

ERIK ACTION Mainstreaming Guide

Learning from a Capitalisation Experience within INTERREG IVC



“O grande Aquário - The Great Aquarium” © Carla Pereira Nunes, Évora



Upgrading the Innovation Capacity of Existing Firms

ERIK ACTION – Upgrading the Innovation Capacity of Existing Firms

Mainstreaming Guide

Learning from a Capitalisation Experience within INTERREG IVC

Edited by Regione Toscana, DG Economic Development and Resolvo Srl (www.resolvo.info), with the support of IDEUM (www.ideum.de) and Etruria Innovazione (www.etinnova.it)

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www.eriknetwork.net/erikaction



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Foreword and Introduction

Dear friends,

11 European regions have collaborated intensely over a two year period on one of the first Capitalisation projects to be financed by the INTERREG IVC programme: ERIK ACTION.

Capitalisation projects go beyond traditional network projects, and take exchange of knowledge to a new level. They focus on transferring Good Practices from one region to another. Transfer, in this case, means integrating aspects of successful initiatives into mainstream regional programmes, thus adding value to public programmes.

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 not been perfect, of course. It has included trial and error; it has been an experimentation for all involved. However, we and our partners are satisfied with the results and feel that they can be of real use to others.

To this end, we want to share the strengths and weaknesses of the ERIK ACTION experience with you, in order to help you to reflect on the transfer process that you may be attempting, or considering within the framework of a Capitalisation project or other initiatives. The Mainstreaming Guide documents the transfer process within one Capitalisation project as a means of providing input and stimulus for further transfer activities at European, and indeed extra European level.

The Mainstreaming Guide presents the actions undertaken to choose good practices for export and import, at 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, a copy of which is included at the end of this publication. The film brings the words to life and shows you that this transfer process has the potential to be inspiring and to bring real improvements to regional policies.

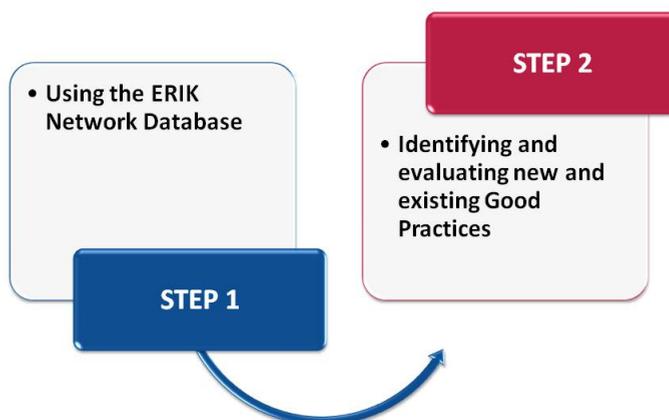
All of us at the Regional Government of Tuscany and all the ERIK ACTION partners hope that this guide will be of use for you and that it can contribute in some small way to promoting ever more efficient and effective cooperation at European level.

*Yours sincerely,
Marco Romagnoli, Director General for Economic Development
Regione Toscana*

Contents

FOREWORD AND INTRODUCTION.....	1
1. GETTING STARTED - IDENTIFYING GOOD PRACTICES	5
2. MAKING THE INITIAL CHOICE OF GOOD PRACTICES FOR TRANSFER.....	11
3. LEARNING ABOUT THE GOOD PRACTICES	17
4. DEVELOPING THE REGIONAL ACTION PLAN	25
5. IMPLEMENTATION AND MAINSTREAMING OF GOOD PRACTICES.....	33
6. CONCLUSIONS AND MOVING FORWARD	41
ANNEXE 1: DESCRIPTION OF ERIK ACTION PARTNER ORGANISATIONS.....	45
ANNEXE 2: DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICES	51
ANNEXE 3: REGIONAL ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE	59

1. Getting Started - Identifying Good Practices



1.1. Identifying Good Practices

“Good Practice: an initiative (...) which has already proved successful and which has the potential to be transferred to a different geographic area. Proved successful is where the Good Practice has already provided tangible and measurable results in achieving a specific objective.” *INTERREG IVC Programme Manual, Page 5*

ERIK ACTION was born from a network of European regions,⁵ that had been running for around 4 years. By the end of the second phase the network was made up of approximately 50 members. One of its objectives was to identify and make available Good Practices born from the Regional Programme of Innovative Actions.⁶ To this end, a total of around 60 Good Practices were collected, analysed and stored in an on-line database. 8 of these were made available for potential transfer within the ERIK ACTION project.

In addition to this collection of Good Practices, ERIK ACTION partners were keen to investigate further initiatives underway in Europe. To this end, new partners were brought in on the basis of experience of collaboration in different projects or of contact made during ERIK Network activities.

⁵ The ERIK Network was funded over 2 phases directly by DG Regional Policy of the European Commission in the framework of the Regional Programme of Innovative Actions

⁶ The ERDF Programme of Innovative Actions were laboratories of ideas for regions to develop innovation policies. During the period 2002-06, the programme funded measures on: knowledge-based regional economies and technological innovation; information society and regional development; regional identity and sustainable development. http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/innovation/index_en.htm



Furthermore, as the Good Practices identified and evaluated during the ERIK Network were collected for the Network purposes, they were not necessarily suitable for the ERIK ACTION project. Therefore, partners and potential partners undertook an analysis at regional level to define whether the Good

Practices were suitable for ERIK ACTION; whether there was interest at regional level to export the initiative; and whether other initiatives had come to light and should be integrated into the new project. These activities were carried out in the phase of preparation of the ERIK ACTION application.

1.2. ERIK Network Database: Using Results of Previous Projects

The ERIK Network database provided an excellent starting point. Not only were a large number of Good Practices available, but they had also been analysed by network partners in a phase of evaluation and peer review.

Many of the criteria on which Good Practices were evaluated were closely in line with the needs of a capitalisation project, as shown in the table below.

Table 1: Indicators from the ERIK Network Database
Availability of results (Good Practice already tested, concrete results available)
Transferability (potential to transfer from one region / sector to another)
Level of innovation / risk (initiative is new /not widely tested elsewhere)
Potential impact on innovation policies
Potential impact on regional economic system
Potential impact on relations (Public Authorities, business, academia)
Potential impact on quality level of services
Effectiveness in relation to expected results (Good Practice achieved objectives)
Economic sustainability (Good Practice is mainstreamed / continued over time)

In Capitalisation projects, Good Practices funded by various regional, national or European sources must be available before the project application is submitted. Indeed, this type of project must: “*already be well aware of existing Good Practices in their field of cooperation (...), must demonstrate that they have good results and transferable tools and approaches.*” (INTERREG IVC Programme Manual, Page 12). Given the short period of time available for a Capitalisation project (24 months), without an initial pool of good practices on which to base the project, it would become difficult to undertake foreseen activities.

With the wisdom of hindsight, the ERIK Network database would be constructed differently. Some Good Practices contain extensive description and analysis. Others are more limited. If it were developed today, the database would be simplified and the calculation of indicators would be undertaken differently. Nevertheless, the database ensured exchange among ERIK Network partners, helped them to identify support schemes with added value and transfer potential for other regions and represented a starting point for ERIK ACTION.

This analysis does not wish to suggest that all Capitalisation projects must have 4 years of networking experience, and an on-line database as their basis. Instead, the lesson to be extracted is that previous experiences can and should be utilised as a solid foundation for transfer activities.

A Good Practice from Western Macedonia in the ERIK Network Database

Innovation in the Wood Sector, exported by **Western Macedonia**, was included in the on-line database. The choice of the Good Practice had been undertaken following in-depth discussion with relevant stakeholders involved throughout the ERIK Network, such as the Regional Development Agency (ANKO) and the Managing Authority of Western Macedonia. On this basis, it was clear that *Innovation in the Wood Sector* matched the INTERREG IVC description of a Good Practice.

1.3. Adapting Previous Results to Project Needs

As stated above, following exchange on the ERIK Network database, the next phase was to widen the pool of Good Practices and ensure their suitability to the ERIK ACTION project. Both original ERIK Network members and new partners undertook a regional analysis in order to ascertain that the most suitable initiatives were made available for potential transfer.

In this phase, partners were free to identify initiatives that they were most interested in exporting. Various qualitative criteria were used, including political support, availability and commitment of technical expertise to support

the transfer of the Good Practice, relevance to the ERIK ACTION theme, and success of the initiative in the region.

Choosing Good Practices on the Basis of Excellent Regional Results

Enterprise Flanders proposed the *ParentHood Projects* initiative, in which large enterprises provide an innovation mentoring service to smaller ones. Between 2000 and 2001, a screening of projects showed that they offered real benefit to participating companies in terms of: professional guidance, attention to strategic thinking and increased knowledge. Over 10 years around 4.600 SMEs participated, a level of demand exceeding funding. This success, and the organisational simplicity of the idea, were the criteria on which the choice of Good Practice were based.

In **Småland and Islands** the decision to propose *Trainee in Time* as a Good Practice was due to the excellent results in supporting entry of highly skilled staff into SMEs. During this programme, around 85% of trainees gained employment at end of the project and companies involved expressed great satisfaction with the results. Within these, some 65% were women and 18 nationalities were represented.

In most cases, the Good Practices selected were right for the project, as demonstrated by the interest shown by partners in later stages. However, in certain cases the lack of specified and measurable criteria was overruled by partners' objective to promote initiatives. Thus, some Good Practices were not suitable for the project (e.g. the action did not match the topic, there was limited evidence of impact, or lack of regional commitment to export the measure). To this end, in future projects it would be advisable to adopt indicators to evaluate the added value of each Good Practice in the context of this particular project and theme. In the case of ERIK ACTION, various indicators from the project database could have been adopted.

In addition to identifying Good Practices, this period of regional analysis was important to ensure regional support for the transfer process. It served to ensure that partners would have the support and capacity to participate actively in an intense period of transfer activities.



The level of stakeholder involvement varied, not only from region to region, but also from one Good Practice to another, depending to some extent on the partner's role in regional decision making. If the partner is a Managing Authority with clear competencies, they can make a decision autonomously or with small scale consultation. If the partner is an intermediate body, consultation must be much wider, to ensure support.

Conditions that facilitate a smooth process of identification include:

- political and financial independence of the partner;
- clear responsibilities regarding overall regional innovation policy and management of single innovation support measures;
- responsibility for Operational Programme at regional level;
- continuous monitoring and evaluation of innovation support measures.

Some partners found that limited stakeholder consultation had negative repercussions in terms of stakeholder involvement in later project stages. At times, there can be a certain lack of trust among regional stakeholders for new proposals, or indeed a lack of flexibility and openness for innovative measures. Only by continued contact and involvement can these reservations be overcome. Therefore, though later transfer activities were not necessarily unsuccessful, they certainly took more effort.

Furthermore, it is important to ensure that stakeholders are aware of the concept of *Capitalisation*. They must be conscious that the level of commitment is higher than in standard cooperation projects. It requires at least 2 years of active involvement, plus additional months in case of actual transfer and implementation, participation at a series of meetings, workshops, visits, staff exchanges, continuous contact and provision of information on request.

Example of Limited Stakeholder Involvement in Tuscany

In **Tuscany** the choice of Good Practices was undertaken through discussion with the Head of Sector for Innovation and with civil servants responsible for implementing the programmes at regional level. Due to time constraints, other region stakeholders were not involved, despite the fact that both programmes proposed involve numerous stakeholders, in advisory committees and sub projects. While these stakeholders were involved in transfer activities at a later stage, involvement at this stage would have promoted ownership and understanding of the process from the outset.

1.4. Choosing how many Good Practices to Transfer

In ERIK ACTION, 16 Good Practices were made available.⁷ The high number of Good Practices, coupled with the large number of partners, required extensive effort in terms of organisation and documentation. Furthermore, active participation requires significant time and resources. It is a challenge to divide allocated resources between such a large number of Good Practices.

