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Knowledge for Regional Innovation
Towards "Regions for Economic Change"
The ERIK Conference



The ERIK Conference and a Future for the Network

Ambrogio Brenna, Regional Minister for Economic Development
Tuscany Regional Government

The ERIK Network Conference Knowledge for Regional Innovation – Towards “Regions for Economic Change” held in Brussels on the 10th and 11th of May 2007 represented the final conference of the second ERIK phase.

The conference provided an opportunity for a wide variety of actors to debate the important and topical issue of the role of regions in innovation and in creating the knowledge based society. Over 170 participants and 50 speakers came from the three sides of the “triple helix”: the world of research, of enterprises and of public government. On this occasion they were brought together and encouraged to exchange experience and opinions and ultimately to find common dialogue.

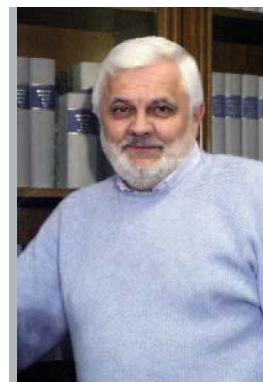
The Conference was divided into different ways of working, starting with the more “operational” first day with thematic workshops in which good practices from many European regions were presented in order to provide examples of initiatives already undertaken, of “lessons learnt”. The second day made use of the plenary session and the round table in order to look towards prospective future activities and the future of cohesion policy in terms of improving knowledge and innovation for growth. To this end the conference welcomed the participation and input of both the European Commission and of the Committee of the Regions.

recommendations and to be active in commenting on them, in using their own experience to express agreement or indeed disagreement. Only in this way, through widespread participation, can we open up the debate on regional innovation and knowledge and find some real solutions to the problems and limitations which still exist in Europe in this field.

Based not only on this conference, but indeed on all the activities undertaken by ERIK, I am proud to sustain that ERIK has been an important, active network which has produced some extremely interesting results.

This solid platform for exchange should now be oriented towards the development of concrete actions, in line with the indications which emerge from the “Region for Economic Change” initiative proposed by the European Commission which looks to turn “knowledge” into “action”.

It is also essential to provide some continuity and continuation to this experience. The Regione Toscana is committed to active collaboration in order to utilise the wealth of knowledge that has been created within ERIK and to help it to grow even further. We believe that the ERIK experience has brought, and can still further bring, an important added value to the knowledge based society and to the overall process of European development.



Ambrogio Brenna
Regional Minister for Economic Development
Tuscany Regional Government

The Conference foundation was the ERIK publication: “Knowledge and Innovation for Regional Growth” which included the network policy recommendations developed on the basis both of the personal experience of the authors and of good practices collected and analysed. Conference participants were encouraged to consider these



Erik Network at the Conference Exhibition Area



Erik Network

European Regions Knowledge Based Innovation Network

Network financed by DG REGIO within the Regional Programmes of Innovative Actions

OBJECTIVE:

provide regions with a Europe-wide platform to exchange experience and good practices on regional knowledge and technological innovation, to support future regional partnerships and to promote social and economic cohesion in the European Union.

ERIK TWGs:

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

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- Toscana (Italy)
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- West Midlands (United Kingdom)
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Observers

- Banska Bystrica (Slovakia)
- Malopolska (Poland)
- North Hungary (Hungary)
- North Great Plain (Hungary)
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Services and Support to Start-ups and Spin-offs

Amt der Niederösterreichischen Landesregierung
Abteilung Wirtschaft, Tourismus und Technologie (Department for economy, tourism and technology of the Federal Government of Lower Austria), With support from Hans-Christian Jäger (IDEUM) and in cooperation with the workshop speakers

Content of the Workshop "Support for Start Ups and Spin-Offs"

In total 8 speeches were given within the workshop "Support for Start Ups and Spin-Offs" which was organised and moderated by the Lower Austrian Government in collaboration with IDEUM. All the start-up support initiatives presented by Alentejo, Flanders, Hamburg and Lower Austria (2) are acknowledged Good Practice Cases for start-up support and are described in detail in the ERIK database in the specific TWG section:

<http://www.eriknetwork.net/database.html>.

Most of the initiatives were financed as part of the Regional Programme of Innovative Actions (RPIA) and have now been mainstreamed into the regional start-up support system. Directly after every presentation the audience were given the opportunity to raise questions. The main results of these productive discussions, and of course the speaker's own opinion on the core success factors for start-up support, were recorded on a poster illustrating the ERIK start-up model.



*Discussion and Writing Conclusions
Hans-Christian Jäger - IDEUM - and Doris Agnetner - tecnet capital*

Hans-Christian Jäger (IDEUM) introduced the workshop by presenting a review of TWG activities and the results achieved, including the elaborated ERIK start-up model, the indicators identified for a self assessment of the "Regional Start-up Profiles", 7 related events (study visits, conferences and workshops) and the 10 Good Practice Cases inserted in the ERIK database.

This introduction was followed by a presentation from **Wolfgang Tüchler** (accent) who pointed out the importance of the regional start-up policy in the context of the knowledge based economy. Using the example of the Austrian AplusB Program and its regional centres, he

illustrated that important results from a regional start-up policy include both newly created high skilled jobs and also the establishment of regional "innovation hot spots". A regional innovation hot spot is an agglomeration of open minded and innovative young firms creating an innovation friendly milieu in close proximity to R&D institutions. The presence of such an innovative centre provides an incentive for the settlement of more firms in the vicinity and for improving two-way knowledge transfer between them and R&D institutions/universities.

Ana Luisa Brejo (ADRAL) then described Alentejo's COMEÇAR project (Entrepreneurship Support Offices) which promotes entrepreneurship among young, skilled graduates in order to encourage them to remain in the region of Alentejo and thus to contribute to its social and economic development. In comparison with the AplusB program this action has a broader approach and addresses the serious problem of brain drain in rural areas.

Doris Agnetner (tecnet capital Technologiemanagement) presented the Lower Austrian technology financing model which provides a complete support chain (professional advice, finance, incubating) for technology and knowledge based firms. This chain also includes the Lower Austrian Pre-Seed Fund which has managed to close the pre-seed stage financing gap in Lower Austria. One of the beneficiaries of this Pre-Seed Fund is the young entrepreneur Rouven Haas (Blue Elph) who pinpointed the benefits of public start-up support from the entrepreneurial point of view. He illustrated the importance of an integrated support portfolio along the whole start-up process, including advice for business plan compilation, pre-seed finance and coaching and R&D grants.

Similarly to the Lower Austrian approach, Hamburg offer a process oriented start-up support model in which the Ideen- and GründerFonds (Idea and Seed Funds) are core support tools. **Helmut Thamer** (TuTech Innovation) explained the revolving self-financing model of the GründerFONDS which allow investors to gain above-average interest on their capital by buying, supervising and selling their shares. The income derived from selling shares is partly distributed among the companies in charge of the Seed Fund and partly re-invested in the fund. This of course facilitates both the sustainability of such a support scheme and participation of private investors.

Muriel Uytterhaegen (PMV-kmo) presented Flanders' Good Practice Case Vinnof (Flemish Innovation Fund). Particular emphasis was placed on the importance of the selection procedure which potential new businesses must go through.

The in-depth analysis carried out addresses 6 dimensions according to the balanced score card methodology: Idea/technology, value chain, business model, product-market-mix, team structure, financial assumptions. The relative difficulty of passing the selection procedure improves the chances of success for the start-up.

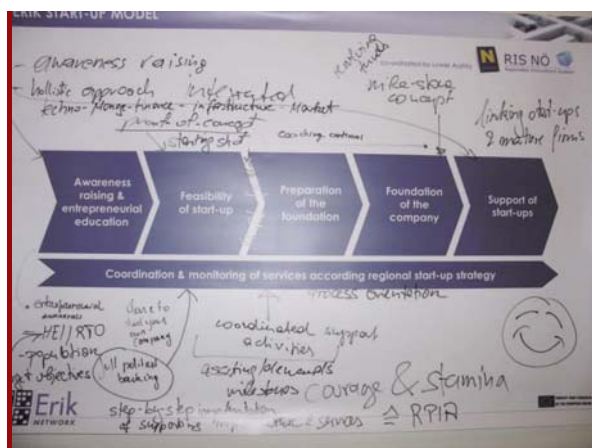
The final presentation of the workshop was given by Irma Priedl (Lower Austrian Government) on lessons learned from ERIK Network activities in the field of Services and Support to Start-ups and Spin-offs and the resultant policy recommendations elaborated. She concluded that there is a strong consensus between the workshop participants and the TWG members on success factors for public start-up support. The lessons learned and policy recommendations of the start-up TWG are available as part of the final publication of the ERIK network (available on-line at www.eriknetwork.net)



Irma Priedl - Amt der Niederösterreichischen Landesregierung, Abteilung Wirtschaft, Tourismus und Technologie

Workshop Conclusions

The following success factors for effective and efficient (public) support of innovation oriented start-ups were identified within the workshop.



The ERIK model of the start-up/spin-off process with workshop findings - success factors for start-up support

- Strong coordination and monitoring of services according a regional start-up strategy is necessary for effective and efficient start-up support. Therefore, full political backing

is required.

- The portfolio of regional start-up services must address the whole start-up process offering integrated services as a combination of technology - management - finance - infrastructure/incubator - market. Continuous coaching should be offered for the entire process.
- During process oriented support clear milestones must be defined in order to avoid risk at any level and to assure effective public support, even though innovation oriented - and particularly technology and academic - start-ups present a higher risk than other innovation support measures.
- Establishing an overall regional start-up infrastructure with a broad service portfolio is a mid-term process and cannot be achieved overnight. The service portfolio must be implemented step by step and not all services in parallel.
- It is indispensable to identify the needs of potential and young entrepreneurs which each service must address. If possible, an initial test and pilot action of a new service should be carried out giving the opportunity to verify the appropriateness of any new services.
- "Dare to start your own company": The new entrepreneur must have courage and stamina. This success factor should be reflected in the early selection process for start-up support.
- Awareness raising is often the door opener for innovation oriented start-ups as much of the target group often has little information on entrepreneurial opportunities. The higher the entrepreneurial awareness the higher the probability of reaching high potentials.
- In order for academic start-ups to gain a higher exploitation ratio of public R&D and knowledge, it is recommendable to negotiate target objectives with R&D organisations / higher education institutions on revenues from patents, number of start-ups per year, etc.



