



Brussels,
DG Regio / D2/

Regions for Economic Change – Fast Track Networks

Theme2.2: Bringing Innovation to the market more quickly

ERIK ACTION - UPGRADING THE INNOVATION CAPACITY OF EXISTING FIRMS

FAST TRACK COMMITTEE REPORT

MEETING REPORT: 1st Fast Track Committee: Brussels, 9 July 2008

ERIK ACTION conducted its kick off meeting on the 7th, 8th and 9th of July 2008. This Fast Track Committee enabled to draw conclusions from the previous two days of work, to decide on a calendar for the next project meetings and to discuss on contents of further work.

Tour de table

The 1st Fast Track Committee of ERIK ACTION was held in Brussels on the 9th of July 2008. The meeting was chaired by the Lead Partner (Jessica Huntingford and Paolo Frosini/ Tuscany region) and moderated by the European Commission represented by Luisa Sanches (REGIO/D.2), Kincső IZSÁK (ENTR/D.2), Ciaran Dearle (RTD/B.4) and Sofie Norager (INFSO/C.2). The Joint Secretariat for INTERREG IVC was represented by Elena Ferrario.

Partners from all participating regions were present (See the annexed list of participants).

(1) Active participation of the Managing Authorities

The large majority of the partners are Managing Authorities or have already established working contacts with them. Therefore all Managing Authorities are aware of ERIK ACTION Network. Luisa Sanches informed the participants that REGIO's desk officers that are the Commission representatives at the Monitoring Committees of the SF are also informed about the project and can be involved whenever there is the need to engage the regional authorities. A list with their names will be available next week.

The partners considered that at the moment the relations with the Managing Authorities are solid. They also informed that at a later stage of the project any difficulties will be reported.

(2) Templates for evaluation

The Lead Partner informed that the self evaluation questionnaire and the overall ERIK project questionnaire have been accepted by all partners to be used during the project (the templates are available on this site). The first self assessment survey will be used to assess the satisfaction of the partners regarding this kickoff meeting. The answers will be analysed and conclusions drawn by the Lead Partner.

One of the results established in the ERIK ACTION project application is that of improving the capacity of at least 55 members of staff. In order to evaluate whether capacity has really been improved by the project, they will be interviewed– at the beginning and at the end of the project –using the template proposed. Interviews will be carried out with staff of the ROP Managing Authority and staff involved in good practice transfer but not in project management. The analysis of the results of these interviews can be used as indicators of the participation and level of capacity building of these stakeholders. The interviews will start when the Best Practice to be used for each region is selected (month 5 of the project).

The Commission (Ciaran Dearle) alerted the partners for the difficulty of raising the interest of Managing Authorities to projects that are financially rather limited and the need to clearly explain that the main goal of this project is to provide ideas and actions plans that improve the regional Operational Programmes.

(3) Communication and web site

The Lead Partner informed that the existing Erik website address (www.eriknetwork.net), that is widely known, will be used to access the ERIK ACTION web page. The orientations from the implementation regulation will be followed and the project will be identified as an INTERREG IVC project.

In the sake of transparency all events and documents produced during this project will be made available. The project will be announced as a Fast track option project and a link to the Regions for Economic Change will be included.

The new logo was shown and accepted by all participants. A first version of the structure of the new web site will be circulated by the end of July for comments. There will be a part reserved to the use of the partners and the Commission staff participating in the project.

The contents of the first brochure (to be done by month 3) were presented by the Lead Partner. It will make the presentation of the project.

There will be a permanent follow-up and communication with RAPIDE and also other fast track active networks. The lead partner of the RAPIDE project participated in Day 1 of the ERIK ACTION Kick Off meeting and present the project.

An important milestone for the project and for its communication will be materialising in the 'stakeholders involvement plan' that each partner will be drawing. These will be disseminated at the same time as the good practice selected to be implemented.

Both the representatives of the Commission and the partners were asked to divulge the Network and ERIK ACTION in events, conferences and web sites.