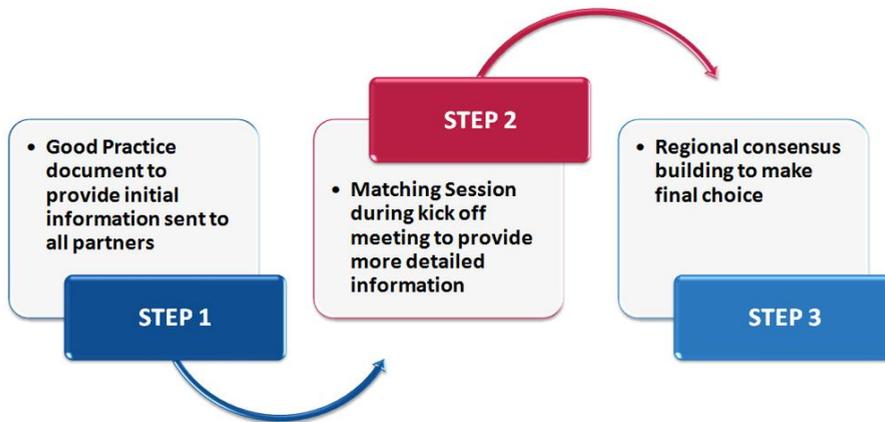
To this end, it could be advisable to limit the number of exported Good Practices to maximum one or two per region. It is not the purpose of capitalisation projects to offer a huge quantity of Good Practices for the transfer pool. Rather, participants should ensure that available Good Practices are high quality, have full support from the exporting region and can demonstrate considerable and sustainable impact. This may mean that some partners in the consortium do not export any Good Practices as the innovation support measures do not match the specified criteria.

1.5. Conclusions to Chapter 1 – Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• With the database and the analysis, a stock of high quality and relevant Good Practices was made available at project application stage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partners are sometimes obliged to propose Good Practices for political reasons, not because they are necessarily the most suitable for this particular project.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All partners were actively involved in choosing Good Practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In some cases, partner organisations could have involved more territorial stakeholders in the choice, ensuring later understanding and commitment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Initial Good Practices (available in database) were analysed according to relevant criteria during ERIK Network activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good Practices identified in second phase were not analysed according to standard criteria, so were not always fully suitable to project needs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ERIK ACTION built on and utilised existing knowledge and experiences strategically.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More time could have been dedicated to a cross analysis between regional realities and Good Practices, to ensure added value for all partners.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partners were aware of Good Practices and of transfer capacity before committing to the project.	

⁷ Descriptions of the Good Practices made available for transfer can be found in Annexe 1.

2. Making the initial Choice of Good Practices for Transfer



2.1. *Selecting Good Practices for import within ERIK ACTION*

As the selection of Good Practices for export had been finalised during preparation of the project application, partners were able to begin the process of studying and selecting the Good Practices to be transferred into their own region right from the project outset.

A document describing Good Practices was prepared and circulated to provide an initial overview. This document allowed partners to initiate analysis of Good Practices of potential interest or otherwise. Such a document should be carefully prepared to ensure that language is clear, level of detail is sufficient and that key information on potential transfer is included.

Subsequently, at the project kick off meeting, partners participated in a total of 16 matching sessions during which the exporting region presented the initiative in greater detail and partners were given the opportunity to clarify certain aspects. This session was appreciated by all project partners, particularly in cases where regional stakeholders involved in implementing the Good Practice were invited to present it.

Partners then undertook an analysis at regional level in order to choose the Good Practices on which they wished to develop their concept for import. The final decision on Good Practices for import was made before the second project meeting. In some cases interest was bilateral. In others, a group of several regions was interested in the Good Practice.

This decision did not oblige partners to transfer all aspects of Good Practices. Instead, partners were interested in participating in activities foreseen throughout the project (described in Chapter 3: Learning about Good Practices), after which they would be free to make an informed decision on whether or not to transfer aspects of the Good Practice into mainstream regional programmes. Indeed, some partners identified Good Practices solely for information exchange. Despite not being the ultimate aim of Capitalisation, it was an important learning experience for a number of regions.

2.2. What makes a Good Practice Transferable?

It became clear that certain Good Practices were of higher interest than others. Some transfer groups involved up to 7 partners, while others had 2. This does not necessarily reflect the quality of the initiative. It provides insight into the level of transferability of certain actions.

Innovation Assistant: Why was it so Popular?

Innovation Assistant encourages SMEs to employ recently graduated staff in order to overcome barriers to innovation. The innovation assistant is employed for a concrete project and funded for maximum 15 months. Support consists of: grant for labour costs; project related training programmes; project monitoring and coaching. The simplicity, yet utility and adaptability of this Good Practice made it the most popular of the project. 6 partners expressed interest in importing aspects of this Good Practice, for the following reasons:

- West Macedonia hoped to transfer training and consultancy to local businesses;
- Bretagne wanted to implement innovation initiatives planned in the Regional Operational Programme;
- Tuscany was interested in transferring consultancy aspects and monitoring processes to finance innovative services in enterprises;
- Emilia Romagna was interested in improving the concept of Interim Management, already being experimented in their region;
- Banská Bystrica wanted to transfer evaluation and training aspects and analyse the role of public authorities in administrating innovation programmes;
- Flanders wished to use the concept to bring stakeholders together in a network.

Considering the Good Practices available for ERIK ACTION, three clear criteria for transferability emerged as:

- *Simplicity* – the Good Practice must be user-friendly and easy to understand; there must be the potential to implement it without making large scale changes to regional programmes and policies;
- *General nature* – the theme must be wide enough to ensure that different realities can find aspects of interest. Therefore, the methodology should not be inherently sector specific;
- *Something new, but not too radical* – the initiative must have a level of originality that means that it is unlikely to exist in many other regions. However, if it is too radical partners may have trouble grasping the concept and integrating it into regional programmes.



Good Practices related to the Regional Innovation Plan in Brittany

Brittany was interested in 5 Good Practices, all directly linked to the main issues identified in the regional Innovation Plan and to political priorities at national level.

Fabrica Ethica was chosen as social innovation is a key issue identified in the framework of Bretagne's regional innovation framework, and environmental and ethical issues are also of high importance. The other Good Practices were in line with Bretagne Innovation's mission to undertake benchmarking activities, formulate recommendations for improved regional innovation support and for providing Breton SMEs with an environment that is conducive to increase their innovative capacities.

In addition to these general characteristics, individual partners utilised the following criteria to decide on Good Practices of interest:

- Existing initiatives in the region that required improvements or renewal;
- Results of monitoring activities in the region that had highlighted serious gaps in the innovation system;
- Measures in regional programmes allowing for integration of new aspects;
- Political priorities in the region and the Member State.

2.3. *Involving Stakeholders in the Selection Process*

Ideally, the decision on Good Practices to be imported should be made on the basis of input from political and technical stakeholders. Their involvement helps build wide-scale support and trust for the initiative. Furthermore, their knowledge helps to ensure that existing regional initiatives are not duplicated and that Good Practices are complimentary to them. The means and intensity of stakeholder involvement at this stage of the project varied widely, due partly to different geographical levels of responsibilities for the ROP and other mainstream programmes.

Example of a Regional Stakeholder Involvement Plan: Alentejo

The regional stakeholder involvement plan for the Good Practice CAMPUS in **Alentejo** showed an interesting mix of political and territorial stakeholders, and a range of activities to involve them. In addition to the ERIK ACTION partner ADRAL, the plan highlighted the importance of involving:

- CCDRA (Alentejo Regional Development and Coordination Commission), Managing Authority of the Regional Operational Programme;
- Evora University, as promoter of existing, related projects in the region;
- IAPMEI (Institute of Support to SMEs and Investment), a national public institute with a branch in Évora, whose mission is to boost development of SMEs;
- NERE (Entrepreneurial Association of Évora Region) and NERBE/AEBAL (Entrepreneurial Association of Baixo Alentejo e Litoral), whose mission is to boost economic development through the creation of ideal conditions for entrepreneurial competitiveness and initiative in their respective territories.

Activities included direct contact, workshops and regional partnerships.

Within ERIK ACTION, a Stakeholder Involvement Plan was developed to structure participation of regional actors in project activities and in implementation of transferred initiatives. Each partner listed political and territorial stakeholders to be involved in exported and imported Good Practices. This plan was developed throughout the project and integrated into the Regional Action Plan (Described in Chapter 4: Developing the Regional Action Plan). It was particularly useful in early project stages to clarify different typologies of regional actors and define activities necessary to involve them.

To promote stakeholder involvement, partners utilised various means, including existing steering committees, face to face interviews and regional meetings. Partners must find the most effective process in their own region.

Active Stakeholder Involvement in Western Macedonia and South East Romania

In **Western Macedonia**, potential Good Practices for transfer were short listed by the project partner, the University of West Macedonia. This was followed by regional consultation between the ROP Managing Authority, the Regional Development Agency, and the Federation of Industries, who offered valuable feedback outlining the points of interest and possible facilitation processes for integrating Good Practices.

SE RDA organised a regional meeting with 23 representatives from public administrations, universities, SMEs, business support organisations and Intermediate Bodies for the 2007–13 Regional Operational Programme and Sectoral Operational Programme. Representatives emphasised the importance of creating partnerships between companies, local administration and universities. Thus, participants agreed that **SIDEUM** and Technology Transfer events were suitable to the regional context.

2.4. *Choosing how many Good Practices to Import*

The number of Good Practices chosen by each ERIK ACTION partner varied from 1 to 4. Those that selected a large number did not necessarily expect to transfer them all, but wished to gain information or leave options open for potential transfer.



On the basis of the ERIK ACTION experience, it becomes clear that there is a balance between too many and too few Good Practices. If a partner chooses 1, they run a risk of not being able to transfer it. During project activities, they may realise that the Good Practice is unsuitable, due to legal

or financial conditions, insufficient commitment or similarities to existing initiatives. Changes at regional level may render transfer technically or politically impossible. Without a Plan B, partners risk failing to achieve their objectives.

However, if a partner chooses many Good Practices, it may be impossible to follow activities consistently. Transfer takes a lot of work, so partners must ensure that they can dedicate staff to following various transfer groups.

Otherwise, they risk spreading themselves too thinly and not gaining real benefit.

Example of Partners that chose 1 Good Practice: Emilia Romagna and Andalusia

During initial months, the **Emilia Romagna** project team and Managing Authorities carefully analysed all Good Practices offered, in order to identify those that could represent added value in the region. As a result of this analysis it became clear that many Good Practices were similar to initiatives already underway in the region. Innovation Assistant was the only Good Practice selected for transfer, as it could be embedded within the regional strategy adopted in the research sector.

Andalusia selected SIDEUM as it was in line with the core of the Regional Policy for Innovation and Technological Development, which focuses on Clusters Development. In a first selection, two options of interest were analysed: Fabrica Ethica and Sideum. However, Fabrica Ethica was ruled out due to lack of regional commitment. SIDEUM could count on stronger institutional support and commitment. This guarantee from project outset limited the risks associated with transferring one Good Practice only.

Example of Partners that chose multiple Good Practices: Flanders

In addition to exporting 1 good practice, **Flanders** initially chose 4 Good Practices for potential transfer and exchange. They found that active participation in so many transfer activities requires high time investment. Thus, regions should analyse their available resources and make a decision on the number of transfer groups that it is feasible to be involved in.

2.5. Conclusions to Chapter 2 – Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of comprehensive information at a very early stage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited description of some Good Practices. Without being too long, information must be clear and sufficiently detailed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active stakeholder involvement in a number of partner regions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited stakeholder involvement in single regions, which caused some complication in later project stages.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matching session at the ERIK ACTION Kick Off meeting with stakeholders and project partners – good preparation, high quality, detailed information on the Good Practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of in-depth analysis of capacity (in terms of human resources) and allocated budget at partner level, meant that number of Good Practices chosen was not always suitable.

3. Learning about Good Practices



3.1. The ERIK ACTION Transfer Methodology

The transfer methodology developed and tested within ERIK ACTION is seen as a strong point of this project. It is a methodology that can be utilised again, with eventual modifications and improvements.

