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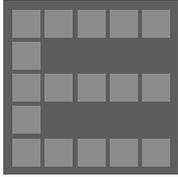
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## European Regional Innovation Awards

Colette Fitzgerald, DG Regional Policy - Innovative Actions Unit

Last year the Directorate-General for Regional Policy organised a competition for the best projects developed in the framework of the ERDF's Regional Programs of Innovative Actions (RPIAs). The main aim of the competition was to identify good innovative practices in regional development in order to promote awareness among political decision makers at regional level and to facilitate the exchange of experiences between regions. The awards ceremony took place in April earlier this year during the plenary session of the Committee of Regions in Brussels. The competition and the awards ceremony proved to be a great success.

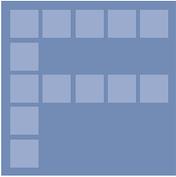
The regions responded to the competition with seventy-two applications. This was very encouraging and proves that regions are proud of their innovative undertakings and wish to share their experience with other regions in Europe.

The competition was given a high political profile thanks to the high-level personalities who agreed to take part in the initiative. The jury was chaired by Mr Antonio Guterres, the former Prime Minister of Portugal who was instrumental in formulating the Lisbon

strategy. He was assisted by other high level politicians, academics and businessmen whose expertise made an important contribution to the success of the competition. On the basis of the selection criteria the jury selected the three best projects for each Innovative Actions strategic theme.

The competition was a great opportunity for regions to present the concrete outputs of their RPIAs on the European level. It also helped to promote the idea of policy experimentation and show that it well-defined results that can be transferred to other regions and replicated more widely in the mainstream of Objective 1 or 2 programs.

All the regions which decided to participate in the competition look to the future with a strong commitment to achieve more innovative and sustainable development. Policy experimentation surely is an important element of this process. I would like to thank all the regions for participating in this initiative. I am glad the ERIK Network decided to give the winning regions another opportunity to present their projects to a wide audience of both regional practitioners as well as policy-makers.



## Interview with Prof. Luc Soete

Luc Soete, Director of MERIT, Maastricht University, Member of the Regional Innovation Awards Jury

*What is your opinion about the innovation awards organised by the European Commission?*

Overall I am very positive about the initiative of granting regional innovation awards by the EC. I think that it is important also for regional policy making to acknowledge the entrepreneurship and dynamism of local civil servants, local business community, academics and researchers which were instrumental in initiating the project, went through all the hassle of submitting the proposal under the ERDF and brought it to a good end. Successful regional development is often very much subject to what is known in the growth and development literature as "small events". Small initial steps which were ultimately at the basis of a virtuous growth and development circle being set in motion. Events which years after will still determine the development path of a region. The formal recognition of such success stories through the granting of an award might in itself contribute to the further success of the chosen development strategy. At the same time other regions can learn from it.

*Which factors were most important for the final selection of winners?*

Obviously in first instance the quality, success in implementation and short term "proven" success of the particular project. The long term success of projects, the broader likely impact on regional development would often only become visible after a number of years and thus too difficult to assess for projects that only just finished. Time can only tell whether the right "winners" were indeed selected: It is the most significant problem for "experts" or wise (wo)men

selecting innovating projects. Only the market will ultimately do.

*According to you what is a value added of ERDF's Innovative Actions?*

In all likelihood regional funds will increasingly become associated with innovative actions. I would suspect that with the enlargement regional development policy (social cohesion) within the EU based purely on low development levels will increasingly come under pressure. In such cases, I would suspect that policies involving the actual systematic transfer of funds across countries from rich to poor will increasingly become opposed. The only possibility for the survival of regional development policy in Europe is through the shifting of such policies towards primarily innovative actions.

*Do you believe that such a form of policy experimentation funded from ERDF should continue after 2006?*

Yes of course, I believe it should be strengthened. The Lisbon goals will ultimately only be fulfilled through successful regional development in the direction of some regional hot spots.

*In your opinion, what should be key elements of regional innovation policy?*

To get the regional innovation system under way. I have given several presentations on this issue: let me briefly quote from one of them: "the tendency to regionally cluster knowledge centers observed both inside the US or Europe is a logical consequence of the agglomeration and joint production effects of knowledge and its appeal to researchers and entrepreneurs. The development of a European Research Area will provide room from this perspective for further knowledge clustering with a rise within Europe of labour mobility of highly skilled people. As a side effect, it might be noted that the European ideals of "social cohesion" are likely to come increasingly under pressure. In short regional innovation policies should aim at developing the optimal conditions for such regional agglomeration processes.

*How would you assess importance of regional networks such as ERIK that focus on sharing experience and good practices between EU regions?*

Positive but I think there is much more scope for alternative networks: cross border networks, particular actor networks (such as universities). Also good practice is not always what one should be after, more insights can often be obtained from poor or worst practice.

## Presentation of innovation awards winners

### Theme 1: Regional Economies based on Knowledge and Technological Innovation

■ *1st place:*  
*Construction and Extension of  
Centre for Competence in  
Nanobiotechnology, Saarland,  
Germany*

The Saarland region is located in the central part of Western Europe, in the "triangle of nations" also known as "Saar-Lor-Lux". It is a border region having France (Lorraine) and Luxembourg as neighbours. The region has a diversified structure. The southern part and valley of the river Saar is highly industrialised and

densely populated, while the northern and south-eastern part is mostly rural with many tourist attractions related to nature.

Main regional indicators

Area 2,600 sq km

Population 1.1 mln

Population density 415 inh/sq km

GDP growth (annual average % change) 0.8%

Employment rate 69.9%

The project is a central measure of the Regional program NanoBioTech-Region Saar ("Regional Programme for NanoBioTechnology, Saarland Region"). The Centre is a decentralised network supporting advanced cooperation and good practice exchange between existing regional nanobiotechnological clusters.

