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ERIK+ and the future European Regional Policy

Ambrogio Angelo Brenna - Regional Minister for Economic Development - Regione Toscana

The recent proposal from the European Commission for cohesion policy reform has led to a wide spread period of reflection throughout Europe. The emerging tendency is both that of promoting structural interventions leaning towards the strategic orientation of the Union (Lisbon, Gothenburg) and that of refocusing attention on more disadvantaged regions, without this excluding support for change in the rest of the Union.

The approval of a new phase of the network of European regions ERIK+ (European Regions Knowledge based Innovation Network) moves us in this direction by contributing to the debate on the efficiency of European regional policy for the development of technological innovation and the knowledge society.

The New ERIK+, with the participation of more than 40 regions including official partners and associate members, intends to complete the work begun by the ERIK network between 2003 and 2005. Its activities place greater emphasis on the collection, analysis and evaluation of good practices coming from the Regional Programme of Innovative Actions or, more generally, from regional schemes in support of innovation.

In the context of the enlarged union, of economic globalisation and of growth of the knowledge based economy, the ERIK+ network can create a privileged platform for dialogue among the regions and between them and the European Commission. Of course, this initiative also provides space for analysis and evaluation of issues related to innovation and technological transfer. These issues include strengthening of relations between science and industry, support for business networks and clusters, policies for start-up and spin-offs and new measures for financing innovation.

The ERIK+ network forms a community of regions capable of designing, developing and sharing new innovation scenarios and of contributing to the creation of a European knowledge society. This strategic space for comparison of the most significant initiatives undertaken by European regions is developed through benchmarking and foresight activities which highlight regional good practices in such a way as to spread local experience across the whole European knowledge area. The regional dimension puts itself forward once more

as the optimum dimension for increasing the value of specific skills even in a trans-regional form, make regions the subjects most adapt for the promotion of new innovation dynamics.

It is therefore necessary to re-launch innovation as one of the fundamental levers for development and competitiveness. This re-launch must start from a solid evaluation of the impact of policies for research and innovation, an evaluation which must be firmly connected to the process of political decision-making for greater intervention selectivity.

It is above all through these aspects - all capable of leading us to improved quality of measures for regional development - that we can respond adequately to the need to formulate good strategic programming, an instrument which is fundamental for confronting the new period which awaits us.



REGIONE TOSCANA
Giunta Regionale



Ambrogio Angelo Brenna
Regional Minister for Economic Development
Regione Toscana



The new phase of the ERIK Network

On the 29 of December 2005 the ERIK+ proposal extending ERIK's activities into 2006 was approved by the European Commission.

The regions of Toscana and Emilia-Romagna will act as the two Network leaders. The ERIK+ Network is composed by 13 official partner regions and by 31 associate partners.

The overall objective of the ERIK+ Network is to sustain and further develop regional networking and good practice exchange among European regions in the field of the first strategic theme of ERDF's Innovative Actions: "Regional Economies based on Knowledge and Technological Innovation". In detail the three main strategic objectives of the ERIK+ Network are therefore:

- To provide regions with a Europe-wide regional Knowledge and technological innovation platform to enhance region-to-region communication with the aim both of improving exchange of experience and good practices and of supporting future regional partnerships along with social and economic cohesion;
- To select, evaluate and disseminate good practices developed in the framework of Regional Programmes of Innovative Actions (RPIAs) among European regions in lieu of the next EU Structural Funds programming period;
- To provide interested regions, the European Commission and other relevant actors with practical recommendations regarding regional innovation oriented measures and policies (e.g. mainstreaming) as well as management and coordination of innovation projects.

Following up the activities undertaken over the two years of operation of the ERIK Network and based on the strong interest shown by the ERIK partners and associate members, the ERIK+ Network will concentrate on the following four sub-themes:

- Clusters and Business Networks
- Science and Industry Relations
- Support for Start-Ups and Spin-Offs
- Innovation Finance

These sub-themes have been identified through extensive surveys and analysis as priority areas of the regional innovation system and prime targets for innovation policies for all network partners and associate members. Furthermore, their relevance from the point of view of European regional and innovation policies in particular regarding the Lisbon, Gothenburg and Barcelona objectives cannot be underestimated. These thematic areas gain still further importance in the context of the next Structural Funds programming period and the prospect of mainstreaming good practices developed and tested in the framework of the ERDF's Innovative Actions.

The sub-themes will be elaborated by Thematic Working Groups (TWGs) managed by selected ERIK+ partners who have a rich experience in implementing policies and measures under their respective themes. TWGs coordinators will be responsible for managing and coordinating all ERIK+ thematic operations. These TWGs are described in detail later in this newsletter.

ERIK+ will last for 13 months and proposes a full schedule of meetings, study visits, publications and events.

On 18th April and on 1st June ERIK+ launched two "Calls for Regional Data" addressed to all the European Regions, with specific regards towards the 143 Regions with an ERDF approved Programme of Innovation Actions.

The qualitative and quantitative data on past and on on-going RPIAs related initiatives (but also on other relevant innovation programmes/initiatives existing in your region) will help identify Good Practices (GPs) concerning programmes and individual projects carried out within them. The data is brought together in the ERIK+ database, available for open consultation throughout Europe, and the GPs will be widely promoted through the ERIK+ network lifespan during, for example, study visits, publications and the final conference.