A transfer group was formed for each Good Practice chosen. One partner was nominated coordinator of the group, with the responsibility for preparing documentation, ensuring deadlines were respected and generally animating the group. Other members provided information and participated actively in transfer events.

Continuous exchange and collaboration were encouraged through the gradual passage from one type of transfer activity to the next, as follows:

- *Help desks* – The process was supported by help desks, organised by the exporting regions, to offer advice, documentation and support for regions intending to transfer, adapt and implement a specific Good Practice. Partners were given the chance to pose open questions remaining after transfer activities. A guaranteed response time of two weeks, significantly accelerated the transfer process;
- *Transfer workshops* – Sessions were organised with presentations from the exporting region or experts on the theme, followed by questions and answers and in-depth discussion. Each transfer group organised between 3 and 5 workshops, sometimes combined with a study visit. These

workshops allowed in-depth and focused discussion on the overall transfer concept or on specific aspects;

- *Study visits* – After learning about the Good Practice through exchange and transfer workshops, partners were offered the chance to see it in action. The structure of events varied, but they generally included introductory presentations from those implementing the Good Practice, visits to companies involved, or participation in related training activities. In some cases, SMEs were directly involved as hosts or participants.

SME Involvement in Transfer Activities: Emilia Romagna

Through transfer activities, regional stakeholders in the region of **Emilia Romagna** had the possibility to interact with other European realities and to discuss potential business collaborations, such as:

- the association UNINDUSTRIA BOLOGNA, who expressed interest in finding out more about TIP Coaching in order to involve regional enterprises;
- stakeholders working in the fields of nanotechnologies and energy efficiency saw the potential for numerous collaboration activities;
- regional stakeholders are considering collaborations that could be helpful in the future setting up and development of Technopoles in the region.

- *Staff exchanges* – staff exchanges were foreseen as events in which an expert from the exporting region visited the importing region, in order to identify how the GP could be adapted to the specific regional context. However, some partners preferred to organise different types of event, either in the importing or exporting region. This included further study visits, participation at related events and wider, multilateral exchange.

3.2. Creation and Running of Transfer Groups

Transfer groups were considered a successful means of exchanging experience and organising transfer activities. The advantages can be summarised as:

- Simplification of organisational aspects when the number of Good Practices and partners is elevated. Without these groups, 11 partners would be excessive for in-depth exchange and discussion. Time and effort required would have gone beyond allocated project resources;
- Chance for in-depth exchange with the exporting region and other regions in the group. Partners could learn about innovation systems in other regions and their plans for transferring Good Practices. In some cases, partners built on ideas of other group members to adapt their own plans;

- Chance for new ideas and collaborations to be developed. Some partners built new project proposals on the basis of transfer group experience, others went into multilateral exchange on the overall theme.

Benefits of a Large Group: Multi-Lateral Learning

In the case of **Fabrica Ethica**, the process of exchange changed from mono-directional (Regione Toscana transferring) to multi-directional, in which partners learned from each other and considered potential for transfer of other CSR initiatives. For example, in Tuscany there is interest in questions of public procurement (experimented in Flanders) and sustainability reporting (developed in Lower Austria). Thus, an extra workshop session on CSR was organised with a view to multiple transfer.

Example of further collaboration: Western Macedonia and Banská Bystrica

The experience of transfer on Innovation in the Wood Sector has created positive synergies and cooperation between the relevant sectors in **Western Macedonia and Banská Bystrica**. The various transfer activities provided the platform for exchange and created necessary business links. To this end, Banská Bystrica and Western Macedonia went on to submit a joint project proposal within 7th Framework Programme on Research Driven Clusters in the Wood Sector and Forestry.

However, some organisational aspects could be improved:

- Coordination of different transfer group activities took a lot of work, particularly when the transfer group coordinator was not very pro-active or when support by group members was weak. Success of the transfer group depends on partner commitment and enthusiasm;
- Attempts to combat the above mentioned obstacles resulted in excessive documentation and a scarce quality of information in some cases. Some documentation is necessary, but the amount should be limited to the essential in order to avoid bureaucratisation of project activities;
- The amount of time available for transfer activities is limited. The project only runs for 2 years, and project meetings cannot generally last more than 2-3 days. Therefore, partners must take responsibility for arranging specific bilateral or even multilateral study and transfer visits;
- Many regional stakeholders, researchers, intermediaries and entrepreneurs were involved in transfer events, but too few of these activities were linked to larger regional events. These kind of events represent important opportunities to link project activities to mainstream regional activities.

Benefits and limits of a small group: Flanders ParentHood Projects

The transfer group for **Flanders** ParentHood Projects had only one importing region, Lower Austria, who had a clear objective for transfer: identification of solutions to a problem with an existing initiative. Stakeholders cooperated to identify solutions. This was made possible by the size of the group with no competing interests.

However, transfer may have benefited from external perspectives from other regions. After gaining very useful and comprehensive information about the Good Practice at the beginning of ERIK ACTION, Lower Austria then concentrated on internal concept development and thus inter-regional interaction slowed down.

3.3. Allowing for variety and for different contexts

While the project can provide the overall methodology for transfer, each Good Practice and partner will have slightly varied requirements. Thus, the process must leave room for individual initiative. For example, some Good Practices require visits to companies to understand potential benefits. Others are more easily explained by contact with participants or by presentations that do not require involvement of many stakeholders.

Added Value of Study Visits: Brittany's Experience with PRAI VINCI

In early project phases, **Brittany** faced difficulties comprehending the concept of *Virtual Enterprise* and *Virtual Organisation* inherent to PRAI VINCI. However, thanks particularly to the study visit organised in Tuscany, Bretagne Innovation and the Regional Council of Brittany were able to understand the initiative fully. They recognised similarities to PRAI VINCI and an existing regional scheme for emerging clusters. With the new information, Brittany did not continue with transferring this Good Practice, but was keen to exchange information with the exporting region.

This became clear with Staff Exchanges. Though initially foreseen for all partners, some found them unnecessary or chose to substitute them with more multilateral exchange activities.

Another example concerns the structure of transfer workshops. In some cases groups involved external speakers, providing context information. Others used internal input or staff directly involved in implementation of the initiative. Event structure was decided largely on the basis of partner requests.

In this sense, help desks were important. The question and answer papers of importing – exporting regions relating to one Good Practice, allowed all group members to gain information on issues of interest that had not been dealt with previously. These papers had several further advantages:

- The importing region has all relevant information in a single document;
- Questions and answers tackle core topics for transfer and allow understanding of regional frameworks;
- Information is provided to all members, thus avoiding repeating questions.

3.4. *Learning about Weaknesses as well as Strengths*

Partners may see this type of project as a chance to publicise certain initiatives, and thus avoid discussing any negative aspects. Being a Capitalisation project, it is essential that exporting regions also present weakness, learning processes and areas for improvement. Importing regions should be made aware of potential pitfalls, and thus helping them to avoid making the same mistakes.

Learning from sharing: the case of Innovation Assistant

The **Lower Austrian Government** initiated Innovation Assistant as a pilot action within the Regional Programme of Innovative Actions. It was then converted into a mainstream funding scheme and subsequently integrated into the Regional Operational Programme 2007-2013.

Through the transfer of Innovation Assistant some obstacles were raised in the importing regions, which Lower Austria had not faced. For example, in several regions grants for staff employment and training are funded by different schemes (European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund). These partners had to find consensus between the two for transfer or amend the concept according.

Furthermore, Lower Austria places no limitation on sectors or technologies being funded, but other partners' programmes focus on strategic technologies or sectors. This could result in low demand for Innovation Assistant. To overcome this, some partners combine Innovation Assistant with the Good Practice *Trainee in Time*, thus opening training to staff in companies in the strategic sectors.

These insights were important for a review of Lower Austria's own innovation policy and an awareness of adequate regional and national conditions.

Therefore, partners should make use of transfer activities to ask as many questions as necessary to be truly in a position to transfer. For their part, exporting regions should be willing to answer questions as honestly as possible.

This kind of exchange can help importing regions to identify aspects of the regional context that might provide obstacles to transfer and exporting regions to make improvement in their own actions.

3.5. *Involving Additional Regions as Observers*

The partnership of ERIK ACTION was keen to involve other European regions in transfer activities. These regions, named Observers, signed an agreement with the coordinator and participated in transfer of the chosen Good Practices. ERIK ACTION attracted 3 observer regions, less than the initial target.

Concerning timing, observers should be involved as soon as possible, as by joining too late it is difficult to become acquainted with the Good Practices because the project is already advanced. However, in initial project months partners have to launch their own activities. Therefore, the best time frame for involving observers is the end of the first or beginning of the second semester.



“Future Road” © Kuei Yin Chou, France

Although the number of observers was low, the quality of collaboration is considerably high. Observers attended two study visits and one staff exchange, and contributed to all related transfer and promotion activities. In some cases, participation has led to further collaboration.

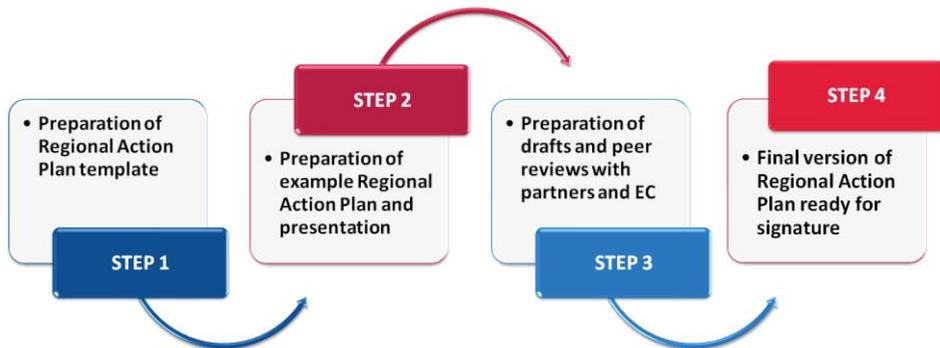
Observer participation leading to real transfer: Lower Austria and Opolskie

In parallel to ERIK ACTION, **Lower Austria and Opolskie** set up a project on transfer and implementation of Innovation Assistant in Opolskie. Within one year the concept for adaptation and implementation was developed and the first pilot projects successfully finished, with presentation of the results at a conference in Opolskie in March 2010. This is a real Good Practice on how the opening of Capitalisation Projects to further regions can initiate inter-regional collaboration and transfer.

3.6. Conclusions to Chapter 3 – Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creation of transfer groups, with a focus on one Good Practice in which all group members are interested.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some transfer group members showed limited creative input or commitment to maintaining transfer activities throughout the project.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gradual approach allowed partners to gain complete understanding of Good Practices and how they fit into regional contexts, and to create real partnerships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• So many Good Practices and transfer activities made it difficult to keep an overview. Attempts to combat this resulted in excessive documentation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Direct involvement of numerous regional stakeholders at project events, including SMEs as final beneficiaries of the project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited initiative taken by partners to undertake bilateral events.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flexibility in transfer activities, allowing partners to adapt activities to their needs and interests and to the Good Practice structure.	

4. Developing the Regional Action Plan



4.1. Preparing the ERIK ACTION Regional Action Plans

“An Action Plan is a strategic document that defines how the Good Practices will actually be implemented under the Operational Programme of each region participating in a Capitalisation Project. (...) In order to ensure its official and binding character, it should be signed by the respective Managing Authority of the Structural Funds mainstream programme.” (INTERREG IVC, Programme Manual, Page 9)

Given that the idea of the Regional Action Plan (RAP) was new to partners, preparation of these documents was initiated as soon as possible in order to ensure that they could be understood and completed successfully. This early start was intended to allow partners to identify potential problems, to understand how to adapt the plan and how to involve the necessary people.

The lead partner and Component 3 coordinator prepared an initial RAP structure template by project month 9. Basing their work on this structure, partners could modify the text according to regional needs. Some changes were made to the template, in order to address problems raised by partners.