The Centre is based on the concept of a virtual company covering the entire value creation chain in the fields of training, research, development, innovation, marketing and sales. It aims at creating synergies by helping all the relevant partners cooperate on development of new products and services. The work program's component elements are e.g.:

- brokerage of information and connecting the partners within the network;
- targeted transfer of technology within the network;
- establishment of international contacts for the partners;
- marketing measures for the network;
- consultancy on a company-specific or project-specific basis;
- initiation and management of joint scientific as well as applied research and development projects;
- offering specialised service for trade fairs and events, e.g., presentation of exemplary product innovations;
- running of a demonstration centre and management of a laboratory co-operative.

The tasks of the Centre are diverse and cover not only networking, but also being a broker and initiator of new innovative projects. The undertaking has a form of PPP (public-private partnership). The management of the network has been given in its entirety to a private company.

#### INTERVIEW WITH THE PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR

*What is the history of the project?*

We started talking about the idea in connection with

the setting up of Saarland's Innovation Strategy in 2001. This strategy aims at empowering Saarland's economy to cope with the structural change. Its basic ambition is to establish structures which allow the implementation of innovations through technology transfer into our industry. One of the technological niches we detected as being auspicious for the future was nanobiotechnology. An inter-departmental working group, consisting of personnel working in the State Chancellery's Staff Office for Innovation, the Ministry for Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Saarland, was involved in the initial conception of the project. Proposals for this project came from partners and experts from the fields of science and research within our NanoBioNet Network. The project was then developed into its final form in close collaboration with these partners, and so we started to apply for ERDF's Innovative Actions.

*What was the role of regional authorities in this process?*

The main task of the regional authorities was to build up structures for networking and to promote the first steps of the network. First of all, we had to win the most important players and to convince them that there would be an added value for them if they joined the network. Our Centre for Competence is oriented towards the entire value added chain and is responsible e.g. for the networking together of the relevant partners, for a targeted transfer of technology, for marketing measures and for the establishment of international contacts in the fields of marketing and commerce. Our objective is the sustained development of Saarland into an internationally-competitive location for nanobiotechnology in the areas of training, R&D and innovation. Our region is a clearly arranged place to be, and all the actors know each other well. So our network can act on a basis of trust and confidence.

*What are the key success factors of this project that could be transferred in other regions?*

Probably the most important success factor is that we decided to outsource the network management. It was the first time that the management of a network for a new, forward-looking field of technology was assigned in its entirety to a private company. This allows technology transfer "at eye level" which means that experts talk to experts. Secondly, we managed to bind together researchers and industrial partners and gave them all the support they needed to apply together for research projects, especially those of the European Commission. Closely connected with this is the internationalisation of the network.

*Would you do anything in a different way if you were to start again?*

If we had to do it all again, maybe we would take a stronger look at pilot projects to bring an immediate and visible success which would help us to win new partners for the network.

**VIEW OF THE JURY:**

"By creating a virtual Regional Centre of Excellence that connects and expands the different activities in the field of NanoBioTechnology this project encourages new economic activities which will in turn become drivers of innovation for the whole region."

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**2nd place:**  
*X-PROT: Set up of a R&D  
Unit in Molecular  
Biotechnology to produce  
Recombinant Proteins of  
Interest for Human  
Health,  
Centro Region, Portugal*

The aim of the X-PROT project was to set up a Molecular Biotechnology Research and Development Unit to produce recombinant proteins. Recombinant proteins are used in crystallisation studies, antibody production and the screening of new drugs, and are therefore of importance for the scientific community. The key objectives of the X-PROT project are: i) setting up of a R&D unit to produce recombinant proteins, ii) production of 5 novel proteins of interest and iii) establishment of an active collaboration between the unit and a research laboratory of a pharmaceutical company.

In order to create a viable project the initiative involves three key partners with proved expertise in the field: the Centre of Neuroscience and Cellular Biology from the University of Coimbra (CNC), Association for Biomedical Research and Innovation in Light and Image (AIBILI) and the technical staff of Bluepharma, former Bayer Portugal, a pharmaceutical company of the Centro Region of Portugal.

The design and implementation of the X-PROT project was based on a functional model supported by the competences of the three partners with complementary expertise. Altogether they assured the success of the project and made the transference of the competences from the university research laboratories to the pharmaceutical companies a reality since the beginning of the project. Most of the success of X-PROT comes from this project organization, which allows the creation of valuable synergies and guarantees the complete execution of the planned activities.

The Centro Region with 17% of population of Portugal covers approximately 26% of its continental territory. Centro is located in the central part of continental Portugal. The economy of Centro region is characterised by a multi-varied production structure, where the predominance of so-called traditional sectors coexists with specialization niches of advanced technological sectors (telecommunications) and services (software, health).

Main regional indicators  
Area 23.668 sq km  
Population 1,7 million  
Population density 75,4 inh./sq km  
(annual average % change) 3,4%  
Employment rate 73,6 %

#### INTERVIEW WITH THE PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR

##### What is the history of the project?

The project was the result of over 15 years of research experience of the Molecular Biotechnology Laboratory of the Center for Neuroscience in molecular biology, protein purification and characterization. The opportunity came with the sequencing of the human

genome which creates an international need for recombinant proteins. Since the research laboratory was located in the same building of AIBILI and in the same city as Bluepharma, casual contacts among the partners occurred frequently, either in the bar at coffee time or during the weekly seminar of the Center for Neurosciences and soon we realised that we could easily set out a model project like X-PROT. The CNC had the technology and the human resources, AIBILI offered unique competences in project management and technology transference, and Bluepharma had a genuine interest in R&D because it is an important part of its strategic development.

#### What was the role of regional authorities in this process?

It was essentially a financial and administrative role under the framework of the regional programme. With this experience now I think they can be more active in promoting successful networks for a future programme.

#### What are the key success factors of this project that could be transferred in other regions?

The key factors of this project are the quality of the human resources and the functional model supported by the competences of three partners, from complementary areas of intervention (a research laboratory from University, a transference centre of know-how and technology to the Health Science industry, and a pharmaceutical company) which assured both the success of the project as well as an efficient transference of competences from the University to the Industry. This later aspect was very important and can easily be transferred to other regions.

#### Would you do anything differently if you were to start again?

I truly believe things were done the right way. So, I would have it done the same way if I had to start all over again!

