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Regions and the New Programming Period

M. Duccio Campagnoli - Regional Minister for Production, Economic Development and Telematic Planning
Regione Emilia-Romagna

It seems that the European economy may be about to undertake a new period of growth, despite uncertainties and tensions in the international context. This new perspective is largely due to increasing efforts made at different levels in recent years to improve the competitiveness of firms, industries, regions and countries in terms of innovation. Step by step, awareness of the need to foster innovation dynamics and change has increased in European society, even in weaker regions. Nevertheless, the achievement of Lisbon objectives is still problematic.

It is significant that European Structural Funds for 2007-2013 concentrate on supporting Regional Programmes focused on innovation, the information society and sustainable development, especially through the "Competitiveness and Employment" Objective. It gives, at last, the right emphasis to the regional dimension for the construction of a new European knowledge-based economy. Moreover, thanks to experiences developed in recent years in several European regions, we can now assert with conviction that regional innovation and research policies are not simply the same policies carried out at national or European level at a reduced scale, but they have their own specificities and are complementary to the other levels. It is clear that they increase the global effectiveness of research and innovation policies, and in this way they can facilitate the achievement of Lisbon objectives over the next five years. First of all, regional policies cannot focus so much on fundamental research but rather on industrial research, namely on the industrial application of research results. At regional level it is easier to create connections among universities, research centres, firms and even SMEs. It is possible to elaborate specific industrial research and technology transfer programmes and strategies around industrial clusters, or groups of scientists and technologists.

Appropriate regional strategies must pay attention to the construction of network relationships (networks of research institutions and firms, relationships between people involved in research and innovation, etc.) and to the effects on the community. All these elements, that can only be effective at regional level, will increase the productivity of research investments, and can produce

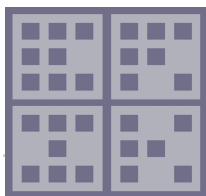
a multiplier effect. Network-community relationships can facilitate mutual understanding and problem solving, and they can more easily generate new ideas, new projects, new hypothesis of collaboration, new businesses. In short, regional innovation policies can accelerate the achievement of the Lisbon objectives and can be strongly complementary to the other efforts of the European Union and the Member States in the field of science and technological advancement. On the other side, they can better help firms - especially SMEs, in their continuous competitive challenges.

The new season of Structural Funds is indeed crucial for the perspectives of competitiveness and cohesion of the Union, and the Commission's actions are extremely appropriate for the reinforcement of the process of reorganisation and re-orientation of the European economy towards a knowledge economy. Nevertheless, several regions have already started their own strategies and are building their own pathways towards such an objective. Within this context the exchange of experiences and inter-regional networking is very important. Networks help us to learn from each other, to avoid mistakes, to connect structures and to create synergy. From this point of view, I believe that ERIK can maintain and increase its important role in the new context that will be operative from 2007.



Duccio Campagnoli
Regional Minister for Production,
Economic Development and Telematic Planning
Regione Emilia-Romagna





ERIK+: New Associates and Observers

The second ERIK phase is well underway and ERIK is delighted to welcome some new Associates and Observer regions. Associate regions are EU regions with an approved RPIA (Regional Programme of Innovative Actions), especially concerning regional economies based on knowledge and technological innovation. Observers are regions without a RPIA, such as regions from new member states, accession countries and other EU regions with an interest in Network activities. Associates and Observers participate in networking in this field on a self financing basis. The new Associates are Dytiki Ellada and Peloponneso (Greece), Veneto and Marche (Italy).

Dytiki Ellada comprises the western / north-western parts of the Peloponnese and the western part of Central Greece. The region's RPIA "INNACT" plays a crucial role in applying state of the art and emerging innovative mechanisms and processes to priority regional sectors, such as SME competitiveness, transition to the new digital economy, and support of the traditional sectors.

Peloponneso is situated in the south of Greece. Their first RPIA "Regional Innovation for Peloponneso (RIPE)" aimed to improve business competitiveness, foster public-private partnership, clusters and consensus, and introduce an innovation culture and practice. RIPE also promoted the development of shared business advisory services. Peloponneso's second RPIA "NetForce 2006" focuses on business clusters promoting new products and encourages the establishment of innovative enterprises with links to educational institutions and research centres.

The Veneto Region, located in north-east Italy, has seen the approval of 2 RPIAs on the "e-EuropeRegio" strategic theme. Between 2002-2003 the RPIA aimed to improve access to on-line services in the region by businesses and the general public. "VENETO NETGOAL 2006", running throughout 2005 -2006, continues this work and aims to speed up the qualification and diffusion of on-line services in the region, particularly to SMEs and local administrations.

Marche is situated on the Adriatic coast of Central Italy. Their first RPIA, "Technological Innovation and the

Information Society for the Development of Industrial Districts", aimed to accelerate socio-economic development through experimental innovation systems for R&D and ICT. The EC has approved a second RPIA "ISSOCORE - Innovation and Sustainable Development as Identifying Factors for Marche Region Competitiveness" which promotes management of changes at regional level, through support for sustainable development strategies.

For more information on all Regional Programmes of Innovative Actions see the DG Regional Policy web site at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/innovation/prog_en.htm

The two new Observer regions are Banská Bystrica (Slovakia) and Sud-estul României (Romania).

Banská Bystrica, located in the south of Middle Slovakia, is implementing a RIS project "BABY RIS" whose overall goal is sustainable economic growth and improved welfare through the creation of a fruitful environment for innovation and entrepreneurship. The project sees the integration of key institutions involved in regional innovation, a more intensive use of modern technology, the development of new products and the foundation of a Centre for Innovation Development Support. BABY RIS also promotes the transfer of good practices from other EU Partner regions and specifically selected EU experts.