A meeting was organised to discuss the procedure for completing RAPs. On this occasion, 4 partners presented first drafts, as examples from which other regions could take inspiration. This was the start of analysing how the Good Practices could be adapted to specific regional contexts.

By project month 11, all partners had prepared drafts and presented them to other regions. A task force composed of the lead partner, component 3 coordinator and European Commission Fast Track Committee members, analysed all RAPs and provided detailed comments and suggestions. Subsequent drafts were presented during peer review committees, where

project partners had the chance to ask questions and comment on the basis of their own experience.

4.2. Gradual Development and Peer Review

The importance of starting RAP development early has been confirmed by partners. While the process of exchange and learning about Good Practices was going well, the task of RAP development was more complicated. Partners had to consider the nature of the Good Practice, the regional (and in some case national) context in terms of decision making, policy, programmes and existing initiatives. They also had to consider available budget and concrete timing.

The general impression was that the RAP structure was useful to address this situation, to organise ideas on transfer and to promote a gradual understanding of how the transfer could be undertaken in reality. In particular, it helped to promote an understanding of the steps necessary to design the future implementation process. In some cases partners used the RAP as a real working paper to present various transfer options: the favoured option and other actions to be implemented if Plan A should fail.



“Natural Swing” © Tineke Bout, Rotterdam

The format allowed more insight into work carried out by different partners and an understanding of each partner’s situation. The three peer review sessions can be seen in the same light. They were helpful both to understand how to use the document and to learn from the experiences of other partners.

Gradual Development of the RAP helping to clarify transfer in Andalusia

In **Andalusia**, the gradual evolution and maturation of the RAP was fundamental. The initial idea for transfer concerned the development of a work methodology between clusters. At first, a pilot project was planned between the 4 important regional clusters: Wood, Stone, Ceramics and Design. The project would have grouped them in a platform to coordinate and stimulate collaboration projects.

However, while preparing the RAP, IDEA clarified these initial objectives and recognised how to improve the plan for adaptation of the SIDEUM Good Practice. The initial idea was modified during RAP development, and transfer now focuses on introducing the concept of Cluster Manager into the Andalusian policy.

The ERIK ACTION RAP was considered a living document that mapped out practical ideas for transfer. As the document was being developed, the intention was to describe both actions undertaken and planned actions. The final version could then be shortened and synthesised to adapt it to the signature by the Managing Authority.

This caused some misunderstandings. In particular, some interpreted it as being politically binding from the outset, and were concerned that certain information could not be included until officially approved by regional decision makers.

Face to face meetings were fundamental to clarify the purpose of the RAP. In this case, time was taken to demonstrate that, during project development, it represented a supporting document, becoming a binding agreement only after signature.

Moreover, some partners found ways of overcoming questions of confidential information, either through regional discussion or by preparing different versions of the RAP: internal versions containing reserved information and external versions to share ideas with partners.

Overcoming the problems of confidentiality: Lower Austria

In order to share various drafts of the RAP with ERIK ACTION partners, **Lower Austria** eliminated the information that was only for the purpose of internal discussion within the region or which indicated an insufficient current status. However, the partner ensured that scenarios and ideas, which could have been useful for other partners, were included in the external document.

Confusion over the use of the RAP could have been reduced if partners had been actively involved in designing the template. A session for template development with a facilitator may have been a better way to design it.

4.3. *Overcoming Problems related to Official Signatures*

The fact that the INTERREG IVC programme requires Capitalisation project partners to sign binding action plans differentiates this typology of project from other standard networking projects. However, some ERIK ACTION partners expressed concern over their ability to ensure that action plans would actually be signed by decision makers. This concern arises from different partner status and responsibility for decision making and management.

Some partners are regional governments, with the Managing Authority directly involved in project activities. Others are intermediate bodies responsible for managing aspects of the Operational Programmes for the regional government. On the other hand, some Member States have centralised control of Operational Programmes. Therefore, the regional level partner was obliged to involve the national government, adding an extra layer of complication in terms of consensus building and time frame. Finally, other partners found themselves in a changing situation in which their role as intermediate body for programme management was diminished due to political changes.



This variety became clear throughout the second half of the project. Discussions among partners and Fast Track members, confirmed that it would be impossible to have a single approach. Different contexts necessitate

different strategies in order to achieve the short term objective of signing the RAP, and the long term objective of implementing Good Practices within Regional Operational Programme or other local, regional or national mainstream programmes. However, this level of flexibility did not mean that partners did not have to sign the RAP. Having received public money to achieve this objective, partners must be committed to doing so.

A double declaration was added after partners expressed concerns. This declaration foresaw a binding commitment from the entity funding implementation and a statement of interest from other key stakeholders.

ERIK ACTION project has brought two further key lessons to the fore:

- Partners in a Capitalisation Project should be aware of its particularities and objectives. Full political commitment is necessary for success. Thus, honest self evaluation is needed before committing to participation;
- Dialogue is a good means of overcoming obstacles to political approval. Decision makers should be informed of activities, invited to events and consulted to ensure that initiatives are coherent with their aspirations.

Continuous dialogue with Decision Makers: SE RDA

In **South East Romania**, the project partner took time to build regional consensus and ensure commitment of key regional actors for the RAP. Representatives of County Councils were involved in the project from the beginning. They participated in, and provided significant input for, relevant project activities and outputs.

The commitment of two important decision makers in the region – the presidents of 2 County Councils – provided legitimacy and support to the project, ensured political backing for the Regional Action Plan and actively contributed to the project implementation.

4.4. How to improve the RAP Template

According to INTERREG IVC (Programme Manual, Page 9), the RAP should include detailed information on: selected Good Practices (e.g. methodologies, projects, processes, techniques); names and roles of regional stakeholders involved in implementation; steps and actions to ensure successful implementation; indicators for implementation (including baseline and target values); details of provisional funds allocated to implement the Action Plan.

The ERIK ACTION RAP Template⁸ followed these considerations and adapted them to the project structure. The template was useful for structuring ideas, and worked well as a basic document. However, the initial template was modified as weaknesses were discovered, as summarised in the table below.

Section	Comments
Official Declaration	A double declaration was added after partners expressed concerns that Managing Authority(ies) would be unable to sign the binding statement. The statement expresses commitment to implementation, without obliging them to undertake actions.
ROP Overview	This section requires a synthetic, targeted explanation that relates directly to the Good Practice(s). A page limit could be

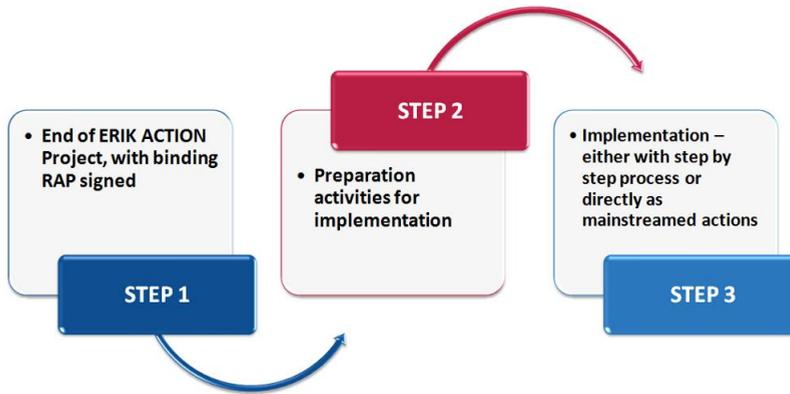
⁸ The RAP Template is available in Annexe 2 of this guide

	<p>established.</p> <p>The section requested an overview of ROP, but as partners identified other sources of funding, they were also included.</p>
Reason for choosing the Good Practice	In some cases, this became a repetition of the section on regional programmes. It could be removed or integrated into section 1, with a description for each Good Practice.
Current Status of Transfer	In an updated version, this could be situated after the section on Implementation, providing readers with an overview of transfer. In a final version, this section would be removed, as it deals with the RAP development process rather than implementation.
Obstacles / problems met, and solutions adopted	This is vital to ensure that problems can be identified and addressed early on. In a final version, this would be removed, as it deals with RAP development process not implementation.
Aspects of interest integrated in regional framework	This was introduced as it became clear that partners would not transfer entire Good Practices, especially those that were particularly complicated. Instead, they chose aspects of interest to their specific context.
Action / adaptation for integration	The more details the better. In first drafts, these sections did not contain many details but as the project went on, discussions at regional level allowed them to be developed into a real plan.
Implementation Schedule	<p>This section was intended as an implementation schedule for transfer after project conclusion. However, as RAP development started early, it was used for activities within project and after.</p> <p>In order to simplify questions of required content, it might be useful to divide this section into Actions undertaken within the project and Implementation after project end. On the other hand, two documents could be prepared from the start: a RAP preparation document and a definitive RAP.</p>
Budget allocation and Resources	As a Capitalisation project, and having committed to making €60 million of mainstream funds (Cohesion / ERDF / ESF) available for GP implementation, this section was essential. However, it causes problems for Managing Authorities, who are not always able to commit to exact figures at this stage.
Expected impact	This section is difficult to complete, but important to allow measurement of results of transfer actions. It is also important for the European Commission to evaluate overall project impact. Partners generally extracted established indicators from existing programmes and added those specific to the Good Practice. Procedures for monitoring indicators were not defined.

4.5. Conclusions to Chapter 4 – Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Common but flexible structure of the RAP template defined early on.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Top down preparation of template impeded understanding of content.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commitment by most partners to continuous dialogue with relative decision makers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Late concerns from partners over legal status of RAP, despite discussion from project outset.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design of creative and flexible implementation options to overcome issues of planning and confidentiality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weak political status of some partners limited ability to react and take risks.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gradual development of RAP, including continuous evaluation and peer reviews, allowed for a flow of ideas and for problems to be addressed at an early stage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Structure mixes RAP development process with implementation. Confusions here could be resolved by using a simplified template, dividing sections, or using 2 documents.

5. Implementation and Mainstreaming of Good Practices



As a capitalisation project, the main aim of the ERIK ACTION project is to ensure the development of a ready to implement Action Plan: partner regions take these Action Plans and put them into reality by implementing them in mainstream programmes following the conclusion of the project. Indeed, the INTERREG IVC programme defines Capitalisation Projects as:

“interregional cooperation projects which focus specifically on the transfer of regional development Good Practices into mainstream EU Structural Funds programmes (i.e. Convergence, Regional Competitiveness and Employment and other European Territorial Cooperation programmes) of the regions participating in the project or represented in the partnership.” (INTERREG IVC Programme Manual, Page 9)

To this end, the RAP (Described in detail in Chapter 4: Developing the Regional Action Plan) was only the first step. It is the immediate outcome of the ERIK ACTION project, but it should lay the basis of work carried out at regional level in the foreseeable future.

5.1. Different proposals for Implementation and Mainstreaming

From the beginning of the project it was clear that Good Practices could not be imported into another region without changes being made to the structure of the action. Instead, specific initiatives need to be adapted to the region’s individual economic, territorial, political, legislative and sociological characteristics. This understanding of the concept of *TRANSFER* is fundamental. Potential partners should be aware that the process is not

entirely dictated by their choice of Good Practice, but that they have room for manoeuvre and creativity.



“City Bike” © Gejza Legen, Kosice

For example, in some cases, following transfer actions and RAP development (described in Chapters 3 and 4 Learning about Good Practices and Developing the Regional Action Plan respectively), ERIK ACTION partners decided to use the Good Practices to modify existing initiatives in the region. In other cases, partners committed to undertaking pilot projects of new actions, or to implementing new activities in a certain sector.

The process of transfer can also follow a multi-step implementation: in a first step partners can run pilot

activities on the concept to gather experiences with the implementation. In a second step the amended Good Practice can be integrated as an inherent part of the Regional Operational Programme or into new policies for the next programming period.

