RegioStars Awards
2010

Presentation of the finalists
Brussels, 20-21 May 2010
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“In the long history of humankind (and animal kind, too) those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed.”
Charles Darwin

Innovation, broadly understood both as profitable change and as the economic exploitation of new ideas in the market place, is key to the efforts of European cohesion policy. Nowadays competitiveness is overwhelmingly about doing new, better or different things not about low cost, low salary production. It is mostly about greener, leaner and smarter, not primarily about cheaper, at least not here, not in the European Union in an ever more globalising economy. In today’s economic context, we need to help regions and companies maintain and, if possible, increase their innovation efforts. Promoting regional innovation is both, the fastest way out of the crisis and the best way to ensure regional competitiveness in EU regions in the future.

It is by collaborating and sharing good practice that we can accelerate the pace of innovation throughout the Union in all “learning” regions. This is precisely why we organise RegioStars, DG Regional Policy’s annual awards for innovative projects supported through EU Cohesion Policy, as part of our wider Regions for Economic Change initiative. These awards aim to identify and publicise good regional innovative projects in order to promote the exchange of good practices across Europe. They are intended as a showroom of some of the best policy initiatives in strategic fields for regional economic development. We want them to be widely disseminated and discussed as inspiration for others to follow.

RegioStars 2010 has seen 87 applications from project promoters and regions from, for the first time, all 27 Member States. This year’s six award fall into three broad areas: “CityStar themes”, “ICT themes” and an “Information and Communication” category. Applications in the five thematic categories, short listed as finalists by the Jury are summarised in this booklet, which also shortly presents the five shortlisted websites in category 6. This brochure can also be accessed on the Inferegio website (http://ec.europa.eu/inforegio).

RegioStars is a great example of how regions, no matter what their size or location, can learn to innovate in its broadest sense from each other. RegioStars is a flexible policy tool which allows us to vary from year to year the sectors targeted by the award categories, as well as revisiting some from previous years to update our stock of good practice. This year we have innovated by focussing on the territorial dimension – the two CityStars and the rural broadband categories are good example of how RegioStars can be used flexibly to examine the variety of experiences across the EU.

This publication would not have been made possible without the participation of the national and regional managing authorities, the project managers and the RegioStars 2010 Jury under the Chairmanship of Mr Jan Olbrycht, MEP. I would like to thank the Jurors – Mr Guido Albertini, Prof. Rob Atkinson, Prof. Gareth Hughes, Ing. Olga Pietruchová, Prof. Luc Soete, Mr Iván Tosics and Mr Massimo Vella – for making available their time and expertise in order to assess this year’s candidates.

Finally, we would like to congratulate all those project promoters and programme managers linked to the finalists described in this publication for being such a valuable source of inspiration for all our regions.

Dirk Ahner
Director General
DG Regional Policy
Cohesion policy has been contributing to the social and economic development of the European Union's territory already for many years. Its specific, innovative character results in many very interesting projects implemented across Europe. Unfortunately, the successful local and regional initiatives co-financed by the EU structural funds and the Cohesion Fund remain very often only locally known. I am happy that the Commission has proposed RegioStars as a way to overcome this weakness.

The RegioStars Awards identifies good practices in regional development and awards original and innovative projects which could be attractive and inspiring to other regions or towns. However, RegioStars does not only reward good ideas, it also provides a forum for exchange of experience and dissemination of good practice examples beyond the places where projects are implemented on the ground.

The extension of the award's formula by introducing in this year's edition new CityStars award categories guaranteed also an even wider scope of projects having the opportunity to present their results and their innovative approaches to the general public. It highlighted moreover the great role Europe's cities and towns play in the development of the European Union.

It was a great pleasure to chair the honourable jury of RegioStars 2010 and to learn about so many projects implemented by and for the benefit of Europe's citizens.

Jan Olbrycht
Member of the European Parliament
RegioStars 2010 Jury

Jury Chairman

Dr Jan OLBRYCHT, Member of the European Parliament

Since 2004 Dr Olbrycht is a Member of the European Parliament on behalf of Civic Platform (EPP). He has been Vice-Chairman of the Committee on Regional Development in the years 2004-2009. He is Doctor of Sociology and between 1998 and 2002 was Marshal of Silesian Voivodship, amongst other roles.

Jury Members

Mr Guido ALBERTINI

He is head of the directorate of International Projects of CSI Piemonte, a consortium of public bodies from the Piemonte Region in northern Italy, which promotes innovation in the Public Administration through ICT technologies. He is an aerospace engineer with experience in major system integrators, consulting firms, telecom operators and aerospace companies. His previous international professional postings have given him experience of the Italian and European Information & Communication Technology and aerospace markets.

Mr Rob ATKINSON, BSc. (Hons), MA, Ph.D

He is a Professor and an Urban Research Director in the Cities Research Centre, Faculty of the Built Environment, University of the West of England, Bristol. His research interests are primarily concerned with cross-national work on urban regeneration, urban governance, and community participation in urban regeneration partnerships, urban social exclusion and European urban and spatial policy.

Mr Gareth HUGHES

He is Chief Executive of eris@ (The European Regional Information Society Association). He has directed a number of projects including IANIS, 2002-04 and IANIS+, 2005-07. He was a member of the European Commission’s eEurope Advisory Group and is the editor, author or co-author of a number of Guides to Regional Good Practice relating to information society, as well as coordinating the European Broadband Portal (www.broadband-europe.eu). He holds degrees in Economics, in Econometrics & Statistics, and in Information Technology.
Ms Olga PIETRUCHOVA, Dipl. Ing., M.A.

She works in promoting gender equality and women rights and is one of the leaders of the women movement in Slovakia. She is a member of the Council for Gender Equality, an advisory committee to the Slovak government, executive director, Slovak Family Planning Association and Chairwoman of the Slovak Women's Lobby and member of the board of the European Women's Lobby.

Mr Luc SOETE is Director of UNU-MERIT (the United Nations University- Maastricht Economic and social Research and training centre on Innovation and Technology) He is also Professor of International Economic Relations (on leave) at the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, University of Maastricht. His research interests cover the broad range of theoretical and empirical studies of the impact of technological change.

Mr. Iván TOSICS

He is of the principals of the Metropolitan Research Institute and a sociologist and researcher with more than 20 years of experience in urban sociology, urban development and housing policy issues. Over the last 15 years he has expanded his activity to include international clients both in Hungary and abroad. He is Coordination Committee member of the European Network for Housing Research and co-organiser of its East European Working Group. Mr. Tosics carries out scientific research and consultancy in housing policy, urban development and municipal finance.

Mr Massimo VELLA

He is currently Management Information Systems (MIS) Officer within the Ministry for Social Policy, managing authority for a cohesion policy programme in Malta. In his career to date he has held various function linked to applying IT in government including as webmaster and implementing an e-Health Portal. He holds qualifications in computers sciences including a BSc from the University of Greenwich UK.
RegioStars Awards 2010

Category 1: CityStars category - Innovative use of brownfield sites in an urban context

- Project Center for creative business innovation and entrepreneurship - within the C-Mine development, Flanders / Limburg (BE)
- Pieper Site, Wallonia (BE)
- ALMADEAN MINING PARK - Environmental and heritage in Castilla La Mancha (ES)
- RDM - Innovation Dock, Landsdeel West (NL)

Category 2: CityStars category - The integration of migrants or marginalised groups in urban areas

- German-Türkish Economic Center, Baden Württemberg (DE)
- Casa del quotidiano - Daily Home, Piedmont (IT)
- Social Integration of Individuals suffering from dependency on psychoactive substances, Vilnius (LT)
- Micro-finance Institute for Increased employment, economic and social integration, East Mid Sweden (SE)
- Successful integration of Roma children, Ljubljana (SI)
- Access to Lifelong Learning (ALL), Wales (UK)