In Sud-estul României innovation policy is centred around the ARISE project. With a duration of 32 months, the objectives of the project are to design a regional innovation policy appropriate for posttransition processes and for EU accession and to embed this policy in a global regional development policy. The project should also help to acquire international visibility for the region through innovation in the environmental sphere and site marketing actions.

More information on each of these regions and other ERIK Network participants can be found at: <http://www.eriknetwork.net/partners.html> along with application forms for any other regions interested in participating either as an associate or an Observer.



Regions for Economic Change: Innovating through EU Regional Policy - Brussels, 12 - 13 June 2006

Elisabetta Toschi and Jessica Huntingford, ERIK Network

On the 12th and 13th of June 2006 the European Commission, DG Regional Policy, held the first of a series of conferences on regions and economic change. The overall purpose of this conference was that of giving interested parties, particularly Structural Funds Managing Authorities, insight into successful strategies and practices for "improving knowledge and innovation for growth", as recommended by the draft Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion Policy for 2007-2013.

This conference fits into a context in which awareness of the importance of research and innovation to Europe's economy is ever increasing in the face of global competition. We know, as emphasised by President José Manuel Barroso in his key note speech, that "*research and innovation have so much potential for generating economic growth*" and that they pay off in terms of economic and production growth and job creation. Innovative industries hire more highly skilled people and pay them more. Between 1997 and 2002, the employment growth rate was 11.9 % for high technology sectors and 16.2 % for knowledge intensive services, compared to 8.1% for total employment.

Despite this growing recognition, statistics relating to European performance still make worrying viewing. The EU invests less in research and innovation than its main competitors. According to the latest official data, the EU's overall research effort represents 1.96 % of GDP, as against 2.59 % for the United States, 3.12 % for Japan and 2.91% for Korea.

The conference aimed to go somewhat towards addressing this situation and raising awareness among the regional actors who can make a difference in terms of increased support of innovation and the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy. Structured around parallel workshop sessions and intermittent plenary sessions, this event focused on examining best practices in the area of knowledge transfer, innovation and clusters, with particular attention to those strategies and projects which have succeeded in less prosperous regions.

The three workshop sessions, each with three parallel sub-themes presenting "good practices" from all over Europe, were divided into:

■ Session 1: Creating the right environment

How to create the right environment for innovation, the role of regional authorities, public authorities and the essential infrastructure and support services.

■ Session 2: Strengthening collaboration between public and private stakeholders

Mobilising and sustaining private investment, developing partnerships between research institutions and businesses, licensing and IPR.

■ Session 3: Establishing partnerships and maximising synergies

Networks and exchanges, trans-regional research and innovation projects, combining national and community funding.

In addition to presenting regional experience and giving participants the chance to discuss and debate the related issues, the conference plenary sessions also gave insight into the role of Structural Funds investments in supporting research and innovation.

In her key note speech Commissioner Danuta Hübner emphasised the vital role that regions have in making use of the funding provided by the Commission, cofinancing and implementing real policies for change.

Commissioner Hübner recognised that: "*The nature of economic growth is such that many of its key drivers, including innovation, can be much more efficiently addressed at the sub-national level because that is the level at which most businesses, especially small and medium-sized businesses, interact with one another and with centres of learning and technology.*"

In practice this means that "*we need to balance the international perspective with a sound understanding of endogenous - local and regional - sources of growth*" and therefore efficient growth and innovation strategies at European and national levels must be supplemented by tailored local and regional strategies, designed by local and regional authorities and involving all the relevant participants in social and economic development.

In terms of the future, Commissioner Hübner confirmed that the new programming period will *"reinforce both the links to the Lisbon agenda and the strategic approach in regional policy"*, setting out broad strategic guidelines at the Community level which seek to provide a balance between territorial cohesion and the growth and jobs agenda, and that knowledge and innovation for growth will be one of the three strategic priorities on which Structural Funds resources should be targeted. Furthermore, she particularly highlighted the Commission's objective to reduce regional disparities, a policy already active that will be even further promoted in the future.

Two thirds of research expenditure takes place in three Member States - Germany, France and the United Kingdom - and most Member States spend the major part of their research budget in their capital region. Recognising that countries who are leaders in innovation keep getting stronger and investing more because *"success breeds success"*, Commissioner Hübner stated that *"the crucial challenge lies in how we raise performance in economies where innovation now plays a lesser part"* and went on to stress the resultant necessity for *"a tailored approach to innovation at regional level"*.

Commissioner Hübner then emphasised the importance of developing or adapting regional innovation strategies and experimenting with innovative approaches and actions. These strategies have proved to be *"a mechanism which makes public policy more effective as a catalyst for innovation... by supporting public bodies, enterprises and other stakeholders to define needs and actions which can then be tested before wider implementation."*

Some regions have already taken this approach into consideration in their operation programmes and others are advised to do the same. In short, regions should be open to experimentation and to taking *"policy risks"*.

The conference offered a chance to learn from the European Commission, from regional experiences and from each other. As stated by President Barroso the point of the conference was to promote the importance not just of *"more investment in research and innovation but also more effective investment"*. He went on to add *"If this conference helps you to understand, through lessons already learned elsewhere, how to make the investments of your Member State, region or organisation more effective, it will have achieved its goal"*.

