

Encouraging entrepreneurship at local and regional level

Best Practice Examples from EER Regions



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European Entrepreneurial Region

Foreword

Entrepreneurship and support for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) have gained additional attention to overcome the current economic and financial crisis. Indeed, there are around 23 million SMEs in the EU 27 compared to 41 thousand large companies, and they account for almost 70% of total employment as well as a majority of net job creation. It is therefore essential that we encourage entrepreneurship at local and regional level to boost sustainable growth, productivity, innovation and employment in order to safeguard our social model.

The European Entrepreneurial Region (EER) initiative was established to help identify and reward annually up to three EU regions with outstanding entrepreneurial visions, irrespective of their size, wealth and competences. The regions with the most convincing and forward-thinking policy strategy are granted an entrepreneurial label: "Entrepreneurial region of the year". The aim of the initiative is to create dynamic, green and entrepreneurial regions throughout Europe. This label recognises forward-thinking regions aiming at promoting further entrepreneurial activity. As such, the project aims to contribute to the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy and the "Small Business Act for Europe" (SBA). Our intention is to help create local and regional "EER communities" and enhance cooperation between all policy levels and relevant stakeholders in order to shape policies and act together to implement them.

At EU level and by the awarded regions themselves, the EER label has been recognised as an effective instrument to help regions master the economic crisis, to meet new societal challenges and equip their economies with new strengths to better shape their growth and development policies.

This brochure of good practices from the EER regions aims to highlight a number of projects that the regions have introduced over the course of their respective EER years which have ultimately helped them to implement small business friendly policies to better target public funds and public-private partnerships towards entrepreneurship, and to encourage enterprising skills among society, notably throughout the educational system.

We must therefore continue to inspire Europe's cities and regions to unlock their entrepreneurial potential which will in turn help to mitigate the effects of the crisis and contribute to achieving the Europe 2020 goals on the ground.



Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso,
President of the Committee
of the Regions, Chair of the
CoR Jury



Brandenburg (DE), EER 2011

Being one of the first regions to be awarded the EER label has been an acknowledgement of Brandenburg's SME policy and a stimulus for the further development of the policy within the European framework. It has also been an opportunity to streamline the SME support measures in the region. Brandenburg places emphasis on ecological modernisation of the regional economy, supporting creativity and innovation as key factors for successful economic development, and provide new revolving financial instruments to complement the range of available funding. In this respect, Brandenburg has achieved a number of good results during the EER year 2011 with the support of EU Structural Funds, including the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

Access to capital for small and medium-sized enterprises

<http://www.fruehphasenfonds-brandenburg.de>

Brandenburg supports companies by providing low-interest loans, guarantees and equity investments for the start-up, expansion and acquisition of companies. In addition to this, new revolving financial instruments have been put in place. The most recent one is the **early-phase fund** which aims to boost the equity capital base of young, innovative SMEs in the early stages through subordinated loans and equity. The fund volume amounts to EUR 20 million. Joint-stock companies based in or with branches in Brandenburg are eligible to receive up to EUR 1 million of funding each.

“innoBB” – Berlin-Brandenburg joint innovation strategy

Berlin and Brandenburg's joint innovation strategy (innoBB) shows how the capital region continues to develop as an internationally competitive innovation hub. The strategy provides for even closer cross-border coordination in order to concentrate forces and to enable the region to ideally position itself with regard to global competition. The capital region, with its excellent research and technology expertise, already has a leading position in the German and international innovation landscapes. To strengthen this position and to sharpen the region's profile, 'innoBB'

concentrates on **developing clusters** with high development potential. Outstanding features are cross-sectoral management structures, international networking and systematic integration into EU R&D structures. 'InnoBB' is closely linked on the Europe 2020 strategy of the European Union. An excellent initiative that has been finalist at the Regio star awards 2009 is the **'Go:Incubator'** in Potsdam. The **Golm science park** has become a location with extraordinary potential for innovation. Its development is based largely on ERDF funding for research infrastructure development.