Each of the two calls - beside the collection of information on regional innovation programmes - will specifically focus on 2 of the four ERIK+ themes as identified above. The second call will last until the end of June.

For more information on the ERIK+ call for data please write to: info@eriknetwork.net or see the ERIK+ website at: www.eriknetwork.net



The new Structural Funds programming period: experimenting new innovation approaches

Veronica Gaffey - Head of the Innovative Actions Unit - European Commission - DG Regional Policy

The Structural Funds co-finance the development of an environment which is favourable to innovation, through support for education, business development and knowledge infrastructure. In order to meet the Lisbon objectives, this priority becomes even more important for 2007/13. It is also important, however, that regional policy helps public authorities to play the role of a catalyst for innovation in order to generate new ideas and new approaches which will promote the development of the individual regions.

Until now, regional policy has supported innovative approaches through separate budget lines and pilot actions (e.g., Regional Innovation Strategies in 1994/99, and Regional Programmes of Innovative Actions in 2000/06). However, mainstreaming the results of these initiatives has sometimes proved difficult. In addition, the new Member States have not yet had the possibility of benefiting from these instruments.

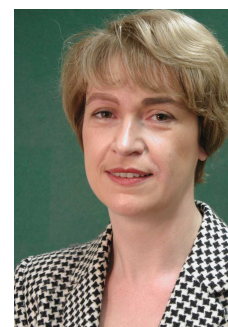
This is why, for the 2007/13 period, the Commission recommends that Member States and Regions make provision within Operational Programmes for the development and adaptation of regional innovation strategies and testing pilot actions. The objective would be to implement successful approaches on a more extensive basis in later years through the priorities of the Operational Programme. This has the potential to help Member States and regions to absorb Structural Fund resources.

A regional innovation strategy should be the first step of an innovation policy, which will in any case be a long-term and iterative process. It is a process which can help develop the capacity of a region or Member State to deliver more effective regional development interventions. The overall capacity of a region depends not only on how individual partners perform, but also how they interact with each other and with public authorities. Frequent interactions between people, firms and organisations reciprocally strengthen and lead to the accumulation of knowledge and know-how. Proximity between different actors makes it easier for them to create, acquire and use knowledge. What the Commission proposes in practical terms is that Operational Programmes would contain a small "laboratory" for testing new approaches, thus

counteracting the perception which has developed in recent years that Structural Funds are risk averse. The approaches and actions tested should arise from an innovation strategy for the region. The "laboratory" could have a specific budget, designated responsibility and should work on the basis of a good partnership between relevant stakeholders, namely with the persons responsible for the daily management of the Operational Programme.

This approach should facilitate the pathway from experimentation and testing through to full implementation with Structural Fund support. In this element of the Operational Programme, risk should be explicitly acknowledged and failure accepted.

Clearly, the approach would need to be adapted to the specificities of each region or Member State and be structured to be complementary with and build on the experiences gained under other relevant initiatives. There may be a role for this kind of experimental approach in both regional and sectoral Operational Programmes. There is no Operational Programme which cannot benefit from a degree of experimentation. The entire range of public policies we support can benefit from an approach which supports innovation, its piloting and testing, analysis of the results and further implementation.



Veronica Gaffey
Head of the Innovative Actions Unit
European Commission - DG Regional Policy



"Industrial Dynamics" The Innovative Actions Programme in Västra Götaland

Christer Enerskog, Programme Manager Västra Götaland Region

The industrial sector of Västra Götaland is the backbone of the regional economy and employment in Sweden outside Greater Göteborg. The Industrial Dynamics Programme has its origin from the RITTS study (1999-2000). Some of the main RITTS conclusions showed that industrial companies were dissatisfied with the regional qualified support service, which was not adapted to industrial companies' needs and demands and offered little co-ordination and collaboration between actors. RITTS also revealed the need for a change of attitude and innovation culture within SMEs. The Industrial Dynamics Programme enabled the RITTS conclusions to be put into practice.

The core of the Programme was the action "Developing a world-class regional innovation system based on knowledge transfer to industrial SMEs" where projects aimed at developing and testing new approaches to improve SMEs' drive for innovation and ability to innovate. The two most successful projects were "BETTER-courses" and "Regional Innovation System/Service". Both are based on real demand from SMEs, use relevant knowledge/ specialist resources from the whole region and reach companies even in remote areas.

BETTER-courses from the three university colleges in the area focus on competence development of individuals/groups in industrial SMEs by developing demand driven university courses. These are distance courses using modern technology (Internet learning, lectures via video streaming, meetings through video conference). team of university teachers developed specific courses on the basis of need analysis from 10-20 representative SMEs, thus courses focus on real problems and improvements in SMEs. Real measurable improvements in participating SMEs can already be seen. This concept promoted closer co-operation between the participating universities in order to develop and carry out the courses. It has also started the necessary process to overcome barriers between academia and industrial SMEs.

The "Regional Innovation System/Service" concept was designed to deliver a hands-on, demand-driven innovation service to industrial SMEs with regard to technology, business and market development.

