

ERIK ACTION – Upgrading the Innovation Capacity of Existing Firms

A Capitalisation Project Experience

Outline of Presentation

Background:

- defining the project focus;
 - operational programmes targeted;
 - origin of good practices.

Partnership:

- developing the partnership;
 - involvement of Managing Authorities;
 - other stakeholders involved.

Other advice:

- most important steps in preparing a capitalisation application;
 - learning from ERIK ACTION : challenges and rewards;
 - conclusions and recommendations.

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Defining the Project Focus

Overall Objective: improve regional development policies in innovation and the knowledge economy and, specifically, in upgrading the innovation capacity of existing enterprises

Theme identified from analysis of strengths / needs:

- Addressing a real problem: limited competitiveness and innovation capacity / investment
- Dealing with innovation as a comprehensive concept (not just high tech)
- Focused (original idea too wide to address in 24 months)

Operational Programmes

INTERREG IVC Programme Manual refers to Regional Operational Programmes (ERDF) – Some partners using these programmes

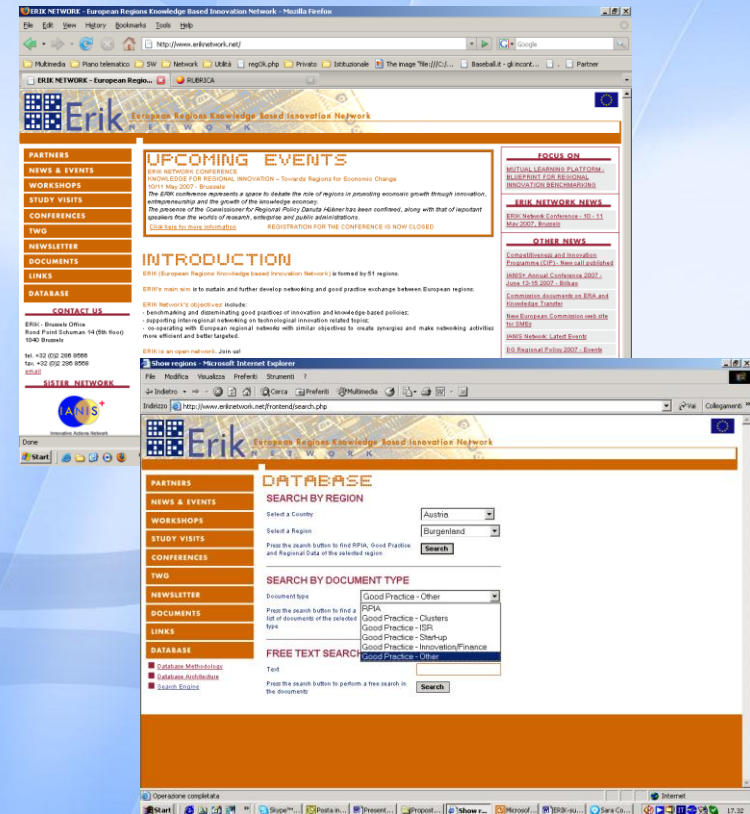
BUT choice of mainstream programme depends on:

- Level of decision making (regional / national);
- role of partner in regional process
- Good practice of interest

...ultimate objective has to be transfer of good practices!

Origins of Good Practices

- Based on ERIK / ERIK+ Network (*European Regions Knowledge Based Innovation Network*):
 - Network involving 50 regions
 - Database with 60 GPs
- New experiences identified (*conferences, other projects...*)
- Period of regional analysis (*discussion on good practices with stakeholders*)



Advice on Choosing Good Practices

- **Simple** – must be user-friendly, easy to understand, potential to implement without large scale changes;
- **General** – theme wide enough that different realities can find aspects of interest; not linked to one specific sector or easily adaptable;
- **Stakeholder involvement** – those transferring the GP (regional experts) must be aware of the commitment required.

Be careful of: Good practices proposed for political reasons /
Transfer seen as opportunity for publicity

