to broaden regional firms' understanding for innovation and to foster their own competitiveness.

The R&D/Innovation funding scheme is accompanied by a well-established monitoring and evaluation system covering assessment/approval of the proposal, in-process monitoring, evaluation/impact assessment at the project end linked to the last payment. Impact monitoring activities two to three years after the project end are in preparation. This comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system enables the identification of gaps/barriers of the funded projects at an early stage allowing further advisory support, rework of project schedule and/or involvement of additional partners with the aim to overcome the identified problems. The monitoring system is contributing to an effective and efficient use of public money for innovation support.

The coordinator of the R&D Funding Scheme Transfer Group is Emilia Romagna. For further info contact:

Elisabetta Maini

Email: emaini@regione.emilia-romagna.it

Tel: +39 051 639 6551

Good Practice: Parenthood Projects**Region: Flanders**

Parenthood Projects promotes professional skill development among SME managers by organising learning networks by and for entrepreneurs. Training sessions are held on a day to day business operating level. In addition to capacity building through training activities, Parenthood Projects creates vital network opportunities. Groups meet on a monthly basis over a 1 or 2 year period.

The Parenthood project approach is based on the following principles:

- Owner-manager focus: training sessions focus on entrepreneurs who are company owners or managers;
- Network model: a local or international business network of large and small companies is established;
- Low cost, relevant, accessible;
- Business led: the programme is led by the local business community and responds to the unique circumstances of the local commercial and industrial environment;
- Group development approach: maximising learning effect by capitalising on certain group dynamics;



Parenthood project – Study visit

- Parent Company Support: smaller companies profit from larger companies' experience;
- Sustained involvement: the network meets regularly and guidance is offered between network sessions;
- Locally based: business to business environment in a regional context.

This is a flexible and simple approach that already proved successful in several European Countries, such as Poland, Ireland, Hungary. Earlier studies showed that participants increased their business results after completing a parenthood project cycle.

Many of the created networks are organised on a regional scale and have already demonstrated their capacity to link up with other business networks in other companies.

Companies keep on meeting once they know each other and the knowledge developed continues to positively influence company activities.

The coordinator of the Parenthood Projects Transfer Group is the Flanders. For further information contact:

Philippe Rousseau Email: philippe.rousseau@ewi.vlaanderen.be Tel: + 32 2 553 37 07

Good Practice: Trainee in Time

Region: Småland med öarna

The project Trainee in TIME was established to show that academics with special skills in the fields of technology, economy, IT/computer science and marketing could play a principal role in regional companies. The principal aim was to increase competences in regional SMEs and to create opportunities for university graduates to find employment in the region.

Each trainee works in the company for three weeks at a time and then has a week off to study. The education programme includes individually developed competence packages for each trainee and is developed jointly by LTC (Länsteknikcentrum AB), the trainees and their host companies.

Evaluations carried out on the project show that all involved partners have been very satisfied with the project, both in terms of how it has been implemented and the results achieved. Trainee in TIME has also attracted much attention outside the region. One of the key success factors for the project is that LTC was able to establish and maintain a wide network of companies in the region, a network that is constantly growing.

Trainee in TIME has been carried out twice. During the initial two-year programme 26 companies and 32 trainees participated. Of these, 75% were then employed by their host companies. The second period of the project (2005-2007) engaged 37 companies and 55 trainees. The employment rate for the second stage exceeded 85%. Both unemployed academics and companies in the region has benefited from the project.

The coordinator of Trainee in Time is the Banska Bystrica Self-governing Region. For further information contact:

Veronika Jacekova Email: veronika298@gmail.com Tel: +421 (0) 48 4722 124

Good Practice: *PRAI Virtual Innovation and Cooperative Integration***Region: *Tuscany***

The 2nd Regional Programme of Innovative Actions in Tuscany was an example of innovative organisational methods to promote competitiveness and innovation capacity in the Tuscan economy. PRAI VINCI promoted the Virtual Enterprise / Virtual Organisation as an instrument to create and manage aggregations which serve to strengthen competitiveness of the main industrial systems in the Tuscan economy. The VE /VO was experimented particularly in the field of technological innovation and technology transfer which, in a system of micro-firms such as Tuscany, represents one of the weakest links in the value chain.

The Programme offered four action lines: analysis and design of VE / VO models in specific sectors of the regional industry and dissemination of results; experimentation, through pilot projects, of innovative models of virtual cooperation; modelling, interregional comparison, mainstreaming of the results; animation, monitoring, technical assistance.

Following a call for proposals, 12 pilot projects began in February 2007. These projects brought together a total of 83 actors (90% SME) with funding of 3.620.000 euro (2.892.000 public contribution). PRAI VINCI also experimented and elaborated an innovative methodology of instruments utilised by the Region to support R&D and regional development. These guidelines are available and help to encourage increased awareness on this type of organisational model.