Key note speeches, workshop presentations and further details are available on the Commission web site at http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/innovating_june06/home_en.cfm



Commissioner Hübner and President Barroso
Photo: European Commission



ANSWER - A Novell South Wing Economic Reply: The Regional Programme of Innovative Actions in South-Holland

Hans Spijker, Province of South Holland

ANSWER South Holland makes up 23 % of the Dutch GDP, 30% of its export and 25% of gross investments. The region hosts strong clusters in sectors such as petrochemicals and horticulture, important urban centres, such as Rotterdam and The Hague, an outstanding knowledge infrastructure and a well educated population. However, despite these characteristics South Holland, like many other regions, suffers from the so-called "European disease": the low level of private R&D investment and limited economic renewal. In terms of academic spin-offs, though numbers are not bad, they could be many more considering the good knowledge infrastructure.

Regional economic policy is directed towards curing this "disease" and supporting renewal in existing international clusters and in upcoming clusters. This policy consists of two major strategies: the improvement of the innovation climate and the upgrading of establishment conditions of knowledge intensive firms in the chosen clusters. 9 clusters were selected, including the glasshouse horticulture clusters, the life science clusters and the water/delta sector.

The Regional Programme of Innovative Actions in South Holland, ANSWER (A Novel South Wing Economic Reply), is part of both strategies. The core of this programme is an improved innovation climate by setting up working innovation networks in selected clusters and the stimulation of incubator centres and ICT broadband to upgrade cluster establishment conditions.

In order to set up effective innovation networks the organisation "Knowledge Alliance Zuid-Holland" was founded. Nearly all organisations in the innovation field are members of this organisation, amounting to more than 1300 organisations and 3000 individuals. This number includes entrepreneurs, local and regional governments, educational and research organisations. The mission of the Knowledge Alliance is to support innovation, knowledge transfer and application. In ANSWER two large networking projects were financed: "Knowledge to the market" executed by the "Knowledge Alliance Zuid-Holland" and "Knowledge Circles Rotterdam" in Rotterdam Council. The latter was undertaken in cooperation with the Knowledge Alliance

and concentrates on 2 of the 9 selected clusters: the port of Rotterdam and the life science/medical technology sector.

"Knowledge to the market" aims to promote innovation and create new business. In every cluster a steering committee formed from enterprises, research centres, educational institutions and governments produces an annual action plan with themes considered relevant for the cluster. The theme can be a common problem for the cluster, such as energy reduction in glasshouse horticulture. It can also be a social problem solvable by market solutions, for example ICT solutions to care for an increasing number of elderly people or it can concern new "enabling" technological developments, such as ICT. Following theme-meetings, the groups identify "sub themes" around which to organise workshops. This process goes on to form a consortium of firms, research centre and other organisations, offering process support and subsidies. In 2 years the project has developed more than 35 product market combinations and organised more than 150 meetings.

The second strategy aims to attract international legal, ICT and creative clusters to promote the creation of knowledge intensive companies. In The Hague 2 ANSWER projects have been completed: advanced ICT infrastructure for the "Caballero" incubator and a portal for The Hague, International town of justice, peace and security. In Rotterdam, a broadband infrastructure and some content projects have been undertaken.

Summing up, we can see that the ANSWER programme attained a number of good results and has initiated a lot of further positive developments. All the involved projects have been continued and therefore can be described as lasting inputs for the knowledge economy.

DSC: Artificial plant to measure optimal conditions





Policies and Strategies for Innovation, Research and Technological transfer in Tuscany

Simone Sorbi

Head of the Sector of Regional Policies for Innovation and Technological Transfer - Regione Toscana

Over the last decade the Region of Tuscany has been continuously increasing its efforts to favour and stimulate innovation. It is widely recognised that innovation and technological transfer form a necessary path towards adapting local economic systems and increasing competitiveness and that a strategic role in the European area of research and innovation can be played by regional authorities. European Community indications for the next programming period highlight research and development, in the contest of a knowledge based society and in parallel with an efficient cohesion policy, as the main tools for sustainable development and a high quality of life. Therefore in the next programming period for Structural Funds the VII Framework programme for R&D (VII FP) and the Competitiveness Innovation Programme (CIP) identify the knowledge based society as the main goal and innovation and research as the way to reach it.

Tuscany has been successful in adopting policies elaborated at EU level with regard to innovation and in translating them into regional guidelines for innovation. The numerous initiatives, programmes and projects, implemented and running, confirm Tuscany's capacity for the autonomous management of change and to introduce a demand oriented innovation culture. In the Tuscan context, technological transfer policies are seen as the key to promoting local expertise and skills. Thus promotion of, for example, links between science and enterprise, high tech clusters, benchmarking and foresight actions and private sector involvement in research spin-off and high tech startups, becomes vital in order to maximise the effects of knowledge spill-over. Furthermore, Tuscan policy insists that the role of enterprise, and of the private sector in general, is crucial if we are to promote and foster innovation, especially in terms of their capacity to develop industrial research and ensure financial sustainability of the technological transfer process. Thus one of the main challenges focuses of the Tuscan strategy is to improve dialogue between science and industry and increase private expenditure in innovation and research.

In short, the region recognises the inherently multi-disciplinary character of the innovation process which

requires the technical and financial commitment of different actors in various environments. The Region of Tuscany thus dedicates particular attention to recourse integration, increased synergy between the relative subjects and, more specifically, to a interlocutory "bottom-up" model of cooperative governance. Ultimately, interventions are directed towards the system rather than to single productive realities in order to create a sustainable innovation culture.