#### VIEW OF THE JURY:

"This project is an excellent example of technological innovation that can be transferred to the private sector in order to benefit the region as a whole."

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**3rd place:**  
*VDTC - ProDiMA –  
Development of Innovative  
Products and Services  
using "Virtual Reality"  
Technologies for Mechanical  
and Plant Engineering Smes,  
Sachsen-Anhalt, German*

The Sachsen-Anhalt region, lying to the north east of central Germany, is one of the new German Bundesländer (federal states). It borders on the states of Niedersachsen to the north-west, Brandenburg to the east, Sachsen to the south-east and Thüringen to the south-west. The region is noted for industrial production which has increased over the past years and even surpassed growth rates in the old federal states. The region also has an agricultural industry. Sachsen-Anhalt has many mansions and castles and is home to the Harz mountains in the South-West. The main river of Sachsen-Anhalt is the Elbe, running through the state from southeast to northwest. The second largest river, the Saale, is a tributary of the Elbe.

### Main regional indicators

Area 20,447 sq km  
Population 2.6 million  
Population density 127.1 inh./sq km  
GDP growth (annual average % change) 1.6%  
Employment rate 59.5%

The aim of the ProDiMA project is to revive the small mechanical and plant engineering enterprises of Sachsen-Anhalt. Actually, mechanical and plant engineering is a structurally defined cluster in Saxony-Anhalt, which has been particularly affected by restructuring in recent years. Small enterprises characterise the corporate structure. Establishing innovation networks for developing and manufacturing products as well as for internationalising business activity is important for the survival of these enterprises. The region's scientific scene provides the prerequisites for supporting these processes. The Virtual Development and Training Centre (VDTC), its structure, its technological approaches as well as its future operation are outcomes of the Regional Innovation Strategy and Priority Project. Taking the utilisation of the potentials of future VR technologies as its example, the model project ProDiMA effectively reflects the collaboration of actors from the scientific

community and the business community in equal parts. Corresponding to the thematic orientation of the model project, typical regional mechanical and plant engineering companies work in the project consortium with a research institute. Together with the SME project partners, the model project was oriented thematically toward the entire spectrum of task complexes for and in SMEs such as "VR-based product documentation," "technologies for training on complex machines," "visual-interactive product presentation" and "virtual product development."

### INTERVIEW WITH THE PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR

#### What is the history of the project?

The model project ProDiMA grew out of a multitude of research and industry projects carried out in the past, the results of which are being taken up in the strategic development of the VDTC in Magdeburg. It combines demand-based development of instruments and technologies with corresponding preparations in SMEs and practical demonstration of the successful use of these developments. Its complexity, diversity appropriate to corporate demand and its new, model approach, make it instrumental for implementing the strategic approach to developing a core competence in

the mechanical and plant engineering cluster. This is essential for sustainable research and development for new production services for regional business, generally geared toward the needs of SMEs. Fraunhofer IFF in Magdeburg performed the necessary research. Experiences from users in a multitude of EU projects especially entered into this work.

#### What was the role of regional authorities in this process?

In 2002 the Saxony-Anhalt Ministry of Economics initiated its program Innovative EFRE Measures in Saxony-Anhalt 2002-2004 intended to develop and implement new approaches in the interface of innovation and economic policy in model projects in the innovation clusters of chemical industry and plastics, mechanical and plant engineering and disposal of commercial and industrial waste management. In particular, efficient regional cooperation and excellence networks are being developed, innovative regional competencies are being consolidated as the basis for greater internationalization and the interregional exchange of experience is being intensified. The content substantially builds upon the two regional innovation strategies in Saxony-Anhalt (RIS Halle-Leipzig-Dessau and RIS RAHM) with which the state is acting state-wide on the approach to innovation-oriented regional development pursued by the European Commission. The model project ProDiMA fits into the mechanical and plant engineering innovation cluster.

#### What are the key success factors of this project that could be transferred in other regions?

In view of the demands in SMEs and the connected risks, as part of the model project, the application of VR based products and services, VDTC will solve the problems confronting SMEs. These examples will demonstrate the potentials and effects of their practical use. To this end, the development, prototype application and model validation of corresponding innovative solutions in the context of practical problems is required in SMEs.

The model project includes great potentials for generalization, which ensure the results achieved are used in and disseminated to other SMEs, sectors and groups of actors in the innovation cluster. This results in solutions for the region that are appropriate to demand and intersectoral and beyond that also make benefits available within Europe.

The model project ProDiMA is an outstanding model example of future support of sustainable innovations in

SMEs and is thus a model of strategic orientation and preparation for future projects and products. The results achieved, resulting from the findings and the strategic approach to SME business and the demand for sustainability, can be transferred extremely well to other sectors.

Thus the application of results is not only limited to the mechanical and plant engineering innovation cluster. Further, the internationalization of SME business activities and the exchange of experiences between regions will be simplified in the future.

of project planning and execution applied can be a model for new innovation projects in the future. Thus the transferability to operative programs and other regions is assured. The support measures of the Innovative EFRE Measures are a very simple means of strengthening the regional economy and thus exemplary for supporting SMEs.

#### VIEW OF THE JURY:

The project has been given a European Regional Innovative Action Award for helping businesses through the transfer of knowledge and technological innovation. "This project supports the ongoing structural changes to the local economy."

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## Theme 2: e-Europe-Regio: the Information Society at the Service of Regional Development

*GNULINEX project,  
Extremadura, Spain*

The Extremadura region consists of two provinces, Caceres and Badajoz. It borders Portugal to the west, Andalucia to the south and Castilla la Mancha to the east. The regions capital is Merida (51000 inhabitants). Extremadura is a rich and fertile land that has for centuries supplied much of Europe with fresh produce. Its brown-coloured land is in fact a land full of water. Thanks to its many reservoirs it provides a great deal of electricity and water for irrigation.

Extremadura has taken advantage of its natural resources to promote sustainable development. The regional economy has improved allowing Extremadura to become the Spanish Region converging at the fastest pace with other economies within the European Union (1985-1999 period).