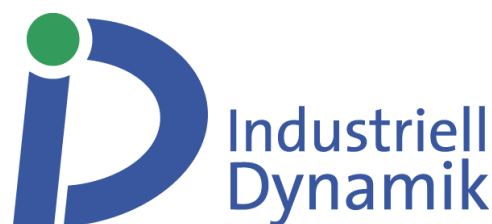
This regional service included:

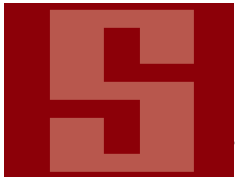
- Pro-active company visits and contacts by selected innovation advisors in order to inspire and motivate innovation and development and to provide analysis and qualified advice. Discussions of possible development areas were also initiated. Based on company demand, development projects are offered on a commercial basis from partners in the Regional Knowledge Network or other industrial specialists.
- The establishment of a Regional Knowledge Network in order to achieve a more co-ordinated innovation service on the basis of pre-existing knowledge resources in the Region, including industrial research institutes, universities, industrial development centres etc. This new co-operation has increased system efficiency and created greater mutual knowledge of the different competences within the network.

External evaluation carried out on both concepts has been very favourable and show positive effects at company level. Region Västra Götaland therefore took the decision in February 2006 to introduce these concepts as long-term measures forming the backbone of the new Regional Innovation System for the industrial sector. These concepts will be further refined and additional measures will be added with the objective of creating and maintaining a world-class Regional Innovation System for the industrial sector.

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The Emilia-Romagna Programme for Industrial Research, Innovation and Technology Transfer

Silvano Bertini, Head - Emilia-Romagna Region, General Direction Production Activities, Trade and Tourism - Local Development Department

In the Emilia-Romagna both private and public actors strongly recognise the increased importance of Research and Development (R&D) and Innovation for competitiveness in regional industry. For this reason Emilia-Romagna has endorsed a regional policy for R&D and Innovation focused on the promotion of Industrial research, technological development and the transfer of new technologies from knowledge production centres to the regional industrial system.

Over the last 3 years Emilia-Romagna Region, through the Department for Productive Activities, has elaborated and implemented a specific policy strategy for promoting industrial research, technology transfer and innovative spin offs, all key elements for the development of a regional economy based on knowledge and innovation and for a new phase of economic and social growth throughout the regional territory. Emilia-Romagna Region, among the first EU Regions to endorse the strategic importance of reinforcing regional growth and competitiveness through innovation and knowledge, has seen its commitment honoured by the European Commission two years in a row with a special distinction as "Region of Excellence" for its outstanding performance in the dissemination of good practice in innovation policy.

The development of an integrated R&D policy scheme in Emilia-Romagna Region has been structured through a combination of intervention and support measures in the field of research and industry starting from 2001 with the ratification of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Regional Authority, universities, research centres and entrepreneurial associations for the establishment of the "Regional Network for Research and Innovation". As a first result of the MoU, Aster, the former Regional Technology Transfer Agency, became the Regional Consortium composed by the same MoU parties, assuming the proactive role of promoting Industrial Research and Technology Transfer. On the base of this large consensus, Emilia-Romagna Regional Authority approved a Regional Law on Innovation (Law no 7/2002) for the promotion of the regional system for industrial research, innovation and technology transfer. The operational instrument was the "Regional Program for Industrial Research, Innovation and the Technology

Transfer (PRRIITT)". The key objective of the PRRIITT was to connect research activity to industry. This objective was pursued through actions both on the demand side (firms) and on the supply side (research organisations). On the demand side, company R&D projects had to include: employment of new researchers, formal collaboration with Universities or research centres (at least 30 man/days), prototyping and registration of patents. On the supply side, Universities and research centres have been asked to form networks in order to develop specific research programs finalised towards specific industrial fields of interest, and programs of technology transfer (Centres of Innovation).

The main groups of actions implemented are the following:

- Actions for the development of the Regional Production System towards Industrial and Strategic Research
 - A: Industrial Research and Pre-competitive Development Projects
 - B: Development of Industrial Laboratories
- Creation of New Entrepreneurial and Professional Activities with a Highly Technological Content
 - A. Programmes for the creation of new professional and entrepreneurial activities
 - B: Financial support to start up of entrepreneurial initiatives
- Network Development
 - A. Research and Technology Transfer Laboratories
 - B. Innovation Centres
 - C. Services for the Development of a Research Network
 - D. Monitoring and Evaluation

To these actions included in the Programme, other actions must be added to complete the regional strategy:

- the Regional Programme of Innovative Actions (RPIA), dedicated to Health and Life Sciences;
- the HI-MECH agreement with the National Ministry of Research, dedicated to the development of the

technological cluster of advanced mechanics and engineering;

- the support to R&D projects in the field of ICT;
- the measure to support the establishment of techno parks to host research activities and spin offs;
- the start up, with objective 2 funds, of a venture capital fund to support innovative start ups;
- the organisation of "Research To Business", an exposition event of industrial research laboratories and technology transfer centres;
- the participation to regional networks concerning research and innovation policies (ERIK, Coor.In.N.A).

Health, Organisational Innovation and Information and Communication Technologies.

Regarding the financial dimension, the overall public regional investment amounts to 156.6 million euro (for a two year period), as co-financing of a total investment of 367.5 Million Euro.