Structural features of the Tuscan productive system are at the origin of these beliefs, of the policies developed over recent years and of the main challenges for the near future. On the one hand, Tuscany is home to a large number of SMEs mainly active in traditional sectors. On the other hand, and in parallel, the region welcomes the presence of high-tech clusters operating in rapidly growing sectors together with large, internationally recognised, high-tech companies. Actions undertaken until now in the context of innovation aim to make the most of these two vital strands. From the outset of the 2000-2006 programming period, the Region of Tuscany, particularly through Single Programming Document (SPD) funds and the Regional Programme for Innovative Actions (RPIA), has strengthened highly innovative sectors, mobilising and coordinating those subjects who carry out research and promoting the transfer of scientific and technological knowledge. Particularly important examples include the programme for industrial research (SPD Funds) through which the regional administration has encouraged the growth of "Innovative Clusters" in Tuscany's main high-tech sectors, such as electronics, Optoelectronics, biotechnology and advanced mechanics. Also particularly important has been attempts to strengthen links between universities and research centres through improved instruments for the transfer of technological knowledge and best practices to Tuscan enterprises and the exchange of human resources.

Based on these extremely valuable experiences, the Region of Tuscany has now recognised the importance of rationalising innovation and technological transfer policy. Interventions, actors and tools are brought together into one single strategic project: PRITT - Regional Programme for Innovation and Technological Transfer.

This method optimises resources and effectively coordinates innovative actions. The PRITT is structured around 7 intervention axes.

- The technological district "ICT & Security": This action line aims to make the most of existing centres of excellence in ICT and technologies for process security / product safety and promote innovation through skill-increasing technology in companies operating in traditional sectors.
- PRAI VINCI: Approved in January 2006, following the successful RPIA ITT 2002-2004, PRAI VINCI experiments with the creation and management of aggregations and organisations which serve to strengthen competitiveness of the main Tuscan industrial systems along the lines of Virtual Enterprise and Organisation (VE/VO). PRAI VINCI concentrates on technological innovation and transfer and will be implemented through the analysis and design of VE / VO models in specific industrial sectors and experimentation, through pilot projects, of associated innovative models. The Programme lasts for two years and is funded at 47% by the ERDF.
- Rationalisation of Infrastructure: Tuscany has over 200 research centres and over 50 innovation centres. These centres would greatly benefit from a more coordinated structure and a synergic development. Thus, this action line concentrates on the rationalisation and organisation these centres throughout the region.
- National and European networks: Such networks, particularly concerning benchmarking & foresight of regional policies for innovation and technological transfer in the knowledge society, are seen as an inherent part of the Tuscan regional strategy. The ERIK Network is one part of this action line which is considered fundamental for present and future strategies.
- Innovative finance measures: The Region of Tuscany intends to implement a system of financing for innovation, including innovation bonds. These tools should help to encourage private sector participation in research and development.
- Innovation stock market: The meeting point between the supply and demand of innovation.
- Communication Plan: A coherent, effective and long term plan will serve to inform actors of opportunities at regional and international level and to promote the regional territory itself.

This regional programme is extremely recent and parts of it are only now coming into force, such as the first call for projects under PRAI VINCI launched on the 24th of July. However, with this new rationalised strategy and based on the valuable lessons learned at regional and European level, the Region of Tuscany aims to take advantage of the opportunities presented between 2007-2013 and to further improve its position in terms of ever-increasing innovation.



REGIONE TOSCANA

Giunta Regionale

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A pilot for cross-border Regional Innovation Strategies in Northern Hungary and Kosice region

Kornél KALOCSAI - project coordinator, Regional Development Agency of North Hungary

Northern Hungary is one of the less-favoured Hungarian and EU regions. Despite outstanding R&D potentials, the region is currently undergoing a period of change in terms of out-of-date industrial structures and infrastructure. Northern Hungary has strong economic, social and geographical links with the Kosice region in Slovakia. The two regions face the same challenges in competitiveness and innovation and both believe in cooperation for accelerated economic development.

Some important indicators for the regions	Northern Hungary	Kosice
GDP per capita (2003) in % of EU25	38,12%	38,77%
GERD (2003)	0,27 %	0,28 %
Unemployment rates (2004)	11,2 %	25,4 %
Patent applications to the EPO (2002) Per million inhabitants	4,6782	3,0696

Source: EUROSTAT, 2006

A Bilateral RIS project

Northern Hungary and Slovakian Kosice Self-Governing Region are developing a trans-national innovation strategy project - NORRIS - which seeks to foster regional and economic cohesion within and between the two regions. Castilla y Leon and Styria also participate in NORRIS. As one of the 33 running RIS projects, NORRIS is financed by the European Commission (FP6). The project represents a unique opportunity to test and implement the RIS process in a cross-border environment, which can assist the construction of a European area of research and development. Many RIS project conclusions comment on a lack of regional linkages and on internationalisation difficulties. The NORRIS project will therefore provide the EU with a pilot project that tackles some of the most important issues confronting the EU today, using innovation and technology as a means of breaking down these barriers. The NORRIS activities will help to foster regional and economic cohesion within and between the participant regions and to improve their levels of competitiveness. The project also aims to establish a regional innovation agency and council.



The NORRIS project contributes to consolidating a European platform for exchange of experience and dissemination of good practices on research and innovation related themes. It also stimulates regional policy making in terms of research and innovation strategies through promoting cooperation, breaking down barriers and encouraging transregional learning. The project opens new areas of transnational activities and makes more efficient and integrated use of existing capacities.

Potential impact of the project

The project creates an programming and implementation basis for regional innovation support activities and for transnational cooperation and partnerships among actors. In strategic terms it fosters regional and economic cohesion between the regions and increases competitiveness.