Category 3: ICT applications for e-inclusion

- Establishing Multicentres in Olsztyn and Marijampole, Warminsko-Mazurskie (PL) and Marijampole County (LT) (LT/PL)
- Computer Literacy Basics for a Lithuanian e-Citizen, Lithuania (LT)
- Digital Meting Places, Arnhem (NL)
Category 4: ICT applications by or for SMEs

New business model for ambulatory monitoring of patients suffering from congestive heart failure - Brandenburg (DE)

One Stop Shop for Companies - Slovenia (SI)

E-Crime - Wales (UK)

Category 5: Broadband coverage in less developed regions or rural areas

eRegio, North Karelia (FI)

High Speed Broadband and White areas in Auvergne: Towards a 100% coverage, Auvergne (FR)

Kelvin, North West Ireland (IE/UK)

Category 6: Information and Communication (Web sites)

www.entdecke-efre.de, Brandenburg (DE)

eu.baltic.net, Baltic Sea Region (ETC)

www.interact-eu.net, EU (ETC)

www.esparama.lt, Lithuania (LT)

www.erdfnw.co.uk, Northwest of England (UK)

Information on the next edition - RegioStars 2011
CATEGORY 1: CityStars

Innovative use of brownfield sites in an urban context
Genk, the third industrial city of Flanders, has a valuable mining heritage with coal in the past playing a pivotal role in the economic development of the city. Building on these assets, and on its mining foundations, C-mine is transforming the former industrial site into a creative hub.

The mining heritage (listed mine buildings, machines) is actively integrated into a powerful new feature in the forward-looking city. The development of creative hub in C-Mine hub is built on four inter-related pillars:

1. **Artistic creation** – space for contemporary culture and artistic productions;
2. **Recreation** – the C-Tour is, a unique mining experience which leads you from the underground passages up to the mine headframe;
3. **Higher education** – establishment of the Media and Design Academy (MDA) (product and graphic design, animation and video as well as continued professional training);
4. **Creative economy** – creating links between knowledge, innovation and entrepreneurship.

The city is developing a cluster of related initiatives tapping into the knowledge of higher artistic education in Genk, Limburg with entrepreneurship and creative innovation at company level, which include:

1. **Design Innovation Lab to support creative innovation in companies** – This would be a knowledge and service centre that supports companies in their creative innovation needs and plans. The concept is based on a few key people who are surrounded by a wide network of experts involved in various (creative) fields and tailored to the demands of the business.

2. **Centre for creative business innovation and entrepreneurship** – The centre focuses on art institutions, entrepreneurs, companies that want to include creative innovation in the development of their product and service. This is facilitated by a:
   - **Multifunctional space for creative projects and services**, including meeting and workspace for the Design Innovation Lab; for project groups, collaboration platforms, start-ups; for students; for training courses, seminars;
   - **Incubation centre for the creative economy** in order to avoid the brain drain of skilled young graduates from the art colleges of Limburg. Genk – working with the colleges and research institutes – encourages developing entrepreneurship through incubation space for creative economy (location for 12 business start-ups, shared specialised technical facilities).

3. **Space for organising innovative corporate events** – A former machine building is being designed as a multipurpose room where innovative company events, fairs, seminars, exhibitions, can be organised.
Innovative use of brownfield sites in an urban context

PIEPER SITE

Region: Wallonie (BE)
City: Liege
Programme type: Objective 2 Programme for the Meuse-Vesdre basin (Liege)
Duration of project: 1 April 2002 – 30 June 2008
Funding: € 192,755 of which € 96,000 in EU funding (ERDF) and € 92,000 in Walloon Region funding

The Pieper “business block” is a business site in the northern Saint-Leonard district of Liege developed on a former brownfield site. The chief aim of the Pieper site has been to attract companies compatible with the surrounding urban housing zone and to offer these companies similar support conditions as can be found in classic business parks. The project forms part of an urban business renovation process started in 1995 by the Liege City Council, which includes the redevelopment of several other brownfield sites remnant from 18 and 19th century industrial activities.

The Pieper site was developed following the rehabilitation of 2 adjoining brownfields covering 1.2 hectares and now provides a business location for 10-15 businesses from the building sector (e.g. furnishing, plumbing, glasswork, solar panels, heating, building security and air-conditioning) that do not fit in at “traditional” out-of-town business parks. It offers an innovative response to the lack of land available for future investors and the need to reintroduce business into the town, whilst responding to sustainable development requirements.

The main feature of the project is the “urban charter” drawn up by the Province of Liege’s development agency (SPI+) and the Liege City Council together with committees from the district and local businesses. The charter spells out how to meet sustainable development criteria and achieve a positive impact in terms of urban regeneration. It defines the rules of cohabitation (activities authorised on the site, role of the support committee) and aims at both the integration with the surrounding district (architectural and urban typology, functioning, mixing of the environment and of small companies within a continuous network) as well as the architectural unity of the area.

The charter also sets out guidelines for the construction of buildings, architectural elements, materials, functioning of the site in terms of pedestrian and vehicle access, parking, etc. It includes a series of eco-construction recommendations on, for example, integration with the immediate environment, green management of energy, water, waste, maintenance, hygrothermal, acoustic, visual and olfactory comfort, sanitary arrangements, air and water quality.

The series of planned buildings include many of these eco-recommendations, e.g. prioritising natural daylight as lighting source, rainwater collectors for sanitary use, use of solar panels, etc. One company, “Energie et Confort”, has, for instance, designed a low energy – high-level thermal insulation building, orientated for maximum daylight, virtually self-sufficient in terms of electricity and hot water production (thanks to solar panels and the latest generation of heat pumps). It is built using eco-friendly prefabricated materials to reduce the construction period and waste production.
ALMADEN MINING PARK

Region: Castilla La Mancha (ES)
City: Almadén (Ciudad Real)
Programme type: Integrated Operational Programme 2000-2006
Duration of project: 2002 -2007
Funding: €10,918,270 of which € 1,410,762 in EU funding (ERDF)

MINAS DE ALMADÉN Y ARRAYANES, S.A. (Mayasa) has installations in the Almadén area, which, historically (over 2000 years), has accounted for one third of the entire world’s metal mercury production. 2,000 people were fully employed here but in recent years, due to increasingly stringent regulations and technical constraints the mine had to close. The town’s population has consequently halved in size to around 6,500 people.

To tackle this situation, two lines of action are being pursued:

• Rehabilitation of the environment to minimise the impact of centuries of mining activity (the waste heap alone covers some 10 ha).
• Restoration of Almadén’s local heritage, to promote its globally significant historical and scientific know-how in mercury mining to offer a wide-ranging visitor experience.

Consequently, the Almadén Mining Park has been re-designed as an educational, cultural and tourist venue which offers an insight into one of the oldest mining sites in the world and illustrating the importance of mercury in the historical development of society.

The park covers a large area consisting of many key buildings such as the magnificent San Rafael mining hospital built between 1755 and 1773 with funds coming from the profits of bull fighting. The hospital was declared Bien de Intérés Cultural in 1992.

The visitors’ centre is located within the San Teodoro mining enclosure, along with the Mercury Museum and the Mining Museum, both housed in restored industrial buildings.

In parallel, a further aim forsees the conversion of parts of the site to accommodate new business activity, thus compensating as much as possible for industrial decline and loss of jobs. Mayasa is working closely with the local municipality and regional government to further the social, economic and environmental restoration of the Almadén area.

A business plan was signed in October 2005, a Cooperation Agreement between MAYASA and the City Mayor to promote social, industrial and turistic projects capable of generating activity and employment. Among other projects making up this agreement MAYASA committed itself to developing a business estate in an area known as “Eras of Barbudillos” where land will be reclassified for new industrial use. In 2008 an aid package worth € 54 million was agreed with the Spanish Government Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Trade, the Government of Castilla La Mancha and the City Council for a re-industrialisation programme for the period 2007-2013.

