

Connecting the territory
through innovation **network**



2012

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RETA PRESENTS THE INOLINK PROJECT IN BRUSSELS ON THE OPEN DAYS 2011



➤ The Andalusian Technology Network (RETA), as lead partner, presented the European project Inolink during the celebration of the Open Days 2011 in Brussels from 10 to 13 October.

The Open Days 2011 is a major event organized by the Directorate General for Regional Policy of the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions.

More than 6,000 participants -among others politicians, officials, experts and researchers- from 206 regions and cities across Europe had a meeting during this event to discuss, debate and help shape the future policy of the EU.

As part of these Open Days several working sessions and workshops have been held, the one were addressed to present several Eu-

ropean projects that are running right now, among which Inolink is included. Specifically, Inolink project was presented by RETA during a working day and subsequent Workshop, organized by the Italian region of Abruzzo, which is also part of this project.

The purpose of this work session to be held in the framework of the Open Days was to present the

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progress and preliminary results of the survey on innovation needs in the different European regions involved in the project. Also in the planned Workshop were addressed issues

such as innovation networks or initiatives on innovation developed to promote the financing of projects of small and medium enterprises. With nine years of history, the Open Days are

an annual event for cities and regions to share best practices in regional development: they are a real meeting point for people at all levels of government and civil society.

Open Innovation in Alpine SMEs OPEN ALPS



► The EU transnational cooperation programme for the Alps - Alpine Space - combines seven Alpine countries to work together and promote regional development in a sustainable way. The priority objectives of the programme are: Competitiveness and Attractiveness, Accessibility and Connectivity and Environment and Risk Prevention.

10 project partners from 6 countries (Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Italy, France and Switzerland) are conducting a project "Open Innovation in Alpine SMEs", which will improve the competitiveness and attractiveness of

the Alpine Space. Through this project innovation and entrepreneurship shall be encouraged, as well as research and innovation capacities of SMEs shall be

What is Open Innovation? "Open innovation is the use of purposive inflows and outflows of knowledge to accelerate internal innovation, and expand the markets for external use of innovation, respectively." It consists in the search and use of external knowledge to improve innovation within a company, as well as in the transfer of knowledge to other firms, in order to expand the market for the use of innovation.

strengthened. The project shall set up a transnational OI support service of OI hubs, a web-based OI management platforms

with hundreds of innovation seekers and innovation solvers from SMEs and R&TD institutions as well as transnational OI innovation forums and OI labs.

This project will make a valuable contribution to the innovation policy in Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative Innovation Union.

CREATIVE INDUSTRY INCUBATION

► Creative industries upgrade basic praxis of artisans, with the latest achievements in science, in order to transform these achievements into new products or services. Hence they represent an important part of the economic and intellectual development of the society. In economic policy they represent a source of incentives for development of new and creative potentials to enhance competitiveness of established companies.

Within the INTERREG IVC project CREATIVE REGIONS (CREA.RE), which is a Regional Initiative Project and includes 12 partners from 10 EU countries, Maribor Development

Agency is working on establishing a cultural laboratory where creative approach will be used to innovate, and thus contribute to the added value of, various productive branches.

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RAPIV'S dissemination event "Connecting the territory through innovation network", 27th October 2011 – Varna



► Dissemination event "Connecting the Territory through the Innovation Network" was held in Varna, on 27th October 2011. The main objective of the action is to inform the society, regional and local authorities about the results and objectives of project INOLINK and the work of the partners under the project in the field of selection and transfer of good practices.



A Press – conference was organized by RAPIV before the Dissemination event: Connecting the Territory through Innovation Network, before the beginning of the event at 10.00 CET, with the participation of the Executive Director of RAPIV – Dr. Dimitar Radev, Mr. Yani Yanev and Mr. Petar Radashev, Director International and European Projects and Programmes, Municipality of Varna.

There were journalists from national and regional media.

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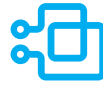
After that the event has had announces in the media – TV Chernomore, Radio Varna.