The poster Exhibition

- Revolving funds are highly successful as the re-financing model with professional service providers leads to higher sustainability of the fund. Furthermore, it is easier to attract private co-investors with a return on investment or a guarantee of stability of money invested.
- For company growth it is important to interlink the start-up with network partners and particularly with other companies. Mature firms might become important customers for innovation oriented start-ups.

Support for Start Ups and Spin-Offs Poster Exhibition

During the two day ERIK conference an exhibition area offered the chance to present more regional good practices. The Start Ups and Spin-Offs TWG had stand with 6 posters on Good Practice Cases, 1 poster presenting the TWG and a wealth of material on the various start-up initiatives. The VIVERNET project from the region of Extremadura was among these 7 posters and was voted by the conference participants as the best exhibition poster.



The poster Exhibition

Extremadura was officially awarded the prize during the plenary session on the second day (see article in this newsletter).



THEMATIC WORKING GROUP:

SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR START-UPS AND SPIN-OFFS

COORDINATOR:
 Department for economy, tourism and technology
 Federal Government of Lower Austria

WITH THE SUPPORT OF:
IDEUM

New businesses and knowledge-based firms offer a vital contribution to the revitalisation and expansion of the local and regional economic fabric and to the diversification of services. Regional policies and measures must support incubation of innovative technology and knowledge based companies.

ERIK+ has focused on supporting the creation of innovative orientated and new technology based start-ups and spin-offs which develop and commercialise new products, engineering processes or services based upon proprietary technology or skills.



Industry and Science Relations

Giorgia Valli
Aster (Emilia-Romagna)

The activities carried out and the results achieved by the ERIK Network in the framework of the ISR Thematic Working Group – coordinated by the Emilia-Romagna region - were presented in the occasion of ERIK's International Conference in a workshop attended by around 90 participants. Through the thematic workshop and the posters exhibited during the 2-days, the event represented an occasion for presenting and discussing the activities implemented, the resulting policy recommendations and a number of ISR good practices. A summary of the event presentations can be found below and the workshop presentations are available at:
<http://www.eriknetwork.net/workshop.html>



The ISR Workshop

Welcome and introduction: Erik activities on ISR

Giorgia Valli, ASTER, Emilia-Romagna (TWG coordinator)
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Giorgia Valli presented the TWG activities implemented from the first ERIK Network phase (2003-2005) until May 2007 with particular focus on activity aims, participant regions and Good Practices collected. The aim of the TWG was to stimulate a mutual learning process among members on ISRs issues and on experiences developed at regional level, both in the framework of the Regional Programmes of Innovative Actions (RPIAs) and also of other regional initiatives, and to spread results to other regions and actors across Europe.

A total of 16 European regions from 10 different countries participated in the exercise.

Ms Valli presented the methodology adopted by the Working Group for selecting the most significant ISR regional experiences, or Good Practices, among the 21 inserted in the ERIK on-line database. Two Good Practices were selected as case studies ("OPTOMED-Innovative Technologies in

Ophthalmology", Tuscany and "SIDEUM", Småland and Islands) and extensively described in the ERIK publication (<http://www.eriknetwork.net/documents.html>), one region was selected for the ISR study visit (Flanders - September 2006) and one Good Practice ("CRIA-Regional Innovation Centre of the Algarve" - Algarve region) was finally selected as the Best Practice from the 60 inserted in the database in all TWGs.

Industry-Science Relations as the Foundation of the Knowledge Economy

Margaret McGarry, Senior Director of Technology Collaboration, Scottish Enterprises (Scotland)

Margaret.McGarry@scotent.co.uk

Margaret McGarry presented the state of the art of Industry/Science relations in Scotland represented by an asymmetry between a high knowledge supply (academia) and a low knowledge demand (industry) and thus a knowledge transfer gap between Universities and Businesses.

She also presented the key activities that Scottish Enterprise has put into place to propel technology transfer activities in Scotland, namely:

- Helping universities to commercialise their science and technology, by:
 - Creating innovative spin-outs
 - Creating patents
 - Creating licensing deals with industry
 - Developing a culture of collaboration with industry
- Helping businesses to absorb innovative technologies and creative thinking to strengthen their competitive advantage, by:
 - Increasing collaborations with universities and research institutes
 - Accessing ideas, patents and know-how
 - Developing a culture of collaboration with the academic sector

The results of these activities can be illustrated by the following Business and Economic Performance data:

- 29% increase in business R&D expenditure in the period 1999 - 2005
- 52 awards in the last five years
- 44 businesses have been incorporated and a further 8 are planned
- 35 businesses have started to trade
- Total investment across portfolio is £ 70M of which £ 62M is from private sector
- 220 graduates and postgraduates employed

OPTOMED

Innovative Technologies in Ophthalmology

Francesca Rossi, Institute of Applied Physics, CNR-National Research Council Tuscany (Italy)
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The OPTOMED Project developed and transferred innovative instruments and methodologies used in Ophthalmic surgery to Tuscan enterprises operating in the field of Opto-electronics and to the most important regional university clinics and hospitals. The project set up prototypes of new surgical diode lasers, instruments for ophthalmic diagnostics, and new pharmaceutical formulations of photosensitisers. OPTOMED was developed by 2 public research centres, 4 ophthalmic clinics and 8 private enterprises.



The OPTOMED diode laser

The beneficiaries of OPTOMED project are:

- **The industrial sector:** a group of enterprises working in the fields of laser technology, optics and electronics components, ophthalmic instruments, pharmaceutical products, economic consulting and planning for the Health System.
- **The medical field:** instruments, pharmaceutical products, and innovative procedures were created and tested in 4 important university clinics and hospitals thus involving final target consumers in the actual development phase.
- **The public health system:** both economic and social advantages.

SIDEUM

Cluster and Innovation in Southern Småland

Per Schöldberg, Sideum Process coordinator, Videum Science Park, Småland & Islands (Sweden)
scholdberg@sideum.se

Mr Schöldberg presented the process leading to the creation of the no-profit agency SIDEUM innovation ab, financed by the RPIA, which now has 3 employees and the following stakeholders: Småland & Islands Regional Government, regional municipalities, Växjö University, VOLVO, IKEA, Trade Unions and banks.

The agency is a service provider which initiates and enhances regional dialogue by offering a neutral arena for politics,

business and academia and to provide services.



SIDEUM premises at Videum Science Park

Sideum was a small RPIA project (50,000 Euro) but had a great impact and promoted new ways of thinking in the region. Among the obstacles and learning lessons were:

- the **terminology:** the concepts of Triple Helix, innovations systems and clusters are not self evident and need to be explained;
- the analysis of **better cooperation** between Academia-Business community and politics is universal, the three cultures with three languages need a common platform;
- the need for public institutions to **change focus:** from project-orientation to policy-orientation;
- the importance of **dialogue** at national level, missing in the project early phase;
- project scale is not the **critical factor**. Instead it is the core idea, participant commitment (stakeholders) and the boldness of project management that counts.

Innovating through tradition

OTTAGONO and OLIOTEC in RPIA Innovazione Sicilia

Angelo Strano and Giuseppe Spartà, PRAI Sicilia - Regione Sicilia (Italy)
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Giuseppe Spartà presented the Sicilian PRAI aimed at stimulating innovation in the regional economy, namely in the agro-food sector. Angelo Strano then presented two ISR regional practices OTTAGONO and OLIOTEC.

The **OTTAGONO project** experimented innovative use and commercial exploitation of low-profitability and production rejected vegetable products. It was developed by 6 SMEs, 1 public research centre and 1 business support organisation. The project developed a production line: analyses and research - product processing - panel test and marketing - development of traceability software. The project was innovative as it initiated a virtuous circle of operational processes that fosters SME demand for innovative facilities. These facilities include the enhancement of agro-food products and the rationalisation of industrial processes.

The **OLIOTEC project** aimed to improve olive oil quality through biotech characterisation of genotypes, traceability

and enhancement of the production line. It was developed by 10 SMEs, 2 public research centres and 1 business support organisation, and concerned the implementation of research activities, experimentation of methodologies, exploitation of results. The project was innovative as it actually applied innovative biotechnological techniques developed in the medical sector on an experimental production level.



The OLIOTEC project

Firm Support Scheme for Research and Development in the Health Sector

Silvano Bertini, Ministry for Productive Activities, Emilia-Romagna Region
SBertini@Regione.Emilia-Romagna.it

Silvano Bertini presented the importance and the characteristics of the health cluster in Emilia-Romagna registering a high concentration of companies in the following sectors: biomedical equipment, artificial organs, orthopaedic prostheses, software, pharmaceuticals and biotech.



Science and Technology - Microscope Lenses

Mr Bertini described how essential the RPIA experience has been in defining Emilia-Romagna's strategy for Research and Technology Transfer. In particular, this project concerned the implementation of research and technology transfer projects involving public-private partnerships of groups of industrial SMEs and research centres or health facilities at regional level. Such projects were aimed at increasing

competitiveness and fostering the development of SMEs supplying products, technologies and services for the health care system.

The action was effective in forming partnerships among industrial companies, research institutions and public health organisations. 12 projects were carried out involving 28 SMEs, 13 research institutions and 11 public health care organisations.

Policy Recommendations and Lesson Learned

Lucio Poma, Ferrara University
lucio.poma@unife.it

Lucio Poma presented the policy recommendations and lessons learned based on the results of an in-depth analysis of the 21 ISR Good Practices collected in the framework of the ERIK project and starting from the so-called European paradox: the European scientific community being one of the world leaders in terms of R&D vs a European productive structure which is not competitive enough in high tech sectors.

These considerations can be summarised as follows.

1. *Developing research fields pertaining to territorial talents.* The analysis of the ERIK ISR good practices has made it clear that such influence is undoubtedly positive. In particular, the advantages are higher when research is developed in the proximity of a productive area around which research groups have crystallised.
2. *Increasing the involvement of companies in the project planning and implementation phase.* In the framework of the ERIK ISR good practices, partnership creation, particularly with the private sector, has been the most emphasised success factor. However, the value scale in the good practices shows that, despite being present in the planning and implementation phase industry still performs a minor role overall.
3. *Enhancing and increasing structures in charge of facilitating the recognition of university research IPRs.* Companies request that knowledge jointly developed with universities is appropriable. European universities are historically devoted to open science and are not used to offering the companies with which they collaborate adequate guarantees in term of knowledge exploitation.
4. *Enhancing the quality and quantity of information.* Any policy based on interactive relations among universities, government and industry requires a huge amount of information which is often lacking. The ERIK Network provides examples of valid platforms for promoting the spread of knowledge.
5. *Enhancing the managerial capacity of universities and regional bodies.* The knowledge governance required for coordination among 3 relevant institutional areas (universities, companies, regional bodies and agencies)

can only be imposed by a certain managerial capacity which companies have but universities and regional institutions have not. In the analysed practices the role of external consultancy is much more present in the planning phase than in implementation. This shows the low managerial or planning level of the actors. Consultancy has been used by those regions which are institutionally less structured or in projects boasting accentuated specificities.