In 2009 the mines of Almadén were nominated for UNESCO World Heritage listing.
The RDM Innovation Dock project is about transforming a former shipyard located in the harbour area of Rotterdam into a campus for educational institutions, innovative business and research institutes.

Founded in 1902, the RDM (Rotterdam Dry Dock Company) was once a booming shipyard in constant expansion. In the fifties it was one of the largest shipyards in Europe and the area occupied by RDM had increased 4 times and covered 40 ha. However, towards the end of the 1950s shipbuilding in the Netherlands came to a halt and this shipyard finally went bankrupt in 1983. Attached to RDM is Heijplaat, a garden village built for the employees, severely affected by the closure of the shipyard. In February 2007 the Rotterdam City Council and the Port of Rotterdam Authority decided to redevelop the RDM site and give it new life through the RDM Innovation Dock.

The key objectives of the project are to transform the obsolete and deserted site into a campus for educational institutions, innovative business and research institutes. Building on the ideas of the Rotterdam Climate Initiative – an initiative in which government, organisations, companies, knowledge institutes and citizens collaborate to achieve a 50% reduction in CO2 emissions – the project focuses on the construction of sustainable buildings on land and water, “smart” mobility and technology for renewable energy (using water from the nearby river Maas for heating and cooling). The plans for the future also include connecting the business zone and Heijplaat village through the development of housing and accommodation for conferences and other meetings.

By bringing together the Port of Rotterdam Authority, the Albeda College - a large comprehensive school for intermediate vocational training - and Rotterdam University, the project aims at facilitating and stimulating networking between business and educational institutions.

The project RDM Innovation Dock includes three phases. The first and second phases cover the renovation of the former machinery hall, adapting it for educational purposes. The third phase covers the reconstruction of a 12 000 m² former shipyard hall into a business hotel. The two educational institutions will work together to attract business which than will be formalised in a knowledge contract. On the ground floor-level, 30-40 individual business units (200m²) will be created, while smaller lots for rent will be available on the second floor.

To conclude, the RDM Innovation Dock project is a good example of the transformation of an urban brownfield area into an area dedicated to science and technology where innovative and creative manufacturing industry meets the world of intermediate and higher vocational education.
4. Space for the accommodation of established leading creative companies

The project is deeply rooted in the development policies of different administrative levels. It fits well with regional ambitions to further develop links between knowledge, innovation and entrepreneurship. It also fits with the vision of Flanders District of Creativity - the conversion of the C-Mine site into a creativity centre is recognised by the Flemish government as a strategic city project.

Furthermore there are multi-level alliances in place to support and anchor the project. Apart from the direct partnership with the Media and Design Academy at the site there is also a model of cooperation with various universities and research institutes, such as the University of Leuven and Hasselt, ‘Flanders in Shape’, ‘Designregion’ and ‘Design Platform Limburg’ to prepare for the development of the Design Innovation Lab. At a later stage, inter-regional cooperation will be established (Leuven – Hasselt – Maastricht and TopTechnologieRegion Netherlands – Belgium – Germany).
CATEGORY 2: CityStars

The integration of migrants or marginalised groups in urban areas
The integration of migrants or marginalised groups in urban areas

GERMAN-TURKISH ECONOMIC CENTER
MANNHEIM

Region: Baden-Württemberg (DE)
City: Mannheim
Programme type: Operational Programmes – Objective 2 Baden-Württemberg
Duration of project: 2002 – 2005
Funding: €1,874,721 of which €923,942 in EU funding (ERDF)

The German-Turkish Economic Centre Mannheim (Deutsch-Türkisches Wirtschaftszentrum Mannheim – dtw) was the first of its kind in Germany to address the specific needs of entrepreneurs of Turkish origin. Over the years, the dtw has become a widely recognised pilot project. It often is the prime contact point for similar initiatives in Germany and for companies from Turkey intending to do business in Germany.

Business performance largely depends on a sophisticated business strategy. This is particularly relevant for companies founded by migrants as they often have to meet higher requirements for bank loans or state subsidies. Additional obstacles can include the lack of language skills and a low qualification levels.

Around 1000 Turkish companies are located in the Mannheim region. They used to take very little advantage of existing consulting offers, which limited their market opportunities significantly. The dtw was set up by the City of Mannheim (Department for Economic and Structural Development, Officer for Integration and Migration) to tackle this problem and harness the full potential of the various companies located in the region.

The goals of the project were:

• to provide consulting services and professional training for Turkish entrepreneurs,
• to support established Turkish businesses in ensuring and improving their competitiveness,
• to complement existing consulting services of other organisations such as the Mannheim Chamber of Industry and Commerce and to assist them in adjusting their offers to the needs of the target group,
• to help company’s founders and entrepreneurs of Turkish origin to better integrate into the local economic environment and to increase the cooperation between German and Turkish businesses,
• to develop a local approach to broadening the German-Turkish trade relations by fostering cooperation between the Mannheim and the Izmir and Istanbul economic regions.

The infrastructure of the dtw was funded by the City of Mannheim, the Federal State of Baden-Württemberg and the European Union (ERDF). Run by the Workers’ Welfare Association with the help of the City of Mannheim and partly financed by the European Union (ESF), the dtw is providing advice for people of Turkish origin to start-up and run a business (e.g. on financial and business planning, service diversification or marketing).

The dtw concept is based on three columns: individual consulting, matching training and qualification courses, and integration of businesses into the existing networking structures at local, national and international level. Specially designed German language classes as well as training for cultural skills also complement this offer.

In the period from 2004 to 2006, the number of people who asked for consulting has risen every year by 20%. In total, 496 people (374 men, 122 women) were trained during the three-year project period. In the past three years, 45 new Turkish businesses were established with the creation of 101 new jobs.
The integration of migrants or marginalised groups in urban areas

CASA DEL QUOTIDIANO - DAILY HOME
Cascina Roccafranca Foundation

Region: Piedmont (IT)
City: Turin
Programme Type: URBAN II (2000 - 2006)
Duration of project: 1 April 2002 – 30 June 2008
Funding: € 851,125 of which € 248,150 in EU funding (ERDF)

Cascina Roccafranca - Daily Home (CR) is a new and unique social and cultural centre in the city of Turin. It is an important incubator of ideas and projects, which provides a space and support to associations and informal groups, and plays host to music, theatre, film and dance festivals.

CR was a key project of the 'Urban Programme 2 Torino' which aimed to improve the day-to-day life of local inhabitants by (i) forging stronger relations between people of different ages, origin and cultural backgrounds; (ii) guaranteeing access to the rights of citizenship for all the inhabitants of the territory; (iii) the creation of a landmark that could accommodate not only needs but also capacities, ideas and proposals emerging from the local population; and (iv) the creation of a common working method by the social, health, cultural and educational territorial services to answer effectively to the demands of the citizens.

CR is a public/private foundation made up by local authorities, associations and citizens equally represented in its governing body. It uses an experimental form of co-management where all members have same status and responsibility, responding to a real demand for involvement by local associations. It also encourages the co-responsibility of citizens in the development of their local area.

CR uses an innovative and experimental model of organisation, management, promotion and collection of data on social demand in the territory, based on three pillars:

1) Being economically sustainable, by hosting profit-generating activities (e.g. a cafeteria, a restaurant etc.) and through fund-raising activities with public and private foundations, economic partnerships with the private sector on joint projects, as well as sponsorship. In 2008, this type of activity generated a revenue of 166 000 euro - equal to 40% of the total budget. The revenue is used to cover operating costs, using public funding mainly to promote new initiatives.