A number of projects have continued with VO/VE activities. Two examples are:

- IDETOS – household furniture and furnishing. Each maintaining their own individual identity, they have added value to their individual projects by forming a “label” together. They have now opened a shop in the centre of Florence in order to market these products.
- e-nautica – nautical service and supply chain. They have developed an ICT platform which represents a common interface for clients. This platform is operational.

The coordinator of the PRAI VINCI Transfer Group is the Development Agency for South East Romania. For further information contact:

Adriana Vaida

Email: adriana.vaida@adrse.ro

Tel: +40 339 401018

Good Practice: *CAMPUS***Region: *Andalusia***

The CAMPUS - Technological Transferability and Business Support initiative was launched in 2004 to promote technology transfer from the knowledge system to the industrial system through the consolidation of technology-based firms.

CAMPUS was initially created as a model for collaboration between IDEA, the Agency for Innovation and Development of Andalusia, and the Andalusian Universities in order to create technology-based firms. Each of these actors has a specific role in the initiative: AGENCIA IDEA works in incentive management, assessment of the technological and economic viability of the project and promotion of the initiative. The Universities work on identifying projects, analysing the scientific and technical relevance of the project, as well as the financial intermediation and monitoring and accompanying the technology-based firm. In fact, the success of CAMPUS can largely be attributed to substantial collaboration between three actors: Universities and collaborating entities, firms and public administration.

Since March 2006, 1 call has been launched each year and a total of 85 projects for consolidation of technology-based firms have been supported. CAMPUS project continues to be launched each year and to receive a positive good acceptance and participation from research groups in all of the universities.

The coordinator of the CAMPUS Transfer Group is ADRAL (Region of Alentejo). For further information contact:

Ana Luisa Brejo

Email: ana.luisa@adral.pt

Telephone: +351 266 769 150

Good Practice: FAME- Support Fund to Micro Companies**Region: Alentejo**

This fund was created to stimulate investment in micro companies in each council in the region of Alentejo in order to improve their products, services, facilities, equipment, and other necessary modifications. The fund also aimed to stir up investment in strategic development areas such as quality, new technologies, environment, security and hygiene.

The fund is applied through a partnership between the regional development agency (ADRAL), the council, the Espírito Santo Bank and companies with headquarters in the respective council. The fund is guaranteed by the council and the Espírito Santo Bank, financing projects in existing companies for up to 100%.

The key innovative features of this programme lies in the fact that the councils have an active role in the process. Having an in-depth knowledge of territory and environment, they can guide the fund to the most needed areas or sectors. The different councils can also adjust the fund to their capabilities. Councils take part in the evaluation of the projects and finance 50% of the eligible amount with no interest. The Espírito Santo Bank also takes part in the evaluation process and finances the remainder of the eligible amount (50%) with a special low interest rate. This fund has reduced bureaucracy, the approval uncertainty and the waiting time is shorter comparing with similar products and the financing is compatible with EU funds.

FAME fills an existing gap in credit access, provides advantageous financial conditions (low interest rate) and is complimentary to the existing national and communitarian financial system. It is also a successful example of a public and private financial fund.

The main success factors of the GP were the acute planning of the fund strategy, the fact that the councils have a deep knowledge of the territory, so they can best guide and advise the promoters of the projects, the financing from the councils with no interest and the low interest rate from the Espírito Santo Bank. Another external factor for the success of this Good Practice is the lack of other non reimbursable funds, thus turning FAME into a very attractive option.

The coordinator of the FAME Transfer Group is Flanders Agency of Economy. For further information contact:

Philippe Rousseau Email: philippe.rousseau@ewi.vlaanderen.be Tel: + 32 2 553 37 07

Good Practice: Industrial Research Projects**Region: Emilia Romagna**

This action forms part of to the Regional Programme for Industrial Research, Innovation and Technological Transfer (PRRITT) in Emilia Romagna. This programmes aims to reinforce the dynamics of the production of the regional system, to contribute to strengthening the regional community by innovation and to develop and spread knowledge.

The action supports research projects aimed at devising new products, productive and organisational processes or services, or at innovating and significantly improving existing products, processes and services. The idea is to promote the evolution of research project results into pre-competitive development plans, projects and prototypes.

Industrial Research Projects:

- contributes to the consolidation of a regional community of knowledge and innovation uniting industry, the research system and the professional world;
- favours development of a regional network;
- promotes closer relations between research and industry;
- promotes industrial research and technological transfer activities.