Main regional indicators

Area: 41,602 sq km

Population: 1.1 million

Population density: 25.9 inh./sq km

GDP growth (annual average % change): 3.5%

Employment rate: 50.7%

GnuLinEx is a GNU/Linux distribution addressed to the final user, based on Debian Woody - one of the safest and strongest GNU/Linux operating system. The Regional Government has modified some characteristics of it in order to adapt it to citizens' needs. GnuLinEx has been distributed in every school in the region, reaching the ratio of a PC for two pupils in Secondary Education and a PC for six pupils in Primary Education, which means that today nearly 60,000 computers work with GnuLinEx, 183,000 pupils and 16,000 teachers that are getting technologically literate using this alternative software.

GnuLinEx is not a product born by chance r spontaneously, but rather by the need to fulfil a double goal: on one hand, an Educational goal, to contribute to the development of the project Red Tecnológica Educativa (Education Technology Network), with a ratio of one computer for each two students in all the schools in the region; on the other hand, to an economic and social goal that consists of spreading free software in Extremadura, through the Plan de Alfabetización Tecnológica (Technological Literacy Plan), SME's and the Administration itself. The availability of a fully functional software that can be copied legally, helps to overcome economic barriers, such as the high cost of software licences.

GnuLinEx allows the region to save on the expense of licenses because it is easily redistributed. The system has been able to spread to other areas of public administration in Extremadura. The region took steps to ensure independence from a single supplier. This created opportunities for development in the local area, slowed the 'brain drain' and gave people freedom to use the software they chose.

The innovative character is not technological but methodological:

- top to bottom political strategy with a clear objective: 1 PC per two students by 2003.
- which is axed on the needs of end users principally and with a design allowing the user to recognise himself culturally when using GnuLinEx.
- establishment of a support system to ensure the migration through the adaptation of existing actions and projects.
- Demonstration effect: the relative ease with which the migration was assured has allowed all regional agents envisaging the use of new tools of the Information Society to get a cheap software, with low maintenance cost, assuring control of updates, adaptations and future modifications, as well as independence from a single supplier.



- control of the updates and future developments is exercised by the Administration.

Extremadura is the first Regional Administration promoting Free and Open Source Software among his citizens and the first one developing and distributing FLOSS together with technical support in the systems' migration. Extremadura is currently working with other Spanish and european regions (eSafer INTERREG IIIC) to develop other versions of GnuLinEx.

## INTERVIEW WITH THE PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR

### What is the history of the project?

In 1998 Juan Carlos Rodríguez Ibarra the President of the Regional Government of Extremadura, took the challenge to get Extremadura into the Information Society, boldly committed not to exclude anyone. We started by carrying out a strategic project of incorporation into the Information Society, based on some essential principles: connectivity (universal access) and Technological Literacy to every citizen, regardless the place they live in.

The Global Project for the Development of the Information Society aims at promoting the usage of ICT's among citizens, taking advantage of its possibilities in every field, specially in the field of training and the creation of businesses that meant an improvement of the citizens' quality of life. The consolidation of this global project, both in the education context, supporting the creation of technologically-based businesses and promoting an ambitious plan for Technological Literacy, reached to the point in which, keeping a successful framework required us to depend on an external factor, such as used software. This situation led to the creation of GnuLinEx: the need to have a software that allowed completing a project which we could fully control; and this could only be made using free software.

### What was the role of regional authorities in this process?

GnuLinEx is managed and exercised directly from the Regional Ministry for Education, Science and Technology of Extremadura Regional Government. Other Regional Ministries have started to work in order to migrate their computing systems, what allows a direct transference of the results to the future regional plans.

### What are the key success factors of this project that could be transferred to other regions?

GnuLinEx is addressed to the final user, whose basic computing needs are offimatic and communication tools (word processor, e-mail, Internet ...), and who does not have a broad knowledge of computing. It is a distribution easy to set up and configure. characteristics, together with the fact that is free/open and can be copied and modified legally, and its contribution to universal access and the freedom of the

human kind, are key factors for the transferability of the project.

A good proof of GnuLinEx transferability is the fact that it has been already transferred to other regions. In April 2003 an Agreement between the President of Extremadura Regional Government and the President of Andalucía Regional Government was signed for the usage and dissemination of GnuLinEx, establishing cooperation mechanisms for the development of new applications and support in Free/open source software. The agreement was made concrete in the launching of the project GUADALINEX. Other regional governments have also shown interest for this distribution (e.g. Basque Country, Canary Islands and Valencia).

In the framework of other european regional policy actions, the project eSafer has been launched (INTERREG IIIC), whose aim is validating the experience of GnuLinEx in the Programmes of Innovative Actions developed in Madeira (P), Lazio (I), Nord – pas de Calais (F), Balear Islands (E), Andalucía (E) and Athens (GR). At international level, GnuLinEx has been transferred to other South American administrations and entities.

### Would you do anything differently if you were to start again?

Yes, we would not have wasted any time to the problem of viruses and to those issues related to safety, from the perspective of an unsafe computing and with no responsibility regarding its most critical problems. We would not have been accomplices, for some time, of a model for technological development addressed to the élite, such as that promoted by proprietary software. Instead of listening to those trying to impose us obligations and getting us discouraged to carry out our project, that would not be sustainable with proprietary software, we would have been worried for talking more with others sharing the same problems as ours.

Having understood that in order to create a real Knowledge Society it is necessary to change the model late, obliged us to start much faster and from another point. This, further of being a complaint, is an exercise of shared understanding, advising others not to take a wrong path, very expensive and disheartening.

### VIEW OF THE JURY:

"This project has already made a significant impact on the region's economy. Fifteen people directly work on the system while another sixty to seventy people are employed in corresponding supplier firms".

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## Theme 3: Regional Identity and Sustainable Development

### *Tanno meets Gemini, Eastern Styria, Austria*

The region of Eastern Styria is part of the larger bundesland area of Styria (Steiermark). Extinct volcanoes in Eastern Styria shape the landscape creating hill country. The hills have good soil conditions and are home to many vineyards. Eastern Styrian agriculture also focuses on forestry and intensive small-hold farming of quality products. In recent years farms have become more interested in organic methods. The region's thermal springs and vineyards attract tourism, although in Eastern Styria it tends to be tourists from within Austria. Textile, clothing and footwear industries have, over time given way to automotive industries specialising in metal work and electronic engineering.