2) Improving the quality of life of the inhabitants by accommodating activities and services for families, children, women, elderly people, migrants and marginalised groups, also giving associations and groups of residents an opportunity to meet, share experience and help one another.

3) Ensuring an adequate level of flexibility in management, in order to enable CR to continuously adapt its services to developing needs of the area.
The integration of migrants or marginalised groups in urban areas

MANO GURU. SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF INDIVIDUALS SUFFERING FROM DEPENDENCY ON PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES

The Mano Guru (My Guru) project starting point can be found in the following observation: the great majority of addicts in Lithuania live in cities, and are young: on average 23-24 years of age. The absence of proper professional skills, a patchy work history, and the negative attitude of employers and the society in general towards ex-addicts, are reasons for which, even after having successfully completed rehabilitation programs, they often turn to narcotics again. Mano Guru helps former addicts to rejoin society and be reintegrated into the labour market, and has shaped methods for similar projects to emerge in other location.

In 2004, a unique salad restaurant, Mano Guru, was opened in the centre of Vilnius. About 70% of its employees are individuals formerly dependent on psychoactive substances, who have successfully completed a rehabilitation program for people suffering from drug dependency.

The project Mano Guru has taken over the concept that work rehabilitation is a logical continuation of the rehabilitation process, offering a complex range of social services. Mano Guru combines rehabilitation and social integration with a both motivational and training program of practical skills in bartending, cooking, and restaurant attendance. There is also a separate staff-oriented program for working with people who suffer from dependencies.

People, who have suffered from addiction to psychoactive agents, and have had the possibility to participate in Mano Guru activities, were offered an extensive program that strengthened both their social and professional skills. A range of methods were used in order to foster self-confidence and support for one other, to enhance integration in the social environment and in the labour market, and also to abolish stereotypes that other people have of these people. Inter alia, over 300 people took part in interactive consultations aimed at strengthening.

The project has existed for two years, and during this time, 80 percent of participants have successfully completed the work rehabilitation program, and nearly half (45 percent) of them found a job. Now the project is continued with the assistance of 2007–2013 Structural Funds.

The methodologies prepared were shared with other regions, in order to promote integration of a larger scope. The success of Mano Guru is contagious: other Lithuanian municipalities are taking interest in cooperation possibilities with the project, in order to establish similar locations for the work rehabilitation of people formerly addicted to psychoactive substances.
MICRO FINANCE INSTITUTE FOR INCREASED EMPLOYMENT, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Region: East Mid – Sweden (SE)
City: Urban areas of East Mid Sweden
Programme type: Operational Programme “Regional Competitiveness and Employment” for East Mid-Sweden 2007-2013
Duration of project: 1 January 2008 – 31 December 2010
Funding: € 993,020 of which € 339,403 in EU funding (ERDF)

Access to finance is crucial for sustainable entrepreneurship in European cities and regions. Even though there are traditional banks and other financial institutions that provide credit, certain groups in society (such as migrants and young people who often find it hard to enter the labour market, part-time workers or those at risk of losing their jobs, the socially excluded etc.) encounter difficulties to access finance when they want to start up, or further develop their micro-enterprises.

This project focuses on the specific situation of improving access to finance for migrant women. Given their socio-economic situation, it can be challenging for this particular social group to find collateral finance, guarantees, produce credit histories etc. and therefore they are often regarded as not bankable.

In 2008, this project was set up in four pilot regions in Sweden. It has as its main objective to establish a permanent Micro Finance Institute for this specific target group in order to extend financial services to those who would like to set up or further develop their micro-enterprises, including self employment.

Activities include the setting up of permanent mobilisation platforms, design of support structure before and after business start up, as well as development of a loan fund of approx. € 480 000 (SEK 5 000 000).

Being the first on the Swedish market, it was vital for the project to demonstrate quickly and successfully that micro-finance is a profitable investment for banks and the society, as well as for regional competitiveness and growth. Within its first one-and-a-half years of implementation, the project has already reached its target of 80 new female entrepreneurs (81 % migrants, 19 % native Swedes) representing 25 nationalities and spanning a wide range of age groups (18 -65).

On 11 September 2009, a Micro Finance Institute was officially inaugurated by The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Enterprise and Energy, Honorable Maud Olofsson.

In order to sustain the results already achieved, a micro-finance limited company has been launched by the project staff and beneficiaries. To ensure a lasting impact, a 3-year micro-finance concept has been developed (Make Women Bankable) including products and processes designed to reach out to the final beneficiaries. A partnership with 3 banks has been strengthened (Sörmlands sparbank, Ekobanken and JAK Medlemsbank) with others to follow.

So far, 15 micro-enterprises have been started up and 20 jobs created. In addition to its communication efforts, the project has also initiated policy dialogue around micro-finance as a tool for social inclusion, job creation, micro-enterprise promotion, women and minority empowerment and as complementary to other interventions.
The integration of migrants or marginalised groups in urban areas

Successful Integration of Roma Children

Region: Slovenia (SI)
City: Ljubljana

Programme type: OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME “HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT” FOR THE PERIOD 2007-2013, CCI 2007SI051PO001 - EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND PROMOTION OF SOCIAL INCLUSION

Duration of project: 30 May 2008 – 31 August 2011
Funding: € 1,593,100 of which € 1,354,135 in EU funding (ESF)

The project addresses the process of integration of Roma children facing discrimination and segregation at school. It strives to prop up the efficiency of the integration by educating and training Roma teacher assistants, school teachers and professional school staff, as well as educating and encouraging Roma parents to assume responsibility.

The goal of the project was to prepare preschool Roma children for a successful inclusion into the elementary school by ensuring education and training that would enable these children to achieve the goals defined in the national curricula, and later build on these outcomes. The aim was to disseminate good practice and experience achieved in Slovenia to areas with poor or no experience at all. The groups targeted in the project were preschool and elementary school Roma children, their parents, teachers as well as Roma teacher assistants.

Throughout the project the Roma Union of Slovenia provided for proper education and training of Roma teacher assistants, who took part in school project teams and contributed to better cooperation by guiding the Roma children’s teachers and classmates in broadening their knowledge of Roma culture, history, language, and identity. The project also encouraged Roma parents to participate in extracurricular activities together with their children. Apart from this, the Union prepared a manual for teachers and Roma teacher assistants in co-operation with the National Education Institute and the public institution of adult education Ljudska univerza Murska Sobota. The manual contributed to more efficient interaction with Roma children and parents.

In the scope of the project, a team was set up, comprising of 39 elementary schools and 20 preschool institutions and represented by teachers and a Roma teacher assistant, Roma parents aiming at improving cooperation among parents, children, and school. On the one hand, the Roma teacher assistants helped the teachers in after school care to execute the programme, animated parents to partake in extracurricular activities and do away with the fear of the institution, assisted Roma children with the Slovene language. On the other hand, it was the obligation of elementary schools and preschool institutions to draw up a plan of activities for the purpose of effective and successful integration of Roma children into preschool institutions and elementary schools until the end of 2008.

The project is innovative because it strived to establish and pursue active involvement of Roma parents within the compulsory system of education, as key figures in urging children towards education and training. Moreover, with the introduction of Roma teacher assistants, the Roma Union of Slovenia sought to awaken the awareness of Roma parents and children of the importance of education and do so by respecting their cultural identity. Nevertheless, the process of integration for Roma children ongoing and the scaling-up of the results is yet to be seen.
ACCESS TO LIFELONG LEARNING (ALL) PROJECT

Region: East Wales (UK)
City: Urban areas in East Wales
Programme type: East Wales Objective 3 Programme 2000-2006
Duration of project: May 2003 - December 2005
Funding: €523,591 of which €196,345 in EU funding (ESF)

The ALL project tackled the difficulties faced by women furthest from the jobs market, providing vital learning opportunities to enable them to become economically active. Led by the Women's Workshop based in Butetown - one of the most deprived wards in Wales and with a high percentage of its population from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups - the project addressed the multiple barriers to employment such as cultural issues, caring responsibilities, lack of basic skills and low self esteem.