The coordinator of the Industrial Research Transfer Group is Regione Toscana. For further information contact:

Paolo Frosini Email: paolo.frosini@regione.toscana.it Tel: +39 055 475 605

Good Practice: *Development of Innovation in the Wood Region: Western Macedonia Sector*

Development of Innovation in the Wood Sector (WI.N) focused on improving innovation capacity in the wood sector, a sector which is of great importance to the regional economy. This action promoted innovation in the wood sector in a moment where the industry was static and characterised by limited or no development. During the WI.N project a call for proposals was launched and 5 pilot projects involving SMEs in the wood sector were provided with assistance to develop new products and / or methods.

One particularly innovative feature of the project was the special cycle of 3 informative seminars in which companies were taken away for the weekend to hotels in small villages. In this context everybody had the opportunity to discuss their business and any problems or obstacles which they were facing. Lectures were given by the expert staff of the Department of Wood and Furniture Design and Technology. Reference notes were written to help with the problems which were detected in this area. Those notes were given to the owners of the wood companies.



Meeting in Kozani

Simultaneously, expert scientists visited companies, in order to analyse and address problems in their production line and to identify potential solutions.

WI.N promoted a strong cooperative culture in the field of innovation among the different bodies in the Region of Western Macedonia. These included the university, technological foundations, research centres, development agencies, public administration, SMEs and their chambers etc. The most important of all was the collaboration between the university and the SMEs.

It would be possible to transfer the overall action idea from the beginning (the planning) or to transfer some aspects of the action. One example includes the way that the seminars take place. This flexible mechanism provides the opportunity for everybody to exchange knowledge and find solution to their problems.

The coordinator of the Development of Innovation in the Wood Sector Transfer Group is Banska Bystrica Self-governing Region. For further information contact:

Veronika Jacekova

Email: veronika298@gmail.com

Tel: +421 (0) 48 4722 124

Good Practice: *The Helice Foundation and the heliceNet service*

Region: *Andalusia*

The HeliceNet is a mechanism which allows for production technology and knowledge transfer from OEMs (Eads and Airbus) to SMEs who have a minimum level of experience in engineering. This project boosts the level of innovation in SMEs and aids large companies in relieving support responsibilities and providing an electronic monitoring and control of their own supply chain in an integrated manner. This control covers every aspect of supply chain management, from engineering configuration, to technical data and certified parts suppliers, from logistics to delivery / order management.

The IDEA Agency has promoted this business network since 2003 and, together with Eads and the SMEs, has created a foundation to manage the system. Both Eads and the SMEs pay a fee to the foundation in exchange for services provided and the non profit foundation diverts economic results into activities such as: participating in international events; publications; organising ad hoc training activities for engineers or SME managers; lobby activities to strengthen the cluster.

Nowadays, the European Aerospace Sector is making a huge effort to set up an integrated electronic supply chain platform as the EXOSTAR platform did 5 years ago in the US market. Until now limited progress has been achieved. However, HELICE NETWORK may provide the necessary elements to move forward. It is a pioneer network in Europe and a member of the American enterprise advisory group.

In a nutshell, the project brought an outer region network like Andalusia up to the leading edge of technological breakthroughs when it comes to E-supply chain management. The business model and the creation process could be replicated in other industrial sectors in which an extended enterprise network is applicable.

The coordinator of the The Helice Foundation and the heliceNet service Transfer Group is Banska Bystrica Self-governing Region. For further information contact:

Veronika Jacekova

Email: veronika298@gmail.com

Tel: +421 (0) 48 4722 124

Good Practice: Breton Technological Development Network

Region: Bretagne

The Breton Technological Development Network gathers 100 advisers (technological and generalist) with a mission of public interest. They visit SMEs, identify needs and support them all along the setting up and management of innovative projects. These advisers all come from local and regional structures.

This network represents a knowledge exchange and networking platform for innovation advisers in the region. The objective is to optimise advisers' visits and their response to identified SME needs by ensuring that they are aware of each other's skills and competencies and of existing innovation funding schemes. Members of the RDT meet regularly and participate in training programmes specifically organised for them. An intranet has been developed so that members can register activities and exchange information about visits. This facilitates knowledge codification and exchange of data and experiences.

Each adviser must adhere to a professional code of ethics with the agreement of the organisation in which he/she is employed. He/she therefore commits to taking part in the canvassing effort, to giving the enterprise the best service possible, to transmitting the information necessary for the satisfaction of the needs of the enterprises to the network and to educating himself/herself.

One of the most important things to optimise the regional innovation support system is the quality of relationships between the different actors. The network allows local and regional advisers to exchange information and creates a common identity between them.

This initiative can put its success down to high quality in all areas: quality of leadership, quality of training sessions and quality of the information exchanged.

The coordinator of the Breton Technological Development Network Transfer Group is ADRAL (Region of Alentejo). For further information contact:

Ana Luisa Brejo

Email: ana.luisa@adral.pt

Tel: +351 266 769 150

For further information:

www.eriknetwork.net/erikaction
erikaction@eriknetwork.net