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The first results of the PRRIITT and connected actions, below summarised, are very significant:

Actions	Approved projects	Investment (mln. €)	Regional contribution (mln. €)
Projects of industrial research and pre-competitive development	529	235,5	92,2
Start up or reorganisation of industrial laboratories	12	6,6	3
New high-tech start ups	26	1,8	1
Research and technology transfer laboratories (*)	27	42,2	20,5
Centres of innovation (*)	24	17,4	8,7
ICT Research and development projects	10	21,4	8,5
Regional Programme of Innovative Actions	35	9,4	4,6
Techno parks (*)	6	19,2	7,6
Venture capital fund for innovative start ups (*)	1	14	10,5
TOTAL	670	367,5	156,6

(*) partly with Objective 2 funds

The first estimation of the impact of the actions implemented show the following figures.

Firms initially planned to employ more than 900 new researchers, to sign 746 collaboration contracts with Universities and research centres (600 researchers involved, 28 M€ of value) and to register 363 industrial patents. The network, coordinated by Aster, of the 27 laboratories and 24 centres involves 232 partners among University departments, Research centres, other public institutions and firms (especially as sponsors), employs 315 new researchers and involves a further 460 researchers.

The Network operates in seven key sectors: Advanced Mechanics, Environment and Energy, Agro-Food Industry, Building and Construction, Life Sciences and





Malopolska Regional Innovation Strategy

Joanna Domanska - Unit Manager Economic Competitiveness and Innovation Department of Economy and Infrastructure
Marshal Office of the Malopolska Region

The Regional Innovation Strategy (RIS) of the Malopolska Region, accepted by the regional government in February 2005, portrays the current state of innovation in the economic area and formulates activities aimed at encouraging enterprises and institutions supporting entrepreneurship to use the region's innovation potential more effectively.

At the heart of the Regional Innovation Strategy are activities strengthening cooperation among: enterprises (especially SMEs), educational establishments, research institutes, administrative institutions and companies in the business field concerned with regional development. The establishment of cooperation networks based on formal agreements between the partners in the network should be conducive to furthering these aims.

The development of cooperation should lead to the formation of "business to business" connections - including clusters, where companies cooperate as well as competing with one another. Among the examples are the Tarnow Industrial Cluster - "The Plastic Valley", and the Krakow Technological Park, where companies operating in computer science play an important role.

Planning of individual activities and organising a common effort to obtain support from national and EU funds should be conducive to increased innovation in the Malopolska economy and more effective technological transfer, understood as an intentional, directed transfer of knowledge and skills towards the production process aiming at effective marketing of the created product.

The elaborated document is consistent with horizontal goals and contains the main strategic and tactical goals for the Regional Innovation System, as well as implementation proposals. A special emphasis is placed on cooperation network structures and incubators for companies operating in the high-technology sector, the optimal conditions for development and successful operation. Indication of potential sources of funds should encourage the future beneficiaries of RIS to take an interest in the concept of innovation and in the development of technological transfer, thus aiding the development of economic potential and competitiveness in Malopolska.

Business entities should formulate and implement concrete projects within the framework of adopted strategic and tactical goals of the Regional Innovation Strategy for the Malopolska Region.

In order for the Regional Innovation Strategy to become a stable component of the development of the Malopolska Region, it is necessary to achieve closer cooperation between the educational sector and enterprises and business-related institutions. A significant role should be played by the technological parks in which innovation development takes place, as well as industrial parks where innovative enterprises (mainly small and medium-sized) are located.

Development directions and structure of the Regional Innovation System

In the present concept of the Regional Innovation System, the importance of supporting an active network of cooperation and connections in a given region is stressed. This network should include both the buyers of innovation, institutions acting as intermediaries, and companies which deal with the supply of innovative solutions. Based on surveys conducted in companies operating in the region as well as on the SWOT analysis, we may observe a disproportion between the existing scientific-research potential of the region and the level of innovation of the companies in Malopolska. Therefore, the main direction of activities proposed by the RIS leads us to utilise existing potential through activating the network of contacts between existing companies in the Regional Innovation System. This concept is reflected in the proposed tasks concerning the creation of different types of network centres in the area of innovation. This idea does not involve creating new companies as legal and organisational units with their own facilities. Instead, the solutions involve the creation of network centres, whose goal is to promote cooperation among existing institutions and those in the process of formation through activities serving the buyers of innovation in the region. This formula will facilitate a better flow of information in the region and will allow more effective use of the institutions that form part of the network.

A survey conducted among regional companies indicated an obvious need for financial backing of

innovative enterprise processes.

This problem concerns new companies which have limited possibilities of obtaining funding from the financial institutions already on the market. Therefore, one of the obvious activities of the Regional Innovation Strategy of Malopolska is the creation of a seed fund, with the help of which innovative undertakings of higher risk may be financed.

The consequence of the existence of a high supply of innovation in the scientific centre of Krakow is the necessity to support the formation of spin-off and start-up type companies.

In the present structure of the RIS, the involvement of scientists is not being utilised to the greatest possible extent. This realisation was a base for the strategy's tasks, aimed at raising the level of involvement of the scientists in the implementation of knowledge, generated by academic institutions.