Bringing together over 15 nationalities to learn new skills including ICT, English language, and numeracy skills, this innovative project also provided a platform for raising awareness, building better understanding amongst the local community groups. Great emphasis was placed on personal development to ensure the women could make informed choices about their future, based on the recognition of their personal needs, abilities and circumstances.

Delivery was through a collaborative approach with partner organisations providing support measures such as free on-site childcare and help with transport costs. Of the 184 women trained, 140 had been out of the labour market for over 36 months and therefore experienced very real issues. All participants undertook training in ICT and 40 gained a level 1 qualification. Acquiring these skills was essential as they have a huge impact on women's equality of access to information and services; employability; social inclusion and engagement in further learning. Indeed, 10% found work directly after the project and 108 progressed to further education courses.

For many ethnic minority women there was, and still is, an expectation that they will remain at home and not work or participate in training after the age of 16. It was imperative that the project presented itself in a culturally acceptable way to engage with both the women and their families.

In strategic terms, the project met national and regional objectives for improving basic and generic skills lacked by a high number of people.

The project ended in 2005 but the partnerships and methods set up continue to flourish with new projects benefitting from lessons learnt over previous stages. The legacy of the ALL project is, once a women has been to the Women's Workshop and received the support needed to develop her skills, confidence and self esteem, she will never again be in the category 'furthest away from the labour market' and will be better placed to adapt to the demands of an ever-changing economy.
CATEGORY 3:

ICT applications for e-inclusion
ESTABLISHING MULTICENTRES IN OLSZTYN AND MARIJAMPOLE

Region: Warminsko-Mazurskie (PL) and Marijampole County (LT)
City: Olsztyn (PL) and Marijampole (LT)
Programme type: INTERREG IIIA/TACIS LITHUANIA, POLAND AND KALININGRAD REGION OF RUSSIAN FEDERATION NEIGHBOURHOOD PROGRAMME
Duration of project: January 2007 - December 2007
Funding: € 666,928.29 of which € 500,195.95 in EU funding (ERDF)

The initial goal of the project was to increase the level of ICT education in the two small provincial towns by introducing unconventional methods of e-learning in the libraries of Olsztyn (Poland) and Marijampole (Lithuania). A number of computers tuned with constructors, music instruments, drawing pads with the help of innovative software became available to the public for free. As a result of the project not only did the image of the two libraries change from conservative and neglected “cellars of archaic books” to modern and useful hubs of knowledge, but also in the long-term the project contributed to the creation of favourable environment for economic development of the regions.

Both Olsztyn and Marijampole are the capitals of regions, which are lagging behind in terms of economic and social development. One of the main obstacles for development of the regions is the low skills levels of the labour force trained, in particular with regard to information technologies (IT).

The innovative idea for a project was born when the libraries in Olsztyn (Poland) and Marijampole (Lithuania) decided to share the cost of buying software for renovating their computer bases which led to a broader collaboration between the two.

As a result, two state-of-the-art multimedia centres were established in the public libraries of the towns of Marijampole and Olsztyn. The overall objective of the project was to increase the level of ICT education in these two towns by introducing unconventional methods of e-learning. In general, the visitors of the Multicentres were given the chance to learn a range of contemporary skills, during which both children and adults enjoy interesting lessons together, assisted by friendly tutors, specifically trained for working with the software and applying modern education methodologies.

The most significant impact visible from the project, however, is the improvement of the quality of life, as now ICT education is made easily accessible and enables both children and elderly to develop their imagination and creativity - and all this for free. Several people have actually gone on to successful employment as a result of the ICT skills training gained at the multicentres.

Another impact from the project is the perceptible growth in competitiveness of the provincial regions of Olsztyn and Marijampole. In this sense, the Multicentres acted as generators of inter-institutional and inter-organisational partnerships in and out of their towns. The local authorities of Olsztyn and Marijampole also committed themselves to provide national part-financing for 5 years, demonstrating the lasting international dimension of the project. The funds allocated by the local authorities will cover the salaries of the staff of the Multicentres and other expenses, which will enable them to continue providing their services for free.

It is clearly visible from the strategic context of the project that the idea of Multicentres has strongly contributed to the long term economic and social rebirth of the regions of Warminsko-Mazurskie and Marijampole county by providing both innovative and attractive methods of youth education and life long learning.
Promoting computer literacy is key to help reduce the digital divide which exists in Lithuania. To support the development of the information society in Lithuania, business companies including leading banks, telecommunication and IT companies, formed an alliance in 2002 called Langas į Ateitį (Window to the Future – LIA). The objective was to increase the accessibility of the Internet and e-services in Lithuania by providing information, computer literacy and training to adults, establishing Public Internet Access Points (PIAPs) and stimulating the growth of e-services countrywide. Key target groups included those living in remote areas with little access to digital services, in particular in rural regions, the elderly or disabled citizens.

LIA seeks to equip 300,000 Lithuanian residents with computer literacy skills, in line with the objectives established by the national Knowledge Society Council. During the start-up phase in 2003, funding from private business sources enabled 20,000 participants to take part in courses on basic internet skills. The second stage consisted of the project 'Computer Literacy Basics for Lithuanian e-Citizens' funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and LIA founders.

This project was conducted countrywide between 2006 and 2008. Over 50,400 adults (with an average age of 43 years old and of which 61% came from small towns and rural areas) have since completed the LIA courses - helping to boost the overall competitiveness of Lithuania’s economy by upgrading skills.

LIA is a good example of private and public partnership in Lithuania. Special attention is paid to the partnership with local municipalities, which make it possible to reach directly those persons living in district centres and rural areas.

The project has also contributed to the implementation of the horizontal priorities. All the residents of the country, irrespective of their education, profession, age, place of residence, sex and social status, were invited to take part in the project, thus implementing the sexual equality and non-discrimination priority. The project also contributed to the fight against discrimination because of disability: among all training participants 400 disabled persons from 16 municipalities of Lithuania have also taken courses in computer literacy and Internet basics. The content and methodology of training were adapted for the disabled.

After finishing the project Computer Literacy Basics for a Lithuanian e-Citizen, four online computer literacy learning courses for the project follow-up were developed and started in April 2008. Such learning is more accessible and cost-effective. Participants can use their own or public PC in PIAPs. It is expected a new digital literacy training project in 2010-2012 funded by ESF. The new project will focus to serve also mostly rural population as well as socially excluded groups with educational content developed in accordance with national computer literacy standards.
The project consisted of implementing 4 “Digital Meeting Places” in deprived areas of Arnhem in order to provide local inhabitants with computer courses to help them enter the labour market. More broadly, these meeting places were also used as multi-purpose community centres and so contributed in strengthening social integration and cohesion in the areas in question.

People living in deprived urban areas often have difficulties in accessing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities. This lack of basic computer skills presents a real barrier when it comes to accessing employment. This is why the City of Arnhem decided in 2000 to create the so-called “Digital Meeting Places” in 4 disadvantaged neighbourhoods of the city.

The main objective of this initiative was to offer very affordable ICT courses (beginners’ courses in computing, introduction to the internet, photo and video editing...) focused on skills frequently sought after in the job market. The training courses were targeted in particular at the long-term unemployed (often older than 50) as well as migrants. In total, 276 participants successfully completed courses. Some of the courses were given by upper-level participants who volunteered as teachers, thus also learning new skills. Other volunteers helped out in various ways such as by overseeing the general running and maintenance of the centres, helping visitors in the internet café, updating the web pages dedicated to the centres’ activities etc. The project was thus not only carried out for the benefit of vulnerable groups but was also partly organised and managed by them.

