



Brussels, 16 December 2009

*By email and by post*

Gerard de Graaf  
Head of Unit - Strategic Objective Prosperity  
Directorate for Better Regulation and Coordination  
Secretariat-General  
European Commission  
B-1040 Brussels

## **Subject: RAPIDE response to Public consultation on the future EU 2020 strategy**

Dear Mr. De Graaf!

The **INTERREG IV C fast-track network RAPIDE** has invited all its 13 partners to contribute to the Public consultation on Community innovation policy. In addition to its individual responses, the network has agreed to send this short consolidated response from the entire network.

This answer reflect the view of the network, which is working in partnership with the Commission's five DGs: 1) Regional Policy; 2) Enterprise & Industry; 3) Research; 4) Information Society; and 5) Employment to deal with the issue of **bringing innovative products and services to the market more quickly**, a big policy challenge for Europe's key goal of economic sustainable growth. Each RAPIDE partner region is responsible for developing an Action Plan, setting out concrete actions in their region to commercialise innovation more quickly.

On behalf of the RAPIDE partnership, I would like to congratulate the Secretariat-General on the priorities presented in the Commission Working Document on the future EU 2020 strategy. The main priorities identified in the Commission Working Document are **largely shared** by regional and local authorities. We do believe that the definition of credible exit strategies from the crisis can only be based on a clear vision of where Europe wants to go after the crisis. In this respect, we share the EU 2020 vision of a more inclusive, more sustainable, greener and stronger knowledge-based economy. This is the agenda that we, sub-national authorities, **have been pursuing** over the past few years. We have integrated the main objectives of the Lisbon and Gothenburg agendas in our development strategies. We look forward to the new momentum that EU2020 will bring to this process.

The effort that regional and local authorities have mobilised and will continue to ensure is largely due to the **alignment of the main EU investment instruments**. Cohesion policy has been instrumental in shifting the attention of sub-national levels towards key EU priorities in the areas of sustainable development, inclusion and research and



innovation. A large proportion of Structural Funds are already allocated to these priorities. The leverage effect also cannot be underestimated, since the sub-national levels are responsible for the design and implementation of around 70% of public investment in Europe.

While there is therefore broad agreement on the priorities identified in the Commission Working Document on the future EU 2020 strategy, the same cannot be said for **the delivery** of those priorities on the ground. **The Commission Working Document remains rather vague, but there are signals that point to the possible sectoralisation of EU instruments. We do not believe that this would be wise for political and economic reasons.**

**Politically**, the Lisbon and Gothenburg agendas have been heavily criticised for the **lack** of involvement of **sub-national actors** in their design and implementation. In fact, it can be reasonably argued that part of the limited effect of these agendas is due to the **absence of ownership on the ground**. Vertical coordination between the different levels of government is absolutely indispensable to ensure the success of the new EU 2020 strategy. It is only through such coordination that sub-national authorities will buy into the strategy, adapt it to their own contexts and support it throughout its implementation.

**Economically**, it is increasingly recognised that public action is more effective when it succeeds in integrating rather than separating investment decisions. **Horizontal coordination** is also more important than ever, in order to avoid conflicting results and to exploit synergies.

We therefore urge the Commission to support the EU 2020 strategy with a **credible, inclusive governance system**, which allows all stakeholders in the EU to benefit and contribute.

We very much hope that you take these points into consideration in the final drafting of the EU 2020 Strategy and we would be very happy to discuss in more detail.

With best regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "B. Kuscher".

Benjamin D. Kuscher  
RAPIDE Project Manager  
On behalf of the entire network



## **RAPIDE: REGIONAL ACTION PLANS FOR INNOVATION DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE**

### **RAPIDE – in brief**

RAPIDE is exploring how the public sector influences innovation by looking at a number of critical factors that determine the success and speed of bringing innovation to market more quickly. While there are examples of good practices in different regions, there is little in the way of overarching or transferable key principles identified as being most important when commercialising innovation effectively.

RAPIDE was already able to capitalise on good practices and ideas of the network as well drawing on expertise from both the partner regions and outside of the network.

Following innovative RAPIDE Actions will be implemented by the RAPIDE network partners.

#### **1. Innovation Voucher Schemes**

- > Partnership of Academia and Businesses  
RAPIDE set up a working group with experts from all around Europe and is mainstreaming the current best practices to the RAPIDE partner regions.

#### **2. Pre-Commercial Procurement projects (PCP)**

- > Public-Private Partnership PPP  
RAPIDE took up the challenge to implement a new and very promising idea how the public sector can promote regional innovation. This new approach is supported by the DG INFSO and RAPIDE is a step ahead and uses PCP to promote innovation far beyond the IT sector.

#### **3. Business Angel Networks**

- > Private-Private partnership  
RAPIDE is supported by the EBAN (European Business Angel Network) how to stimulate regional BA networks.

#### **4. Assessment tool for start-ups in incubators**

- > RAPIDE is addressing with a new assessment tool for incubated enterprises the need to improve the quality and success rate of supported companies. This tool was welcomed and will be even tested by the EBN (European Business and Innovation Centre network)

#### **5. Pitching tool to bring innovators to investors**

- > It is a proven fact that there is no culture of pitching amongst innovators in Europe. Furthermore the first access to public funding is always via written application forms. In today's era of digital communication these forms even if they are online are very often seen as outdated obstacles to access support for new innovative ideas. RAPIDE is therefore at the forefront of online pitching tools in Europe. The target is that future first contacts with Business Angels and public funding schemes should be via standardised online pitching slots to bring innovation faster to the market!



Each partner is currently developing a **Regional Action Plan** setting out how the good practice and ideas mentioned above will be implemented within their region.

Those RAPIDE Action Plans are being developed with the full involvement of the respective regional EU funding **managing authorities (MAs)** and with their commitment to put the plans into practice. The commitment of the MA will peak in their signature guaranteeing the implementation of the RAPIDE Action Plan together with the Commissioner for Regional development on 21 May 2010.

RAPIDE is again a step ahead and will present its **first implementation steps of the actions** at the final conference on 16 June 2010

Alongside the exchange and implementation of best practice, RAPIDE is working with innovation specialists, 'top' innovation regions, and the Commission in order to deliver **strong policy recommendations** around the topic of commercialising innovation.



# RAPIDE



### RAPIDE – the partnership

The RAPIDE network brings together European regions committed to the innovation agenda. The network is made up of 12 regions from across the European Union, a mix of old and new Member States working with the European Commission:

- South West England (UK) – Lead Partner
- Észak-Alföld (Hungary)
- Galicia (Spain)
- Kujawsko-Pomorskie (Poland)
- Lapland (Finland)
- Örebro (Sweden)
- Prešov (Slovakia)
- Saxony-Anhalt (Germany)
- South Bohemia (Czech Republic)
- Tartu (Estonia)
- Wales (UK)
- Western Greece (Greece)
- European Commission

As RAPIDE is a fast track network, the European Commission is also directly involved, acting as an additional partner and critical friend. This engagement is led by DG Enterprise and Industry, and supported by DG Regional Policy, DG Research, DG Information Society and Media and DG Employment and Social Affairs.

The RAPIDE partners include Regional Development Agencies, Structural Fund Managing Authorities (MAs) and universities. All partners have engaged their MAs to ensure that the Action Plans developed through RAPIDE are delivered through the mainstream programmes.