The lack of clear, legal regulations in this matter, as well as the mistrust of the scientific community towards individuals involved in economic endeavours, is not conducive to meeting the desired expectations.

The Regional Innovation System will create conditions for the further development of industry and companies in the area of information technology (IT, ICT), drawing on the existing industrial potential and position of Malopolska, as well as on the great intellectual potential of students being trained in the basics and application of information science (applied information technology, present in various fields of study).

The RIS structure in Malopolska is polarised with Krakow's dominating role as a centre gathering institutions of innovation supply.

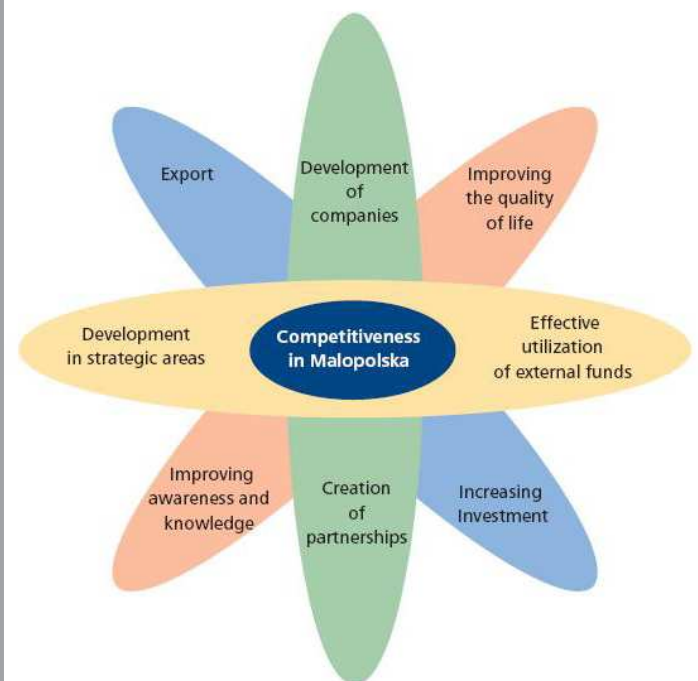
Therefore, the present strategy aims at a wide-spread diffusion of innovation outside of the metropolitan centre. Creating a network of centres with the help of enterprises in Malopolska, connected with various aspects of innovation should serve this aim.

The diffusion of innovation will be aided by the system of commissioning M.A. and doctoral theses, with the needs of SMEs in mind.

In this manner, natural channels of information transfers will be formed, and the contact between M.A. and doctoral students and SMEs will change into lasting bonds, linking the economic entities with schools of higher education.

The aim of these types of activities is to provide the schools of higher education with the innovative solutions needed as seen from the perspective of companies operating in the region.

The structure of the RIS horizontal goals Based on Regional Innovation Strategy of the Malopolska Region for 2005-2013



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Industry and Science Relations

Background to the TWG

The establishment of effective Industry-Science Relations (ISRs) has been widely recognised as an essential condition for the development of regional innovation systems. Cooperation between research and the private sector has proved to have a relevant impact on the promotion and exploitation of research findings, on the development of knowledge-based companies and on the acceleration of the knowledge generation and diffusion process at regional level. Despite the existence of specific regional conditions affecting the reach and the intensity of ISRs, Regional Authorities can implement concrete, valuable initiatives to trigger cooperation in this field.

The ERIK Thematic Working Group on Industry-Science Relations, led by the Emilia-Romagna Region, was created during the first phase of the ERIK Network to stimulate a mutual learning process on ISRs issues and on regional mechanisms and tools supporting interaction with specific regards to ERDF Regional Programmes of Innovative Actions. During the first two-years, the group pursued this objective through information and knowledge exchange activities, the organisation and participation to networking thematic events throughout Europe (workshops and study visits) and the development of a methodology for the analysis of regional initiatives in the area of Industry-Science Relations that has been included in a Working Group Thematic Paper.

The paper outlines 4 sub-dimensions of analysis, corresponding to areas in which most interaction between Industry and Science takes place, representing the focus of the overall TWG activity:

- Collaborative Research between Science and Industry
- Start-ups from Public Science
- Interaction in the field of human capital (mobility of researchers and cooperation in education and training activities)
- Technology Transfer from Public Science to Industry

Within ERIK, the Working Group developed 31 quantitative and qualitative indicators in these sub-areas to capture and make available regional good practices through the ERIK database.

Under ERIK+ the ISR Working Group will concentrate on the analysis of regional good practices selected among Regional Programmes and Projects of Innovative Actions and other regional schemes supporting the development of Industry-Science links. To this end, TWG members met in Brussels in March 2006 for a working session aimed at defining the most relevant thematic indicators to be included in the database and to be used by regions interested in presenting a good practice in the area of ISRs. A testing phase was carried out by the regions engaged in the process to guarantee data availability, indicator relevance and pertinence to the Programme and Project levels.

The ERIK+ "Call for Good Practices" launched on 18th April represents the instrument for the preliminary selection of ISR regional good practices. The process will be further fuelled by the ISR study visit that will take place in September 2006 and will be scheduled according to the results of the preliminary selection phase.