Dutch courses were also offered to the migrants in the facilities and progressively these four meeting places originally created for ICT trainings became additionally multi-purpose community centres where the local residents (of different nationalities and age groups) could meet.

In such a way the project matched the objectives of the Ministry of Home Affairs to promote the social and economic participation of vulnerable groups as well as into the development programme of the Municipality of Arnhem.

The project can be considered as successful considering the digital meeting places are still working in Arnhem. Additional centres have been created in other areas (the 8th centre was opened in September 2009) with twice as much participants as expected. The Digital Meeting Places initiative is now fully part of the Stichting Rijnstad programme (the local organisation working on social welfare).
CATEGORY 4:

ICT applications by or for SMEs
NEW BUSINESS MODEL FOR AMBULATORY MONITORING OF PATIENTS SUFFERING FROM CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE

Region: Brandenburg (DE)

Programme type: Innovative Action Programme

Duration of project: 1 November 2004 – 31 May 2005

Funding: total cost: €242,402 of which €86,172 in EU funding (ERDF)

The project combined the expertise of various regional partners to provide an innovative ICT based business model for long term, ambulatory management of patients suffering from congestive heart failure in underdeveloped areas.

The project was implemented by ‘Getemed’, specialised in tele-medical solutions, in the context of the BIEM (E-Business and Media Convergence) programme, which was initiated by the Ministry of Economy in Brandenburg. One of the programme priorities was to encourage regional SMEs to develop business models using ICT applications that create new services or optimise the workflow of existing services within the health care industry.

The project’s key objective was to develop a new business model for the ambulatory treatment of CHF (Congestive Heart Failure) patients and investigate a new tele-monitoring device capable of measuring and transmitting multiple vital-signs parameters to a tele-medical centre, where the data is analysed. The general practitioner is supplied with regular reports and can intervene if the patient’s values deteriorate.

The aim was to reduce the number of hospital admissions per patient, the number of days spent in hospital when admitted and the associated health care costs, while at the same time increase the standard of health care and the quality of life for patients.

From an innovative point of view, the model was the first of its kind in Brandenburg and a lot of effort was applied to ensuring compliance with data protection issues. Also, this model as opposed to other examples, puts great emphasis on integrating the general practitioners, stresses that the telemedicine centre must be regional and affiliated to a local clinic or hospital, thus finding overall acceptance.

The partners involved were:

1. Telemedicine centre in Brandenburg/Havel (TMZB), which provided the medical knowledge and analyse of the incoming data, generating reports and providing feedback to the general practitioners.

2. Jonas Medizintechnik installed the equipment in the patient’s home, provided training and technical support.

3. ‘Getemed’ was the project coordinator, responsible for developing and providing the tele-monitoring equipment and software analysis tools used in the TMZB.

4. AOK Brandenburg – a health insurance company - financed the business model with over 100 patients until the end of 2008.

5. Various general practitioners and their patients.

The main obstacle for the project’s sustainability is the highly regulated health sector in Germany, which imposes hurdles when it comes to transferring new, innovative treatments and services into standard reimbursement therapies.

For this reason ‘Getemed’ is using a distributor network to expand the tele-monitoring area of business into other European and international markets.
ONE STOP SHOP FOR COMPANIES
(HTTP://EVEM.GOV.SI)

Region: Slovenia (SI)
Programme type: Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007-2013. Convergence Objective
Duration of project: January 2007 - December 2010
Funding: €4,329,153.38 of which €3,679,780 in EU funding (ESF)

One-Stop-Shop for companies is a government portal which offers a whole host of services free-of-charge, including company registration on-line. Operational since 1 February 2008, the portal has been used by more than 50% of the companies registered in Slovenia, including over 90% of small companies (sole traders). Companies can perform more than 1,600,000 online procedures per year. Registration of a company is free of charge and completed in 3 days.

The project brings together 15 institutions and is used by more than 700 civil servants in 247 one-stop-shop contact points. It received the ‘Best Slovenian ICT project’ 2009 award as well as the United Nations Public Service Award for 2009 in the category ‘delivery of services for Europe and North America’. If all companies used One-Stop-Shop services, they would save up to EUR 10.2 million per year.

The main objective of the project is to provide easy access and services to existing companies, and to facilitate a speedy creation of business entities. Work processes and procedures have been optimised and rationalised through the project and administrative costs significantly reduced. And that makes procedures for business simple and easy to use.

This main goal - fast and free of charge registration of a company - has been successfully achieved with company registration now taking only 3 days to complete. 80% of all companies in Slovenia can today be registered free of charge. On average, 20% more limited liability companies are registered per month compared to a year before the system was set up, and the number of companies in total operating in Slovenia has increased by more than 10%.

The efficiency of the system is ensured through connections to 6 official databases and 6 different sub-systems. This means that when users submit an application for registration into the system, they can at the same time submit other applications. Those applications are then held until the system receives the information that the company has been registered in the Court/Business Register. In parallel, all other data (tax, health insurance etc.) and information on the new company is transferred to other relevant institutions.

Uptake of the system has been very quick. The portal can be used by all companies irrespective of their location. The services are transparent (all applications can be monitored), accessible 24 hours online, or at the one stop shop contact points and notaries. There are 159 contact points in the Republic of Slovenia, including notaries (88) and 11 district courts (for entries in an official capacity). Services at the one stop shop contact points are also free of charge.

According to a survey carried out, user satisfaction with services at One-Stop-Shop contact points is very high. To further increase user satisfaction and boost the use of the One-Stop-Shop portal, we have launched an extensive promotional campaign, prepared video instructions for users, modernised the portal, uniformly branded One
**ICT applications by or for SMEs**

Stop-Shop contact points and started developing new services for companies and entrepreneurs. We regularly organise workshops and training for desk officers at One-Stop-Shop contact points. This is the only way to make the One-Stop-Shop slogan, “Never so close!” a reality, and to bring public administration services closer to business entities.

Through this system, start-ups are supported and the 0 EURO costs for establishing a company can help to reduce unemployment given the. It is friendly application and it offers simple services online or in person. With most of the services provided on-line, it is also an environmentally friendly system.

In this way, the aims of the ‘One-Stop-Shop’ for companies not only closely mirror the EU Lisbon and Gothenburg goals of competitiveness and sustainable development, but also meet other European agendas to strengthen institutional capacity and improve the efficiency of public administrations and services. The portal provides an innovative support tool to help to maximise the economic potential of new and already established companies. It is a good example of partnership and co-operation of different stakeholders - critical for the successful realisation and sustainability of the project.
The e-Crime Wales project is a partnership of public and private sector organisations committed to equipping business with the knowledge and tools to combat e-crime.

It is also integral to the Welsh Assembly Government’s Ministerial Advisory Group objectives for Information Communications Technology and it is responsible for the management and delivery of the all Wales e-Crime Action Plan, tackling the threat and effects of e-Crime on Welsh business.

E-Crime generally refers to a criminal activity where a computer or computer network is the source, tool, target or place of a crime. It encompasses a whole raft of traditional crimes – such as fraud, theft, blackmail, forgery and embezzlement.

The project is managed by the Welsh Assembly Government and has an overall aim of securing a safe ICT environment for business. The innovative partnership of Police, Government and private sector was brought together in 2004 to address the then emerging threat of e-Crime and it is the first in Europe to work in a co-ordinate way with direct delivery of e-Crime support through four regional dedicated Police Officers.

This approach has ensured that the e-Crime Wales Action plan sets an agenda for the multi-agency actions required to combat e-Crime. Consultation with businesses at e-Crime Wales events ensures that the changing needs of businesses are addressed in the project delivery strategy. Both Police and Government contributing staff and funding to delivery of the e-Crime Wales project, and the private sector contributing both in-kind support (speaking at conferences) and private sector investment as match funding.