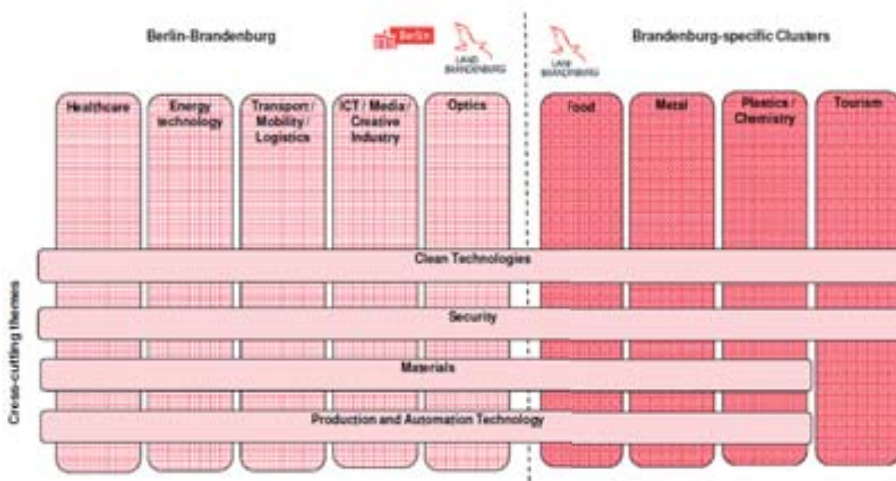
Ecological modernisation, energy, materials efficiency and clean technologies

The regional government provides support for the ecological modernisation of SMEs in Brandenburg via measures which raise awareness, provide information and advice and promote investments in conjunction with energy efficiency. Brandenburg supports projects for the increased use of renewable energies and for improving energy efficiency and security of supply in accordance with the revamped "RENplus" guidelines and the objectives of the regional "Energy Strategy 2030" with a focus on **clean technologies**. Support for the low carbon economy will be a major component of the future ERDF operational programme for the post-2014 period.

Entrepreneurship education and start-up support

To publicly promote entrepreneurship at an early stage, a series of events were organised as part of the region's EER action plan by the Ministry for Economic and European Affairs in selected schools in Brandenburg. **Pupils from year ten to year twelve** were invited to talk to entrepreneurs about self-employment and entrepreneurial spirit. The events also underscored the cooperation of schools, entrepreneurs and administrations in various innovative projects, including school companies, participation in networks involving schools and businesses and the participation in a national competition to encourage R&D activities among teenagers.

A wide range of **piloting and coaching services** for different target groups advises **start-up entrepreneurs**. All measures are coordinated in one comprehensive system and funded under a directive to support qualification and coaching measures for start-ups and SME succession. A highlight is the nationwide Gründerchoaching Deutschland programme run by the KfW promotional bank. Within the network **Gründungsnetz Brandenburg**, all universities and universities of applied sciences collaborate. The **Start-up Navigator International** provides comprehensive support for international students, scientists and alumni, such as an initial evaluation of the business idea presented, development, external consulting and coaching, training, networking and mentoring after the start-up phase.





County Kerry (IE), EER 2011

Nurturing a unique entrepreneurial ecosystem

The Kerry entrepreneurship initiatives – Junior Entrepreneur Programme, Young Entrepreneur Programme and Endeavour – are initiatives of the Institute of Technology, Tralee (Regional University), Shannon Development's Kerry Technology Park and Tweak.com. The programmes are part of a wider vision to create a unique entrepreneurial ecosystem to transform the future of the region.

The Junior Entrepreneur Programme (JEP) is an entrepreneurial awareness and skills enhancement programme for primary school children. The programme aims to help children recognise enterprise and entrepreneurship and to foster an awareness and understanding of the entrepreneur's role in the community, empowering the child to think and act with the initiative, creativity and independence that are invaluable in the modern world.

The **Junior Entrepreneur Programme** is aimed at pupils in the **8-12 years age group**. The founders joined forces with Mary Immaculate College of Education, Ireland's largest teacher training college to develop and deliver the programme. Fifteen per cent of schools in the region took part in the pilot phase of the programme; as the programme expands, an estimated 50%-60% of primary school pupils in the region will complete the programme. During the academic year 2012/13, the programme partners will aim to refine the delivery model to facilitate a national and international roll-out of the programme.