#### Main regional indicators

Area 16,387 sq km

Population 1.2 million

Population density 72.5 inh./sq km

GDP growth (annual average % change) 2.7%

Employment rate 67.8%

TANNO meets GEMINI – Creating affordable, energy efficient housing using local timber.

The aim of the "TANNO meets GEMINI" project was to create affordable housing that optimised energy efficiency. The project combined the ideas of the Herbitschek company, who produces prefabricated houses using local fir trees - Styria, actually, is the most heavily forested province in Austria - as building materials, with the 'plus-energy' housing designs of Gemini-Haus.

The result was prefabricated houses so energy efficient that the project was able to sell surplus energy back to the power-grid.

TANNO meets GEMINI created a team of partners with different building and construction expertise who together were able to maximise their technical and ecological knowledge. This resulted in a low cost, high quality product.

The wood material developed at the Technical University of Graz, enabled a modular system of construction with similarly designed wall and ceiling elements which were used in Styria for the first time in the building of homes. Precise static construction systems, detail developments, the examination of building physics, cost and quality analyses, were combined with new, exacting methods of

prefabrication and the production of large area construction elements. Together they produced a multi-purpose, ecologically and cost-optimised construction system which can be implemented and adapted regionally as well as internationally, without the need for changing its basic structure. Furthermore a highly insulative housing shell, in combination with intelligent home automation, results in a home which only requires the energy of about 30 tea candles to heat it. This minimal heating energy requirement, along with the total energy needed for electricity and hot water, is not only covered by the integrated photovoltaic system; it actually produces an energy surplus, which is then fed into the power-grid at a profit. This makes it possible to not only build self-sufficient houses, but to build „Plus-Energy“ (energy generating) housing developments.

#### OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT BY THE CO-ORDINATOR

Styria is the most heavily forested province in Austria. In the northeast of the province, the so-called Joglland, 20% of the entire woodland consists of fir trees, which is 10 times the average in Austria. In cooperation with a network of regional firms, the Herbitschek company has developed a line of prefabricated homes marketed under the name TANNO. These are ecologically designed low-energy consuming homes which use fir as their main building material. The GEMINI-HAUS was designed and built as a net energy producing house in the years 1997 to 2001 in cooperation with the architect DI Kaltenecker in Weiz. Similar to a sunflower, the house rotates in relation to the sun to make optimal use of the sun's energy and thereby produces more energy than it consumes. The project TANNO meets GEMINI was initiated in November 2002 by the architect DI Erwin Kaltenecker, the

Herbitschek company and the engineer Wolfgang Lackner. Based on the knowledge and experience gained from TANNO and GEMINI and in cooperation with the Technical University of Graz (Institute for Wood Construction) and the Joanneum Research Institute (Institute for Energy Research), further advancements were achieved in the areas of cost and energy optimisation of the prefabricated house.

The potential effect of the project on the region is that the partners are exclusively drawn from local companies in the region of East Styria. All the partners and firms involved in the project will increase their market presence and expertise in their companies through the products developed as part of the project. The formation of networks amongst the participating companies and research bodies will strengthen the regional and international competitive position of the small and medium sized companies involved and will create a leadership in the region in this product area. The project will certainly continue after the period of support because it is designed for sustainability and only employs local raw materials and technologies. In addition it is anticipated that the project will continue by its results being exported to other regions, as it is not limited to this region but can be used globally. A house designed in this way creates the best living and working space which enhances personal well-being through its particular atmosphere.

Due to the geographical situation of East Styria on the border of future EU member countries (e.g. Hungary, Slovenia), there is a great market potential in this area. There is a high probability that the production facilities for the derived timber product OSB 8000 will be built in Styria. This will ensure that the entire value added chain from raw materials to the finished house will be produced in one region. A regional energy agency, in which the Styrian region is also involved, could be a further possible source of finance. Continuing and additional financing are also possible within the framework of support for development of rural areas (INTERREG III, LEADER+) or through local planning authorities as well as the Objective 2 Programme Styria. Transfer to other regions is possible and sensible because the project does not depend on specific characteristics of the region or the area and can be employed universally because of the general climate and energy situations. The results and findings of the project can easily be transferred to companies with a similar business orientation in other member states through transfer of expertise. This project is also a part of a European Solar Construction Exhibition (), which in addition to Weiz also includes the cities of Hamburg (D), Berlin (D), Plauen (D), Leicester (GB), Rom (I), Scandicci (I), Asti (I) und Castilblanco (E). Additional projects are in planning or preparation in Kapfenberg (A), Krieglach (A), St. Agyden (A), Lieboch (A), Weinitzen (A), Fürstenfeld (A), Passail (A), and Maribor (SLO). The implementation of this housing

concept is also planned for the European Solar Construction Exhibition in Hamburg (Project coordinators: IG-Passivhaus Steiermark/Styria-Burgenland) and for tourism projects in Corsica, Greece and Croatia.

The necessity of participation of all partners involved was due to the different distribution of areas of expertise (timber construction, energy etc.). Combining the available technologies and ecological knowledge of all those involved was able to enhance the benefit for everyone.

the companies of EGGER-Holz (production of derived timber products) and Griffner-Haus (specialised in prefabricated houses) could also be integrated into the project. The complete construction of the homes (home automation, wiring, interior fittings, furnishing etc.) required the integration of additional regional companies into the team. Here as well, through the cooperative of all of the handicraft businesses, it was possible to carry out cost-optimised and high-quality work.

#### VIEW OF THE JURY:

"This project, very well adapted to the region's specific situation, has contributed to the creation of a network of companies in this field. The project is a very good example of sustainable development."

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## ERIK Study Visit on Science-Industry Relations in Helsinki

The ERIK Network Study Visit on Science Industry Relations took place in Helsinki on the 6th and 7th May, 2004. The event was supported by OECD and organized with the help of the Finnish Ministry of Trade and Industry. During the two-day visit representatives from the main institutions responsible for Innovation Policy in Finland and research centers were visited by the Erik Network members.