The results of survey on innovation needs and good practices identified within INOLINK project, INTERREG IVC of the EC were presented at the event. In the first presentation "Survey on Innovation Needs – Presenting the Results" Dr. Dimitar Radev, Executive Director, RAPIV presented the results of Regional Survey on Innovation needs. He gave a brief overview of the total summarized results

of the survey for all partners and of the results for RAPIV. In the second presentation "Best EU practices for Connecting through Regional Innovation Network", Ms. Irina Kircheva introduced the Good practices, selected by RAPIV during the implementation of INOLINK project.

The event was followed by lively discussion among the participants. They also had the opportunity to fill a questionnaire and choose the best practices to be transferred in the North East Region of Bulgaria..

PROFILE. ABRUZZO REGION (ITALY)



➤ Abruzzo has a long experience on Innovation. It participated in different projects like RIS Abruzzo phase 1 and 2. It was the 1st EU Region getting out from Objective 1. The Earthquake of 6th April 2009 in L'Aquila led to a sharp economic slowdown, whose recovery is still rather uncertain. At the present moment Abruzzo has a difficulty in job market access. The economic crisis involves in particular young people. Currently Abruzzo Region is

at the 4th place in the ranking of economic growth. This fact means that the recovery of productive activities has been positively evolving although it is not a stable and diffuse recovery. Currently in Abruzzo the most important innovative sector are: Pharmaceutical, Food and drink, Tourism and Automotive that not include anymore Textile/Fashion and construction due to the strong crisis that affect them. Abruzzo presents very important universities that cover all of the nominated economic sectors. The

survey also shows the lack of spin-off from universities and the lack in the creation of new enterprises but it is also related to the economic moment that the every region in the world

has been go through.

On students and universities, Abruzzo has 3 Main Institutions (L'Aquila, Chieti – Pescara and Teramo). Chieti – Pescara presents the high number of students enrolled, followed by L'Aquila. Abruzzo's universities gathered students mainly from the south part of Italy and it is recognized as one of the important universities. Regarding the people engaged in R&D, inside the enterprise as % on the total in Abruzzo is 1,5% (26,5% Lombardy Region, 0,1% Molise Region - 2007), people engaged in R&D in public institution as % on the total is 1,1% (Lazio Region 43,3%. Valle d'Aosta Region 0,1% - 2007) and people engaged in R&D in universities as % on the total is 2,1% (Lombardy 12,4%, Valle d'Aosta Region 0,0% - 2007). In Abruzzo the level if investment is 1,04% with respect of regional GDP.

About Innovation Environment Abruzzo is a very For more information:

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dynamic Region. It has been working in different fields principally: issued a call (Activity of ROP ERDF 2007-2013) on 'Sustain to the creation of Innovation Poles' for the overcoming of the old logic of industrial district through the consolidation of the territorial system of Innovation Poles. Just in the month of April has

been signed an agreement, the 1st one in Italy, with the Italian Ministry of Development for the financing and development of Enterprises' Network 'Abruzzo 2015'.

At the present moment Abruzzo Region is at the 4th place in the ranking of economic growth (1,67%); the national average is

1,19%. It is necessary to accelerate the processes' reform as well as those relating to Innovation Poles. The positive data came out from the activities of specific productive district that have been gradually formed in Abruzzo thanks to policies aimed to favour the logic of enterprises' networks and Innovation Poles.

The main results at a glance

- From the regional survey is evident that Automotive, Food and Drink and Tourism are the three pillars Abruzzo's economy. There are no discrepancies, the data provided make a clear and realistic picture of the situation in the Region where sectors like Construction and Textile / fashions have been very affected by the crisis and are giving space in favour of more specialised sector as Pharmaceutical one.
- The major part of the spin-off in Abruzzo Region are supported by the university of L'Aquila especially in Pharmaceuti-

cal and Engineering /construction sectors that surely represent one of the most important economic sector in Abruzzo.

- The best practices and the actions carry on by Abruzzo regional Government by improve the competitiveness and innovation of development local actors are so many and such to reduce and, in some cases to eliminate, the innovation barriers identified. It appears fundamental the preliminary innovation activity promoter of the local actors in order to improve the consciousness that the competitiveness of a terri-

tory or of a local system it is measured, by now in all advanced economies, no more trough traditional productive factors, such as the capital and job, but rather with the analysis of the immaterial factors of the production and therefore of technology knowledge and human capital.

