

ERIK ACTION Project:

the experience of the

EMILIA-ROMAGNA Region

in the transfer process of the

Innovation Assistant Good Practice

May 2010

Key objectives of the regional strategy

- ✓ to address existing productive systems towards **innovation and research**
- ✓ to promote the development of new productive systems based on **higher knowledge intensity**
- ✓ to expand and enforce the regional **“knowledge community”**
- ✓ to strengthen the **collaboration** between **industry and research** systems
- ✓ to set up a **regional network** of industrial research and technology transfer structures

Reasons for choosing the “Innovation Assistant” Good Practice

The "**Innovation Assistant**" Good Practice is the answer to the necessity to strengthen technological and innovation competence in regional SMEs, stimulating them to employ recently graduated personnel.

The Innovation Assistant has to be fully employed, for a concrete innovation project, within a SME, with a permanent employment contract. He/She has to attend a specific post graduated training programme

- ➔ The Innovation Assistant may be **embedded very well** within the Emilia-Romagna regional context
because
- ➔ It is **in line with the current regional strategy** adopted in the fields of research, innovation and human resources
therefore
- ➔ It could be **integrated and enhance** an already existing successful strategy

The transfer process

The Emilia-Romagna Region has tested the Innovation Assistant Good Practice within the last call for proposals (2008) of the **MEASURE 3.1-A - PRRIIT** “Industrial research and pre-competitive development projects”



to improve an already successful strategy bringing **an integration** in the already closed 2008 call for proposals **adding a clause** not expected before

The Measure 3.1-A - PRRIITT

allows the **employment of young researchers** within firms

- especially with **technical-scientific skills**
- with a degree from at maximum 5 years
- they are engaged, within the firm, for the **implementation of a specific research project**, and for its duration

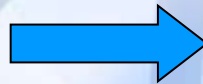
Successful Results already achieved:

- ➔ 2004 and 2005 calls for proposals (**529** projects approved)
811 new young graduates employed in firms
of which **375** with a permanent contract
- ➔ 2008 call for proposals
392 new young graduates foreseen

The integration made

Firms could employ new young researchers with a particular form of labour contract called the **“High Apprenticeship” contract**  a contract with training contents

The **firm** commits itself to guarantee **a vocational training** to the employee, **within the working relationship**, benefiting from skilled young, lower labour costs and tax relief in terms of welfare contributions



The **new young researcher** is engaged for a specific research project by a firm, through a normal labour contract, with standard protections, and he/she **has to attend a University master**, obtaining **a voucher from the Emilia-Romagna Region**, enhancing his/her skills and gaining, at its conclusion, **a high post graduate diploma**



Therefore, we can talk about a **“Senior Innovation Assistant”**

The fruitful contribution from Ferrara for a pilot experiment

The **University of Ferrara**, in collaboration with the **CDS** (Documentation Studies Research Centre), contacted both beneficiary firms of the Measure 3.1-A and 100 other firms

Among **beneficiary firms** of the **Measure 3.1-A**:

- ✓ **50** expressed interest on 3 masters offered by the University of Ferrara
- ✓ **12** committed themselves stipulating an agreement with the University
- ✓ after an interview with potential students, firms draw a **ranking** selecting people to whom they were interested
- ✓ potential students decided to accept or not the offer by the firm

7 students accepted to be recruited by firms through the High Apprenticeship contract, attending masters offered by the University of Ferrara

In particular:

- ➔ **6 students** started to attend (in February 2010) the Master “Science, Technology and Management (MaSTeM) Techniques, Technologies and Material for the Environment”
- ➔ **1 student** started to attend (in March 2010) the Master “Construction and Works Direction”

obtaining **a voucher of Euro 5.000,00** by the Emilia-Romagna Region to cover master costs, financed through resources coming from the 2007-2013 European Social Fund of the Regional Operational Programme (ESF-ROP)

Future steps

- to carry on **consultations** with all four main **regional universities** in order to enrich their 2010/2011 schedule with new courses related to the High Apprenticeship, strictly tailored on firms needs (both master and PhD courses)
- to examine strengths and weaknesses of the measure and design **more flexible schemes** in agreement with Universities
- enrich their 2010/2011 since the 2008 call for proposals of the Measure 3.1-A acts as a pilot test, we want to continue to include the High Apprenticeship contract **in future calls for proposals**, related to the same Measure, as well as in other Measures
- we will persist **encouraging firms** to employ using the High Apprenticeship contract

How can cooperation upgrade the innovation capacity of existing enterprises?

- ↗ through the possibility to examine how similar problems have been treated in other regions
- ↗ by the possibility to see directly how the best practice has been designed and applied and how it works
- ↗ through the possibility of establishing a stable link among the regions or the institutions involved
- ↗ by benchmarking performance and results

What lessons has your region learned from the ERIK ACTION project on the theme of investment in youth and human resources?

The experience of the ERIK ACTION project, by means of matching with other regional experiences, further convinced us about the centrality of young qualified human resources in the development of a knowledge based competitive economy. Knowledge economy is focused on human resources

We learnt that we could even more in this direction, thanks to the good practice individuated, and other actions

Often, for SMEs, there is a cultural problem concerning the involvement of highly qualified young human resources. It must be overcome in order to make them competitive for the future. Much has been done, but much can be done yet

What challenges do you face in the field of investment in youth and human resources and how can interregional/national cooperation help?

The main challenge is to create in general a socioeconomic environment attractive for young qualified personnel in our region

It requires to make SMEs used to employ such human resources, to make all the institutions oriented to create adequate opportunities of professional growth

Emilia-Romagna is constantly monitoring other regional or national successful experiences from which to learn methods and practices to be imported and adapted to the regional context

Thank you
for your attention!

EMILIA-ROMAGNA REGION

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