The table below illustrates different strategies for implementation and mainstreaming that will be experimented by the partners of ERIK ACTION:

Partner / Good Practice	Proposal for Implementation and Mainstreaming
Regional Government of Tuscany – TIP Coaching	<p>Aspects of TIP Coaching are being integrated into the first regional call of the ROP 2007-13 on Action 1.2, for the creation of Innovation Poles. Transfer activities are also linked to Action 1.3 on support for innovative investments in enterprises.</p> <p>These actions should strengthen the level of demand for</p>

	<p>qualified services coming from SMEs. Innovation Poles should provide services and promote technology transfer, knowledge exchange, networking and interaction.</p>
<p>Regional Government of Lower Austria - <i>Fabrica Ethica</i></p>	<p>The Lower Austrian Government, in cooperation with the University of Applied Sciences Wiener Neustadt Campus Wieselburg and the Lower Austrian Chamber of Commerce is engaged in a joint initiative with national ministries, called “Success with FAIR responsibility and sustainability reports“ in Lower Austria. This is a joint national and regional level project, with Lower Austria as the pilot region for whole Austria. The results of the transfer process on Fabrica Ethica have been integrated into this project.</p> <p>Subsequent to the finalisation of ERIK ACTION Lower Austria will implement the Regional Action Plan by attracting additional regional SMEs for application of the established code of CSR for SMEs and the guidelines for the SME sustainability reporting. Sustainability reports will be included as an element of the ROP for the period 2014-20.</p>
<p>Regional Government of Emilia Romagna – <i>Innovation Assistant</i></p>	<p>Among the main aspects of interest in Innovation Assistant Good Practice, was the post graduated training programme and the creation of sustainable and higher qualified jobs with their engagement SMEs.</p> <p>For the adaptation of the chosen Good Practice, the partner will implement aspects of the Good Practice into a specific measure of the Regional Programme for Industrial Research, Innovation and Technology Transfer. SMEs would be offered the possibility to employ researchers with a new form of labour contract with aspects of vocational training, called the High Apprenticeship contract.</p>
<p>ADRAL (Regional Development Agency of Alentejo) - <i>CAMPUS</i></p>	<p>The working methodology of the Good Practice was adjusted to Alentejo’s regional characteristics and context. The original CAMPUS Programme is constituted by 5 major steps: 1) Detection, 2) Analysis-advising-processing, 3) Evaluation and constitution of the dossier, 4) Financing and 5) Monitoring.</p> <p>CAMPUS will be integrated into <i>FAME – Support Fund for Micro and Small Companies</i>, a financial instrument managed by ADRAL since 2000, in partnership with a Bank, local councils and the Institute of Support to SMEs and Investment. The new measure, FINICIA EIXO 3.1, will follow the same steps as in Andalusia, with an essential new step of promotion and dissemination added at the beginning of the fund.</p>

<p>IDEA (Regional Innovation Agency of Andalusia) - SIDEUM</p>	<p>Andalusia was already working on cluster models as part of the regional strategy. Therefore, the objective was not to transfer the entire good practice, but to learn about new management tools.</p> <p>Thus, the fundamental contribution of SIDEUM has concerned the definition of the figure of the Cluster Manager in Andalusia, which will constitute the nucleus of implementation and mainstreaming. The action will be implemented through the Operational Programme Andalusia ERDF 2007-2013.</p>
<p>Banská Bystrica Self Government Region – Innovation in the Wood Sector</p>	<p>The Good Practice is focused on improving innovation capacity in the wood sector, a sector of great importance to the regional economy. Banská Bystrica region decided to transfer the overall action idea (management structure, monitoring, products and ideas) in order to create a strong cooperative and innovation culture in the wood sector among all related stakeholders, such as universities, research institutes, public administration and mainly companies.</p> <p>This will be ensured by funding from Operational Programme “Competitiveness and Economic Growth” and a certain annual budget will be allocated to it.</p>
<p>Bretagne Innovation – Innovation Assistant</p>	<p>The Good Practice will be implemented using funds from the ROP, Regional Innovation Framework. A step by step process has been identified to integrate the concept into an initiative named <i>Innov’acteur</i>.</p> <p>In particular, Innovation Assistant will be used to conceive the training dimension of the scheme and the process of recruiting qualified human resources within SMEs. After a preparatory phase and a phase of consultation among regional stakeholders, a pilot action will be launched to test the initiative. The results of this action will form the basis of the permanent action to be implemented.</p>
<p>Flanders Agency for Economy - Fabrica Ethica</p>	<p>The Flemish Government wants to invest in the sustainable economy. This development model includes all aspects of CSR, but approaches it in a broad and integrated view.</p> <p>The Fabrica Ethica transfer process has fed regional dialogue on CSR, and a business driven approach to CSR will be integrated into the next Flemish ERDF Operational Programme. In the meantime, Flanders will launch a project call on using CSR as a strategy for company development (sustainable economic development as a strategy for growth).</p>

<p>South East Romania Development Agency – SIDEUM</p>	<p>Levels of collaboration between Public Administrations, academia and the private sector are currently fairly weak in the region. Thus, the triple helix concept inherent in SIDEUM has been used to prepare a series of pilot projects, financed by ROP funds on the Priority Axis: Support to sustainable development of urban growth poles. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Marketing Centre to create a favourable framework for local business and foreign investors in Braila County, promote sustainable development and maximise number and quality of jobs. • European Business Park in Braila County, which facilitates technology transfer, innovation diffusion, business ideas and projects scouting. • Regional Business and Innovation Centre to develop public sector led network between local and regional authorities, universities and businesses.
<p>LTC (Development Agency of Småland & Islands) – Innovation Cycle</p>	<p>LTC hosts a project called READY 2010, which focuses on supporting new approaches of facilitating innovation and increasing cooperation between triple helix sector actors. Furthermore, the Science Park System in Jönköping has received money from the Regional Development Council to work on issues covered by this Good Practice.</p> <p>A two step approach will be adopted: the work on transferring and incorporating elements of Innovation Cycle will be developed via READY 2010. At a second stage a combination of Science Park System funding and eventual applications for additional funding will be used for more extensive implementation.</p>
<p>University of Western Macedonia – Innovation Assistance and Trainee in TIME</p>	<p>The two similar Good Practices have been integrated to produce one initiative, funded by the Special Regional Development Programme and participating enterprises.</p> <p>This action for the improvement of Innovation and skills of SME employees provides an intensive training programme for graduates coming from technological and economic faculties from educational institutions located in the region or people coming from the Region but who studied elsewhere.</p> <p>The objective is to align educational institutions with the real needs of regional enterprises, in order to absorb graduates coming from technical faculties of educational institutions.</p>

5.2. Critical Issues for Implementation and Mainstreaming

As shown in the discussion on preparing the Regional Action Plan (Chapter 4 – Developing the Regional Action Plan), ensuring implementation and mainstreaming of Good Practices is not easy. Indeed, implementation is dependent on the relative regional or national authorities. The most critical aspect for transfer is that it depends almost entirely on the will of certain people within the Regional Government or the ROP Managing Authority. If they are not in favour of the integration of Good Practices from other regions, they have the power to close transfer activities. In some cases, changes in government following elections delayed the decision making process or required changes to the former developed version of the Regional Action Plan.

To this end, the Managing Authority and person in charge of the ROP must be involved from project outset. Signing a formal letter of support during the application procedure is not sufficient. Some form of internal commitment should be added. Involvement of the Managing Authority can be supported by a continued effort to raise awareness of the potential benefits of the Good Practices for the region, and to involve as many other interested stakeholders as possible. The partner must dedicate time and energy to convincing decision makers of potential benefits of the initiatives proposed.

Within the project, another means of improving transfer possibilities was the organisation of bilateral meetings between Managing Authorities from different regions. This direct contact can be beneficial in



terms of convincing decision makers of the potential benefits of cooperation, and capitalisation activities. Unfortunately, the brief duration and heavy schedule of the project meant that few such meetings could be arranged.

The Fast Track Committee of the European Commission offered its support to bring together the ERIK ACTION partner, the ROP Managing Authority and the geographical unit at DG Regio, and to discuss the opportunities of integration of selected Good Practices into the ROP. In the end, partners did not take up this opportunity, though this would have been helpful in certain cases.

Partners in the ERIK ACTION project showed high levels of creativity to overcome the risk of failing to transfer due to lack of political commitment from ROP Managing Authorities. They identified and developed different alternative strategies to implement Good Practices. Partners looked into national funding, other regional programmes, pilot activities and agency funding. This kind of innovative thinking has saved the transfer process in some regions.

Innovative Alternative Scenarios for Transfer in Alentejo

ADRAL realised near the beginning of the project that transfer into the Regional Operational Programme could not be taken for granted. Thus, alternative transfer scenarios were set up for CAMPUS and TIP Coaching. While the scenario for CAMPUS involves the creation of a new action line within an existing programme for small and micro enterprises, managed by the agency itself, TIP Coaching was presented as a pilot programme of INALENTEJO, the Regional Operational Programme. To this end, CAMPUS has been mainstreamed into agency activities and the results of the TIP Coaching pilot can be used to illustrate regional added value.

Furthermore, the timing of Capitalisation projects in relation to regional programmes must be taken into consideration. This concerns:

- current stage of regional programmes – if they are well advanced or if funding has already been allocated, it may be difficult to make changes;
- elections at local, regional and national level – in addition to resulting in changes to representatives, elections mean that attention is directed elsewhere or that decision makers may not want to take risks;
- overall economic climate – in times of economic downturn policies for economic development change. This may provide opportunities, but at the same time the shortage of money is a threat to any transfer activities.

Overcoming Potential Problems for Mainstreaming in Emilia Romagna

Emilia Romagna managed to set up a collaboration between two different Departments of the Regional Government, who must collaborate to overcome the difficulties of harmonising the ERDF and the ESF Operational Programmes.

Following in-depth consultations with both ERDF and ESF Managing Authorities, the Partner assessed the feasibility of an integration between the programmes and the departments. It was deemed feasible to set up future collaborations in the implementation process of the Good Practice. This collaboration represents an added value, as it cannot always be taken for granted in public administrations.

Furthermore, some partners expressed concern about lack of funding, even when the concept was of interest. In Member States with centralised procedures, the amount of funding allocated directly to regional level is limited. It is not easy to influence decisions on distribution. Therefore, partners have to identify multiple potential funding sources and to investigate various application procedures for the implementation of Good Practices from partner regions.

5.3. Conclusions to Chapter 5 – Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness of the concept of transfer and the need to integrate Good Practices through adaptation to the specific regional situation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation put at risk due to political changes and financial concerns.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multitude of innovative and well thought out means of implementing and mainstreaming Good Practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of concretisation of some proposals for implementation.

6. Conclusions and Moving Forward

Overall, the Capitalisation experience has been positive for all project partners. The project structure and input from partners led to two years of intensive exchange and eleven Regional Action Plans detailing the numerous import and implementation activities to be carried out.