E-Crime Wales programme align an e-business programme to support businesses directly with a specific diagnostic service to allow potential victims to address weaknesses in their systems. Its outcome is twofold:
- it protects the investment business makes in entering the information society through ICT, and
- overcomes the barrier of trust in ICT when adopting new emerging technologies particularly networked models, cloud computing and living labs.

The programme contributes to the aims of the West Wales and the Valleys ERDF Convergence Programme which promotes the use of ICT to transform business processes, products and services rather than simply investing in ICT. The innovative character of the project is rooted both in its structure and its delivery.

The e-Crime Wales Steering Group, chaired by Police, promotes partnership and collaborative approaches to the fight against e-crime in Wales, involving members from the police forces and legal authorities, government departments and agencies, business group, banks, software and ICT industry, businesses and communities and the general public.

The regional SPOC (Single Points of Contact) is responsible for raising awareness of e-Crime by working with their local business community, and working within their respective Regional police forces to ensure that all pertinent e-Crime data/incidences are captured and appropriately recorded and processed.

Other deliveries are the guides “Preventing e-Crime for Dummies” – addressed to businesses, police representatives and other stakeholders and covering all aspects of e-Crime, and “First Responder”, an information tool for police.

Latest figures show globally that e-Crime is on the increase and although big businesses are set up to tackle the effects, it is the smaller businesses that are now more likely to be targeted.

A European e-Crime partnership has been established under Wales’ leadership to coordinate actions, share information and best practices and cooperate across borders in order to address the danger of e-Crime to all European regions. The partnership includes senior representatives of regions from Poland, Czech Republic, Sweden Romania, Belgium, Spain, France and other regions across the UK.
CATEGORY 5:

Broadband coverage in less developed regions or rural areas
As a peripheral region with a very low population density and long distances between localities, North Karelia faced the challenge of declining competitiveness. One of the objectives of the eRegio project was to increase broadband availability in municipalities for citizens and local businesses; to develop information and knowledge based economy. Thanks to the success of eRegio, the broadband gap has greatly narrowed and people living in rural areas, SME’s, farmers and others are in a much better position to compete and make their living.

The eRegio project was an umbrella project which facilitated region-wide cooperation between all 16 municipalities to develop a common broadband infrastructure in rural areas. To get off the ground, the project faced many challenges, not least that of building knowledge and capacity. The regional council in North Karelia took the lead role in the project, following a coordinated competition for broadband procurement in 13 out of 16 municipalities.

By investing in the development of broadband infrastructure, the connections in sparsely populated areas have significantly improved. This marks the initial step towards building an “Information Society for All” region.

The main impact of the project is that citizens no longer feel excluded from the Information Society, but rather they are now part of it. Broadband coverage increased from 74% up to 98% between 2004 and 2008. This has opened up many possibilities. Although the geographical distances still exist, people can connect with each other on-line and businesses have access to relevant infrastructure irrespective of their location.

The region is now using the latest technology and solving the problems of inequality between rural and urban areas. During the procurement process, a relatively small local telecom company was one of the first in Finland to provide broadband connections through wireless broadband for rural area households, local businesses, farmers and holidaymakers. Most of the development of the broadband availability was based on WiMAX technology in the eight municipalities facing the greatest accessibility problems. Whilst the telecom operators are generally pleased with the progress so far, a key lesson to learn is the need for support to encourage local people to take up the offer.

The key players were the financiers on the public side: EU, national, regional and local administrations. Private partnership and support came from teleoperators, citizens, local associations, interest groups and media. Regarding the budget, € 750,000 came from the ERDF, € 750,000 from national public resources and further € 394,000 was made available by private sector. The eRegio is a good example of how a regional authority can promote broadband availability in cooperation with citizens, administrations, operators and financiers.

Similar projects are now also being implemented in the neighbouring regions. North Karelia has contributed to these projects with its know-how and knowledge exchange. In addition, the main national telecom operator provided a 1 MB wireless connection via @450 network covering virtually the whole country. This can partly explain the high increase of broadband coverage. eRegio was one of the finalists in the “Bridging the Broadband Gap” competition in 2007 and one of examples of the Finnish national broadband strategy implementation of how to increase accessibility.
Broadband coverage in less developed regions or rural areas

Thanks to the success and experience gained from the eRegio project, the North Karelia region is confident to keep on going. The next steps and activities started in 2009 with the main aim of building a next generation fibre optic network which would be made available to all households, public and business buildings in the areas that are under-served so far - mostly rural areas. These activities are based on the new Finnish broadband strategy (FTTH), with regional authorities again to play a key role. The experience and knowledge achieved during the eRegio will certainly be invaluable when it comes to tackling the new challenges.
High Speed Broadband and white areas in Auvergne: towards a 100% coverage

Region: Auvergne (FR)
Programme type: Broadband coverage in less developed regions or rural areas
Duration of project: 2006-2009
Funding: € 38.5 M: € 10 M in EU funding (ERDF), € 4.8 M in national authority funding and € 23.7 M in local and regional authorities funding

High-speed broadband access constitutes a decisive factor of competitiveness for regions, both in terms of attracting and keeping new residents and firms.

Auvergne, one of the most sparsely populated regions in France (approximately 1.3 million inhabitants), put in place a public/private partnership in 2005 to extend high-speed broadband coverage to all households.

This aim was achieved in early 2009, with 100% of households able to choose from a range of service providers and benefit from national rates for high-speed connections.

In everyday life citizens wish to benefit from numerous services requiring high speed broadband access for leisure, family-life and for professional use as well. High speed broadband access has also become a key condition of territorial attractiveness.

In sparsely populated areas, it is often difficult to find an affordable and efficient internet access. Private operators in telecommunications are often not prepared to take on the risks associated with investing in these so called ‘white areas’.

In the Auvergne, most of the population and economic activities are concentrated in six small metropolitan areas. However, the development of the whole region requires a strategic vision for its rural areas. To preserve coherence and avoid scattered initiatives, it was thus crucial to have the different local authorities cooperate and work on a global regional scheme.

In December 2005, an agreement was signed between the Auvergne Regional Council and its four departments (Allier, Puy-de-Dôme, Cantal, Haute-Loire), to extend high-speed broadband coverage to the 338 communes located in the ‘white areas’.

Following a preliminary study, a Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) was agreed as the best way forward both on a legal and an economic level. This was the first Public-Private-Partnership in the field of telecommunications in France. The service provider, France Télécom, was designated as the contractor of the PPP.

Less than 2 years later, 99.6% of lines in Auvergne are eligible for high-speed broadband through DSL technology and a satellite solution is available for the remaining 0.4%. Users can choose any provider and benefit from national rates.

As a result, just one month after the deployment of these new facilities, around 30% of the households who previously did not have a high speed broadband Internet access, subscribed to a contract, facilitating the development of new practices, as illustrated by the following examples:
Broadband coverage in less developed regions or rural areas

- Small business can start more easily, especially in the tourism sector,
- Farm businesses get connected, they can improve their organisation, use the on-line application forms for receiving European agricultural subsidies,
- The work of independent nurses is facilitated by the use of an on-line declaration which also speeds up reimbursement for their patients,
- Visio-Public Points device (PVP) : 103 interactive terminals have been set up in rural areas in order to facilitate the access to public services and the relation with administration (awarded by the first price of the 2007 European Broadband Exhibition),
- Numeric Spaces of Work (ENT) are developed in schools and can improve the relationship between parents, pupils and teacher.
The Kelvin project’s aim is to bring a Direct International Communications link into the North West of Ireland, including counties in Northern Ireland (UK) and the Republic of Ireland, through a new submarine cable ashore on the north coast, linked to an existing transatlantic cable (Nova Scotia, Canada to England). The new submarine cable will be linked to access facilities (Points of Presence) in 13 locations throughout the region (8 in Northern Ireland and 5 in the Republic of Ireland). Exactly the same services will be available on the same terms and conditions (including cost) at each of the 13 locations, effectively removing the impact of the UK/Ireland border on both availability and price. Broadband services will be available on an open access basis and benchmarked against prices for services from Dublin and major UK cities (Glasgow and Manchester) to New York and Amsterdam.