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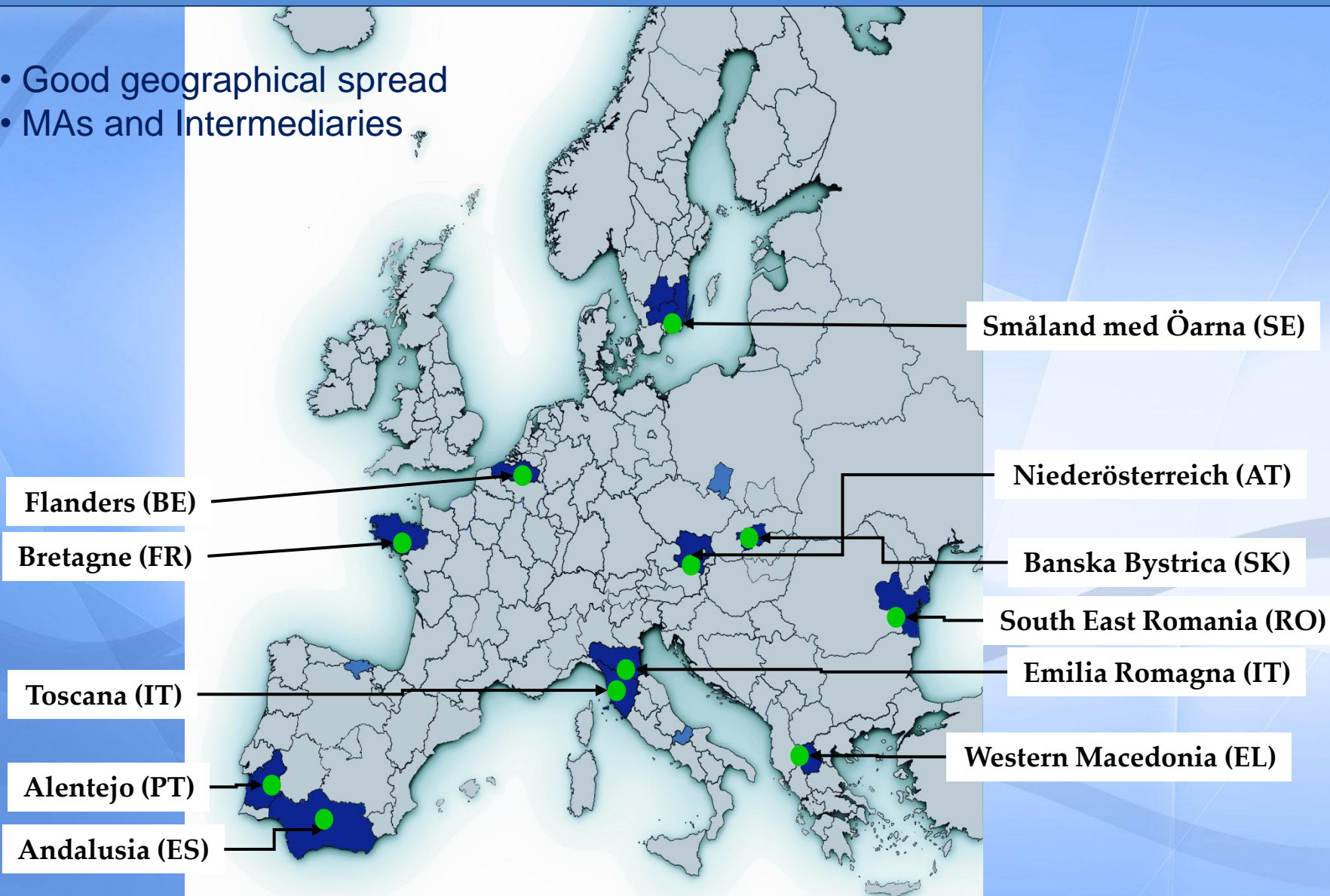
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Project Consortium

11 regions from 10 European countries

- Good geographical spread
- MAs and Intermediaries



Developing the Partnership

- Partners from original network / new partners from previous collaborations
- All identified innovation / project theme as a key priority
- Common needs but varied knowledge, economic strength and governance

Next step:

- Personal contact and meetings to discuss theme / project type

Stakeholders and Managing Authorities

- Stakeholder involvement in preparation phase limited to GP choice (*weakness?*)
- DIRECT involvement of MA, and of specific person in charge of the funding scheme in question is **fundamental** (*meetings at regional and interregional level?*)
- Ascertain that intermediaries really are intermediaries!

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Most Important Steps in Preparing Application

- Intense consultation with all partners to ensure they are aware of Capitalisation requirements;
- Starting on time;
- Making sure that your project is: *a)* really a Capitalisation project, and *b)* something new;
- Doing as much as possible to lay the ground for the project: GP analysis, regional involvement, etc.

Learning from ERIK ACTION Case Studies 1/2

- Distrust among regional stakeholders can hinder transfer - potential conflicts of interest should not be underestimated;
- Transfer process positive – initial exchange and practical study visits essential to understand GPs (e.g. Tuscan decision on Innovation Assistant);
- Organisation of *transfer groups* useful for exchange /organisation;
- Learning process useful when partners are honest about strengths and weaknesses. Can lead to bilateral learning, not just one way transfer (e.g. CSR);

Learning from ERIK ACTION Case Studies 2/2

- Gradual development of RAP and continuous exchange are essential (facilitates consensus building and identifies gaps;
- Clarification of what is the RAP is essential (e.g. Confusion about legal status during the project)
- Strong leadership (lead partner /component coordinators) needed but...
- the more partnership involvement, the greater the understanding – Partner initiative (e.g. Bilateral exchanges) should be encouraged;
- Divide project management from content related actions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Why ERIK Action was successful:

- Preparation (early and partner contribution)
- Full understanding of programme / capitalisation projects
- Careful choice of partners

Critical points to watch out for:

- Extensive stakeholder participation needed at all stages
- Partner commitment and understanding
- Suitable good practices
- Open dialogue on TRANSFER from project outset

Thank you for your attention

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