The positive aspects of the ERIK ACTION project, as stated by the partners can be summarised as follows:

- “The experience of Capitalisation has been positive in terms of learning to work with the objective of sharing weaknesses as well as strengths. All of us have had to change from a mindset of presenting how good they are, to that of discussing and learning from others in order to improve what we do” – Regional Government of Tuscany
- “In the beginning the aim of the project was rather vague, but it became more concrete as so much time was reserved for transfer of experiences” - Agency for Innovation and Development of Andalusia - IDEA
- “Capitalisation projects are positive because you can learn from the lessons of other regions. This way you don’t have to face the same problems and you can develop an even better Good Practice” - Enterprise Flanders
- “Working with more experienced people in innovative environments changed our whole vision on interregional cooperation, and our behaviour in communication with stakeholders. At regional level we have become catalysers between the triple helix stakeholders in the transfer process. We fostered a process of consensus building. Transferring and adapting part of a Good Practice meant an improvement and added value to the private sector involved” – South East Romanian Development Agency
- “ERIK ACTION created new insights on implementing actions for increased SME innovation capacities through transferring actions from other EU Regions. The experience of the Capitalisation Project has been helpful in identifying means of creating opportunities for actions that can help SMEs and in understanding the means of fostering regional policies for increasing innovation” – University of West Macedonia
- “We have experienced the Capitalisation approach and the ERIK ACTION project as a vehicle that can also be used at national level, where further work is needed to ensure better coordination and exchange when

stimulating knowledge transfer and sharing and supporting further growth and competitiveness.” LTC AB, Development Agency Jönköping

On the other hand, in a hypothetical future Capitalisation project, the following advice should be taken into consideration:

- ***The more focused the theme, the better.*** The theme of Innovation Capacity in enterprises is huge and covers many sectors. In the future it would be better to consider a narrower theme. However, it is not simple to find a consensus on a focused topic during the application stage;
- ***Easy to transfer Good Practices versus truly innovative Good Practices.*** Many of the ERIK ACTION Good Practices had already been seen in other forms and transfer consisted of adaptation rather than really new initiatives. Some partners would have preferred to see something different, and believed that the amount of work required is only worthwhile if Good Practices are really innovative. However, as seen above, Good Practices need to be simple enough to permit transfer. Therefore, the selection of Good Practices needs to balance both these aspects;



“La Grande Distribuzione - Large Scale Distribution” © Antonella Masi, Florence

- ***Small or committed consortium.*** In ERIK ACTION the amount of work for the lead partner and component 3 coordinator was huge, due to the number of partners and of selected Good Practices. This effort can be reduced by limiting the number of partners and Good Practices, and by a more balanced level of engagement by all partners;

- ***Be clear about the aim of the project.*** It is essential to take time to go over the idea of Capitalisation before the application is presented. In this way, partners who feel unable to achieve the fundamental objectives do not participate;
- ERIK ACTION has offered partners the opportunity to undertake a ***learning-by-doing process***, to discuss the benefits of importing Good Practices with regional stakeholders and Managing Authorities. Partners should start developing Regional Action Plans at the beginning and encourage stakeholder involvement at every stage. Political and technical commitment of regional and/or national stakeholders is the key to ensuring that implementation and transfer can really be achieved.

Annexe 1: Description of ERIK ACTION Partner Organisations

Regione Toscana



Tuscany is located in central Italy and covers a total surface area of 22,992 km², making it the fifth largest region in Italy. Tuscany has 3,528,225 inhabitants, a population density of 153 in./km² and a current demographic growth rate of – 0.3/1000.

Tuscany can lay claim to a dynamic, diversified economy based around a market covering 7% of the Italian population and over 350,000 companies. The GDP in 2004 stood at 83,285 million euro, with a growth rate of 1.1%. The Tuscan economic system is characterised by the size and geographical / sector based distribution of manufacturing plants, organised into 12 industrial districts. Industry in Tuscany continues to specialise in traditional sectors, such as: textile and clothing; leather and shoes; marble and tiles. However, the Tuscan industrial system is not only composed of manufacturing. A number of high tech segments, such as pharmaceuticals and biotechnology, ICT and optic-electronics, show high rates of growth, as do businesses linked to the agro-food industry.

The Regione Toscana is responsible for the regional territory as a whole. The Sector for Attracting Investments, located within the Department for Economic Development, is committed to undertaking interventions to strengthen territorial competitiveness and promote networks for national and European economic cooperation.



Niederösterreich

Niederösterreich with a surface area of 19,174km² is the largest area in Austria and has 1.55 million inhabitants. The region is located in north east Austria, bordering the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Its main economic sectors are mechanical engineering, metal processing, wood, food, chemistry and oil industry, as well as rubber and plastic. In the north agriculture and forestry are also strong. Niederösterreich's GDP per capita amounts to 25,300 euro (2006), the GDP increased to 38,8 billion euro in 2009.

Together with Austria's capital Vienna, a separate province located in Niederösterreich, and Burgenland, Niederösterreich forms the Vienna Region, characterised by formidable economic dynamism. The Vienna Region shows the strongest concentration of research institutions and universities in Austria.

The Government of Lower Austria is the Managing Authority of the Regional Operational Programme. The Department for Economy, Tourism and Technology (WST3) is responsible for coordination of the Regional Innovation System. Innovation, collaboration and interregional exchange are of utmost importance for the competitiveness of the whole region. Therefore, WST3 started the Continuous Improvement Process of the Regional Innovation System with the development of the regional innovation strategy nearly 15 years ago. Lower Austria was named the most innovative region in Europe in 2008 by the Assembly of European Regions.

Within ERIK ACTION WST3 was supported by IDEUM consultancy.

Emilia-Romagna is located in the north-east of Italy in the centre of the country's most productive area. It accounts for 7% of the geographical territory, 8% of the Italian population, nearly 9% of national GDP and 12.6% of national exports. GDP level, rate of employment and degree of labour market participation make the region one of the first in the EU. With over 420,000 enterprises (1/10 inhabitants) the region demonstrates a strong entrepreneurial attitude.

The main industrial clusters are: automatic and packaging machinery, motorcycles and automotives, food and processing machinery, textiles, ceramic tiles, bio-medical industries, agricultural machinery and metal electronics. The research sector relies on a wide range of technical and scientific resources and competencies including six universities.

Emilia-Romagna has endorsed an R&D and innovation policy focused on promoting industrial research, technological development and technology transfer. The regional policy for research and innovation promotes interaction between businesses, research institutes, universities and centres for technology transfer, and is based on the Law for Innovation and its implementing programme, the PRRIITT (Regional Programme for Industrial Research, Innovation and Technology Transfer), started in 2003.

Alentejo



Alentejo lies to the South of Portugal, bordered in the North by the Tagus River, to the South by the Algarve mountain ridge, to the east by the Spanish regions Extremadura and Andalusia and to the west by the Atlantic. The Alentejo area covers 27,323.9 km², corresponding to approximately 1/3 of the national territory. The resident population stands at 535,000 inhabitants, with a population density of 19.6 inhabitants per km².

Alentejo is strategically located, in the convergence of Lisbon and Extremadura (Spain) regions. Mobility is assured by its structured and modern road network and key infrastructures such as a large scale deep water port and a new Airport currently under construction, located in the south of the region.

At economic level, services register the largest number of companies, with a particular prominence of tourism. The industrial sector follows, with relevance for agro-food and agriculture and fishing appears in third place. In recent years, the region has increased its expertise in terms of innovation and ICT, and renewable energy, mainly solar and wind energy.

ADRAL – Agência de Desenvolvimento Regional do Alentejo, S.A. is a regional structure established in June 1998 with 66 partner shareholders, public and private, with experience in economic, entrepreneurial, social and development activities, geographically spread. One of ADRAL tasks is cooperation with local, regional, national and international actors, promoting common initiatives and joint projects. Its social object is: "to promote the regional development of Alentejo and strengthen its economic and productive base, in cooperation with other organisations and bodies in Alentejo, Portugal and other EU countries, which have similar objectives."

Andalusia



Agencia de innovación y Desarrollo de Andalucía IDEA
CONSEJERÍA DE INNOVACIÓN, CIENCIA Y EMPRESA

Andalusia is located in the south of Spain and is the second largest region of the country. Covering 87,597 km², with 8,285,692 inhabitants, a GDP of €152.004 million and 5 airports and seaports, Andalucía is in the Top 10 European regions of the future, according to FDI "European cities & regions of the future" competition 2010.

After experiencing significant growth over the last five years, the region is consolidating its position within strategic sectors, such as aeronautics, biotechnology, ICT, renewable energy and environment, among others.

With more than 23.000 researchers, the region ranks third in Spain in terms of talent engaged in R+D, accounting for 11% of Spain as a whole. Moreover, it is strong in patents and scientific production. According to latest data provided by the National Statistics Institute, Andalucía ranks third at national level in terms of R+D investment, totalling €1.538 million in 2008, accounting for 1.03% of the Andalusian GNP.

IDEA, the Agencia de Innovación y Desarrollo de Andalucía, is the public institution in charge of economic development and business promotion for the Andalusian Regional Government. Agency IDEA contributes to regional economic development by promoting innovation and cooperation within the Science-Enterprise-Technology system and improving competitiveness in regional production. IDEA provides services, infrastructure and advice to companies, and works to ensure that innovation and development in Andalusia are level with the most advanced European regions.



Banská Bystrica

Banská Bystrica is located in the south of Middle Slovakia. The territory covered by the region is one of the largest self-governing regions in Slovakia, spreading over an area of 90,455 km². The region has a population of around 661,000 inhabitants and a population density of 7.297 persons per km².

Banská Bystrica has a strategic location in the heart of Central Europe. It offers typical features of Slovakia - natural beauty, history embodied in unique cultural monuments, richness and variety of art production and craft skills, plenty of opportunities for sport lovers and recreation, as well as interesting offers for potential investors.

Over the past 15 years, the economic structure of Banská Bystrica has shifted from industry to services. Presently, the most relevant sectors in the region are mining, engineering, foods, pharmaceuticals, wood-processing, glass and ceramics. SMEs with less than 20 employees provide employment for 2/3 of the labour-force.

Banská Bystrica Self Governing Region (BBSK) was created in 2001. BBSK is responsible for regional coordination in economic development, the development of entrepreneurial environments, innovation potential, tourism, environment and human resources. BBSK undertakes activities in conformity with the Economic, Social and Cultural Strategy and the Regional Innovation Strategy. These strategies outline actions to develop innovation and entrepreneurial environments, transfer results and Good Practices and to support increased international cooperation.

Flanders

The region, with its 6.0 million inhabitants, covers an area of 13.522 km², and lies in the northern part of Belgium in one of the most densely populated area of Western Europe, with 434 inhabitants per km². Flanders borders the North Sea and is situated between The Netherlands and France. Flanders is a key economic region within Europe, thanks to its central location in the Western European industrial area. It produces high quality, reasonably priced products mostly exported to the international market. An important advantage is high level of education and multilingualism.

The backbone of the economy is the SME. From a total of 417,000 companies, over 99% have less than 250 employees, 89% less than 10. Large companies (less than 0.5%) are usually part of multinational groups. About 70% of Flemish employment is generated in: chemicals/pharmaceuticals, metal products and machines, electronics, food products and textiles. High-tech sectors such as biotechnology and IT are gradually gaining importance. Flanders is also strong in transport and communications. Enterprise Flanders forms part of the Flemish government and is responsible for outlining and executing policies on entrepreneurship. The Agency concentrates on support measures for enhancing competitiveness of all types of companies in Flanders. It works towards pooling and expanding existing knowledge, raising company and general public awareness, and refining existing policies and financial support measures for companies. Enterprise Flanders was the Managing Authority of the ERDF Regional Operational Programme 2000-2007 and continues to be so for the period 2007-2013.



Bretagne

Brittany is a cultural and administrative region in north-west France, lying between the English Channel and the Bay of Biscay. Its land area is 27,209 km². In 2008 the population of Brittany was estimated at 3,103,000. The largest metropolitan areas are Rennes, the regional capital (547,059 inhabitants), and Brest (300,262 inhabitants).

With a GDP of €78 million in 2007, Brittany is the 5th most productive region in France. It provides 4.3% to national wealth creation. For the last 10 years, the GDP has seen average production higher than national average. One characteristic is the influence of agriculture: it contributes 4% to the region's added value (nearly double the French national average of 2%). Alongside agriculture and fishing, high performance industrial activities have developed around a few sectors of activity (food, telecommunications, automotive, ship building). The service sector has also received a significant boost.

Bretagne Innovation was formed in 1988 as the Regional Innovation Agency created and co-financed by the Regional Council. Bretagne Innovation supports SMEs in managing innovative projects and including participation in networks, organisation of collective actions with its partners, manages funding from the Regional Council of Brittany to introduce new skills into SMEs and provides Project Management training sessions for SMEs. Since 1995, Bretagne Innovation has also facilitated company involvement in European Research and Innovation projects.