6. **Boosting companies' competitiveness.** Nowadays, it is fundamental for university research to help enhance competitiveness of the productive fabric.
7. **Defining the division of tasks between project planning and implementation in a logic of integration and partnership.** The analysis of the good practices highlights the fact that the actors in charge of project elaboration are often different from those implementing it. A specialisation and division of tasks in the knowledge production area is taking place, between those producing project planning knowledge and those producing knowledge applied to research. The benefit of a constant dialogue between those planning the project and those proactively implementing should not be forgotten.
8. **Betting on human resources and on the enlargement of social capital.** In the triple interaction, it is not only companies that increase their potential but also governmental bodies and universities. In the co-planning and co-implementation of projects, besides achieving the expected results, a sound institutional learning activity takes place where communication methodologies and languages improve alongside the knowledge and competencies of the human resources operating within these institutions. 76% of the ERIK good practices have indeed described a bottom-up approach to testify an evident effort towards the investment on local human resources.



THEMATIC WORKING GROUP:

INDUSTRY SCIENCE RELATIONS

COORDINATOR:

Regione Emilia Romagna

WITH THE SUPPORT OF:

ASTER

Close industry and science relations are crucial for setting up and improving innovative companies. Consequently, effective cooperation between business and research is one of the key elements of a well developed regional innovation system.

Regions can implement many concrete measures to improve this co-operation providing opportunities for mutual learning and joint projects.

ERIK+ has focused its analysis on collaborative research between public science and industry, interaction between industry and science in the field of human capital, technology transfer from public institutions to industry and policy framework conditions.

ISR GOOD PRACTICES:

"Innovation Space" and "Simaa" - Alentejo

"CRIA" - Algarve

"ETCO" and "Localiza" - Aragón

"Virtual Technological Park" and "Research and Technology Transfer in Health" - Emilia-Romagna

"Tifane" - Liguria

"Fachdialog" and "Innovation Assistant" - Niederösterreich

"Ottagono" and "Ollotec" - Sicilia

"Sideum" - Småland Med Öarna

"Optomed" and "3Tnet" - Toscana

"SBO", "VIS-TD", "Tetra and HobuFund" and "Postdoctoral Fellowships" - Vlaanderen

"The Better Concept" - Västsverige



Clusters and Business Networks

Soizic Nelo
Coventry University Enterprises Ltd

Some Initial Considerations

During the ERIK conference, organised on the 10th and 11th May 2007 in Brussels, the TWG Clusters and Business Networks organised a workshop session on the 10th May. The session counted around 50 participants from across Europe and from various organisations and institutions.

The workshop included presentations from various European experts on their experiences of clusters in Europe. It offered an opportunity to identify key steps in developing a cluster and networking strategy, as set out below. The success of the strategy is dependent on working with both the strengths and the weaknesses of the local economy - getting the evidence base right is an essential foundation.

What are the key features of clusters?

The key features of clusters are set out in the EU Commission's guide "Creating Smart Systems"; Clusters are based on systematic relationships, among firms. The relationships can be built on common or complementary products, production processes, core technologies, natural resource requirements, skill requirements, and/or distribution channels. Clusters are geographically bound, defined largely by distances and times that people are willing to travel for employment and that employees and owners of companies consider reasonable for meeting and networking. The range is influenced by transportation systems and traffic, but also by cultural identity, personal preferences and indeed family and social demands.

Clusters have life cycles, which progress from an:

- **embryonic stage**, which can be generated by innovations, inventions, or inward investment, to the
- **growth stage**, where markets have developed sufficiently to spin off and attract imitators and competitors and to stimulate entrepreneurship, to
- **maturity**, which is when the processes or services have become routine, imitations enter the market and costs become a key competitive advantage, to

- **decay**, when the products become fully replaceable by lower cost or more effective substitutes.

Clusters are not defined by organisational membership, and while an association provides members with many real benefits, "free riders" are also parts of the clusters. By virtue of location and common needs, they may also address the same non-exclusive external economies as cluster association members.

Clusters produce externalities, the "hard" externalities that provide a larger pool, greater variety, and lower costs of supplies and components, specialised and customised services, skilled labour, and potential partners, and the soft externalities that provide access to tacit knowledge of technologies, markets, and opportunities to network, and to aggregate interests and needs.

Clusters are defined by relationships. Ultimately, they are self-selecting based on how individual employers and institutions in a region define their missions, set their priorities, use their region's resources, and form relationships.



Cluster stand at the Poster Exhibition



The key steps in developing a cluster and networking strategy

Content and Conclusions of the Workshop

Clive Winters, CUE Ltd and coordinator of the TWG, opened the session and introduced the speakers for the day who went on to provide the audience with a wide European perspective on cluster experiences.

The speakers were: Rene Tonnisson from Tartu Science park in Estonia; representatives from the two ERIK selected case studies, Matteo Ametis for E-cluster Veneto and Peter Van Essen for Knowledge Alliance; George Marian Isbasoiu from Romania; and Philippe Suinen from the Walloon region in Belgium. The session was closed by Alexander Hicks from Coventry University who was the reporter for the day.

The document below summarises the points presented by each speakers during the session, as recorded by Mr Hicks.

Clive Winters - Coventry University Enterprises West Midlands UK

- Clusters develop in the context of life cycles moving from an embryonic stage through to a growth stage and on to maturity and decay. Policy must reflect the stage reached by each cluster.
- Clusters can develop organically through the work of local and regional activists. An overt sense of membership is not necessary for a cluster to work.
- Relationships, both personal contacts and institutional engagements, drive clustering activity. These relationships, particularly the personal ones fuel proactive clustering.
- Measuring impacts and outputs of clustering and networking activity is important in order to inform ongoing policy and strategy development.

Rene Tonnisson – Tartu Science Park Estonia

- Clusters and Networks can be best motivated if there is a real sense of common purpose, a goal or goals or perhaps a perceived 'enemy'. An example is the Tartu Software Micro Cluster established as an initiative to enable training and education issues based on a common need to improve the quality of the regional labour pool.
- Clusters can be built on existing networks.
- To catalyse action cluster management roles should include promoting the benefits of participation to members and potential members and to external groups such as international clusters and networks. Cluster outputs can include better understanding of each member's competitive position.

Peter van Essen - Knowledge Alliance (case study) Zuid Holland

- A focus on improving the level of professionalism in cluster management is recommended.
- Also recommended is a focus on strategic projects with bigger impacts on the regional economy as more valuable use of clustering support activity.

- Communicating outward on behalf of members adds value to support services and policy impacts.

Matteo Ametis - Veneto e-cluster (case study) Veneto Innovazione, Italy

- In order to enable an e-cluster to work as a knowledge exchange tool in a dynamic and complex environment a robust and user friendly ICT platform is essential.
- The functions and capability of cluster and network management systems must include the ability to organise the operation of a results driven cluster and make a difference at the company level.
- The aim of an effective cluster management system and its outputs must be to add value to the member's innate ability to produce, a minimum requirement of cluster membership.

George Marian Isbasoiu - University of Brasov Romania

- The debate on the cluster evolution process is still open with no general agreement on how clusters develop and the distinction between them and networks.
- Policies that stimulate entrepreneurship are critical to the motivation of members and the overall success of a cluster.
- Access to finance is also a critical success factor as it accelerates the growth of firms in the context of a cluster.
- Cities are now operating as a whole as 'industrial incubators' offering an established infrastructure that enables a cluster to work effectively. Policies must recognise the differing benefits to clusters operating within cities areas and 'green field' sites.



Mr Suinen, Managing director AWEX discussed the international development of Walloon competitiveness clusters

Philippe Suinen – CEO of AWEX Walloon, Belgium

- Clustering activity requires specific government and other public investment in order to make it happen effectively.
- Clusters are best initiated, structured and managed by involving the members at all stages.
- Effective clustering demands a pro-active international approach featuring cross-border networking.
- Clusters need critical mass in order to move forward.

*Alexander Hicks – rapporteur
Coventry University, UK*

Five key words with policy implications emerged from the presentations and discussion.

1. **Purpose**
Each cluster requires a clear sense of purpose so that members can identify with the benefits of membership
 2. and draw motivation from them.
 3. **Relationships**
One to one relationships make clusters work.
 4. **Benefits**
The benefits of membership must be promoted within the cluster and beyond.
 5. **User friendly**
All systems within the cluster must be designed with the member's needs in mind.
- Added Value.** The cluster must offer members something that cannot be acquired elsewhere.



Alexander Hicks presents the Workshop Conclusions



THEMATIC WORKING GROUP:

CLUSTERS AND BUSINESS NETWORKS

COORDINATOR:
Coventry University Enterprises Ltd

Actions and projects related to clusters and business networks were chosen most often by regions working in the first strategic theme of RPIA programmes.

Clusters and networks are increasingly recognised as regional strategic resources, providing a favourable environment for innovation and technology dissemination.

ERIK+ has analysed concrete measures that can help regions implement targeted cluster / network policies and measures, such as schemes encouraging inter-firm networking, enhancing innovation management and promoting advanced business advisory services.

CLUSTER GOOD PRACTICES:

- "Rota dos Sabores", "Innovation Cycle", "PRIA Plano Regional de Inovação" and "Old Techniques, New Concepts" - Alentejo
- "Mobile Solution Group" - Bremen
- "Network of Regional Innovation" - Castilla y León
- "Development of Innovation in the Wood Sector" and "K-clusters" - Dytiki Makedonia
- "From Industrial Districts to Digital Districts" - Piemonte
- "ReFine", "Cluster development and Technological R&D" and "GnowHow" - Småland med barna
- "META" - Toscana
- "e-cluster" - Veneto
- "VIS-TIS" - Vlaanderen
- "South Holland Knowledge Alliance" - Zuid Holland

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Innovation Finance

Patricia Nord, TWG Coordinating assistant, the Regional Council in Kalmar County
Maria Lindbom, TWG Coordinator, Project Manager, the Regional Council in Kalmar County/ South Sweden

Introduction to the Theme Innovation Finance

The TWG IF workshop at the ERIK+ Network Conference provided an opportunity for those operating in the field of Innovation Finance to present results and share ideas. The overall aim of this article is to present observations from this occasion and browse the most important points discussed. Following a brief introduction to the theme, the first section summarises the workshop presentations while the second section goes on to present some of the theme Policy Recommendations. Finally, the conclusions of the workshop are outlined.