The **Young Entrepreneur Programme** is dedicated to illustrating the validity of entrepreneurship as a career choice. The Young Entrepreneur Programme is offered to secondary school pupils in the **15-16 age group** and to third level students in the region. The mission is to help identify, inform, recognise and celebrate the next generation of business leaders – and their educators. It complements traditional learning by layering workshops, case studies and interaction with key business leaders on top of participants' own ideas. During their 5-6 years in secondary school, 30% of students complete the programme. The Institute of Technology, Tralee has integrated the Young Entrepreneur Programme into a number of its courses. The Institute is currently implementing a plan whereby all students of the Institute will have the opportunity to study entrepreneurship during their time at the college. To date, over 3 000 students have completed the programme, with the number set to reach 4 500 by 2015.



Endeavour is a technology agnostic accelerator programme for globally-facing start-ups, its key differentiating factor being its globally successful mentors and international entrepreneur network. In its first two years of operation, Endeavour graduates created companies with a combined capital value of over EUR 20m.

Developing a culture of entrepreneurship across an entire community

The Kerry entrepreneurship programmes represent an excellent example of public-private partnership – the programmes are operated with the support of several public organisations and state agencies as well as a very significant number of entrepreneurs and businesses. The initiatives penetrate all aspects of the community – parents and family, the local community surrounding each school, local entrepreneurs and businesses, and the media.

Each of the programmes has been designed to fit within the existing education system – rather than trying to change the system. The programmes have received significant interest from the political system and successive ministers for education have addressed programme events.



Innovating through clustering initiatives

At Kerry Technology Park, clustering as a development tool has been adapted to meet the needs of a relatively small, peripheral community. The focus is on creating a hub of knowledge-intensive activity where it did not previously exist. At its

core is the integrated campus created by the Institute of Technology, Tralee and Shannon Development; the **Kerry Technology Park campus** has been planned and developed from a green field site with the vision of achieving a seamless integration of education and enterprise. A very successful hub of like-minded companies has grown organically on the campus

– **entrepreneur-led, knowledge-intensive, export-oriented companies with a strong R&D focus, targeting niche markets.** Kerry Technology Park, the Institute of Technology, Tralee and the successful enterprises located on-campus are at the epicentre of the Kerry entrepreneurship initiatives.





Region of Murcia (ES), EER 2011

Entrepreneurship plan

Objective: promote entrepreneurship and support new business creation.

Contribution of EU funds for this initiative is through the global grant scheme (ERDF).

Activities promoting entrepreneurship:

Promote an entrepreneurial spirit: fostering entrepreneurial culture in society: 'Entrepreneurship Day' every year since 2007 (1500 participants per year, 40 organisations involved).

Introduce entrepreneurship in schools at an early age: 69 educational centres, 560 teachers and 16 000 students involved, 150 firms created per year. 'Emprender en Mi Escuela-EME' - primary education, 'Empresa Joven Europea EJE' - secondary education, 'FP Emprime' - vocational education.

Support the creation and consolidation of companies: 35 venture capitalists involved, 25 established in the last two years. An agreement between 6 municipalities.

Coordination of the regional network supporting entrepreneurs: 45 intermediate organisations involved, 350 supporting officers, permanent technical office for entrepreneurs, assistance to 1300 entrepreneurs, 50 business plans monitored.

Innovation system

Objective: strengthen every link in the in-company innovation chain.

Contribution of EU funds for this initiative is through the global grant scheme (ERDF).



www.planemprendemos.es



Activities strengthening innovation:

Promotion of research, development and innovation for companies: more than 750 companies encountered, 11 events organised with more than 350 firms attending, more than 40 projects submitted to National R+D+I schemes for funding.

'Regional Federation of Technology Centres' (Citem); 10 sectoral technology centres, 809 firms associated, 123 firms joining EU funded R+D projects.

'Regional technology marketplace' (DirecTTto): over 600 offer-demand profiles, 80 expressions of interest generated, 7 contracts endorsed.

'Murcia Food Brokerage Event 2011': 190 companies attended from 20 countries, 600 bilateral meetings.