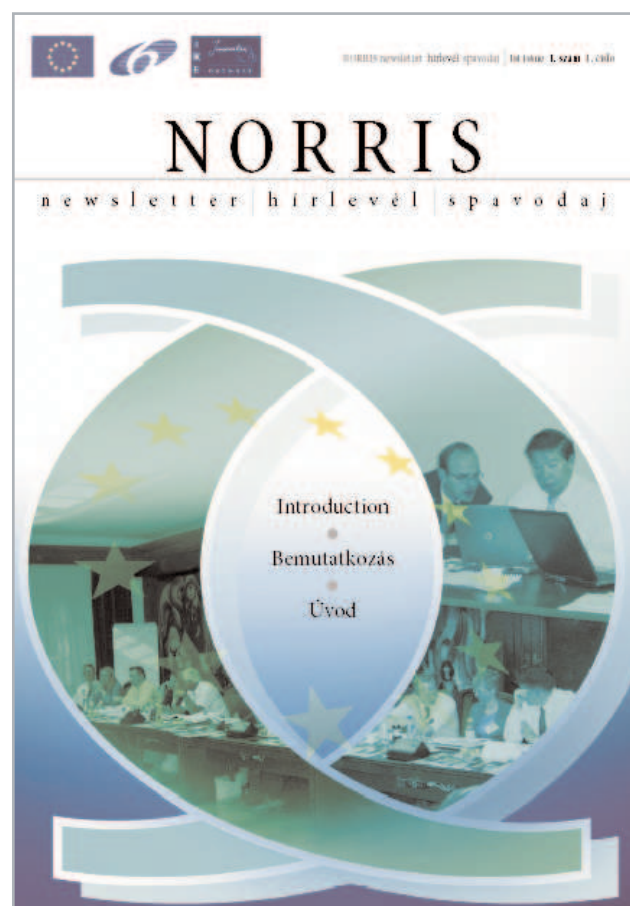
On the basis of these objectives, potential impacts will be an increased capacity to absorb EU funds, due to improved regional programming and implementing capabilities, and greater national and private cofinancing in innovation related projects. The project will also promote:

- transnational and regional co-operation on R&D and innovation;
- definition of common research areas, growing investments and expenditure on innovation;
- more effective and integrated exploitation of existing capacities;
- more university-industry research projects, flagship projects and proposals for 2007-2013;
- an environment suited to SMEs, innovative start-ups, spin-offs, investors and R&D centres;
- improved regional economic images and greater possibilities;
- strengthened cross border cohesion between regional actors, mainly SMEs;
- modernised SMEs due to technology transfer activities and EU support;

- stimulated transnational connections and restoration and modernisation of the economic weight of the Košice-Miskolc axis in new areas of trans-national activities;
- successful connection to European innovation as active participants of EC initiatives.

In the project each region has its own Regional Steering Committee, but both the overall Steering Committee and the operational Project Management Unit are trans-regional. The outputs of the project are three Regional Innovation Strategies - a Hungarian, a Slovakian and a trans-regional one. The project will be conclude at the end of February 2008. However, NORRIS is not perceived as a project but as a process. The partners want to establish mechanisms that ensure the creation of new initiatives and strategic economic development tools beyond the end of the programme.

For more information see: www.norrisproject.eu
or contact: Kornél KALOCSAI, Project coordinator,
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IRE – Innovating Regions in Europe. Joint platform for collaboration and exchange of experience for regions developing regional innovation strategies





Industry and Science Relations Thematic Working Group

Giorgia Valli, TWG Co-ordinator

In the last 5 months, the ISR TWG, coordinated by Emilia-Romagna, has focused on the collection, analysis and selection of regional Good Practices relating to the ISR theme. Following the launching of the project first "Call for Good Practices" in April 2006, 8 regions responded positively to the initiative by introducing 17 good practices into the ERIK+ database, 11 of which are funded by the RPIA. In May 2006 an evaluation session was organised in Vienna involving 12 European regions analysed the ISR practices and selected the most significant.

The ISR Good Practices selected

The GPs chosen for the Final Publication are SIDEUM from Småland and Islands, Sweden and OPTOMED "Innovative Optoelectronic Technologies for Ophthalmology" from Tuscany, Italy.

The ISR Study Visit in Flanders

Flanders region was chosen as the host region of the second ERIK+ study visit due to the interesting examples of non-RPIA ISR initiatives inserted in the database. The study visit was organised on the 4-5 September 2006 by IWT (Institute for the Promotion of Innovation by Science and Technology in Flanders) and GOMOV (GOM Oost-Vlaanderen), in collaboration with the TWG co-ordinator, Emilia-Romagna region and ASTER Science Technology Industry.

The event included the presentation and discussion of Flanders RPIA and 5 non-RPIA Good Practices, as well as the presentation of the above-mentioned OPTOMED and SIDEUM. Participants also visited Ghent University (<http://www.ugent.be/en>) where Food, Agriculture and Biotech projects developed by the Biotech Engineering dept were presented and the:

ILVO-Institute for Agricultural and Fisheries Research (http://www.ilvo.vlaanderen.be/index_uk.htm) where several ISR projects were demonstrated.

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OPTOMED, developed within the Tuscan RPIA, developed innovative instrumentation and methodologies used in Ophthalmic surgery and transferred them to enterprises operating in the field of Opto-electronics and to university clinics and hospitals. OPTOMED has produced prototypes of new surgical diode lasers, instruments for ophthalmic diagnostics and new pharmaceutical formulations of photo sensitizers. The project conducted studies on pre-clinical experimentation and technological and surgical validations. It went on to define clinical protocols in four major Tuscan ophthalmic clinics. The project then evaluated the economical and social impacts of the new technologies and procedures in comparison with traditional ones. The project was developed by a public/private partnership composed by 2 Public

Research Centres, 4 Ophthalmic Clinics of Tuscan Universities and Public Hospitals, 8 Enterprises.