Innovation Finance in the Erik Network

Erik Bunis, (Managing Director, Länsteknikcentrum (LTC AB), region of Småland med öarna), introduced the workshop theme and indicated the main aims of the Thematic Working Group (TWG) on Innovation Finance. These aims were to analyse and identify means of accessing finance in innovation. This work included mainly knowledge exchange within the Network, within which the study visits were a focal point.

Through this TWG an innovation time-line indicating the main finance stages has been developed. The Idea stage is the starting point for innovation and mainly focuses on evaluation and securing the ownership of the innovation (Intellectual Property). In this stage there are often possibilities for the inventor to gain initial funding from the public sector. The Prototype stage is essential to find the possibilities and design of the innovation, both physical products and services. Generally, this second stage suffers from a lack of funding because the public sector is limited by regulations and financial resources and it is too early for the private sector to see the possibilities of return of investment. The third, Production stage, focuses on developing the production environment, often with heavy investments in tools and machinery. The Market intro stage is strongly connected to the Production stage as an introduction to the market requires support from flexible production. This stage often sees large investments in marketing and PR and presents some risk as the innovation life cycle can differ. In the Production and Market intro stages there are often difficulties in accessing public funding due to the restrictions mentioned above. Only the strongest innovations can find venture capital. The two final stages, Growth and Expansion combine marketing issues and the expansion of organisations and production facilities. These stages require heavy financing and there is generally stronger interest from the private sector. However, the public involvement must continue as many companies, especially SMEs, have little experience and need guidance. Work in this TWG has confirmed that there is

a gap in Innovation Finance when leaving the product/service development phase and trying to acquire resources for market establishment. This gap has a two-fold explanation. Firstly, in the early stages of a project the risk is often too high for private investors and, the managing costs for venture capital funds are often too high in comparison to the investment required. Secondly, legislation on direct financing limits engagement public financing particularly in terms of direct support to enterprises which in many cases is blocked by the European legal system.

Based on this information, the workshop audience was asked to consider two questions:

- How can different innovation finance actors be co-ordinated to achieve the best results?
- If possible, how can the gaps in the innovation finance timeline be eliminated?



Workshop Speakers

All Money is Not the Same

Christian Saublens, Director of EURADA (European Association of Development Agencies), presented his theme "All money is not the same" concentrating on the question of how to support access to finance by SMEs. "All money is not the same" in the sense that it is not only a question of access to money but also a question of the life cycle of a company and about sales and market penetration. The importance of indirect support, integrated support and IPR evaluation cannot be emphasised enough. Indirect financial support can include pre-incubation and incubation actions, workshops and tutoring in terms of coaching, mentoring and hands-on management. Integrated finance involves both entrepreneurs and all equity providers as advisors. Training in submitting business proposals, for example, can demonstrate whether the business proposal is a "good risk" for the investor. When it comes to academia on the other hand, support in capacity building and improving links with the



POLICY PAPER

ERIK Network Position on European Policy for Regional Innovation and Knowledge

The ERIK Network:

- 1** Highlights the continued and vital importance of sustaining and strengthening the regional dimension of programmes promoting innovation, research and knowledge at regional level for the achievement of the Lisbon goals, for the sustainable and balanced growth and success of Europe's regions, and for improving its citizens' quality of life
- 2** Recognises the heterogeneity among European regions which, while providing opportunities and added value to Europe, also presents a challenges in terms of providing policy solutions at European level to suit all
- 3** Agrees that, the Regional Programmes of Innovative Actions of the European Fund for Regional Development (ERDF) have played an important role as straightforward and hands on "laboratories of ideas" for European regions and have allowed regional actors to take risks while testing out new ideas which help to respond to the challenges of the new global economy
- 4** Supports Regional Programmes of Innovative Actions and other such innovative initiatives being mainstreamed and the experimentation of innovative approaches being integrated into regional operative programmes. Regional governments should use EU funding to kick start initiatives but the real touchstone is how to help regional actors to stand on their feet as quickly as possible, learn to seek and provide for themselves, and thus generate products and competition. Mainstreaming of the RPIA provides the opportunity to integrate best practices and policy recommendations from the initiative into other crucial sectors, such as education, energy, manufacturing and financing





5

Therefore demands inter-regional transfer of Good Practice Cases in order to accelerate the dissemination of successful methodologies within Europe

6

Is aware that some aspects of existing regional innovation and economic policy and structures for implementation offer real possibilities for growth and competitiveness. They include numerous strong and experienced support structures in place at European, national and regional level and the funding opportunities available to initiate, sustain or expand innovation programmes

7

Recognises that despite these aspects, there are many risks and much space for improvement in regional innovation and economic policy. The EU is a strikingly variant mosaic of cultures, knowledge specialisations, economic strengths and development opportunities. When examined at the regional or at the local level this overwhelming variety can make it difficult to commit to long-term growth goals. Economic growth and employment measures can often have adverse effects if they are not intrinsically sustainable as they may be abused for short-term gain

8

Highlights the role of all regional actors (the centres of knowledge production, of knowledge implementation and of local administration) in initiating and supporting economic growth. Together, these three centres form the “triple helix” of knowledge-driven innovation and economic development and are central to regional policies for innovation

9

Stresses that the regional level is, and continues to be ever more, vital for achieving growth and competitiveness in the European Union. Regional administrations are the fulcrum around which the whole system of regional operators, public and private, rotates. Regional administrations can and must take the role of coordinating, managing and developing activities related to research and innovation within their regional territory. Regional authorities must have the respective political and financial responsibility to play an important role in promoting and fostering innovation on regional level. The regional level should not be considered as an innovation system on a reduced scale in comparison to national system of innovation, rather as something deeply different and yet connected





10

Sees the human factor as the key to regional development. Europe still suffers from a deficit of technical vocation and it must be recognised that well trained and capable human capital is a prerequisite for innovation. Regions, with European support, must have the capacity to invest in development, mobility and proliferation of human capital

11

Reiterates its view that multiple, flexible and coordinated support measures should be introduced to promote innovation. Public funding should help people to help themselves. Therefore, economic growth does not only require the provision of financial aid but also of education, training and support. As the ERIK+ Good Practices demonstrate, integrated approaches with a variety of these service types have higher impact

12

Sustains the fundamental importance of developing working methodologies for cooperation on various themes addressing aspects of the innovation process, such as the working groups around which it has concentrated its activities until now:

- a. Industry Science Relations to reduce the existing gap and help research centres and enterprises to speak the same language;
- b. Support and Services for Start-Ups and Spin-Offs which address the whole start-up process offering integrated services as a combination of funding and continuous coaching on technology, management, finance, infrastructure/incubator and market;
- c. Clusters and Business Networks as the perfect environment to enhance competitiveness by allowing firms to take advantage of local knowledge, suppliers, information, skills and opportunities;
- d. The availability of adequate means of Innovation Finance to bridge the gap in the finance chain

13

Encourages continued public financial support for stimulating cooperation methods, in particular networks, at all levels. Local and regional networks form the basis of a wider national European network and eventually even a global network. By creating a strong framework for uncomplicated exchange and providing the platform for effective methodology transfer, cooperation within networks helps individuals (actors or regions) to achieve results that alone would be unattainable





14 Recognises, however, that while projects financed with European Commission money can form a network basis or a foundation, without further continued political and financial support they risk having to close before their work can really bring tangible benefits to the regions. Therefore the ERIK Network believes that throughout a network lifespan time and effort must be spent on building relationships and contacts and attracting interest, ideas and funding for further work

15 Sees the importance of a network in providing not only fundamental services but also in building on previous experience to ensure that work does not remain at a theoretical level. Instead, the focus must move towards exchange for precise, well-defined purposes and concrete actions, such as in-depth feasibility studies for adapting one successful regional system to another, funding for sharing resources and facilities, or indeed implementation or inter-regional transfer of pilot actions developed from exchange activities

16 Therefore welcomes the launch of the new Regions for Economic Change initiative, which will support networks in which members concentrate on using existing knowledge to build action plans which can be implemented in the respective regions, thus capitalising on the knowledge. The key slogan “going from ideas to action” should be promoted and adopted by innovation networks

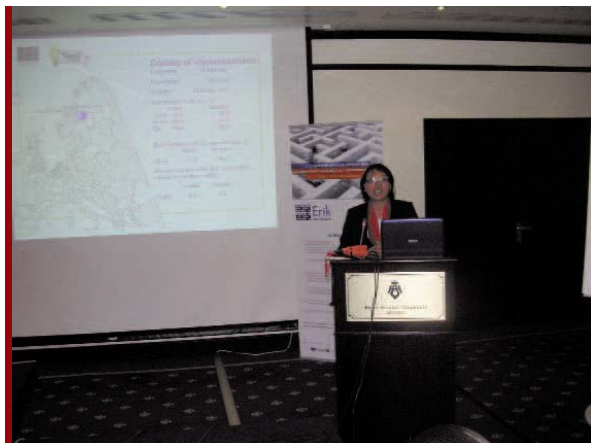
17 Confirms its interest in continued dialogue with the European Commission and other European regions on how to capitalise on the vast experience gained within the ERIK Network with an ultimate aim of providing regions with a Europe-wide platform to support social and economic cohesion



market place is crucial. The difficulty in access financing is often due to an asymmetry in information between entrepreneurs and investors. Investment readiness is needed to bridge the gap in "innovation finance". Ultimately, finance and support from anyone in the general public is welcome and of great importance. Regional authorities can also play a major role in facilitating finance to SMEs.

Innovative finance in scarcely populated areas

Beatrice Einarsson from Åkroken Science Park in Sundsvall, Sweden, presented one of the TWG case studies TRENFI – Västernorrland. The TRENFI project was financed by the Regional Programme of Innovative Actions and was carried out by a group of regional organisations and investors in co-operation with the County Administrative Board of Västernorrland between 2001 and 2003. The main actions were to investigate and promote new and innovative mechanisms for financing innovation in SMEs. Four pilot projects were set up and the results can be summarised as follows: thanks to the project the first regional VC fund in Västernorrland (INVESTA Business capital), Västernorrlandsfonden, an insurance company with a strategy to invest in local SMEs, and Y-Network Saminvest, a pilot fund supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) have been created. Y-Network Saminvest works as a catalyst between private VC capital and growth companies, through co-financing private VC capital. From this presentation two possible means of bridging the gap in the field of "innovation finance" were proposed. The first is to collaborate within the regional grouping for financial infrastructure. The second is to improve links in financial structures and promote joint management of seed- and venture capital initiatives.



Beatrice Einarsson presents the TRENFI project

CAMPUS Project

José Antonio Cano Martín from the Innovation and Development Agency of Andalusia, Spain, presented the CAMPUS Project. This project was launched in 2004 in response to two needs. The first was to convert the results of university research into business initiatives enabling new products and/or services to be provided. The second was to promote the creation of technology-based firms resulting from university spin-offs using exemplary means. The project

aimed to create technology-based companies (TBFs) with a potential for growth with products and/or services and to provide financial instruments during the seed and start-up stages. An overall objective was to provide a link between universities and businesses and create a collaboration network for business start-ups which eases the transfer of knowledge between the world of science and business. A total of 60 university spin-off projects have now been established through CAMPUS. Many are linked to the dynamic universities found in Malaga, Granada, Cadiz and Almeria. Experience in the CAMPUS project has shown that we should encourage not only seed and start up capital but also early stage expansion capital, as attention is often centred on fixed assets and machinery. It is also important, to cover the initial working capital until the company reach private financing circuits. The CAMPUS project is an extremely complete regional government project in the creation of innovative technology-based firms because it is "all-embracing" in that it covers all services and actors in the system.



The Innovation Finance Poster Stand

Mittelstandsoffensive – Initiative for SMEs

Telse Jochims, Innovation Manager at BIG Bremen Investment Agency, Germany, presented the Good Practice "Mittelstandsoffensive - Initiative for SMEs" as a project that involves co-operation between the federal state of Bremen and the Deutsche Telekom AG (German Telekom). The project supports SMEs in implementing new ICT applications in their businesses. In particular, "Mittelstandsoffensive" helps SMEs to reduce restraints in investing in IT and e-Business solutions by providing consultations on how to invest in ICT. This process of consultations involves IT consultants, IT developers and lawyers. In Bremen helping companies to improve their internal processes in a sustainable way is seen as a way to boost the regional economy by creating employment. Between 2004 and 2006 a total of 266 SME consultations were held. The most frequent topics of consultation revolved IT security, Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), Shop Systems and, Internet- and Telecommunications. It is important to provide help to companies in order for them to invest in innovation in a sustainable way. This is done when finance indirectly reaches companies through investments in information and intensive consultation.

Tekniklots

Conny Gustavsson, Head of department for Information and Education in the Swedish Institute of Casting Technology (SWECAST) in the region of Småland med öarna, presented the Good Practice Tekniklots. This project was initiated in 2002 by a team of eight partners from the regional innovation system. Tekniklots aimed to help SMEs to develop new innovative products and services, to implement new technology and to carry out business analyses. During its four years of existence Tekniklots helped more than 200 companies to turn ideas into marketable products. Results show that more than 90% of all supported projects achieved their expected goals and the final business turnover for the supported project/product is in average 30 times higher than the financial support awarded. Among the many products which could be used as an example, is the office chair made of ecologically degradable components and developed by the company RH-Stolen AB. This product was presented at the conference.

One explanation for the success of Tekniklots is the transfer of economic support from the government to companies. Another lies in the flexible structure of the innovative networks which collaborated. Continued strategies in Småland med öarna to bridge the gap in innovation finance can learn from and build on the Tekniklots experience.

Innovation Finance TWG: Lessons Learned and Policy Recommendations

Erik Bunis presented the lessons learnt through the ERIK+ Network Innovation Finance TWG. Within the Erik Network, different regions have a different approach to financing innovation but some similarities remain, largely concerning obstacles to accessing finance. It was therefore possible to bring experiences together to produce some policy recommendations which could be useful for all. One recommendation is to concentrate on creating spaces where people with business ideas can meet people with financial resources and develop their ideas. Funding could be provided to prepare, supply and hold events in varying formats where regional actors both new to the scene and already known can hold constructive, well organised networking. A second recommendation is to create programmes which fund expert support and consultancy on gaining funding through specific European and regional programmes and opportunities. Another recommendation addresses the difficulties of ensuring private participation in innovation. Financial incentives should be offered for private companies to participate in innovative regional development. Measures should not only provide initial capital for public administrations to fund innovation but also capital for testing financial mechanisms which see the direct participation of regional actors in programmes and companies themselves.

It remains vital to ensure a balanced supply chain for innovation finance, thus part of the funding can be dedicated to direct access by the companies to balance the amount that used for administration and project selection. This can be achieved by a joint partnership in programmes and by bringing both public and private financing together. Overall,

one concrete means of balancing financing would be to make better use of company money alongside a development of finance links to the JEREMIE initiative (Joint European Resources for Micro to Medium Enterprises - <http://www.eif.europa.eu/jeremie/>).

Plenary Session Conclusions from Workshop Reporters

Christian Saublens also took on the role as workshop reporter on behalf of the TWG Innovation Finance in the Plenary Session that followed the workshops. Mr Saublens spoke of the need for improved practices indicated from lessons learned in ERIK+. He stressed that the gap in the chain of "innovation finance" is still a vivid reality and much improvement is still necessary in our regions. However, many projects and good practices show that this gap can be bridged. In order to fully succeed both financial and non-financial tools, such as training and advice, are needed to promote the development of innovative SMEs. It is also important that all the relevant actors involved in the process of innovation finance meet and discuss in the framework of a platforms which could be implemented in regional programmes. Mr Saublens summarised the discussion by reconfirming that improved links between actors among the general public would improve the balance in financing innovation.



THEMATIC WORKING GROUP:
INNOVATION FINANCE


COORDINATOR:
Småland med öarna
(Småland and islands)
Regional Council in Kalmar County

Difficult access to finance is one of the most common barriers to innovation, as loans to new and innovative companies are considered of high risk by both private and public financial institutions.

Regional policies can play a key role in enhancing information and actual access to innovation funds.

ERIK+ has concentrated on new measures for attracting more capital throughout different stages of business development e.g. public seed funds, venture capital funds, risk sharing between public and private funding, etc.

INNOVATION FINANCE GOOD PRACTICES

 Time line for innovation financing

Idea	Prototype	Production	Market Intra	Growth	Expansion
	GP FAME			GP Epirus	
	GP Tekniklots				GP FAME
		GP Bourse regionaux			
	GP Seed Finance				
		GP Trenf			



Knowledge for Regional Innovation Plenary Session and Round Table

Prepared by Jessica Huntingford and Paolo Frosini (ERIK Network) on the basis of the conference presentations and input

The second day of the ERIK conference "Knowledge for Regional Innovation" included one plenary session and one round table with the following overall objectives.

- To present the ERIK Network policy recommendations on innovation, knowledge and the role of networks;
- To hear from political actors in the field of innovation and knowledge on the role of networks and on upcoming initiatives, with particular relation to the future of the ERIK Network;
- To hear reactions to the ERIK Policy recommendations from representatives of the academic and the business world;
- To hear the point of view of regional authorities on the role of networks in the new programming period.

This article will present the main points made and conclusions drawn from the various sessions.

Plenary session 1 - the political view

The session was opened with a welcome and introduction from the chairman and Head of Sector for Innovation in the Tuscan Regional Government, Mr Simone Sorbi, and a welcome from the General Director of Industry, Trade and Tourism for the Emilia Romagna Regional Government, Ms Morena Diazzi. The ERIK Network was then honoured to welcome the General Director for Regional Policy at the European Commission, Mr Dirk Ahner.

Mr Ahner stressed his support for networks like ERIK. Networks not only promote necessary interaction between stakeholders but they also support the European Commission's message that innovation is vital for regional development. To this end Mr Ahner particularly welcomed the ERIK publication "*Knowledge and Innovation for Regional Growth: Policy Recommendations Based on European Good Practices*". Mr Ahner emphasised the fundamental point that networks are about people, therefore the right people and the ability to collaborate are crucial. An effective network includes participants who have a wide variety of knowledge to share, who are willing to do so and who are ready to invest resources in transforming knowledge into concrete actions. Networks need enthusiasm from members and this enthusiasm is something that can only be constructed step by step, allowing members to overcome any initial misgivings. Therefore, time is an important condition for a network. With time a network can become a credible source of knowledge and in turn can attract new members.

The latest related initiatives taken by the European



Dirk Ahner, General Director for Regional Policy
European Commission

Commission in this field fall under the umbrella of 'Regions for Economic Change', launched in November 2006. Within 'Regions for Economic Change' regions are encouraged to network around 30 priority themes proposed by the Commission. The Commission advocates a two way bridge between mainstream programmes and networking activities. This means that gaining experience and knowledge is not sufficient. Regions participating in the networks should implement ideas through their established programmes, while sharing their experience of these programmes through networks. The Commission will actively support networks that are committed to disseminating and mainstreaming results through the 'fast-track option'. Interest in 'Regions for Economic Change' has particularly focussed on this 'fast-track option'. Under Interreg IVC and Urbact, the Managing Authorities will launch calls for proposals for networks around the identified themes. The Commission will then be consulted and will indicate which fall under the 'fast-track option' and can thus avail of Commission participation.

The ERIK policy recommendations are in line with the basis of this initiative. Networking promotes innovation through opportunities to exchange knowledge and to meet new partners. However, the ultimate goal must be to transform this knowledge into action. Following a presentation of the network achievements by Mr Silvano Bertini, Head of the Economic Development Policy Unit of the Regione Emilia Romagna, these ERIK Recommendations were presented in detail by Mr Stratos Pistikopoulos from Imperial College London. Mr Pistikopoulos was appointed to this role due to his vast experience in the world of research and in the world of business. In addition to his work at Imperial College, he has been instrumental in creating a number of spin off companies which are going from strength to strength.

This background allowed him to analysis the work done within the ERIK network with external but expert eyes. In order to prepare the network policy recommendations, a SWOT analysis was carried out on the ERIK Network. Interestingly, some of the network's strengths can also be considered weaknesses if not adequately managed. For example, the large number of members means that ERIK can really call itself a European-wide network and benefits from the experiences and detailed input that these heterogeneous regions provide. However, it is also true that the lack of a tool to ensure participation from all regions poses organisational and work distribution challenges which affect performance, productivity and potential. Furthermore, the ERIK Network offers real added value in terms of collaboration and exchange of ideas. However, the concentration on this valuable experience and knowledge exchange has meant that the network has not prioritised concrete actions.



Stratos Pistikopoulos presents the ERIK Policy Recommendations

Mr Pistikopoulos went on to outline the *network policy recommendations*. While facilitating structured information exchange is important, information exchange within networks should not only concentrate on positive examples of regional policy. Indeed much can be learned from analysing mistakes. Helping regions with this type of analysis is one area where networks have real added value. Networks can bring people together and let them discuss common problems and potential solutions. Networks should secure funding to hold events and intensive sessions, allowing people to think and to share knowledge. Networks must also maintain basic services for which regions avail of network support. These include, above all, partner searches or contacts and updated information on opportunities for regions.

However, they must now go further. European regions have had sufficient time to experiment with different network formats and ways of working. It is now time to build on this experience and to ensure that work does not remain as simple exchange. Instead, the focus must move towards exchange for precise, well-defined purposes. The network should ensure growth and a future. In terms of growth networks should cooperate not only with other EU countries but also with countries outside EU borders. Cooperation could allow two-way exchange and transfer of ideas, actions

and network structures that can themselves lead to positive results and impact. In terms of a future, time and effort must be made to attract interest and ideas for sustainability and perhaps even funding for further work. This includes the vital cooperation and communication between different networks in order to avoid unnecessary duplication or competition.

The cornerstone of Mr Pistikopoulos's more *general policy recommendations* is that regions must enthusiastically invest in development, mobility and proliferation of human, intellectual and financial capital. People are the most important resource, since they initiate and apply innovation, but also because they advocate policy measures to governments. Knowledge is another resource that must be generated, protected and implemented with ease.

Within this overall panorama, some vital aspects are: supporting start-up/spin-off companies both by training and funds and by advocating national policy measures that simplify capital flow procedures; identifying, creating and encouraging clusters of innovation excellence (strength comes in numbers); providing quick and efficient innovation finance. Finally, regional policies can directly manage or indirectly regulate funding but must foremost encourage entrepreneurial spirit at all stages. The full SWOT analysis and policy recommendations can be found in the ERIK publication, available on-line at www.eriknetwork.net.

Mr Gerhard Stahl, Secretary General of the Committee of the Regions, followed this presentation with his view on the role of the regions in promoting European innovation and knowledge. The Committee of the Regions is active on various fronts to this end, some examples include the Lisbon Monitoring Platform (<http://lisbon.cor.europa.eu/>) and the co-organisation of the first annual Regions for Economic Change conference. He stressed that regions do indeed have a vital role to play here and in fact their roles and responsibilities are increasing. In particular, regions are at the frontline in the delivery of innovation support to enterprises and they form the spatial basis for clusters. Regions are well positioned to appreciate needs and construct policies by encouraging relevant actors to interact and concentrate on shared interests. However, in terms of strategy the balance between the 3 pillars of the triple helix remains essential.



Gerhard Stahl, Secretary General of the Committee of the Regions

The first session was closed by the Regional Minister for Economic Development in Tuscany, Mr Ambrogio Brenna. Mr Brenna confirmed Tuscan political support for the ERIK Network and stressed the need to continue and to build on the good work undertaken by this network. He used this opportunity to provide added value to the ERIK Network Policy Recommendations by highlighting what, in his experience, are four of the most vital elements for economic change and for maintaining a high level of growth in Europe.

The first characteristic is knowing your territory, being able to identify what regions already have in terms of innovation and what they still need, thus avoiding duplicating or neglecting areas of interest. The second characteristic is learning from and building on previous experience. A regional strategy has to be implemented, tested and continuously adapted to regional and global change. The third characteristic is taking risks to make things happen and encouraging public subjects to be innovative as policy makers, to dialogue with the regional system and become co-actors in territorial development. Finally, cooperation at all levels is important. Knowledge exchange, regional, national and European networks, and a wide spread governance of decision making are the fundamental elements on which to implement effective policies and respond to territorial needs.

Mr Brenna stressed that ERIK is an active network which has provided many interesting and important results. He now, in line with the ERIK policy recommendations, believes that having established this firm basis and this platform for exchange, more intensive cooperation should be directed towards concrete action. In this, he would like to see Tuscany region participating in continued activities within ERIK towards, for example, formulating feasibility studies and action plans for transfer, personnel exchanges, training activities and pilot projects.



Ambrogio Brenna
Regional Minister for Economic Development in Tuscany

Plenary session 2 – the academics' view

This session was chaired by Mr Mikel Landabaso from DG Regional Policy of the European Commission. The speakers in this session were:

- Luciana Lazzaretti - University of Florence, Italy

- Jeremy Howells - University of Manchester, UK
- Edward Chlebus - Wroclaw University of Technology, Poland

In the context of regional innovation the role of universities or other higher education institutes must be analysed, especially considering the very weak industry-academic links which still exist all over Europe. As far as partnership with business sectors, the university system must become an "innovation partner" for enterprises. On the other side the economic system, with its capability for generating profit and launching new research programmes, can be "knowledge partners". With regards to the public sector, universities can be instrumental in decision making support activities, cooperating in enforcing regional innovation and creative environments.

However, in large parts of Europe there is little evidence of dense highly inter-dependent knowledge and learning networks. The lack of 'demand' for innovation is the biggest single barrier to developing successful university-industry collaboration. There is still a focus on the 'high peaks' of high technology and innovation without considering the mass of "ordinary firms" or those excluded from established knowledge and learning networks.

Localised patterns of interaction show that proximity still matters in knowledge and learning. Furthermore, most, if not all studies, emphasise the importance of skilled labour in knowledge and learning networks. Regions need to be able to attract and retain such workers, forming 'labour pools' which are socially integrated but diverse. Regions have the right dimension and make up to provide a rich, combinatorial environment which combines spatial proximity, opportunities for inter-organisational interaction and learning, good supply conditions in terms of skilled labour and important social and cultural networks. Importantly, there is also a demand criteria which supports novelty seeking and innovation in terms of new learning routines. However, in Europe the variety of regions and the heterogeneity among them becomes ever greater. It is difficult to reach agreement on, for example, what makes a good region for knowledge and innovation. It is therefore difficult to provide overall generalisations and policy advice.



Session speakers and chairman

Plenary session 3 – the entrepreneurs' view

The session was chaired by Mr Olivier Baudelet, the ERIK project officer from DG Regional Policy of the European Commission. He stressed the importance of this session as policy makers often discuss the necessity of further involving private enterprise, particularly SMEs, in the policy debate, but in practice it is not done enough.

The three speakers were:

- *Fabio Rangoni - President of Mortara Rangoni Europe, a leading manufacturer in the medical technology field, and member of the board of the local association of industries.*
- *Lars Johansson - Founder of ProfilGruppen AB, an aluminium company located in Åseda in the south of Sweden.*
- *Mariana Chabrilón Popelka - Head of the Research and Development Unit of the Mediterranean Centre of Photobiology (Centro Mediterráneo de Fotobiología).*

First and foremost, as concluded in the previous session, it is important to remember that every region is unique in terms of industrial talents, scientific knowledge and the socio-economic needs of the community. Therefore, policies elsewhere can be usefully studied but not copied in their entirety.

It is clear that different sized companies have different approaches. Large companies have had time to settle in their activities and to devote time and resources to real collaboration with research institutions and with public authorities in terms of knowledge and technology transfer. Small companies, on the other hand, are not always able to fully commit such resources to collaboration, despite being aware of the potential benefit. Their main objective has to be survival.

As in the previous session a number of obstacles to collaboration, transfer and effective policy making emerged from this session. One is the organisational disproportion and different managing cultures between SMEs and academia. Some go as far as to say that the different poles of the triple helix are speaking different languages. Furthermore, this lack of comprehension is visible even within each pole. For a small company, a lack of experience in negotiations with large companies can hinder their growth and development. It is essential that a small company knows its limits. Product development can only go so far and then it becomes necessary to contact larger enterprises for large scale production and distribution. Training courses in this type of negotiating skills or matching events organised by the public authorities would certainly help. Instead the impression given by the local institutions can sometimes be that of a lack of clear, direct decisions. In these cases, resources are spread over various initiatives and there is a lack of an overall strategy for business support.

Furthermore, public financial support for human capital is recognised as essential and problems arise when such support is late and / or limited. In line with the ERIK Policy Recommendations, the clear agreement emerged that the

human factor is fundamental to any technology transfer process. There is no transfer without students or researchers moving from their labs into the industry or technicians from the industry moving into research labs. There will be no students and researchers in technical fields if the technical culture is not promoted and taught at school, starting from the lower grades. Our society suffers from a deficit of technical vocation that must be corrected as a pre-requisite for innovation.

In terms of solutions, it emerged that the business world also recognises the need to cooperate and collaborate on different levels. Indeed such cooperation is recognised as one of the best means to preserve and develop industrial competitiveness and a well managed cluster is a protection against business failure. Networks of companies organised into clusters by regional managed support organisations can close the gap with the academic world, a gap that is impossible for the single player to bridge. The small local network is the basis for the regional network, for the national network and eventually for international and global networks.

To this end, policy goals should be identified through a continuous confrontation, involving private industry and research centres in project planning. Only in this way can the policy really respond to the needs of the whole territory and help it to develop and grow. In this way we can also learn to recognise that the policy of innovation should not be limited to promoting existing industrial talents but should target important socio-economic problems that impact the community; their solution generates products and processes of international relevance.



Session speakers and chairman

Round table – the regional authorities, networks and the European Commission

The Round Table concluded the conference and saw the participation of the European Commission, regional authorities and other European networks connected to themes on which ERIK operates.

- *Moderator - Yiannis Bakouros, University of Western Macedonia*
- *Wladyslaw Piskorz, Head of Unit Innovative actions, DG REGIO, European Commission*

- Reinhard Büscher, Head of Unit Innovation Policy Development, DG Enterprise, European Commission
- Philippe Vanrie, Managing Director, EBN -European Business and Innovation Centre Network
- Glynis Whiting, West Midlands in Europe and ERRIN Network
- Irma Priedl, Lower Austrian Federal Government
- Luminita Mihailov, South East Romania Development Agency
- Morena Diazzi, Emilia Romagna Regional Government Albino Caporale, Tuscany Regional Government



The ERIK round table

networks for concrete help in obtaining European funding and developing new projects at regional or provincial level.

This is in line with the overall opinion that networks need to move away from regional representatives getting to know each other and carrying out benchmarking activities and more towards greater specification and higher levels of concreteness.

As stated by the ERIK Policy Recommendations, collaborations between different networks are considered of utmost importance especially when the themes in question are similar. If each network operates on an individual basis the risk of duplicating activities and limiting effectiveness is high.

Those operating in the field of innovation and research need some level of continuity in terms of network provision. They need to know who the existing actors, in this case networks, are and to form sustainable relationships with them. In some cases networks can even merge if the conditions are right. For example, networks working on similar themes but with a slightly different membership base could provide added value by pooling their resources.

The discussion centred very much around the utility of networks: Why do we create networks? Why do we sustain them? What is the added value of having networks? How should networks be formed?

It is clear that the creation of a network must be fully justified. Using European Commission funding for a network which does not have real, concrete, useful and exportable aims and outputs is not acceptable. In fact networks should "change statistics" by creating jobs, creating products, in short adding visible value to growth.

Therefore, the number of networks should be limited. We should go for quality rather than quantity. Networks of regions should also be directly linked to regional policies. Only in this way can we see real results.

However, faith in networks and in their added value for sharing ideas, knowledge and experience (good and bad) at European level is still visible. Networks are seen as part of a learning process.

A successful network requires commitment from their members, and members themselves see that the more they put into a network, both in terms of resources and time, the more they can reap the benefits. With the right partners networks can really accelerate the process of economic development.

Networks need to find their position on the market, choose their theme, and differentiate the services offered depending on their target group. For example, new member states need



Winner of the ERIK Good Practice Prize

The ERIK Prize for a Good Practice was chosen among the projects, actions and programme which have been inserted into the ERIK database. The evaluation was carried out in a three step process:

- *First level of evaluation:* Good practices inserted before the 30th of June 2006 were evaluated by all ERIK Network partners and associates at two network evaluation sessions (Vienna, 22nd and 23rd May 2006 and Brussels 7th and 8th September 2006). These evaluations were taken into consideration for the selection of the finalists. The ERIK Operative Unit also carried out a further internal evaluation using the following criteria:
 - Quality of Description in the Database
 - Level of Innovation
 - Level of transferability
 - Level of sustainability
 - Impact on Regional Economic System (including policy, services or support actions)
 - Impact on relations among regional actors
 - Expected / Achieved results

From this evaluation 6 finalists were selected with the relative results and comments.

- *Second level of evaluation:* The 6 selected finalists were sent to the ERIK TWG Coordinators who provided a ranking of their top 3. These points are added to those awarded in the first level.
- *Third level of evaluation:* The 6 selected finalists were also presented to an independent judge (Mr Paolo Martinez, Firenze Tecnologia) who evaluated all the good practices and selected one. The points were added to those given in the 1st and 2nd rounds. The good practice with the highest score from all three levels of evaluation was awarded the ERIK prize.

As a result of the evaluation process the winner of the prize was:

The Region of Algarve for the good practice "Algarve Regional Innovation Centre"

The project created, implemented and consolidated a Regional Innovation Centre in the Algarve. This centre aimed to facilitate relations between research units and enterprises, to ferment entrepreneurship through different university initiatives and to contribute to creating a favourable environment for innovation. This was a pioneer project in the region where scientific and technological resources are

scarce, as are support structures for innovation and technology transfer.

The most visible results of the project are: the 1st Innovation Fair of the Algarve; the launch of a university spin off ideas competition (12 innovative projects - 12 Business Plans); the creation of a technological structure, combining research centres and enterprises, allowing the concentration of a prosperous environment for innovation in biotechnology, biomedicine and intelligent systems; and the installation of a Support Cabinet for the Promotion of Industrial Property, in partnership with the Industrial Property Office of Portugal.

This project is concrete and well implemented. It responds to a real regional need and addresses a number of different innovation related issues. It was implemented by a strong partnership and provides an excellent example of good industry science relations.



Presentation of the ERIK Good Practice Prize

For more information on the project please see the ERIK database or contact the project manager:
João Guerreiro, University of Algarve
Email: jguerreiro@ualg.pt



Winner of the ERIK Poster Prize

A Regional Good Practice Exhibition was organised in parallel to the two day ERIK Conference.

The exhibition showcased some of the good practices collected and analysed by the ERIK Network and which form the basis of much of the ERIK outputs. The good practices (available on line at: www.eriknetwork.net/database.html) were presented within their relative Thematic Working Group along with further dissemination material and products from the good practices.



Products from Tuscan Good Practices

The exhibition also included a stand presenting the work carried out by a number of networks with whom ERIK has successfully collaborated, namely: ERRIN (European Regional Research and Innovation Network), IRE (Innovating Regions in Europe), EBN (European BIC Network) and CRPM (Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions).

In addition to providing a space for regions to present their successful, innovative projects, the exhibition provided an opportunity for conference participants to meet, to make international contacts and to build relationships with potential partners from different countries and sectors.

Participants at the conference were requested to vote for the best poster in the exhibition. The winner was chosen among the 25 posters of good practices which were showcased in the exhibition area.

The winner with the greatest number of votes was:

**The Region of Extremadura
for the good practice
"VIVERNET"**

The poster managed to attract attention with its colourful and innovative design while still conveying the Vivernet message to the public.

Vivernet is a business centre which facilitates the development of new IT companies. It provides the necessary resources so that young entrepreneurs with creative talent and with good ideas but without sufficient assets, can develop their initiatives.

Vivernet offers a wide range of free resources and services: logistical support, consultancy and information, training, promotion of business cooperation.

Vivernet has created two business centres located in Cáceres and Badajoz, a virtual site called www.vivernet.com and a travelling team which operates in the rural areas of Extremadura.

Vivernet is an important project which brings flexible service provision on high tech and new business initiatives to young people and to rural areas.

Vivernet has created more than 140 enterprises in the last seven years.



Presentation of Prize for the Best Poster

For more information on the project please see the ERIK database or contact the Vivernet Manager:
Julio Yuste Tosina - Vivernet
Email: julio.yuste@juntaextremadura.net
Web site: www.vivernet.com



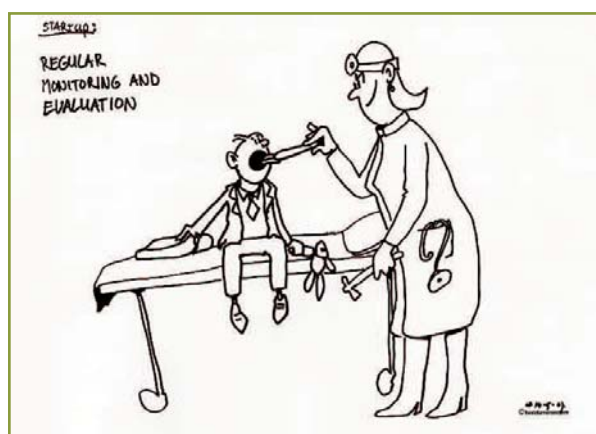
ERIK Cartoons

The ERIK Network used different methods of communication and interaction to encourage debate, exchange and participation during the conference.

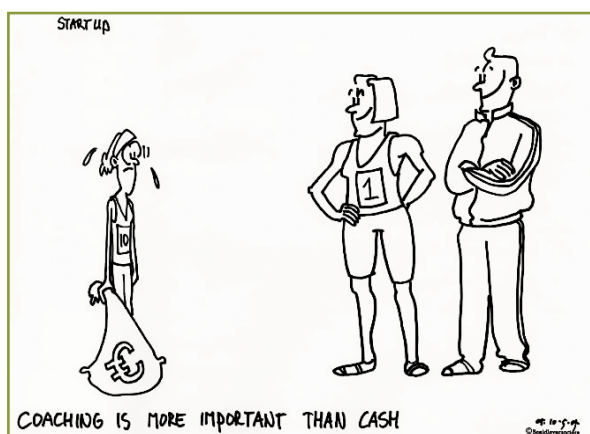
In addition to the workshops, plenary sessions, exhibition and the awards described above, ERIK also invited Carolien Feldbrugge, a talented artist from the Netherlands, who observed the work and summarised the conclusions through illustration.

© Carolien Feldbrugge
beeldleveranciers
www.beeldleveranciers.nl
info@beeldleveranciers.nl

A selection of the drawings are presented here.
To see the whole selection please visit:
www.eriknetwork.net



Regular monitoring for new business (1)



(2) New business need support as well as money



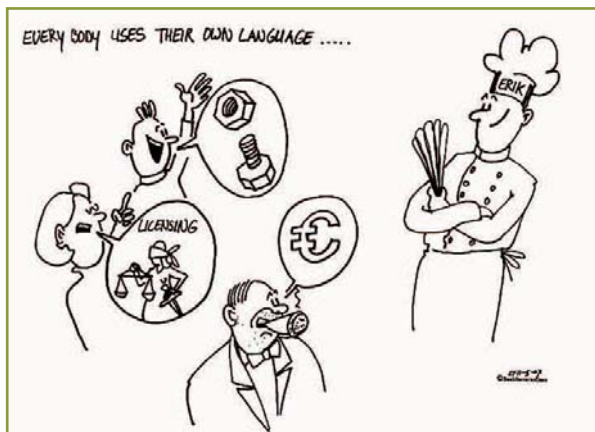
Clusters need a leader (3)



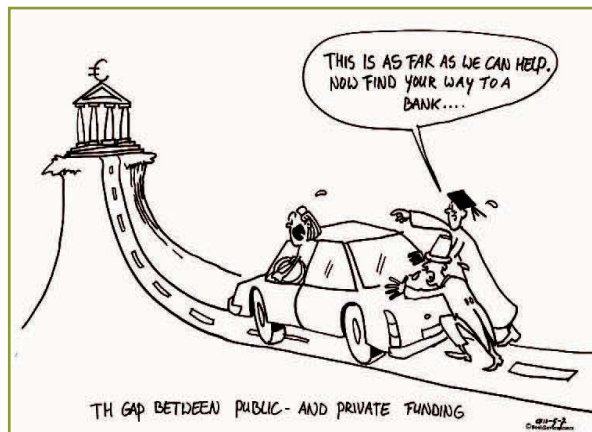
(4) International clusters



ERIC Cartoons



The language barrier in research and innovation (5)



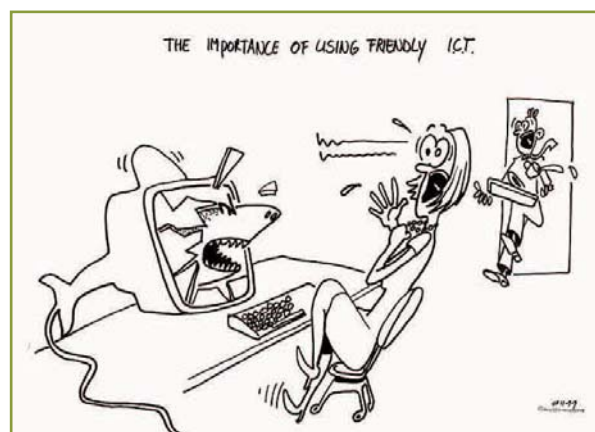
(6) The gap between public and private financing



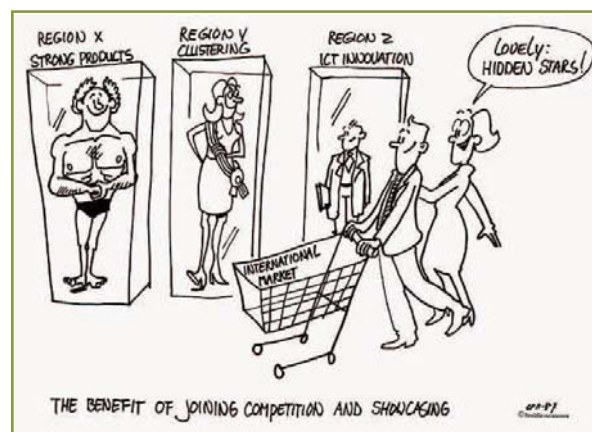
Excluding universities from discussions of demand (7)



(8) The paradox of modern capitalism



The importance of user friendly ICT (9)



(10) The international market



News

Report on Europe's position in research and innovation

On the 5th of June the European Commission presented a new publication on Europe's position in research and innovation.

The "Key figures 2007 on Science, Technology and Innovation" shows that R&D intensity (R&D expenditure as % of GDP) in Europe has stagnated since the mid-nineties, while major competitors such as Japan, China or South Korea have been able to increase substantially their R&D effort, shaping a world where knowledge is more evenly distributed than ever before. Moreover, the R&D investment deficit against the US has remained constant over recent years. In particular, the low level of business R&D in the EU remains worrying. Regarding research excellence, although the EU is the world's largest producer of scientific knowledge, the impact of European science is lower than that of the US. EU universities are also very much underrepresented in the top rankings.

The report underlines the need for the EU to adapt and make the ERA more attractive to the rest of the world. Key Figures 2007 reveal that high R&D intensity can be achieved when high contributions from the private sector go hand in hand with high levels of public funding.

The report and the related information can be downloaded at: http://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/monitoring/statistical01_en.htm



Publication of 4th Cohesion Report 30th May 2007

The 4th European Commission report on economic and social cohesion was published on the 30th of May 2007. It provides a detailed analysis of the position of regions in the enlarged Union of 27 Member States and 268 regions in terms of GDP, productivity and employment and identifies a series of challenges with which Member States and regions will be confronted in the years ahead. It also provides a first assessment of the impact of European cohesion policy in the 2000-2006 programming period, as well as of the preparation for the period 2007-2013. The report includes 10 questions to kick off the debate inside and outside the European institutions on the future of this major policy area. The long-term purpose of this report is to launch the reflection on the future of Europe's policy to promote greater economic, social and territorial cohesion and to foster regional development and competitiveness.

Cohesion policy has had a proven effect in helping the European Union's regions to develop, through investment in infrastructure, human resources, and the modernisation and diversification of regional economies. However, all stakeholders agree that more can be done.

This report lays out what the Commission sees as the main challenges for future regional development in the next 20-30 years - including demography, climate change, social exclusion or energy - and opens a debate on how to address these challenges. This report will be discussed in detail at the 4th Cohesion Forum on 27 and 28 September 2007.

The report, the Forum programme and related information can be downloaded from:
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/4thcohesionforum/index_en.cfm?nmenu=10

4th Report on Economic and Social Cohesion



News

Financing small businesses: recommendations for action

The European Commission, the Member States and finance professionals have recently considered what are the best ways of improving the flow of finance to small firms.

The result is a summary which presents the key conclusions of five reports that have reviewed both loan and equity finance and complements the conclusions on seed investment that were published in March 2007.

The report recommends that banking associations should initiate or pursue a dialogue with SME organisations at national level about ways of increasing mutual understanding and that this process should be fostered by public policy makers who should provide a regular forum for such discussions.

Furthermore, the report suggests an improvement in the quality of tools for enhanced transparency among SMEs. SME organisations should help their members with their understanding of financial terminology and concepts by developing tutorials and glossaries.

The summary and the five reports on which it is based can be downloaded at:
<http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/financing/publications.htm>

Open Days 2007 8-11 October 2007

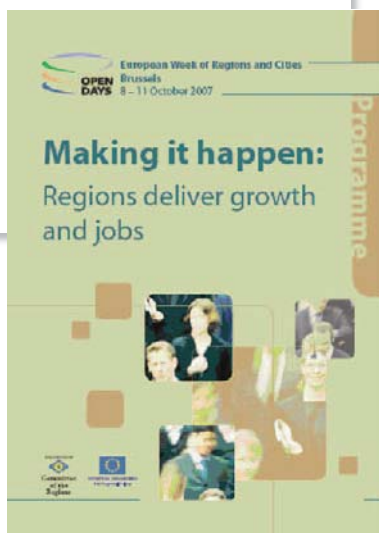
The 5th OPEN DAYS-European Week of Regions and Cities will be held between 8 and 11 October 2007 in Brussels. Organised by the Committee of the Regions, the European Commission's Regional Policy Directorate General and around 100 regions, cities and other institutions and private partners from all over Europe, this year's headline is: "Making it happen: regions deliver growth and jobs". More than 150 workshops and sessions will focus on the new generation of cohesion policy programmes, which will be implemented in the course of 2007 in all European regions. Between 2007 and 2013, the public and private funding made available through these programmes amounts to about EUR 500 billion.

The OPEN DAYS 2007 programme will be built around five sub-headlines:

- Attracting investors: Regions and cities show how it works.
- Proximity matters: Clusters and regional development.
- Spending it wisely: Public-private partnerships and financial engineering.
- Crossing borders: Networking and best practice supporting growth and jobs.
- Checking delivery: How the new programmes are implemented.

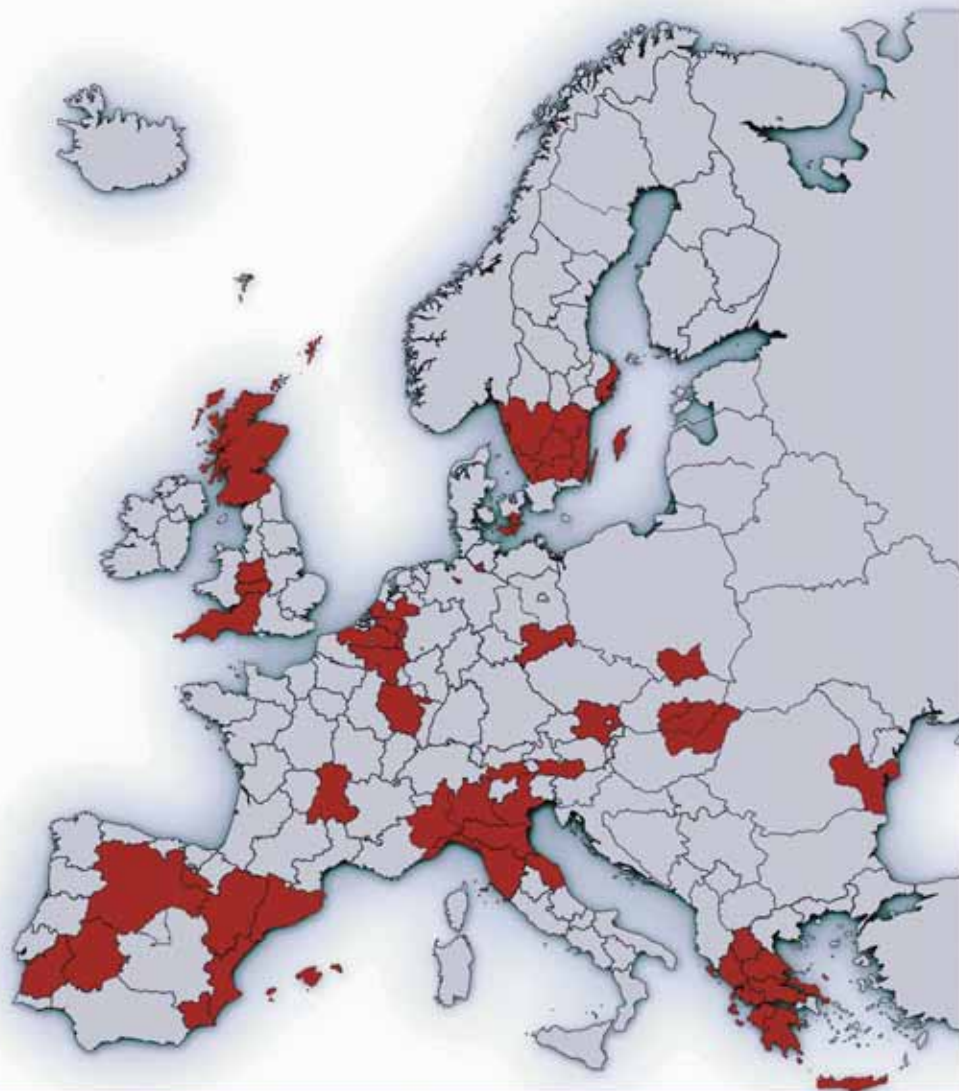
In addition to these seminars and workshops, an "Investors Café" in the Committee of the Regions will provide space for exhibitions, stands and networking opportunities around the themes of the event.

For more information and the programme:
www.opendays.europa.eu



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