'Innovation voucher 2011': catalogue of more than 30 innovation services for companies, with more than 300 experts acting as service providers.

'Peral Service' (intellectual property rights) through a network of 13 agents accredited in patents; more than 1000 advisory sessions provided to companies and individuals.

'Enterprise Europe Network': visit to 140 companies, 67 firms attending EU events, 470 bilateral meetings, 9 TT agreements, advise on R+D to 200 companies, 20 proposals submitted to 7FP.

'Smart Specialisation Strategy': regional exercise in progress, mentoring received from the E.C., 1FP7 project retained (ERRIN Net).



Best practice: regional network of 11 Local Business Incubators plus two European Business Centres disseminated in 13 municipalities (Red de Viveros de Empresas)

Objective: provide information, advice, placement, logistic facilities, training, access to networking for SMEs and entrepreneurs, bringing together main business support organisations.

Target measures:	Training of managers:	Advanced services:	Main figures (target period: 01/2010-12/2011)	Budget:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - common procedures manual - management tools - generating new business ideas - entrepreneurial diagnoses - access to business plans - ICT solutions - access to funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - upgrading managerial skills - upgrading entrepreneurial skills - project management - business marketing - promotion of incubators - technical & financial analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - financial plans - virtual search for placement - entrepreneurial test 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - location for companies: 170 offices - occupation ratio: 85% - support staff: 25 technicians - business plans evaluated: 1 560 - creation of new firms: 75 firms per year - training: 2 500 hours of training - cooperation agreements: 15 - new jobs created: 900 - managing organisation: Murcia Region Development Agency (INFO Murcia) - approximately 70 co-operating and supporting organisations: local councils, chambers of commerce, business intermediate organisations 	<p>EUR 50 000 (annual budget, 60% funded through the ERDF global grant)</p>

■ www.viverodeempresas.es



Catalonia (ES), EER 2012

Administrative and regulatory simplification: the one-stop-shop implementation plan

Modern and responsive public administrations can significantly contribute to the creation, success and growth of SMEs by saving them time and money and hence freeing resources for innovation, internationalisation and job creation. The Government of Catalonia is working on a **new model of interaction between businesses and the administration** that underlines the social utility of entrepreneurship and is based on responsibility and mutual trust.

At present, businesses bear numerous unnecessary administrative burdens that hamper their competitiveness. The plan to introduce a **"one-stop-shop" for businesses** will enable companies to complete all the necessary procedures and formalities to launch business activities at a single point. In this regard, the Government of Catalonia has approved the one-stop-shop implementation plan. Almost 600 procedures concerning businesses have been identified (470, 78% involve the regional government, 100, 16% involve the state government and around 20, 4% involve the municipalities). 90 out of 470 procedures involving the regional government will be abolished. Moreover, 320 out of 470 (68%) will be simplified. This could see companies saving some EUR 160m each year (EUR 640m over the course of the plan period 2011-2014).

The one-stop-shop is based on:

1. Multi-administration: regardless of the competent level of government.
2. Multi-channel: the services are offered by the most suitable channel chosen by the enterprise.

3. Building a network: collaborative model used in provision of services.
4. Efficiency and effectiveness: completing procedures at the time of the request.

Internationalisation: 'Start Exporting' programme

Catalonia accounts for 26% of total Spanish exports and 28% of Spanish imports, internationalisation is therefore a strong lever both for growth and competitiveness and the Government of Catalonia is committed to boosting it. ACCIÓ is the public body that carries out the policy of innovation and internationalisation. The 'Start Exporting' programme focuses on SMEs and entrepreneurs that want to start exporting (or are exporting less than 20% of their turnover).

The programme is specifically designed to help SMEs (smaller in terms of size in Catalonia than the EU average) overcome the difficulties involved in the internationalisation process (lack of time to invest in acquiring market intelligence, risk and limited financial resources, insufficient staff resources, etc.). The programme contributes to the **development of an export strategy** and development plan. This includes deciding which products/services are exportable, which markets have the most potential and are more suitable for the company, and finally deciding on the best strategy to access those markets and their clients. Companies are encouraged to participate in **trade missions, international trade fairs and other trade events** so they can build relationships with international customers and conduct on-site market research.