South East Romania

South-East Romania covers 35,762 km² or 15% of the total national surface, making it the 2nd largest of 8 Romanian regions. The region includes 6 counties: Braila, Buzau, Constanta, Galati, Tulcea and Vrancea and has a population of 2,848,219 inhabitants. Economic activity is characterised by the decline of industrial sectors, restructuring of big enterprises and establishment of SMEs. The majority of big enterprises are active in processing industry, construction, transport and services. In 2007 agricultural production amounted to €1.1 Billion, the amount derived from an agricultural surface equal to 14% of the national total. In 2007 gross added value in industry (including construction) was €3.5 Billion, representing 32.6% of regional gross added value. In 2007, the South-East hosted 59,783 enterprises of which 99.63% were SMEs (59,560). From the total of 59,560 SMEs in the region, the majority (49.5%) operate in the trade sector. Hence, the SMEs' sector is the driving force of the local economy, playing a vital role in the creation of new employment.

The South-East Regional Development Agency (SE RDA) is one of 8 Regional Development Agencies in Romania and is a public, non-governmental and non-profit institution responsible for regional development policy programming and implementation. SE RDA's mission is to promote sustainable socio-economic development through: partnerships, integrated development services, implementation of regional development programmes and economic cooperation. Since 2007 SE RDA has been the Intermediate Body for the 2007 – 2013 Regional Operational Programme.



Småland med öarna (Småland and Islands)

Småland and Islands is strategically located in South Eastern Sweden. The eastern area is an integrated part of the Baltic Sea region and the western area is centrally located between Sweden's three largest cities. The region is comprised of 4 counties and 34 councils in an area of 33,333 km², 9% of the nation's total 410,335 km². With 800 thousand inhabitants, the population density stands at 24 inhabitants/km².

The economy is concentrated on manufacturing. Cross-county cooperation within clusters exists within strong industry branches, such as aluminium, timber, and heavy-duty vehicles. Öland's and Gotland's economies are characterised by agricultural and tourism but cluster-like networks have also been established. The coast and islands offer opportunities for wind power and bio-fuel production. The conditions for tourism are excellent but still seasonal and dependent on the wellness of the Baltic Sea.

Småland and Island is a formal region only in a NUTS 2 context. In reality it consists of four counties with their own political and public administration. The authorities are the Regional Councils of these counties: Kalmar, Kronoberg, Jönköping and Gotland.

LTC, Länsteknikcentrum i Jönköpings län AB facilitates regional development focusing on interaction between companies, universities and the public sector. LTC was established in 1987 and has extensive experience in supporting companies and other innovation stakeholders. LTC supports SMEs to grow and adapt to new demands.

Western Macedonia is situated in North-West Greece, bordering with the regions of Central Macedonia, Thessaly, Epirus and the regions of Bitola (F.Y.R.O.M.) and Korce (Albania) to the North. While covering a total surface of 9,451 km² (7.2% of Greece), it has a total population of just 302,892 inhabitants (2.9% of the country's total).

The secondary sector (47.5% of regional produce) is vital for the regional economy, mainly due to mining activities, electricity production (70% of country's total power is produced in the region) and the fur-leather sector. The recent development of the tertiary sector (currently 39.1% of regional produce) has also been important, concerning mainly financial and insurance agencies, but also transport and storage facilities. The primary sector, although important for the regional economy, demonstrates low levels of productivity (13.4% of regional produce).

With high profile professors and researchers from around the world, the University of West Macedonia has a major role in the R&D development in Western Macedonia and at national and international level. The University of West Macedonia is an active partner in many projects on innovation in regional development, including regional innovation strategies, knowledge management, technological innovation support tools and increasing SME competitiveness. During the «K-Clusters» Programme of Innovative Actions (2003-5), the University of West Macedonia developed activities to provide added value services and to support collective efforts of regional partners to implement innovative actions in waste management, marble, wood and fur sectors. The University of West Macedonia is currently involved in developing the Regional Innovation Pole of West Macedonia.

Annexe 2: Description of Good Practices

Good Practices exported by the Regione Toscana

Fabrica Ethica: Tuscan Programme of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Fabrica Ethica constructs a production process that supports competitiveness through respect for social and environmental rights. It is an example of innovation in organisation, processes and behaviour.

The Regional Government of Tuscany began working on CSR in 2000. Tuscany was first at European level to adopt incentives and economic aids to support SMEs in CSR and the first region in Italy to begin a public programme specifically targeted to spread CSR in economic development programmes. CSR in the region is now regulated by the Regional Statute and a specific regional law.

Fabrica Ethica:

- has mobilised regional level actors and helped focus SMEs activities on CSR, through the multi-stakeholder Regional Ethical Commission, active since 2003;
- provides information and tutoring on CSR issues within firms and the community;
- covers 50% of SA8000 and environmental certification costs for SMEs and cooperatives and provides funds for other management system certifications;
- supports specific projects to spread CSR in industrial districts including innovative management systems to coordinate CSR with environmental care and quality in the leather sector, and micro credit for non-bankable subjects.

PRAI VINCI - PRAI Virtual Innovation and Cooperative Integration

PRAI VINCI promoted the Virtual Enterprise / Virtual Organisation (VE/VO) as an instrument to create and manage aggregations to strengthen competitiveness of industrial systems in Tuscany. VE/VO was experimented 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 call for proposals was launched in 2006 and 12 projects were approved. These projects brought together a total of 83 actors (90% SME) with funding of 3,620,000 euro (2,892,000 public contribution).

Various projects have continued after the closure of the programme, for example:

- IDETOS – household furniture and furnishing. Partners have added value to individual products by forming a label together. They have opened a shop in the centre of Florence to market their products.
- e-nautica – nautical service and supply chain. Partners have developed an operational ICT platform which represents a common interface for clients.

Furthermore, guidelines are available and have been distributed in order to encourage increased awareness on this type of organisational model.

Good Practices exported by Lower Austria

Innovation Assistant

Innovation Assistant responds to the need to strengthen technological and innovation competence in regional SMEs, especially smaller firms and SMEs in rural areas. These target groups suffer from a lack of highly qualified staff, caused by long distances from educational organisations, fear of contacting R&D institutions and the perceived less attractive location of the company.

Innovation Assistant stimulates SMEs to employ recently graduated staff in order to overcome these barriers. Innovation Assistants are employed for a concrete project and funded for a maximum of 15 months. The action is open for SMEs of all sectors of industry and industry related services. The support consists of 4 pillars:

- grant for the labour costs of the innovation assistant;
- mandatory training of the innovation assistant by a specially designed post graduate training programme established at the Donau University Krems;
- grant for the project and innovation assistant related consultancy;
- Accompanied monitoring/evaluation of project by an external consultant.

Innovation Assistant is nowadays a key tool in the regional innovation system and has been mainstreamed into the Regional Operational Programme.

TIP coaching - Technologie- & Innovationspartner Innovation Coaching

Technology & Innovation Partners (TIP) Coaching supports regional firms, especially SMEs with the potential and the desire to innovate, in introducing innovation to their business.

The TIP Coaches visit regional firms in order to gain an overview of their technical, technological, financial, organisational and innovation related state of the art. The TIP Coach is then in a position to advise the entrepreneur and refer him/her to potential collaboration partners, appropriate funding schemes, helpful services and events.

The TIP Coach acts as a door opener for the firms to gain an access to the full innovation service portfolio in Lower Austria and beyond the region. The service was established nearly 20 years ago and is now a sustainable part of the regional innovation supporting system.

Results of ongoing monitoring activities demonstrate a high level of satisfaction among the firms involved. Through on site visits the Coach gains a direct and accurate impression of the firm's situation and culture, and can thus provide targeted advice and support. Visits have generally lead to further innovation activities within the firms.

R&D Funding Scheme

The funding scheme for R&D Funding Scheme provides financial support for R&D projects on basic and industrial research and experimental development.

The funding rate ranges from 25% (for large firms) to 80% (for SMEs/collaborative projects). In young innovative firms funding can cover up to 100% (if combined with early stage financing). The support can be a grant, loan, guarantee or combination.

The funding scheme is characterised by its flexibility on type of activities, financial

tools and payment. The funding scheme not only supports technology related R&D activities, but also feasibility studies and process related or organisational activities. This helps to broaden companies understanding of innovation and to foster competitiveness.

The R&D/Innovation funding scheme is accompanied by a monitoring and evaluation system covering assessment/approval of the proposal, in-process monitoring, and evaluation/impact assessment at project conclusion. This comprehensive system enables identification of any gaps or barriers at an early stage, thus allowing further advisory support, rework of project schedule and/or involvement of additional partners to overcome identified problems. The system, carried out by regional actors, contributes to an effective and efficient use of public money for innovation support.

Good Practice exported by the Regione Emilia Romagna

Industrial Research Projects and Pre-Competitive Development

This action belongs to the Regional Programme for Industrial Research, Innovation and Technological Transfer (PRRIITT), which represents an overall strategy to strengthen the regional innovation system and connections between research and industry.

This specific action reinforces positive attitudes of SMEs to research and innovation, by financing specific projects for new products, processes or services. The ultimate aim is to promote the evolution of research project results into pre-competitive development plans, projects and prototypes.

The key aspects of the action consist of:

- Promoting employment of new science and technology graduates for research and development projects in SMEs
- Activating collaboration contracts between SMEs and research centres.

The action has contributed to stimulating competitiveness and growth of more dynamic SMEs, to increasing employment in R&D and to producing industrial patents. It also facilitated industrial oriented research by Universities and Research Centres.

The action has already been transferred to other Italian regions (Sicilia and Campania).

Good Practices exported by ADRAL, Alentejo

Innovation Cycle - Spreading and Promoting Science and Technology

In Portugal, particularly in rural areas, a high level of resistance to cooperation has been noted among companies and academic institutions. This situation is, however, showing some signs of change at a political level, at business association level and indeed among companies and institutions.

Innovation Cycle fits into this context, by creating the conditions for increased cooperation, especially among companies and institutions with the ability to plan, test and implement innovative solutions.

Project activities included organisation of 8 workshops and 1 final conference. Workshops included discussion on the central theme of innovation and study visits to

companies and/or institutions with innovative products and/or processes. Each workshop tackled innovation in identified clusters: tourism, education, health, environment and energy, traditional products, ICT and entrepreneurship.

This initiative led to the constitution of a regional partnership including the Regional Authority, ADRAL, University and Polytechnic Institutes and other organisations and associations related to the clusters on which workshops focused. It has successfully promoted cooperation among the business sector, interface institutions and R&D centres and wide scale debate and innovation in various social and economic sectors.

As a result, 3 pilot Knowledge Cycles were organised involving ADRAL, University of Évora, regional companies and associations. The partnership held 3 sessions with researchers, entrepreneurs, business associations and interface organisms. Participants worked to identify entrepreneurial problems, needs and feasible and realistic solutions related to issues such as research, internationalisation, internal organisation, funding.

FAME – Support Fund to Micro Companies

FAME is the Alentejo Support Fund to Micro and Small Companies, an innovative fund created in 2000 involving a public-private regional partnership: ADRAL, Espírito Santo Bank and local councils. The Fund responded to a need identified in the region, namely funding for micro and small companies, which often face difficulties with high costs of bank loans and access to finance.

FAME is an innovative and modern financial instrument, run by public and private regional entities with national funds. This fund is available for new or established companies and for entrepreneurs keen to promote new investments. It has a flexible and simple process with a reduced bureaucracy and the approval period is significantly shorter than other similar initiatives.

FAME stimulates investment in micro companies to improve products and/or services, facilities and equipment and to make other changes. The fund also stimulates investment in strategic development areas, such as quality, new technologies, environment, security and hygiene.

FAME's sustainability is assured through a configuration implemented in 2006. The FAME model was enlarged in its ability to intervene in the territory with the inclusion of public funds coming from IAPMEI (Portuguese Institute that supports SME's and innovation) and Guarantee Mechanisms. FAME is now part of a national investment programme called FINICIA, promoted by IAPMEI.