The activities implemented by the ISR Working Group will contribute to the formulation of policy recommendations for improved regional Industry-Science Relations. At least two regional cases will be selected and included in the ERIK+ Final Publication and widely promoted by the Network. Non-RPIA regional participants will be granted the opportunity to promote their regional ISRs initiatives and projects through the ERIK+ promotional channels and at the Good Practice Exhibition that will take place in February 2007 in Brussels during the ERIK+ Final Conference.

Members

The ISR Working Group currently sees the active participation of the regions of Emilia-Romagna, Lower Austria, West-Midlands, Aragon, Västra Götaland, Flanders, Bremen, South Holland, Småland and islands represented by the Regional Council in Kalmar County and Valencia.

Further information on the activities of the Industry-Science Relations TWG is available from:

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Services and Support to Start-Ups and Spin-Offs

Background to the TWG

Under the coordination of the Department for Economy, Tourism and Technology of the Federal Government of Lower Austria, the Thematic Working Group (TWG) "Support for Start-Ups and Spin-Offs" was established in the first phase of the ERIK network with a focus on:

- knowledge based start-ups (KBSU) which develop and commercialise new products, engineering processes or services based upon a proprietary technology or skill;
- start-ups with potential for global competition.

Through 1 workshop and 3 study visits partner regions exchanged experiences with other interested regions and provided recommendations for the evaluation of these support and service projects with focus on the support of innovation oriented start-ups and spin-offs in the framework of the Regional Program of Innovative Actions (RPIA). Furthermore the TWG regions developed a pragmatic methodology based on a step-by-step-approach and involving the exchange of Good Practice cases as well as a set of indicators describing the "Regional Start-up Profile".

With an EXCEL based tool - also developed during the ERIK network - some member regions have already carried out a pragmatic self-assessment of their own regional projects and infrastructure dealing with support and services to start-ups and spin-offs.

The TWG "Support for Start-Ups and Spin-Offs" is now continuing its work under the ERIK+ Network. TWG members have already selected a set of 9 indicators from the larger set of indicators identified during the first phase. The indicators were chosen by ERIK+ partners present at the Practice Cases for the "Support for Start-Ups and Spin-Offs" within the ERIK+ database.

for Start-Ups and Spin-Offs" within the ERIK+ database. Based on the former ERIK activities and the feedback from the open "Call for Good Practices" launched on 18th April 2006, a number of good practices will be pre-selected for an in-depth case study demonstrating the success and the success factors of support activities for innovation oriented start-ups/spin-offs within Regional Programs of Innovative Actions and other regional support activities. These case studies will also take into consideration the "Regional Start-up Profile" which was developed in order to analyse the regional support system with respect to start-ups/spin-offs. The following step will be the first study visit within ERIK+ on "Support for Start-Ups and Spin-Offs", which will be carried out on 11th and 12th July 2006 in Alentejo (Portugal). The location was chosen on the basis of the regional Good Practices selected for in depth analysis. The case studies selected along with a set of policy recommendations, based in part on the good practices and case studies analysed throughout ERIK+, will be presented and discussed during the TWG workshop and the ERIK+ Final Conference to be held in Brussels in February 2007.

Members

The Start-Ups and Spin- Off TWG continues to be coordinated by Lower Austria. The TWG membership is currently composed of Emilia-Romagna, West-Midlands, Kalmar, Western Macedonia, South Holland, Alentejo, Västra Götaland, La Rioja, Balearic Islands and Extremadura.

Further information on the Services and Support to Start-ups and Spin-offs TWG is available from:

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Department for Economy, Tourism and Technology of the Federal Government of Lower Austria.

Figure 1: The model of the start-up process developed within ERIK





Clusters and Business Networks

Background to the TWG

The Clusters and Networks TWG was established during the first phase of the ERIK Network. During this time members focused on clearly understanding the varying and disparate definitions of 'clusters' across the EU, together with an analysis of experiences and activities undertaken by the Group members. In particular the Group looked at opportunities for exchange, and links to regional innovation programmes across TWG member regions. A first draft outline of potential indicators was produced and circulated to the initial group for comment.

In many areas of the world, industry clusters have become an essential and often pivotal element of economic development and innovation policy. Often competitive regional advantage can be best understood through understanding specific industries and networks competitive advantage, approach and interaction. More difficult to understand are key elements which can effectively contribute to the development and support of these key clusters, and subsequently how these can be interpreted into policy and implementation.

The focus, therefore, of the Clusters & Networks TWG is to identify and evaluate these, providing key indicators for regional policy and decision makers in understanding individual clusters and their position in terms of support and future development, with the intent of promoting policy and financial decisions at all levels.

Objectives

The Clusters & Networks Thematic Working Group aims to identify key indicators able to support establishment and implementation of regional policy in this context. Our main objectives are thus:

- To review current Cluster & Network policy and research documentation and activity.
- To focus on indicator identification in the areas of concepts, connections and competencies;
- To identify key good practice examples across ERIK+ network regions, with a particular regard to lessons and experiences of RPIAs and the production of case

study material.

- To pilot test and evaluate the agreed indicators.
- To undertake a regional study visit to enhance knowledge, and support TWG case studies.
- To provide proposals for future policy development and implementation.