(4) Events

A. Project meetings

The dates and locations for the next 3 project meetings (2008 and 2009) were discussed and agreed. The Fast Track Committees are to be held back to back with the Project meetings. The following table gives an overview

Project Meetings	Fast track Committees	Date	Location
1 st Project meeting	1st Fast track Committee	7-9 July 2008	Brussels
2 nd Project meeting	–	20-21 October	West Macedonia
3 rd Project Meeting	2 nd Fast track Committee	16-18 February	to be decided
4 th Project Meeting	3 rd Fast track Committee – to be decided	4-6 May	Vienna

B. Training sessions

The first training session was held during the kick off meeting on the 8 of July. The Lead partner informed that though the first part was highly appreciated the session 'Knowledge Cafe' could be improved. While it was a good opportunity to promote discussion and exchange ideas, it didn't bring all expected results in terms of concentration on innovation strategies. This was an experimental method and the idea has always been to test different methods during the training sessions.

Hans-Christian Jäger presented some proposed options for the next two training sessions:

- Workshop on concrete support tools: Each workshop elaborates a plan to improve an individual innovation support instrument (offered GP or other instrument) with required budget, expected impact on regional economy;
- RIS Up Your Mind: Idea engineering for the development / implementation of Regional Innovation Strategies. 1 regional case study is presented and participants elaborate scenarios for further regional, innovation oriented development by the participants;
- STRINNOP – Strengthening the Regional Innovation Profile: One workshop with all participants using a process orientated approach with c. 50 qualitative/quantitative indicators leading to a rough estimation of each partner's own Regional Innovation Profile;

- CUP Game - demonstration of advantages of lean management: the aim is to provide a simplified visualisation of innovation in production process, to demonstrate the advantages of lean management / lean production and to foster culture change within companies.

Partners agreed that training session workshops do not necessarily have to be linked to GPs. It would be interesting to bring in other experiences of concrete tools. It is important to understand GPs properly, but also to understand the overall regional strategy. They also stressed the importance of focusing clearly on the topic of the training session. There is only added value if the sessions are targeted and not simply looking at overall regional innovation.

After an animated discussion it was decided that the Component 3 leader will make a proposal based on partners' suggestions and will circulate it around project partners who will be given an opportunity to comment and approve.

C. Further actions and milestones

The Lead Partner introduced a detailed table with actions and deadlines as follows:

Action	Partners involved	Deadline
Information on flights sent to RT (where flying from / connecting flights)	all partners	14/07/08
First draft of brochure sent to partners	RT	14/07/08
Final version of partnership agreement sent to partners	RT	14/07/08
Final version of Erik Action Partner Annexe sent to partners	RT	14/07/08
Send updated contact list to all partners	RT	14/07/08
Minutes sent to all partners	RT	17/07/08
Remaining categorisation on GPs	Flanders, Emilia Romagna	21/07/08
Feedback on brochure	all partners	25/07/08
Manual of Open Project	RT	30/07/08
Open Project functional	RT	30/07/08
Web site - first version available for visualisation	RT	30/07/08

update methodology training workshop	Lower Austria	31/07/08
Rules /guideline for Transfer help desks	NO	15/09/08
Draft regional stakeholder plan	all partners	15/09/08
Update of initial matching matrix (according to specifications in the minutes)	all partners	15/09/08
Calculation of carbon footprints	all partners	15/09/08
Signed partnership agreement	all partners	2 weeks after receipt
Final version stakeholder plan	all partners	15/10/08
Proposals for hosting project meetings	all interested partners	20/10/08
Next meeting (project, SG, training session)	all partners	20/10/08

(5) Content related support

During the first day of the meeting the DGs representatives explained what they were expecting from this Network. Sofie Norager (DG INFSO) reinforced this message referring that there is a lack of uptake of innovative ICT in businesses and public services and there is the need to raise awareness of the opportunities offered by ICT and the increased competitiveness which can be derived from it. One of the means to achieve better awareness is by integrating ICT into a more holistic approach in public policies. To achieve this policy makers must cross-link inside their own structures (e.g. from Ministry of research to Ministry of health) and must involve representatives of the supplier industries when developing new strategies. The use of pre-commercial public procurement for innovative solutions for the public sector represents a major source of funding for R&D in the private sector especially for SMEs developing their R&D activities.

The fast track committee was concluded.

REGIONS FOR ECONOMIC CHANGE

ERIK ACTION - UPGRADING THE INNOVATION CAPACITY OF EXISTING FIRMS

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