The programme (60% financed by ACCIÓ) provides support for one year to help SMEs develop tools and techniques that they need to succeed in export markets:

1. One-day export workshop (GoExport)
2. 50 hours of assessment by a senior export adviser to develop an export strategy and development plan.
3. 25 hours of assessment from a digital marketing advisor to develop an online marketing strategy for export markets.
4. Support 2 days a week from a junior export sales manager to implement the export plan and execute export sales tasks.

Finally, the most important objective is to achieve or increase export sales and if possible ensure that these international sales come from diversified markets. In this regard, the programme has been running since 2001 and a total of 500 companies have participated (30% of participants in the programme are entrepreneurs – companies established for less than 3 years; 61% are micro, 26.8% small and 7.3% medium enterprises). Out of the 41 companies that participated in the programme in 2010-2011, 65.8% achieved export sales during that programme year. The main export markets were: France (50%), Belgium (22.7%) and the USA (18.2%). Moreover, 78% of the participants in the programme forecast that they will achieve export sales in the short term.

The Catalan government is committed to scale up the programme in order to contribute to the region's export-led economic recovery. This is being achieved by aligning all the internationalisation agents operating in Catalonia so that they offer the same programme to SMEs in Catalonia. This will enable the target of 500 companies starting to export regularly in 2012 to be achieved.



Photo:
Ms Tuula Palaste-Eerola



Helsinki-Uusimaa (FI), EER 2012

Promoting young entrepreneurship:

Creative – a story about the strength of companionship

Creative enables young creative entrepreneurs to achieve goals no one could, or would have time to, achieve on their own. In the programme, seven young entrepreneurs develop their businesses and business skills – together. Businesses taking part in the Creative programme have existed for a year or two. By choosing entrepreneurship the participants have gained freedom, the chance to follow their dreams and to do what they know best. The programme brings like-minded people together, since a creative entrepreneur is truly understood only by another creative entrepreneur.

During the spring of 2012, the entrepreneurs planned and implemented numerous common displays at events and fairs. Each of them had to think carefully about the core of his or her business; how can I stand out? On the other hand, cooperation of the creative industries has offered some novel possibilities for everyone. In Creative, the entrepreneurs have gained useful networking tools applicable in their own field of business.

The Creative programme culminated with the **Creative Entrepreneurs Market** at the European Athletics Championships in Helsinki in June-July 2012, where all seven entrepreneurs presented their services and products. The Creative programme was planned and implemented by Uusimaa Regional Council and Rastor Oy in the spring and summer of 2012. The programme was co-financed by the European Social Fund.

www.eer2012.fi

Promoting e-government and one-stop-shop solutions:

Establish a business easily, reliably and quickly on the internet

The Perustayritys.fi service is free, easy, fast and reliable. All the basic documents, bank accounts and insurance policies needed to start a business are created in one session with no hassle or error. The service has been developed and tested in real, everyday situations. It is designed to meet every need you may have as a company founder.

The service is being developed further in accordance with guidelines from the tax administration, National Board of Patents Trademark Registration (PRH) and the Ministry of Employment and the Economy (TEM) business support service. The SME Foundation (PKT säätiö) is also involved. All banks and insurance companies have been invited to add their services to the system, and Nordea, IF, OP Bank, Savings Banks Group, POP Bank, Tapiola Pension and Veritas Pension Insurance and The Local Insurance Group have already joined up.

This EER year 2012 has already seen over 3 000 users register for the service, and more than 1 000 enterprises have been established via the service in the Helsinki-Uusimaa region.

The system has been developed and created in such a way that it could be rolled out in any country, requiring only small modifications. The system now operates in three languages and all languages could easily be introduced.

Furthermore, a special version of the service for schools and students has been developed during the Helsinki-Uusimaa EER 2012 year.



Photo:
Ms Tuula Palaste-Eerola



Trnava Self-Governing region (SK), EER 2012

Duo**Stars

In 2008, the European Commission approved a joint project between Trnava Self-Governing Region and Lower Austria called DUO**STARS, named after the Slovak and Austrian transnational co-operation programme.