Members

The TWG is led by the West Midlands region. Current members from the network include the regions of Tuscany, Flanders, Western Macedonia, Lower Austria, South Holland, Bremen and the Balearic Islands, Piemonte, Veneto.

Further information on the Clusters & Networks TWG is available from:

a.orchard@cad.coventry.ac.uk or Coventry University Enterprises Ltd, The Technocentre, Puma Way, Coventry CV1 2TT



Innovation Finance

Background to the TWG

A new TWG has been introduced in the ERIK+ Network Programme, namely Innovation Finance. The focus of the TWG is on financial structures and instruments created through and by the RPIA. The TWG has a horizontal perspective supporting the structures of the three other TWG's in the ERIK+ Network.

Difficult access to finance is one of the most common barriers to innovation, due to the level of risk that public and private financial institutions run through granting loans to new and innovative companies. Regional policies can, however, play a key role in enhancing information and actual access to innovation funds.

The process of introducing innovation to the market requires a chain of capital flow. In many aspects European support structures are too weak to do this and suffers from the many gaps which impede it from serving as a working flow of capital. However, this pattern is not uniform throughout Europe and, in particular, engagement from public supportive structures differs.

Through the introduction of this new TWG, ERIK+ will concentrate on measures aiming at attracting more capital in the various stages of company development. Many regions have used different forms of their RPIA for innovation finance support, directly or in-directly. The TWG will form indicators for the ERIK+ Database to follow how RPIAs have become involved in regional innovation finance structures.

Clusters and innovation finance: methodology & activities

To enable these TWG to meet their objectives in the ERIK+ Network timeframe, it is essential that the approach and activities are clearly defined and that all TWG members are willing and able to input into the process. The methodology and related activities have been set with this in mind.

The ERIK+ Network is clearly focusing on identification, understanding and analysis of good practice, through the gathering of case study material and economic data, particularly from RPIAs across the EU, but also

identification of other good examples from regional innovation programmes in key thematic areas.

The Clusters & Networks and Innovation Finance TWGs would like to actively encourage partners and associates to provide examples for good practice case studies. The call for data and good practices for these two TWG will be held in June 2006.

The work of the TWG will involve analysis of the elements of these examples, and a focused study visit to one region per TWG (during the 1st week of October and the 1st week of November) to gain further information on an acknowledged exemplar to be used in the final reports to the Network.

Members

The Innovation Finance TWG is led by the Regional Council in Kalmar County together with members of the Nuts II region Småland med öarna (Småland and islands).

Further information on the Innovation Finance TWG is available from:

mats.rosen@kalmar.regionforbund.se

Regional Council Kalmar County, Box 762, S-39127 Kalmar



News

Registration as an Associate Member or an Observer Region

ERIK+ encourages further participation from other regions in order to wider the benefits provided by the network and indeed to enrich the network itself.

Participation in the network as an associate region is open to EU regions with an approved ERDF Regional Programme of Innovative Actions (RPIA). ERIK+ associate partners are entitled to participate in ERIK+ thematic events (e.g. workshops, study visits, etc.) on the basis of their own financial resources.

Participation as an Observer region is also welcomed for new Member States and Accession Countries regions and any EU region with a significant interest towards the Network thematic areas.

Observers are entitled to take part in the Network activities at the same conditions as Associate Partners and thus take advantage of networking and information exchange.

To register as an Associate Region or an Observer region, interested subjects are invited to complete the on-line application form at: www.eriknetwork.net



Regions of Knowledge 2

E-Rain Open Call for Participants

E-RAIN, the European Network of Regional Innovation Agencies opens its doors to new potential members. E-RAIN's main mission is to study the innovation policy programmes and analyse their implementation procedures, in order to find the ways to enhance the efficiency of research and innovation programmes across Europe.

E-RAIN is very glad to invite practitioners and organisations involved in the design,

development and implementation of research & innovation policy programmes to join the network and participate to the project activities, meetings and study visits.

For further information visit:
<http://www.e-rain.net> or contact the coordinator at info@e-rain.it

ERIK+ Study Visits

ERIK+ foresees a schedule of study visits - 1 visit for each thematic working group.

Participation at the study visits is limited to partners, associates and observers of the ERIK+ network.

However, the resultant presentations and documentation will be made available on the ERIK+ website and will be included in the final ERIK+ publication.

The Programme of study visits lasts from July 2006 till November 2006. The first study visit will

be held in Alentejo on the 11th and 12th July 2006 within the TWG "Support for Start-Ups and Spin-Offs."

The location of the study visit is to be decided and is dependant on the results of the chosen TWG case studies.

For further information visit:
www.eriknetwork.net



News

Ianis+ Annual Conference Blekinge 2006

On the 15th and 16th of June the Ianis+ Network (Innovative Actions Network for the Information Society Plus) will hold its 2006 Annual Conference - TOWARDS eREGIO 2010 - Challenges & Threats for the competitiveness of the regions in the Global Knowledge Economy".

The conference will highlight issues relating to development of the information and knowledge-based societies and on the threats posed by global competition. It seeks to address these in

the frame of existing and emerging EC policies, and to highlight success stories and ways forward, from which we can all learn. The event will take place at the Ronneby Brunn Hotel, Ronneby, Sweden.