On the first day, the Erik delegation was welcomed by Mr. Antti Joensuu, the Deputy General Director for International Technology Policy of the Finnish Ministry of Trade and Industry, who presented the main objectives and the institutional operational frame. The improvement of framework conditions affecting the economic environment in which the industrial sector operates and the subsequent enhancement of Finnish products' competitiveness is the key intervention area set out by the Ministry. In this view, collaboration with innovative companies, universities and research centers represents a core activity undertaken at national, European and international level. The coordination among the different institutions involved in Innovation Policy and, more specifically, the participation of the Ministry of Trade and Industry to the Finnish Science and Technology Policy Council assures and reinforces a rapid implementation of economic policy decisions.

Moreover, the Ministry of Trade and Industry supports the development of peripheral regions with productive specializations different from the ones characterizing the Greater Helsinki Region, mainly related to ICT applications. In this direction, big efforts have been taken by the Government through the Center of Expertise Program with the identification of the target Finnish regions that are able to develop important innovation programs and with the provision of financial support schemes to favour these initiatives.

The study tour program was complemented by a visit to the Foundation for Finnish Inventions whose main aim is to support and help private individuals and small entrepreneurs located in Finland to develop and exploit invention proposals.

The Erik delegation was then received in one of the largest and most important technological parks of northern Europe, the Technology Park of Otaniemi, with its 14,000 technology students, 3,000 researchers, 2 start-up companies and 3 large companies. The Otaniemi Science Park also operates as a business incubator. The results, mostly achieved

during the nineties, have been extraordinary: more than 5,000 jobs created, 150 Meuro of annual wages, 90% success rate of financed start-up companies. The Greater Helsinki Region sees a large concentration of universities and science parks that actively collaborate one with the other. Since biotechnology and ICT sectors are the most important sectors for economic growth of Finland, the universities and science parks are also deeply involved in the establishment and development of international clusters.

The second day of the study tour started with a visit at the Tekes, the National Technology Agency of Finland, the country's principal promoter of research and development. The main activities of the Agency are represented by technology program promotion, provision of start-up loans for new companies and other instruments addressed to the creation of new businesses

At the end of the study tour, the Erik members were received during the afternoon at the VTT Technical Research Center of Finland that is an independent expert organization that carries out technical and techno-economic research and development programs. VTT also provides information services and is the largest contract research organization in the Nordic countries, operating in different fields such as ICT, manufacturing methods, industrial components, and management of extensive industrial systems.

## Murcia

# Innovative Actions Programme

Rafael Martínez Fernández, Instituto de Fomento Región de Murcia

At the end of 2001, the Region of Murcia applied to participate in the innovative actions of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Notification of the Region's acceptance was received in February, 2002, and the Development Agency of the Region of Murcia (INFO) managed a RPIA from that time until September, 2003. The ERDF awarded 2.7 million euro to this Regional Program for Innovative Actions, which is expected to generate 4.1 million euro in investment and jobs.

The project's objectives were to favour innovation as a main pillar for SME growth, test new tools for facilitating Technology Transfer and increase coordination and integration of the "Science-Technology-Business" system.

The project's actions were carried out by personnel at the Region of Murcia Technology Centers, the Universities of Murcia and Cartagena, the European Business Innovation Center in Cartagena, the General Directorate of Science, Technology and Information Society, as well as INFO, which also coordinated the project.

Murcia's RPIA exercise was linked to aspects of the regional economy based in technological innovation and knowledge. Its activities included methodological exercises such as studies to characterize firms in the pre-innovative phase, plans for introducing innovative culture to firms, as well as pilot support programs for SMEs. These pilot programs were aimed to increase technologist mobility as well as new quality and design tools.

The following activities were proposed in the first RPIA:

- Characterization of pre-innovative firms
- Installment of innovative culture in businesses
- Technological Indicator System adapted to less industrialized regions
- Technologist mobility
- New quality and design tools
- Proactive technology transfer strategies in less developed business organizations
- Introduction of a corporate technological plan as a management tool for the Region of Murcia
- Forums for defining the technological demands of the regional industrial sector
- Management network for technology center information within the Region

A classification of these activities helps differentiate the first three theoretical or methodological actions from

the rest of the actions, which offer direct assistance to SMEs

### Methodological activities

In characterizing firms as pre-innovative, a company typology was defined and characterized in order to help companies make the jump to, or begin the first steps toward, technological innovation.

This exercise helps to define the program's potential clients, maximizing aid benefits which were traditionally destined to firms with internal innovation management already implemented. One thousand five hundred firms were interviewed, and resulted in proposals for changes in support programs for SME advancement through innovation.

Introducing innovative culture to firms through this program was achieved by developing a methodology to allow firms, mainly in the pre-innovative stage, to successfully implement innovative culture. The program also included actions for diffusion of design tools and unique strategic models used by each participant firm. Very few participating businesses had already installed innovative culture into their most significant corporate policies, and changes were proposed to bring more innovative perspectives to business policies. A total of 800 firms were involved with these actions.

A guide which allowed firms to compare their activities with their surrounding industrial environment was also developed and distributed in collaboration with the General Directorate of Science, Technology and Information Society and 150 self-diagnostic technologists.

In addition, a system of technology indicators adapted to less industrialized regions was developed to show the Region of Murcia's position in relation to technological innovation and long-term advances. Although difficult to express in official statistics, the program has detected a degree of heterogeneity in how firms consider their own innovative culture. Over two-thirds of participant SMEs described some type of innovative culture within their businesses.

Although these methodological activities present a higher level of "technological risk," they have provided interesting conclusions on our SMEs and business organization.

The Region of Murcia Technology Centers and the Development Agency have been the direct agents

involved in the development of SME support initiatives.

The forums for defining the regional industrial sector's technological demands offered 23 technological meetings with a practical nature to the different industrial sectors. These forums worked to define solutions to the main sector demands, previously outlined by expert committees.