Partners:	Duration:	Budget:	Objectives:
<p>Lead Partner: Wirtschaftskammer Niederösterreich, St. Pölten, Austria (Lower Austria Chamber of Commerce)</p> <p>Partner No.1: Industriellenvereinigung, Wien, Austria (Austrian Industrial Association)</p> <p>Partner No.2: Trnava Self-Governing Region (TSGR)</p> <p>Partner No.3: Dolný Bar Municipality</p>	<p>1 September 2008 – 31 August 2012</p>	<p>EUR 448,137</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 5% - financial contribution from TSGR · 10% - Slovak national budget · 85% - ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) support the regional economy through knowledge, research and innovation b) improve both the attractiveness of the local area and regional competitiveness c) improve the skills of local people in the region

The project's main aim was to create the right conditions for strengthening economic and industrial development in both regions involved. By using regional management strategies as a basis for the implementation of individual project activities, the project partners wanted to help increase the overall attractiveness and competitiveness of their regions. The project brought together public institutions and businesses through the development of global

value creation networks with state-of-the-art technological know-how. The project supports structural change between sectors and the regions involved and it increases the share of innovation, significantly reduces products' time-to-market and increases their value creation capacities. The project focused in particular on involving small and medium-sized businesses in the innovation value creation network and on ensuring closer links between neighbouring localities.

ITE – Intelligent Energy

The Intelligent Energy Project aims to improve bilateral and interregional cooperation between Austrian and Slovak regions at regional, municipal and private level in the sustainable energy development sector. The project seeks to promote a cross-border development of skills in the field of renewable and sustainable energy management.

In pursuit of its environmental objectives, this project will take into account the best possible use of local and regional available resources in order to achieve the highest added value for the region. It will emphasise raw materials as well as resources such as solar energy, wind, water and waste. Overall, the project aims to reduce regional dependence on imported energy and draw on renewable sources.

In the long-term, the project's objectives will focus on complete independence from imported (mostly fossil-based) energy:

- contribute to the climate protection goals under the Kyoto Protocol, with regional reductions in CO₂ production at the forefront,
- use of available primary regional renewable energy resources to meet energy needs,
- contribute to the creation of a meaningful mix of energy sources as part of long-term supra-regional energy management,
- contribute to reductions in energy consumption, particularly to reduce dependence on imports of fossil energy carriers.

TSGR will contribute to the following project outcomes:

- the establishment of an international energy cluster (Institute for Renewable Energy Sources),
- a partnership of 20 to 25 entities dealing with renewable energy sources on both sides of the Austrian/Slovak border,
- the production of an energy security strategy for the sustainable development of the energy industry, with an emphasis on renewable energy,
- the development of five "eco-checks" of different-sized communities
- the preparation of publications
- the organization of workshops and seminars
- the development of five cross-border pilot projects



Nord-Pas de Calais region (FR), EER 2013

Promoting entrepreneurship among young people and women

The Nord-Pas de Calais Regional Council, and more precisely its economic affairs department, decided to set up a **Regional Strategy for Economic Initiative (SRIE)** in June 2011, aimed at increasing awareness of the entrepreneurial spirit among the region's inhabitants, particularly young people and women.

Following the example of the SRI (regional innovation strategy), it gave priority to regional economic initiative by co-producing an SRIE (regional economic initiative strategy) **in conjunction with the education board, universities, the delegation for women's rights and local businesses.**

Six working groups each held three meetings during 2010-2011 aimed at producing a report on the current situation and identifying the impediments, leverage and cross-functional focus areas (male-female equality, assessment and communication) relevant to each group: academics, students, women, businesses and regions, which would also be the focus of assessments and research. The official launch of the SRIE will be held on Tuesday 13 November 2012 and will mark the beginning of the operational phase of this strategy. The audience will consist principally of "public go-between" including teachers, school leaders, business leaders. These groups of people will eventually be in charge of entrepreneurship awareness among various target audiences in the region.

However, the SRIE has been operating since January 2012, along with the monitoring of action plans, particularly for the women's entrepreneurship and pupil's entrepreneurship components. Its task is to mobilise human and financial

resources as well as engineering skills, expertise and research right across the region from both regional institutions and co-producers.