For registration and more information visit:
<http://www.ianis.net/blekinge2006/>



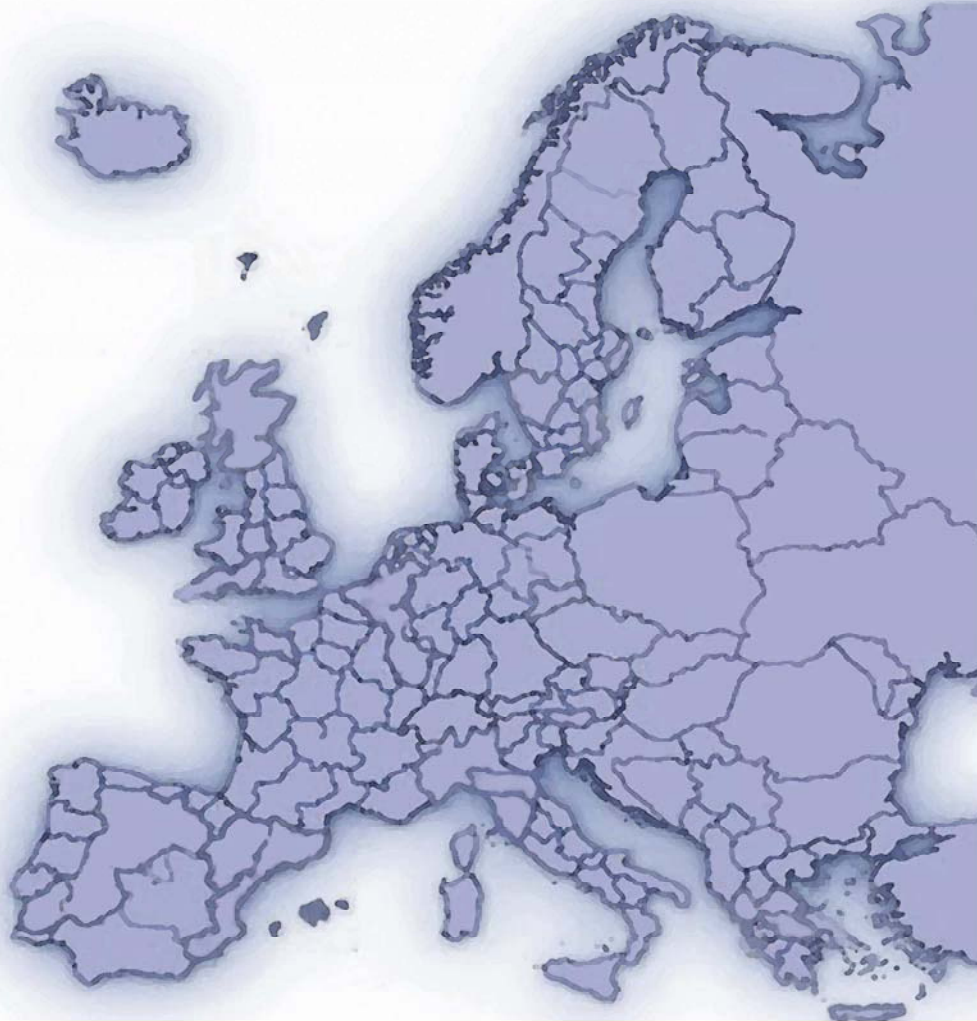
DG Regional Policy **Innovating through the EU Regional Policy** Brussels, 12-13 June 2006

The Directorate General for Regional Policy is organising a series of conferences under the general heading 'Regions for Economic Change'. These are directed towards national and regional managing authorities as learning opportunities and to a means to examine how Europe's Cohesion Policy contributes to the Lisbon process.

There will be three events in the series,

leading up to the fourth Cohesion Forum, which will take place in June 2007. The next event "Innovating through the EU Regional Policy Brussels" will take place in Brussels on the 12-13 June 2006.

Further information is available at:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/conferences/innovating_june06/home_en.cfm



Erik Partners

Toscana (Italy)
Emilia Romagna (Italy)
Nieder Österreich (Austria)
West Midlands (United Kingdom)
Småland med öarna (Sweden)
Alentejo (Portugal)
Aragon (Spain)
Bremen (Germany)
Comunidad Valenciana (Spain)
Västsvrige (Sweden)
Vlaanderen (Belgium)
Dytiki Makedonia (Greece)
Zuid Holland (Netherlands)

Erik Associate Partners

Basse Normandie (France)
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Cataluña (Spain)
Dytiki Ellada (Greece)
Extremadura (Spain)
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Ionia Nissia (Greece)
Ipeiros (Greece)
Islas Baleares (Spain)
Kärnten (Austria)
Kriti (Greece)
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Limburg (Netherlands)
Lombardia (Italy)
Lorraine (France)
Marche (Italy)
Murcia (Spain)
Noord Brabant (Netherlands)
Peloponnisos (Greece)
Piemonte (Italy)
Sachsen (Germany)
Scotland (United Kingdom)
South West (United Kingdom)
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Stockholm (Sweden)
Storstrøms Amt (Denmark)
Sud-Tirol (Italy)
Thessalia (Greece)
Veneto (Italy)
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