The North West region of both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are the most distant from the existing submarine cables and the international exchanges they serve, as the existing cables are all on the east and south coast. This has a significant impact on the provision of telecommunications services in the region both in terms of costs and also the levels of latency (the speed at which a packet passes from its origins to its destination).

The most innovative aspects of the project relate to the submarine cable solution. This involved diverting commercial traffic from an existing transatlantic cable. Every other telecommunications cable uses the Irish Sea - from Scotland, Wales or England to a landing point on the east coast of Ireland. The solution used by this project deliberately avoids the east coast and the existing concentration of telecommunications infrastructure. Instead of all networks centering on Belfast and Dublin, a new telecoms hub has been created in the North West, reducing the impact caused by physical distance.

The approach taken at the point where the cable lands is also very innovative - to minimise the environmental impact on the beach a 600m pipeline was installed by directional digging from a car park behind the beach, under the sea wall and out into the Atlantic. This required a specialist contractor and equipment from the Netherlands.

In terms of services, the most innovative aspect of the project is the pricing mechanism. Prices for the broadband products must be the same in each of the 13 locations throughout the region and are benchmarked against costs for from Dublin, Manchester and Dublin to both New York and Amsterdam.

The price paid by customers in the North West must be equal to or less than 20% below the lowest median cost in Dublin, Manchester or Glasgow. The pricing mechanism will operate until December 2018.

This is a joint project between the Northern Ireland and Ireland governments. The technical specification for the project therefore had to permit a solution which could operate in both jurisdictions including interconnecting with the different infrastructures while at the same time providing the same broadband products and at the same price. As cross border services are not regulated the governments agreed that the range of products and services and pricing should be included in the contract and monitored jointly by both governments. The result is a partnership between the two governments and the contractor who acts in both jurisdictions. Most of the risk associated with the project rests with the private contractor. The contractor has a BOND in place covering the total value of the contract. If there is a breach of contact the bond will be activated and all contracts (and sub contracts) may be taken over by the two governments. However construction of the

KELVIN

Region: North West Ireland
Programme type: Interreg IV
Duration of project: July 2008 - March 2010
Funding: total cost: € 30M of which € 22.5M in EU funding (ERDF)
new direct link and associated terrestrial work is almost complete and it is unlikely that the bond will be activated. The contractor is also committed to operating the new direct route until at least December 2018. There is no government funding to cover operational costs.

The new submarine cable has been installed providing the link to North America and improved connectivity to Europe. New business and commercial opportunities are being developed by the private sector to take advantage of the new direct link.

The project is being delivered and managed by the private sector company Hibernia Atlantic Ltd. The company is under contract to operate and provide services through the new link up until the end of 2018. The company’s own forecast is that revenue from the project will cover the operational costs from 2012 onwards. There is a formal review of the network’s performance and revenue scheduled for July each year.
CATEGORY 6:

Information and Communication
(Web sites)
www.entdecke-efre.de

Region: Brandenburg
Programme type: Convergence (ERDF)
Date of launch: 13 July 2009
Funding: € 74,808,75

The Managing Authority of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) of the German Land Brandenburg has created a dedicated website to promote the ERDF (EFRE in German) in Brandenburg. The main feature of the website is an interactive photorealistic multimedia presentation about the ERDF in Brandenburg, which seems to appeal in particular to younger users. Users discover the ERDF as if they were playing a computer game.
eu.baltic.net

Region: Baltic Sea Region
Programme type: INTERREG (ERDF)
Date of launch: 01 May 2007
Funding: € 23.686,00

This website of the transnational European Territorial Co-operation programme Baltic Sea Region covers 11 participating countries, including some outside of the EU. The Managing Authority of the programme, also responsible for the website, is the Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein in Germany. Key information about the programme, funding opportunities and existing projects as well as contact data is available on the homepage.
The INTERACT II website is a platform for stakeholders in European Territorial Cooperation/INTERREG programmes, covering 27 EU countries plus Norway and Switzerland. The website includes an important download area with access to programme and project management tools as well as up to date information on reference documentation (i.e. legislation, guidebooks…) and a calendar of events. The website is hosted by the Bratislava Self-Governing Region, which is also the Interact Managing Authority.
www.esparama.lt (Esparama means "EU assistance" in Lithuanian) is the official website of the EU structural assistance to Lithuania. 15 governmental institutions contribute to the website, which receives daily updates by the Structural Funds Management and Monitoring Information System (SFMIS), including information on call for proposals and lists of projects. The Ministry of Finance is responsible for the website.
www.erdfnw.co.uk

Region: Northwest of England
Programme type: Regional Competitiveness and Employment (ERDF)
Date of launch: 03 August 2009
Funding: € 15.675

The website of the ERDF programme in the Northwest of England contains summary information about: the programme's priorities, targets and governance arrangements; the availability of funding and the project application and project management process; projects funded by the programme; resources available to support applicants; relevant news and events; and full contact details for Programme staff. The Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) is responsible for managing both the ERDF programme and the website.
RegioStars – The Awards for Regional Innovative Projects
RegioStars 2011


The RegioStars 2011 Awards were launched in January 2010 at the presentation of RegioStars 2010 finalists. The deadline for receipt of applications is 16 July 2010.

Award categories

There are five RegioStars Award categories for 2011:

I. Economic competitiveness theme
1) Networking and cluster initiatives supporting regional growth and SMEs access to global market
2) Anticipating economic change

II. Low carbon economy theme
3) Promoting sustainable energy in cities (“CityStar” category)
4) Integrated, clean urban transport projects (“CityStar” category)

III. Information and communication theme
5) Promotional photo of a co-funded project

In addition to the Jury award under category 5, the Commission will organise an online public vote on the shortlisted promotional photos. Thereby allowing two awards under this category.

Award criteria

Award criteria for thematic categories 1-4
a) Innovative character of the project
b) Impact or expected impact of the project in terms of initial objectives
c) Expected sustainability of the project: Evidence could include development towards self-financing or demonstration that the project has or will be part of a succession of projects sequentially funded by other EU financial instruments.
d) Project's results in enhancing local, regional and interregional partnerships: Evidence could include demonstration that the project was inspired by another region's project/programme or shared with another region.

Award criteria for category 5 - Information and communication
a) Quality and visual impact of the photo: it tells the story of the project well, is aesthetic and of high quality. For example, the human dimension of a project is well captured and/or an unusual angle has been chosen.
b) The project photo has contributed to increasing the visibility of European regional policy: this will be judged based on evidence provided by the applicant. How has the photo been used in communication activities? Did it feature in news articles, or on posters, postcards etc? What messages on regional policy were conveyed? Was it part of a communication strategy? Demonstrate the impact these activities had.
c) The project description is complete, correct and informative: inter alia, the following elements should be explained: the European dimension of the project; the results of the project, and the contribution of the project to the region's development strategy. If possible, cite the reactions or opinions from a beneficiary.
RegioStars Awards 2010

The third RegioStars Awards was launched in February 2009 at the close of the Regions for Economic Change conference.

RegioStars – the awards for innovative projects - is an annual event to recognise and reward innovative projects supported by EU cohesion policy.

RegioStars 2010 has seen a record 87 applications from project promoters and regions from all 27 Member States. This year six awards are on offer in three broad areas: two “CityStar” awards, three awards in ICT themes and one Information and Communication award.

The RegioStars Jury selected 24 finalists.

More details on these projects can be found on the Inforegio website: