



Press Release

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West Midlands in Europe hosts Open Days 2007



European Week of Regions and Cities

Brussels

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EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DG Regional Policy



West Midlands in Europe took the opportunity to showcase a new initiative from the region at the prestigious Open Days in Brussels.

To a capacity audience of key regional policy makers from across the EU, John Bailey, Pro Vice Chancellor, Business Partnerships & Knowledge Transfer from Aston University (pictured left) showcased the "West Midlands Regional Innovation Vouchers", a two-year INnovation

Delivers EXpansion (INDEX) pilot project which encourages greater interaction between businesses and universities in the West Midlands.

Since its launch in the summer, INDEX has received 212 applications for vouchers from West Midlands SMEs which can be converted into £3,000 worth of tailored advice and expertise from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Demonstrating this highly innovative scheme, John Bailey said *"This project has been a great success, involving all 13 HEIs in the West Midlands and SMEs who haven't traditionally had a link to universities. The real driver is that demand is led by SMEs – they have been saying what they want and we have been converting it into what they need and engaging academics. We have been absolutely overwhelmed by the response from universities and SMEs."*

For more information on this highly successful INDEX project please click here: www.indexvouchers.org

Delegates including Cllr. Sir Albert Bore, Jon Bloomfield and Andrew Todd from Advantage West Midlands (AWM), Tony Dunn from the Black Country Consortium

and 130 others from across Europe engaged in a lively debate on concrete effective action being taken by regions in their use of transnational EU funds and discussed how public and private sectors are working together better to transfer knowledge and to support innovation - the 'triple helix'.

Practical experience from the West Midlands (Aston University), Apulia (Italy), Navarra (Spain), Maribor (Slovenia) and Zlin (Czech Republic) showcased how various EU funding programmes are being used to attract investors, support clusters, forge public-private partnerships and exchange best practice across Europe.



Stuart Webb, Head of Innovation Clusters & ICT Policy at AWM (pictured left) skilfully chaired the full-to-capacity seminar, which included a round table discussion lead by Orlando Arango, European Investment Bank, and Christine Mason, European Commission (DG Regional Policy).

"This was an excellent opportunity to profile the region to an audience from across the EU, demonstrating how the West Midlands and the European Regions for Research and Innovation Network (ERRIN) is engaged in the wider discussion on the future of structural funds and FP7 funding on research and innovation" said Richard Tuffs, European Policy Manager at West Midlands in Europe.

West Midlands in Europe hosted and organised this high profile seminar on "EU funds for knowledge and innovation - using Structural Funds and other programmes" with regions from the ERRIN Network as part of the 'EU Regions and Cities Open Days 2007'.

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Notes to editor:

West Midlands in Europe

- West Midlands in Europe is a cross sectoral partnership representing almost 100 organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors in the West Midlands.
- Established in 2000 it aims to represent the region, provide the latest information and intelligence on EU policy and funding, forge links across Europe and promote partners and the West Midlands region.

- The key role of West Midlands in Europe is in networking and connecting the region to EU institutions and other regional networks and stakeholders.
- The region has a high profile office in Brussels with excellent meeting facilities with space for up to 130 people and an ideal exhibition area to showcase the region's strength in design and innovation.
- For more information, please click on the following link: www.westmidlandsineurope.org

Open Days

- Open Days is an annual Brussels based programme, organised by the Committee of the Regions in conjunction with Brussels based local and regional representations, of over 150 seminars and events, which attracts over 5000 key regional stakeholders from across the EU.
- This year's Open Days focuses on the theme 'Making it happen: regions delivering jobs and growth'. For more information, please click on the following link: www.opendays.europa.eu