#### Activities in support of SMEs

The Region of Murcia Technology Center information management network is committed to resolving the heterogeneity of information systems which can then create synergy and efficiency in information management and technology watch. This project is currently being continued under another European Program called INTERREG.

Technologist mobility has also facilitated the involvement and mobility of 51 technologists in small and medium firms within traditional sectors. This service has helped the firms to have an internal interlocutor capable of identifying technological factors as threats or as beneficial opportunities. The role of qualified technologists is essential because the best way to transmit technology transfer is through expert professionals.

Other activities were designed to support quality and design-related actions aimed at facilitating an intermediate scale for those firms within high manufacturing industries who have had difficulty in incorporating these standard management tools. This measure sought to avoid the dilemma between firms either adhering to the standard practices or not participating at all.

In collaboration with the CENEMES Innovation Relay Center, a methodology was developed for less developed business organizations (which also have few specialized services for companies) to create favourable conditions in firms as well as facilitative organizations for technology transfer. Many of this activity's conclusions have been incorporated into the INFO 2005 proposed aid programs.

At the same time, 22 technology plans have been developed in SMEs while many generic plans have also been laid out for several subsectors. This tool is expected to help firms which have received consultation to consider technology as a basic resource for competition and innovation, and to implement these activities proactively.

#### Conclusions

The Region of Murcia Regional Program of Innovative

Actions has worked with a goal of putting the most pressing needs of regional SMEs on the table. The administration sees this work through the regional development agency and technology centers to be a radical "bottom-up" approach. This focus, along with INFO's developing requests, has motivated the application for funding a second RPIA. Thanks to the work of all parties involved, the exercise was finished last May, and its completion supports the request for participation in a second program.

The results of analytical exercises and regional strategic innovation proposals from other European regions were taken into account during completion of the first project. These results have also been considered in developing the second project and help by offering differentiating and innovative aspects which have proven successful in other regions.

The predominant, practical focus of these innovative actions, in coordination with their corresponding theoretical or methodological approaches, is reaching a balance which has generated great interest in the science-technology-business system and especially in Murcian SMEs. This effect has led the Development Agency (INFO) to strongly support these innovative action projects aware of the importance they have for Objective 1 Regions and their competitiveness in a globalized market. These activities further improve the Added Value of Murcian firms, products and services.

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# Lombardia Innovative Actions Programme

Luciana Fedrizzi, DG Artigianato, Nuova Economia, Ricerca e Innovazione Tecnologica, Regione Lombardia

At the beginning of 2003, the Lombardia Region started a 9.162.000 € Innovative Action Programme named "MINERVA", co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (32%), national Fund (36%) and with a significant participation from the private side (32%). The Programme, is concentrated in some areas of the Region (areas ob. 2), with only limited activities in the rest of the Region.

MINERVA addresses two of the three Innovative Action's themes:

- Regional economies based on knowledge and technological innovation
- e-EuropeRegio: the information society at the service of regional development

## Targets

MINERVA's main targets are:

1. to develop an Integrated Innovation Regional System aimed to coordinate all regional players in order to improve the utilization of new technologies, processes and products by SMEs as well as a new organization of services delivery.
2. to undertake a scouting of a new innovative approach on target areas: the creation of new innovative companies with good technology potentials, to support the definition and the evaluation of an innovative business idea, i.e.

MINERVA aims at promoting, in a proactive way, the collaboration between the knowledge system (universities, research centers) and the economic system, in particular SMEs in the north of Milan and in the areas ob.2.

MINERVA is built on seven actions: four horizontal Actions to create the tools through which to develop strategic guidelines on innovation and to stimulate the cooperation among the key actors of technology and finance, and three cross Actions to support private companies in making innovation through practical but innovative actions, in identifying good ideas for transfer.

## Actions

The Programme has seven actions divided in different areas:

- I. Regional economies based on knowledge and technological innovation

The first four actions aim to create an Integrated Innovation Regional System.

The first action (Regional Forum on innovation) has the objective to create a Forum that will advise and supervise regional policies on innovation trying to complete and harmonize the initiatives implemented at regional and sub-regional level. A document "The strategical document for research and innovation in Lombardia", will be produced in which will be presented the regional strategy and the instruments to support the research and development activity in Lombardia in order to improve the skills and the knowledge of the region and to promote the exchange of experiences and technology transfer. It is also foreseen an activity of implementation of a model of "governance" with reference to the topic of the biotechnologies analyzing the relationship between science and society.

This action is supported by two different actions to promote the industrial exploitation of existing technologies (Directory of expertise (skills)) and to create an observatory to identify technologies needs and the keys critical factors concerning technology in different area and to realise a prospective analyse in order to anticipate the demand (Pilot observatory on technology watch and foresight).

In order to support innovation for SMEs there are two specific innovative actions: the New support schemes for start-up and spin off for the creation of new innovative companies with good technology potentials, also including new schemes to support company innovation, and the Explorative awards to SMEs for innovative projects to support the definition and the evaluation of an innovative business idea. Within this action the Region has experimented a new form of financial support with the use of a "technology voucher". The voucher gives the opportunities to companies or even to an entrepreneur, to buy services to support the creation of new innovative companies and the development of new innovative technologies addressing their needs to a number of centres that have been credited by the region (research centres, universities, etc). The support is given at different level: to help to define the business idea, to prepare a business plan and for the start up and the business incubator phase.

This support scheme has given significant results thanks of the quick availability of the contribution and the flexibility of the instrument based on a step by step approach. This incentives scheme has also the advantage to address the needs of SMEs to external centres that can have a wider specialisation and can contribute to ensure an added value to the SMEs.

II. e-EuropeRegio: the information society at the service of regional development  
Only one action is foreseen under this theme to promote the development of technology platforms for marketplace and or portal for SMEs (Support for market place).

As an accompanying measure, Minerva has foreseen an action to promote networking (Transnational networks): participation to transnational networks, monitoring the participation of Lombardia companies and research centres to FP VI, promotion of the

development of new networks in order to support the participation to FP VI and stimulate integration.

### Players

The programme has been developed using a bottom-up approach trying to involve all the main actors involved in the sector that are: regional decision makers, the public, private and third sector, innovation centres, trade associations, enterprises – particularly SMES - business representation organizations, regional development technology institutions.

All Minerva actions are in progress: when concluded there will be a final event to inform about their results and to promote the dissemination of the experimented best practices.

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on the next NEWSLETTER

RPIAs from:

■ Basse Normandie

■ Alentejo



## News

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# ERIK Conference “Knowledge based regional development and innovation. The transition towards a knowledge based economy”

Florence 25 and 26 November, 2004

Innovation is increasingly recognized as a major source of productivity and output growth and as a consequence becoming an important target for growth policy initiatives. At the same time governments are devoting more attention to the territorial dimension of the innovation process and to a range of local and regional actors contributing to this process including firms, universities and public research institutions. The trends towards more globalised markets and increasing links between research, knowledge and technology explain this somehow new focus. On the one hand such trends and particularly the development of information technologies seem to have heralded the death of distance. On the other hand they have also paradoxically underlined the role of proximity in the development of new products and processes. Innovation is often based on tacit knowledge, a type of knowledge that can only be exchanged through interpersonal relations i.e. between firms or between firms and research entities on a local and regional basis. The Florence conference aims at analyzing these new challenges, at learning from government policy experiences and at sharing best practices. It will examine promising new policy options to better link knowledge and business communities and help turning technologies into market opportunities. A particular focus will be put on policy initiatives to stimulate inter-firm cooperation through business networks, on science/industry partnerships and on support to start ups and spin-offs. The issue of start ups and spin-offs - a main source of the innovation dynamics - will also be reviewed. The Conference will bring together for the first time innovation policy officials and leading policy analyst at national and regional level from Europe as well as from America and Asia. Efforts will be made to conclude the conference with a charter on the themes discussed. The conference is co-sponsored by the Tuscany Region, the ERIK Network - a group of 33 European Regions co-financed by the European Commission - and the OECD.

### Event News

#### DECEMBER 2004

>> 05-07 **Fourth European Forum for Innovative Enterprises, Stuttgart and Karlsruhe (Germany)**,  
On 5-7 December 2004, the European innovation community will meet in Stuttgart at the '4th European Forum for Innovative Enterprises' to be co-organised by the European Commission and the Regions of Excellence Stuttgart and Karlsruhe. High-level european innovation policy makers, researchers and practitioners will present and debate the latest policy ideas, opportunities and challenges for a more innovative and competitive Europe.

Hosted by two leading european regions in innovative start-up creation and development, the Forum provides a unique opportunity to discuss the development and implementation of outstanding innovation policy with the main actors, face to face. The event includes two Innovation Tours organised by the Stuttgart Region Economic Development Corporation.

>> 06 **INTERREG IIIC Forum, Rotterdam (NL)**  
Assessing interregional cooperation in the EU: present and future  
A Europe-wide INTERREG IIIC Forum will take place on 6 December in Rotterdam at the 'De Doelen Concert and Congress Centre'. Representatives from Local and Regional Authorities from across Europe will meet to exchange ideas on running successful operations under INTERREG IIIC and to discuss the results and future of interregional cooperation.

This full day event will feature the following subjects:

- The future of interregional co-operation policy within the enlarged EU.
- Presentations on the current activities of INTERREG IIC with a showcase of approved operations in the following areas: Spatial Planning and Transport, Social Development and Governance, Economic Development and Innovation, Environment and Risk Management.
- Advice for potential applicants on putting together a successful INTERREG IIC proposal based on the lessons learnt during previous application rounds.

Furthermore, participants interested in meeting potential partners will also be invited to share ideas and to learn more about the INTERREG IIC programme and its funding opportunities. Running parallel to these informative presentations will be an exhibition with over 100 stands displaying both ongoing and potential operation ideas, where informal meetings will be encouraged throughout the event

More information

<http://www.interreg3c.net/sixcms/detail.php?id=312>

>> 13-14

**SME Capacity Building and Investment Readiness, Brussels**

The event organised by EURADA in cooperation with EBAN, London Business Angels, Barcelona Activa and IVEN.

<http://www.eurada.org/calendar.php?menu=3>

**JANUARY 2005**

>> 27

**'Entrepreneurial innovation: networking key players and users' call for proposals**

The call for proposals 'Entrepreneurial innovation: networking key players and users' has been launched by the European Commission. The call relates to sectors, clusters and networking of innovation actors by sector. The deadline for project submission is 27 January 2005.

For further details [http://fp6.cordis.lu/fp6/call\\_details.cfm?CALL\\_ID=172](http://fp6.cordis.lu/fp6/call_details.cfm?CALL_ID=172)

**JUNE 2005**

>> 19-22

**The XVI ISPIM Annual Conference, Porto, (Portugal)**

The 2005 ISPIM Conference "The Role of Knowledge in Innovation Management" will be held in Porto, Portugal on 19-22 June 2005. It will be organised and hosted by INESC Porto. Academic papers and practitioner presentations will be included in the conference programme. The deadline for paper abstracts and presentation outlines is 15 January 2005.

For more information

<http://www.ispim.org/index.html>

## Erik Partners

Emilia Romagna (Italy)  
Lombardia (Italy)  
Toscana (Italy)  
Nieder Österreich (Austria)  
Wallonie (Belgium)  
Basse Normandie (France)  
Lorraine (France)  
Bremen (Germany)  
Thessaly (Greece)  
Alentejo (Portugal)  
Aragon (Spain)  
Murcia (Spain)  
West Midlands (United Kingdom)

## Erik Associate Partners

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Flanders (Belgium)  
Storstrøm (Denmark)  
Sachsen (Germany)  
Crete Region (Greece)  
Epirus (Greece)  
Ionian Islands (Greece)  
Sterea Ellada (Greece)  
Liguria (Italy)  
Piemonte (Italy)  
Gelderland (Netherlands)  
North-Brabant (Netherlands)  
South Holland (Netherlands)  
Balears (Spain)  
Castilla y León (Spain)  
Catalunya (Spain)  
Extremadura (Spain)  
La Rioja (Spain)  
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