Evaluation brief: *Mid-term thematic evaluation of the Innovation, Research and Technology Transfer components of the ERDF Operational Programme (OP) and the State-Region Programme (CPER) in the Franche-Comté Region* (France)

Key words: thematic evaluation, programme evaluation, interviews, use of administrative data and policy documents

1. Introductory information

- The evaluation reviews the measures related to innovation, research and technology transfer supported by the two following programmes in the French Franche-Comté Region: (1) 2007-2013 Operational Programme (OP) and (2) 2007-2013 State-Region Programme (CPER).
- The evaluation is presented in a published French-language report, with the following title (translated to English): *Thematic evaluation of the Innovation, Research and Technology Transfer components of the ERDF Operational Programme (OP) and the State-Region Programme (CPER) in the Franche-Comté Region.*
- This was a mid-term thematic evaluation carried out to test the relevance, coherence and progress of the two programmes during the first phase of their implementation (2007-2010).
- The evaluation was conducted in eight months and published in 2011. The total budget of the evaluation was €60,000.
- The evaluation was carried out by Technopolis Group France for the ERDF Managing Authority in the Franche-Comté Region - i.e. the Secretariat for Regional Affairs in the Prefecture of the Franche-Comté Region and more specifically its Service dedicated to studies, prospective and evaluation.

2. Summary

The evaluation covered the innovation, research and technology transfer component of the Franche-Comté ERDF Operational Programme and the State-Region Programme – which represents about €243m funding all in all and covers activities ranging from investment in research infrastructures, grants for research equipment, to incentives for SMEs to take part in innovation activities. More specifically, the evaluation was also intended to review in some depth the two main forms of support available: (1) collaborative research between public research organisations and regional businesses and (2) promotion of technology transfer.

The evaluation mainly focused on coherence and relevance issues, as well as on the programmes progress. The two overarching question of the evaluation were: (1) what were the initial aims of the OP CPER related to research, innovation and technology transfer and (2) how these were translated into concrete initiatives during the first part of the ERDF OP/ CPER programming period?

The evaluation used a rather straightforward approach, representative of the qualitative-oriented methodology implemented in this type of thematic ERDF evaluation: namely it brings the formal analysis of programmes documents and monitoring data and the subjective analysis through a large campaign of 60 semi-structured interviews together.

The methodological approach was particularly successful in collecting and triangulating the views of the wide range of stakeholders associated to the programme and coming from various sectoral backgrounds and bodies. This served the evaluation in building a common understanding of the two programmes and in testing the programme logic issued from the analysis of the programmes' document.

The evaluation concluded on the rather large coherence between the CPER and the ERDF Operational Programme, and judged satisfying the overall progress of the two programmes. The European ERDF funding had reportedly a significant added value in initiating projects of a wider scale, even if the outputs do not always lived up to expectations mainly due to delays in the programming and the early-stage of the evaluation compared to some projects. The analysis of the coherence with the Regional Innovation Strategy concluded to the shift into the regional vision for innovation towards a more transversal approach and the subsequent needs for an adjustment in the generation of programmes post-2013.

The evaluation was therefore successful in giving the bigger picture. However, the evaluation produced few operational recommendations. This was reportedly due to the breadth and depth of the study, which occasioned an alternation between recommendations orientated towards the overall ERDF OP and CPER strategy (e.g. increase the knowledge of regional actors related to European funding and European project procedures) and more specific measures (e.g. the Institut Pierre Vernier created as a dedicated technology transfer organisation to coordinate all aspects of regional technology transfer efforts; and the Competitiveness Support Schemes (CAC), which are framework agreement intended to support a specific economic sector such as the wood industry, the car industry, etc).

3. Further information

- The full case study may be found at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/archive/projects/practices/index_en.cfm
- Link to the evaluation study: http://territoires.gouv.fr/evaluations-regionales-par-region
- Link to the Managing Authority that commissioned the evaluation: http://www.franche-comte.pref.gouv.fr/