For more information: Roberto Pini
R.Pini@ifac.cnr.it - <http://ceo.ino.it/itoptome.htm>.

SIDEUM, developed with RPIA co-financing, was developed in Kronoberg County, a sub-region of Småland and Islands characterised by numerous SMEs, great entrepreneurship but low formal education, and no "metropolis". The region lacked focus in R&D related business development structures. SIDEUM project aimed at creating a common platform between academia and the public and business sectors. The shareholders of the resultant non-profit association are the Regional Council, Municipalities, University, VOLVO, IKEA, Labour Unions and Banks etc. SIDEUM aims to boost an innovative knowledge-based economic growth and to coordinate regions priorities and initiatives in C&N. It also aims to encourage participation by individuals, companies and capital. SIDEUM provides financial services, a neutral arena for politics, business and discussion, thus initiating and enhancing regional dialogue, project administration, Cluster management, and National and EU networks.



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Greetings to all ISR TWG members from Francesca Montalti, former TWG co-ordinator having just recently left her job in ASTER



Services and Support to Start-ups and Spin-offs Update

Irma Priedl, Amt der Niederösterreichischen Landesregierung, WST3 (Department for Economy, Tourism and Technology of the Federal Government of Lower Austria) in cooperation with Hans-Christian Jäger, IDEUM

Completed Activities

Several important activities have been carried by the Thematic Working Group "Services and Support to Start-ups and Spin-offs" over the last 5 months.

To name but one, 9 Good Practices from RPIA and other innovation related activities in the field of start-up and spin-off support were inserted in the ERIK+ database by 7 European regions. Out of this sample 2 Good Practice cases from Hamburg Ideen- Gründer FONDS (Idea and Seed fund) and Lower Austria (Pre seed Acceleration of Technology-based Firms) were selected by the ERIK+ network as case studies for the final publication.

These case studies will be documented in more detail in conjunction with the particular context of the regional start-up support infrastructure of Hamburg and Lower Austria. A first coordination meeting of both regions together with the region of Western Sweden took place at the end of August. As member of the TWG Services and Support to Start-ups and Spin-offs, Western Sweden will accompany the exercise as a benchmark region.

In addition to the documentation process of the case studies the first ERIK+ study visit was held within this Thematic Working Group. It was hosted by the Portuguese region Alentejo in the capital town Évora. In addition to numerous presentations, discussions and a workshop on start-up/spin support and on Alentejo's Programme of Innovative Actions, the programme also included a visit to Évora University. The one and a half day event was organised by CCDR - Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Alentejo and ADRAL - Agência de Desenvolvimento Regional do Alentejo S.A., in collaboration with the Lower Austrian Government and IDEUM as coordinator of the TWG. The event saw the participation of more than 40 people from 10 European regions and from the European Commission (DG Regional Policy).

Several success factors but also barriers for startup/spin-off support as part of the regional innovation policy were identified within the study visit. The experiences of the participating regions and experts served to validate the ERIK model for start-up support which was developed in the former ERIK phase. During

the workshop a number of recommendations for the next structural funds period were also deduced.

More information on the specific TWG Good Practices as well as the presentations and conclusions of the study visit with deducted policy recommendations are available on the ERIK+ website at:

<http://www.eriknetwork.net/study07.html>, while further detailed information about the ERIK model for start-up support is available at:

<http://www.eriknetwork.net/twg.html> Support for Start-Ups and Spin-Offs.

What next?

By the end of this year the case studies for Hamburg and Lower Austria will be finalised together with the policy recommendations with respect to regional startup and spin-off support. These recommendations will be based on the Good Practices in the ERIK database, the conclusions of the study visit in Alentejo, the indepth case studies and other experiences in the field of regional start-up/spin-off support.

Case studies with deduced policy recommendations, as well as the analyses of the completed Good Practice Cases, will be discussed at the open TWG workshop and presented at final ERIK+ conference, both in Brussels in April/May 2007.

Further information on the TWG is available from Irma Priedl, irma.priedl@noel.gv.at, or Martina Ebner, Martina.Ebner@noel.gv.at

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



Clusters and Networks Thematic Working Group Update

Amanda Orchard, TWG Co-ordinator

During the previous months the Clusters and Networks TWG initially focused on the identification and clarification of the cluster impact indicators, according to the updated TWG focus paper. The final 10 indicators proposed by the TWG co-ordinator and approved by the Network, were added to the ERIK+ on-line database. This has enabled the ERIK+ group to further enhance the database highlighting the key role of cluster and network development in the establishment of key regional innovation policies - a factor which has been effectively highlighted through many RPIA's.

The results of the open call for good practices resulted in 18 entries into the database, of which 16 financed by RPIA, from 11 regions. Each good practice was evaluated against an agreed set of criteria to enable the identification of those representing the most effective and transferable practices to be used for the programme case studies and study visit. The criteria were as follows:

- Was the good practice a real laboratory for innovation;
- Had the good practice resulted in an improvement of Innovation policies;
- Did the good practice have a positive impact on the regional economic system;
- Did the good practice have a positive impact on relationships;
- Had there been an improvement of quality in the level of services;
- Had the good practice been effective in relation to expected results (exceeded expectations);
- Was the good practice sustainable?

The full evaluation of the good practices was undertaken during the TWG meeting in Brussels in September 2006. Overall, the group were able to discuss and identify the key individual elements of the good practices and ultimately agree on those actions which would form the TWG final case studies and study visit location. The two case studies chosen for the TWG are Knowledge Alliance - South Holland Knowledge to the Market and Veneto e-Cluster.

South Holland's 'Knowledge to the Market' project aims to support 9 strategic clusters in the region through the creation of knowledge alliances supporting 'product to

market' activities. Particularly important to the success of this activity has been the involvement of organisations at all levels (education, research, government, businesses and business support), with over 1,350 organisations involved and 3,500 individual 'members' of the Knowledge Alliance. The project has held 150 events during the RPIA period and identified 35 product-market combinations. The programme continues to be supported and financed directly by its members and can be identified as a key mechanism for cross-cluster and organisational development, with great potential for transfer to other EU regions but also to trans-national knowledge alliance creation.

The Veneto e-Cluster programme is unique both in terms of ambition and of its objectives - to identify and establish an innovative model of cluster creation and structure based on the competitiveness demands of the region. Essentially based on a system of networks supporting high quality product development and production, the Veneto region has seen economic decline resulting from production relocation to low labour cost regions and the resultant reduction in the 'added value' economic impact of high value goods. As a result, the region identified the strategic demand for improved traditional collaborations being broken down by changes in the supply chain structure.

Focusing on model development, ICT implementation for internationalisation and entrepreneurial support the pilot project aims to establish a dynamic cluster model, create global-level networks, change management processes and offer specially designed coaching to support regional leaders in the identified clusters.

As a result of the evaluation meeting the TWG study visit will take place in the Veneto region on the 16th and 17th of January 2007, coinciding with the region's hosting of the international 'Patterns of Cluster Evolution' Conference.



TWG Innovation Finance

Mats L.G. Rosén, TWG Coordinator

The Thematic Working Group Innovation Finance focuses on financial issues in the whole innovation process. Often innovative business ideas in the regions fail to reach the market due to lack of capital in the vital phases. This trend seems to intensify in Europe where the markets are more reluctant to feed innovation with capital in initial stages and global competition in production makes it harder to create sustainable economic conditions. Innovation is one answer to raise competitive ability of enterprises in our regions and it requires both ideas and capital. During previous ERDF periods many new public financed institutions were established to support innovation. However these concentrated mainly on the knowledge support side. It is now essential to find solutions for innovation support from the financial point of view.

The ERIK+ TWG Innovation Finance wants to highlight good practices (GP) from all around Europe to provide the European Commission with concrete examples of innovative forms of innovation finance in the regions.

The TWG held its evaluation seminar on the 7th and 8th September in Brussels, alongside the TWG Clusters and Business Networks. Examples of excellent GP on innovative forms of innovation finance can be found in the regions. The challenge has been to find such examples within the RPIAs themselves.

The following 7 GP were registered in the database, 6 of which were co-financed under the RPIA:

- Alentejo - FAME
Support Fund to Micro Companies
- Ipeiros
Efficient Promoting of Private Financing
- Languedoc-roussillon - Bourses pour Porteurs de Projet Innovant
- Mellerstanorrländ
Transparency Enlargement Financing
- Småland med öarna
Tekniklots
- Småland med öarna
Funding of innovative enterprises and ideas in an early stage
- Småland med öarna
Mutual Guarantee System Development

A good practice must be strong enough to last after European co-financing has ended. In order to achieve this regional partnerships and networks prove important. The innovative character is also fundamental but to measure innovation the good practice must be placed in context. A project that is already in place in one region could be innovative for another.

The projects selected as case studies for TWG Innovation Finance were those from Languedoc-Roussillon and from Ipeiros. In line with the aspects highlighted above, both GP's represent projects with an innovative character and they prove to be sustainable. The Ipeiros project has created a guide for innovative investment opportunities in the region and has organised visiting schemes for business Angels and Corporate Investors. Within their innovation system Languedoc-Roussillon, on the other hand, have created a system of grants to cover running costs and initial project expenses as a means to combat obstacles that potential entrepreneurs face.

Tekniklots, Mutual Guarantee System Development and the FAME project were also among the high scoring projects. In connection with the Workshop and Final Conference these regions will be invited to present their results in a poster session.

Following an internal conference call to further define the focus of the TWG, a study visit will be held in the region of Languedoc-Roussillon on the 6-7th November in order to exchange knowledge on the region's GP and their overall innovation system.

Members

The TWG members come from Alentejo, Emilia-Romagna, Lower Austria, Piemonte, South Holland, Tuscany, Valencia and Västra Götaland, Småland med öarna (Sweden) as coordinator.

For more information: Mats L.G. Rosén -Head of Department Business Development, Regional Council Kalmar County. Mats.Rosen@kalmar.regionforbund.se

News

Third ERIK+ Study Visit Innovation Finance

The ERIK+ schedule of study visits continues on the 6th and 7th of November with the visit to Languedoc-Roussillon within the TWG Innovation Finance.

The location of the study visit was chosen on the basis of Good Practices inserted into the ERIK database. The study visit will present some interesting examples of innovation finance and will then go on to highlight the horizontal

nature of this theme by visiting a number of practical sites related to the promotion of innovation and knowledge in the region.

The resultant presentations and documentation will be made available on the network website.

Interested regions should contact:
info@eriknetwork.net

Presentation of the ERIK Network at e-Challenges 2006

The ERIK Network is delighted to participate in the eChallenges 2006 Conference which takes place 25-27 October in Barcelona, Spain. This is the sixteenth in a series of annual conferences supported by the European Commission, which bring together over 600 delegates from leading commercial, government and research organisations around the world to bridge the Digital Divide by sharing knowledge, experience, lessons learnt and good

practice in thematic areas including Networked Business, eGovernment and eDemocracy, Technology Enhanced Learning, Collaborative Working Environments, eHealth, GRID, Knowledge Management, Smart & Virtual Organisation and International IST Collaboration. ERIK participates with a stand in the eChallenges e-2006 Exhibition which showcases research results and applications through innovative technology demonstrations and posters.

For more information on the event see:
<http://www.echallenges.org/e2006/>

Other News

Survey on the Territorial Digital Divide eris@ Network

Access to broadband communications is increasingly important for the life chances of citizens, the competitiveness of enterprises, and the development and cohesion of Europe's regions. And yet, the availability of broadband in Europe is quite uneven. In many cases, rural and sparsely-populated territories have no broadband provision due to the economic of competitive supply. Alternative technologies, such as satellite and wireless communications systems cannot compete on price without significant economies of scale. Now, at the request of the European Commission (DG Information Society & Media), eris@ (in the framework of IANIS+) has launched a web-based survey amongst local and regional public authorities (available in English, French, German, Italian, Spanish & Polish) to establish the extent of the broadband gap and the interest of these public authorities to share information, strategies and plans, and experience in overcoming the problem of the territorial digital divide. Moreover, the survey seeks to establish the interest in the possibility to create an on-line system for broadband demand aggregation on a pan-European basis.

Regions and those representing local authorities are encouraged to complete the survey which can be found at:
http://www.ianis.net/broadband_survey/index.php

DG Research - Today is the Future Brussels - 7th of March 2007

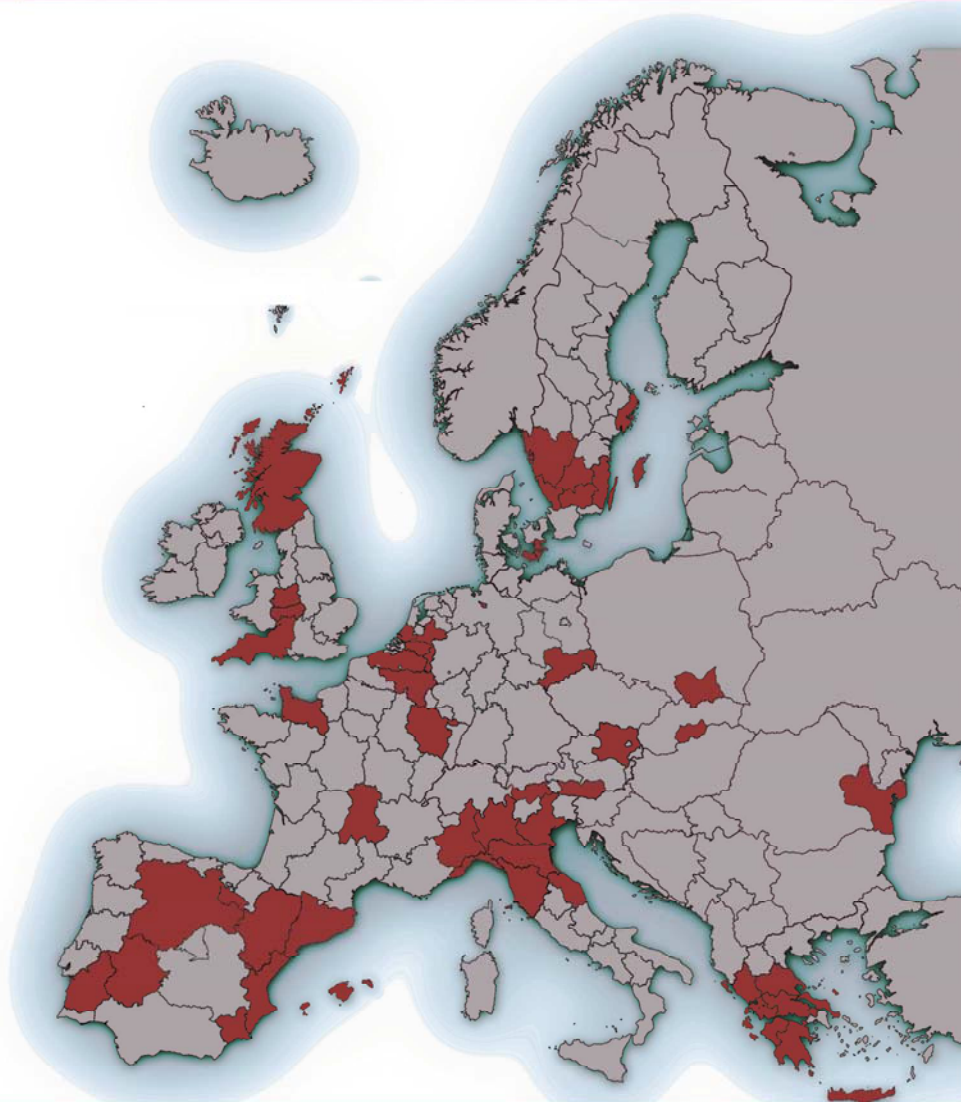
The European Commission's DG Research will organise under the German Presidency a major event on European Research in Brussels on the 7th of March 2007. This event will mark the launch of the 7FP 2007-2013, which will devote close to €50 billion to European and international cooperation in science and technology. The aim of the event is to raise political commitment to European research, expand media coverage and increase public awareness.

On this occasion, organisations will be invited to exhibit their European research activities and show their contribution to resolving today's problems and concerns.

The exhibition will showcase European success stories in science and technology. It will be an opportunity to reach the public and science journalists. The aim is to show that research (including in the social sciences and humanities) provides answers to some of today's crucial questions. A minimum of 100.000 visitors over two weeks are expected to attend the exhibition.

For further information please contact directly:
European Commission - Directorate-General for Research
Tel: +32.2.295 99 71 michel.claessens@ec.europa.eu
or see the web site at:
<http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7/events/>

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