HubHouses®: a new place to generate new projects

In the context of the SRIE, implanted in five universities in the Nord-Pas de Calais region, Hubhouses® are designed **to help students to generate, formalise and mature their plans to start a business** or non-profit making organisations, whatever the field (cultural, sports, retail, crafts ...).

Approximately 100 square metres have been made available to them (working space, meeting rooms, information and documentation space, relaxation area) and a facilitator is there to greet them, guide them and to liven up the Hubhouses® through a programme of varied activities. The results are very encouraging: since the opening of the first Hubhouse® in 2008, 125 projects have been supported and no less than 32 new companies or non-profit making organisations set up.

Hubhouses® are set to benefit from ERDF funding for the next two years.

Innovation support

■ North France Innovation and Development (NFID)

With the support of ERDF funds, this public organisation reinforces regional measures in favour of research and innovation by monitoring calls for offers aimed at SMEs launching innovation programmes. NFID also plays a major role in making the Regional Innovation Strategy (SRI) a strategic platform for enterprises looking for services to allow them to carry out their projects in the best conditions. This platform has enabled the networking of reception, support, funding and follow-up operators in the entire region. It has developed a collaborative tool "ASTRIDE", which facilitates the linkage between SMEs, project initiators and potential investors.

■ Creation of a co-investment fund to help SMEs finance their innovation

The Nord-Pas de Calais region has set up a private company in order to create a permanent system that ensures the financing of a second pool for innovative projects, including both technological and non-technological innovations.

ERDF funding of EUR 4million will benefit this new company which will mainly target projects relevant to strategic excellence sectors included in the regional innovation strategy: terrestrial means of transportation by rail, trade industry for the future, materials and applications for a sustainable use, and the nutrition-health-and-longevity sector.





Southern Denmark (DK), EER 2013

Smart Specialisation – innovation and growth through clustering initiatives

The Growth Forum in the region of Southern Denmark is a commercial-political partnership involving the business community, knowledge and education institutions, unions and employers' organisations, local authorities and the region of Southern Denmark. It is a hub for regional growth initiatives.

The Growth Forum focuses its strategy on three priority areas, where regional businesses have proven their capacity as leaders over the past few years. The three strategic areas of business excellence are:

- **sustainable energy** with a focus on **energy efficiency and offshore energy production**
- **Health and welfare technologies**
- **Experience economy - with focus on tourism and design**

Instruments and projects financed by the Growth Forum are targeted on these areas of business excellence and the following tools are to be used to achieve the strategic goals:

- entrepreneurship
- human resources and education
- research, innovation and new technologies – including design and ICT
- cluster development

Cluster organisations are important for the four strategic areas of business excellence. So for each of the four strategic business areas there is a dedicated cluster organisation:

- **Lean Energy** (www.leanenergy.dk) and **Offshore** (www.offshorecenter.dk) – Sustainable energy with focus on energy efficiency and offshore
- **Welfare Tech** (www.welfaretech.dk) – health and welfare technologies
- **Design2Innovate** (www.design2innovate.dk) – design

Smart specialisation in the region means that the **specialised cluster organisations play a unique role in the regional innovation system**. The cluster organisations are network organisations tying businesses, knowledge and research institutions and public actors together within a certain area. Within each of these prioritised business areas the cluster organisation focuses on the needs of the businesses – both entrepreneurs and the more mature businesses. The clusters are partly funded by the region of Southern Denmark, EU funds and private money.

Each cluster has specific target measures as well as expectations from the European Cluster Management Excellence according to the quality indicators and peer-assessment procedures identified by the European Cluster Excellence Initiative. The South Danish Regional Business Development Centre (www.vhsyddanmark.dk) works alongside these cluster organisations and offers free guidance to start-ups and businesses eager to grow and succeed. The organisation is financed by the 22 municipalities in the region of Southern Denmark.

The overall 2020 goals for the region are: a level of productivity that is 10% above the OECD average and an employment rate on a par with the OECD Top 5.

Welfare Tech Invest – innovation and growth through improved access to venture capital

Access to finance is a challenge for entrepreneurs and SMEs, also within the areas of business excellence in the region of Southern Denmark. In order to improve access to venture capital of health and welfare technologies, a venture capital fund entitled **Welfare Tech Invest – Southern Denmark** was set up. This fund, launched in 2012, invests in welfare tech entrepreneurs in the region. At present there is DKK 75m in the fund dedicated to this purpose. Furthermore, the capital fund provides loans to entrepreneurs in the region's rural areas. A further DKK 20m is foreseen for this purpose.

Welfare Tech Invest – Southern Denmark is part-funded with money from the region of Southern Denmark and EU funds. **Welfare Tech Invest** is managed by professional investment managers, with specific knowledge about investing seed-money, accelerating growth in entrepreneurial companies and the specific business area of health and welfare technologies. Money from Welfare Tech Invest will, on a case-by-case basis, be matched with money from other investors and loan providers.

Targets for Welfare Tech Invest (within the next 5 years):

- Invest in 12 young companies within welfare tech in the region
- 30 loans will be granted to companies in the rural areas of the region
- Between 175 and 250 new jobs will be created in the portfolio companies.





Styria (AT), EER 2013

Strategy project: TASTBAR – tactile information and orientation system for blind and visually impaired people

People with disabilities should be able to take part in all aspects of daily life – this is the goal set out in the European Commission's ten-year strategy.



The **Raunjak intermedias GmbH** from Stainz in the province of Styria is working towards this goal. The company has set a great example by developing a **specific system that makes daily life easier** for the blind and visually impaired. Raunjak has developed innovative and unique methods of implementing and producing **3-dimensional surface labels and surface designs**. These new methods are attracting interest from all economic areas, the public at large as well as the private sector. With the support of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), a customised marketing concept for a tactile information and orientation system for blind and visually impaired individuals could be developed and realised. Because this topic is still not particularly popular among the public, specific marketing activities and the promotion of awareness in the public are necessary.

In 2009, the company applied for a **patent concerning a method of producing 3-dimensional surface labels for the visually impaired and blind**. The newly developed method is based on

The strategic context of this project is primarily the goal to meet the demand for **3-dimensional surface labels in areas of construction and architecture** in all of Austria and the EU.



The main impact of this project is summarised in the following points:

1. Positive economic effects are expected for the entrepreneur and his/her business leading to a promotion of this strategic business unit.
2. Raising awareness within the whole region of Styria and beyond of people with disabilities.
3. Furthermore, in its leading role at national and EU-wide levels, the Raunjak intermedias GmbH participates in many discussions and has been able to present a new method for producing print products.



The expected sustainability of this project is largely based on the fact that this product will significantly raise the bar regarding accessible information technology, and considerably promote competitiveness in the field. Although the market is not yet competitive, this project has a technologically innovative nature which will be increasingly recognised during public calls for proposal for information products.

Eco World Styria

The Styria province is one of **the densest cleantech know-how areas** with a long history in this field. The innovative cleantech cluster ECO WORLD STYRIA was set up to drive regional growth in this Green Tech Valley. It supports companies and the location of Styria with basic services and projects with strategic levers as regards the growth drivers of innovation, know-how, and new markets.



This **cluster initiative** connects more than **170 cleantech companies, manufacturers, service providers and scientific organisations** to enable eco-innovation through cooperation. The cluster organisation and its strategic partners secure sustainable growth for the cluster clients through the entire service and product value chain in the areas of biomass, solar energy, waste as a resource and water.

At the beginning of the project, Styria hosted a highly interesting **concentration of cleantech companies** with cleantech sales reaching a value of 5% of GRP, which **nearly doubled** to 9% in 2010 mainly due to innovative products and innovative services. Specifically, the number of **global cleantech leaders** within one hour's drive has exceeded one dozen, **new headquarters have been attracted** and **5 000 new jobs** have been created.

According to the **feedback of the companies**, ECO has fostered this development and the innovation services provided by **ECO is rated 1.3 "Excellent"** (on a 1 to 5 scale). As a further result, ECO WORLD STYRIA was **ranked No 1 Cleantech Cluster in the World** by the renowned US Investor's network Cleantech Group. ECO is the winner of the RegioStars 2012 Award - Smart Growth category.

■ www.eco.at





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