Good Practices exported by IDEA, Andalusia

The Helice Foundation and the heliceNet service

HeliceNet is a mechanism that allows for production technology and knowledge transfer from large companies with branches in the region (Eads and Airbus) to SMEs. This project boosts the level of innovation in SMEs and aids large companies in relieving support responsibilities and providing integrated electronic monitoring and control of their supply chain. This control covers several aspects of supply chain

management: engineering configuration, work in progress production monitoring, quality and non conformity reports, technical data, certified parts suppliers, logistics, delivery status sheets, orders, orders confirmation, invoices control, etc.

For SMEs who decide to go further and to have full engineering control capabilities by implementing business processes for the aerospace sector, a set of aerospace experts are available to implement the model in Application Service Provider mode.

IDEA Agency has promoted this business network since 2003 and created, together with the Eads and the SMEs, a foundation to hold and manage the system. The foundation diverts economic results into activities such as, participating in international events to promote the cluster, publishing the Andalusian Aeronautics Magazine, organising training activities and acting as a lobby to strengthen the cluster.

As a result of this project, an initiative to create an aerospace service centre has been supported by national innovation authorities and regional administrations in Spain.

TTandalucia - Technology Events to promote technology transfer agreements between Companies and Universities

The relationship between science and industry has many facets, and knowledge and technology are transferred through different channels and means. 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.

To this end, the following four actors in the Andalusian Knowledge System collaborate to organise workshops focusing on Technology Transfer in strategic sectors: the Agency for Innovation and Development of Andalusia (IDEA), the Centre for Innovation and Technology Transfer of Andalusia (CITANDALUCÍA), the Technology Spaces Network in Andalusia (RETA) and the Technology Transfer Offices Network from the Andalusian Universities (RED OTRIS).

The events promote innovation through technology cooperation and exploitation of research results and facilitate collaboration between research groups and companies. Technology agreements are signed between enterprises and research groups. Every year since 2006, 16 technology events have been organised, each focusing on a specific sector. Furthermore, an in-depth follow up process has been created to give continued support to participating companies in their technology transfer agreement.

CAMPUS: Technological Transferability and Business Support

CAMPUS was launched in 2004 by the Andalusian Government and managed by IDEA to promote technology transfer from the knowledge system to industry by consolidating technology-based spin offs.

The initiative provides financial instruments to support those spin offs with huge growth potential that are capable of generating new products, technology or services from research results. It also facilitates a link between universities and businesses, converting scientific knowledge into economic activity, and leading to the creation of a network for business start-ups and knowledge transfer.

Since March 2005, 121 projects have been supported and Andalusia is now considered the first Spanish region for fostering this type of companies. The call for proposals is

constantly open and many ideas and business plans are received for evaluation. The success of CAMPUS is largely due to collaboration between the agents that integrate the itinerary for the consolidation of a spin off, with Universities and Research Centres. Other key features are the complete and professional assessment of the projects and the joint monitoring of companies.

The main actors involved in the Campus Programme are: IDEA as the manager of the initiative, the Capital Investment and Risk Management company of Andalusia INVERCARIA that is the first venture capital company at regional level and is 100% owned by IDEA, and collaborating entities composed of the universities of Andalusia, CSIC (Spanish Council for Scientific Research), CTAP, FIBA, ISAPA and FSP.

Good Practice exported by Bretagne Innovation

RDT Bretagne - Breton Technological Development Network

One vital means of optimising the regional innovation support system is to improve the quality of relationships between different actors. The Breton Technological Development Network answers this need by creating a regional network between innovation support structures. This network allows local and regional advisers to exchange information, for example about the skills and needs of SMEs, and creates a common identity between them.

The Breton Technological Development Network gathers 100 advisers (technological or generalist) with a mission of public interest. They visit SMEs, identify needs and support them in setting up and managing innovative projects.

This network is an appreciated platform for knowledge exchange and networking for innovation advisers in the region. The objective is to optimise advisers' visits and their response to identified SME needs by ensuring they are aware of each others' skills, competencies and existing innovation funding schemes. Members of the network meet regularly and participate in specifically organised training programmes.

An intranet has been developed so that members can register their actions and exchange information about their visits. This facilitates knowledge codification and exchange of data and experiences. This database is a source of knowledge on enterprises, classed according to their needs and access to technology.

Good Practice exported by Enterprise Flanders

ParentHood Projects

The objective of ParentHood Projects is to professionalise the management of SMEs by organising learning networks by and for entrepreneurs. This is achieved through the organisation of training sessions on the day to day business operating level. Participants are divided in groups that meet on a monthly basis over a one or two year period. In addition to practical training, events offer networking opportunities.

The ParentHood project approach is based on the following principles:

- Owner-manager focus: Training sessions for company owners and/or managers.

- Network model: The project forms business networks of large and small companies.
- Business led: The programme strategy is led by the local business community and responds to the unique circumstances of the commercial and industrial environment.
- Group development approach: Maximising learning effect by capitalising on certain group dynamics.
- Sustained involvement: The network meets regularly and guidance is provided between sessions.
- Locally based: It creates a business to business environment in a regional context. It is a flexible but simple concept. Results of monitoring show that participants increased business results after completing a Parenthood Project cycle.

Good Practices exported by LTC

SIDEUM

Based on the awareness that the region lacked focus in R&D related business development structures, the SIDEUM project created a common platform for frontline development processes between academia, the public arena and the business sector. The project was organised into 4 steps:

- Elaboration of the plan for a regional structure commonly owned by academia, business and the public sector.
- Presentation to regional stakeholders of good practices developed in other parts of Europe.
- Delivery of the formal proposal to regional actors and approval from Local and County Councils, business networks and Växjö university. In total several hundred decision makers were involved.
- Communication from all public institutions and the university on willingness to be members of the association owning the development company. Several banks and large companies also became formal partners.

Within a year the project turned into a company owned by the public and private sectors. The Local Council, University, County Council and County Administration are responsible for the basic funding of SIDEUM. They provide SIDEUM with the economic stability needed to operate as a non-profit development agency.

Trainee in TIME

The project Trainee in TIME was established in 2002. The idea was to show that academics with special skills in the fields of technology, economy, IT/computer science and marketing can play a principal role in increasing capacity in the regions' SMEs.

Within the programme individually developed competence packages are developed for each trainee. The trainees work for three weeks at a time, followed by one week's study time. The education programme was developed jointly by LTC, the trainees and their host companies.

One of the key success factors was the establishment a wide and constantly growing

network of companies in the region. Furthermore, companies' needs are the essential focus in the project, as reflected by the individually developed competence packages. Evaluations undertaken on the project have shown that all involved partners have been satisfied both with how the project has been implemented and with the results achieved. Trainee in TIME has been carried out twice. During the first project, running from 2002 to 2004, 26 companies and 32 trainees participated. Of these, 75% were employed by their host companies. The second period of the project (2005-2007) engaged 37 companies and 55 trainees, and the employment rate exceeded 85%. Both unemployed graduates and companies have benefited from the project.

Good Practices exported by University of Western Macedonia

Development of Innovation in the Wood Sector

The project focused on improving innovation capacity in the wood sector, a sector of great importance to the regional economy. This action promoted innovation in the wood sector in a moment where the industry was static and limited or no development was underway. The following actions were undertaken:

- A call for proposals for 5 pilot projects in SMEs of the sector to be assisted in developing new products and / or methods in their work.
- Development of the above mentioned pilot projects in the selected SMEs.
- Development of a mechanism to monitor the action, to analyse parameters regarding the development of new products in the sector, to develop know-how and to systematise knowledge.
- Diffusion of results to other SMEs operating in the wood sector.

One innovative feature was the special cycle of three informative seminars in which companies participated. 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. Simultaneously, expert scientists visited companies, in order to analyse and address problems in their production line and to identify potential solutions.

Annexe 3: Regional Action Plan Template

Official Declaration: Support for the Regional Action Plan for [name of region]

The following organisations have participated in the ERIK ACTION project and in the transfer preparation of Good Practices from ERIK ACTION partner regions to the region of [name of the region]:

- The Managing Authority for the Regional Operational Programme [name of the Regional Operational Programme]: [organisation]
- [regional, subregional or local authority, regional actor or service provider]
- [regional, subregional or local authority, regional actor or service provider]

All these institutions acknowledge the added value of the ERIK ACTION project and its contribution to the Regional Operational Programme and/or other regional mainstream programmes, provided through interregional collaboration, identification of valuable Good Practices and the development of the Regional Action Plans.

During the ERIK ACTION project the above mentioned authorities, stakeholders and actors have participated in extensive transfer activities, in view of a possible import into the region of [name of region], related to the following Good Practices:

- **[Good Practice 1] – Repeat for each good practice**
 - Brief description;
 - Coherence of good practice with ROP / regional funding programme being used to fund activities;
 - Allocated budget and time frame for implementation.

We consider the import of the abovementioned Good Practices, with necessary adaptation according to regional context, to represent potentially valuable input for economic development in the region of [region]. The annex of this declaration contains the detailed Regional Action Plan for [region].

We hereby confirm our support for the import and implementation of the above mentioned Good Practices in the Regional Operational Programme or other regional mainstream programmes according to the developed Regional Action Plan.

Organisation: _____

Name and function of Legal Signatory: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Official Stamp: 

Organisation: _____

Name and function of Legal Signatory: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Official Stamp: 

**Official Declaration:
Implementation of Regional Action Plan for
[name of region]**

As [role of the organisation, e.g. ROP Managing Authority, the intermediate body designated to carry out some or all of the tasks of the Managing Authority for the Regional Operational Programme, County Council, Regional Government for Economic Affairs], [organisation] will be responsible for the implementation of the following Good Practices according to the developed Regional Action Plan for [region]:

[only those GPs which are under the implementation responsibility of the respective organisation are listed]

- **[Good Practice 1] – Repeat for each good practice**
 - Brief description;
 - Coherence of good practice with ROP / regional funding programme being used to fund activities;
 - Allocated budget and time frame for implementation.

The annex of this declaration contains the detailed Regional Action Plan for [region].

I, [Name of Legal Signatory], in my role as Position of Legal Signatory hereby commit to implementing the actions outlined above using funds from [Name of Regional Operational Programme or any other regional funding programme], for a total of approximately € [Amount Available].

Name and function of Legal Signatory: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Official Stamp: 

ROP Overview

- Short overview of objectives and priority axis (including budget available)
- More information about axis with link to innovation policy and current regional activities related to ERIK ACTION and GPs
- Actions already undertaken within priority axis
- Flexibility of axis to allow the integration of GPs from other regions

Good Practice 1 [insert title]

Reasons for Choosing GP

- Short description of GP, highlighting aspects of particular interest
- Short description of regional characteristics, initiatives, political will etc which led to choice of GP

Current Status of Transfer – History and process description

- Description of transfer activities undertaken so far:
 - Update 1: Initial exchange with providing region, decision making process, transfer workshops, staff exchanges, study visits, help desks, etc.
 - Update 2:
- Any obstacles / problems met, and solutions adopted:
 - Update 1: Problem met, solution adopted, lessons learned.
 - Update 2:

Adaptation of GP

- Aspects of interest in Good Practices and where they can be integrated in the regional framework;
- Action / adaptation required for integration into regional framework.

Transfer team

- incl. Stakeholder Involvement plan (as integral part of this document)
 - Political involvement (regional/national entity, ROP Managing Authority)
 - Territorial Involvement (service providers and others involved in the practical transfer of the good practice)
- Continued support necessary from exporting region

Implementation Schedule

- Schedule for implementation of transfer actions (mainstreaming within the current ROP period = 2013);
- Gantt-Diagram with single steps/activities/milestones

Budget allocation and Resources

- Financial budget with source of funding / Staff (# person months/year)

Expected impact

- Expected results from transfer actions (quantifiable and measurable impact of GP implementation on statistics of the region, qualitative impact) like:
 - # of new jobs / Euro spent / new created job
 - Increase of firms' turnover
 - Increased firms' R&D / innovation activities
 - Further thematic indicators from the ERIK database
- Monitoring actions proposed for measuring impact (innovativeness, economic success, indications of equal opportunities and environmental impact).

GP2 [insert title] ... GPn [insert title] - *Repeat as above for all good practices being transferred*