- The data show that the stakeholders have identified the lack of access to financial tools to support the main barrier that hinders firms in innovation. Process. The biggest obstacle on organizing innovative processes, is found whereas in the lack of innovation manage-

ment skills. Also the lack of cutting-edge knowledge of new technologies and business models represents for the interviewed actors a major obstacle.

The main measures of identified support, essential to remove the obstacles described above, are the promoting closer interaction between universities, public research organizations and companies and the necessity to access at feasibility funds.

The main measures requested to provide innovation support services are fast track procedures for administration and evaluation of

projects.

This is significant as it demonstrates that innovative projects are often blocked by bureaucratic procedures that heavily would slow them down and did not allow adequate development such that they can quickly improve the competitiveness of the proponents.

- Abruzzo Region presents a reasonable number human resources and qualified work force both in the innovative sectors and in the seed crystal sectors.

The Region has three important universities that manage with many scientist and technological courses. Each

university, especially the scientific one has an internal department for research and development.

And over 72 research laboratories are localized in the whole territory, 55 of them belong to faculties departments of medicine, pharmacy and engineering of L'Aquila and Chieti-Pescara. There are no missing courses of infrastructures.

- Networks play a decisive role in the innovation process. The survey shows that the stakeholders interviewed are well connected, just few stakeholder have no relation with some others.

Regional Improvement Plan Podravje region Maribor Development Agency

With the work on INOLINK project, part of the INTERREG IVC program, it has become obvious, through studies of various innovation strategies (see www.inolink.eu), that the Podravje region needs a new strategic innovation framework, which would determine: Innovation stakeholders, Innovation agents, Measures for developing innovation, Ways of generating development funds

Despite the fact there are several identified agents of innovation within Podravje region, especially those financed from public funds, the region has not established a strategic council for innovation, nor has it regulated the positions among the agents themselves. As the result there are several dispersed funds, with no clear focus of regional development. Therefore Maribor development agency is preparing:

1. Regional innovation systems;
2. Operational Programme for Regional strategy of innovation 2014 – 2020;
3. Regional plan for innovation improvement. Considering the current outputs of the INOLINK project the recommendations for stakeholders as well as steps to achieve the recommendations will be delivered in next year.

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PROFILE. ALGARVE (PORTUGAL)



► The Algarve is a Portuguese region with almost 450,000 inhabitants in an area corresponding to almost five percent of the continental territory. The economy of the Algarve is based on three key sectors that are central to the region, both for the staff they employ and the generating wealth: tourism - including hotels and restaurants, construction and wholesale and retail trade. The region's economy is also characterized by limited innovation dynamics, combined with the low levels of knowledge-based compa-

nies and tolerance to risk. The region's economy particularly characteristics are also reflected at the human resources level that constitutes the labor market in the Algarve.

In this sense, and despite the last decade the proportion of the active population with Higher Education has doubled, human resources are mainly characterized by low qualifications and expertise. Despite the human resources characteristics, the region has more than 21% of its population engaged in science and technology. The importance of innovation as a factor of territories and regional economies development has been increasingly evidenced by regional actors.

In the last decade, the region has been done an effort to overcome some of the identified structural problems. This effort has taken place mostly at the regional strategic planning driven mostly by the Commission for Coordination and Development of the Algarve. However, the implementation of such strategies is highly dependent on European funds and limited resources which constrain its real implementation. Finally, it's possible to emphasize that the Algarve has an urgent need for actors and infrastructures that enable implementation of a real culture of innovation, supported by regional policies able to retain knowledge-based resources in the region. This survey was performed between July and November 2010. There were identified 24 innovation-related stakeholders of which 13 finally contributed to this survey.

- The five main sectors are tourism (hotels and restaurants), wholesale and retail trade, construction, real state, renting and business activities and transport, storage and communication.



The main results at a glance

For the other hand, stakeholders consider that the five most important innovative sectors are tourism, ICT, marine services, agro-food and agriculture and fisheries. However, the most innovative sectors considered like that according their potential to the region and the developments produced in recent years are biotechnologies, energy and tourism. In fact, the main conclusion of the matching between these points of view is that the only common sector is tourism, which is due to the fact that the Algarve has a huge tourism potential if not only connected to the Sun&Beach products. Nevertheless, there are some sectors that have been emerging as having innovative and economic potential to the region: sea-related activities, biological agri-

culture, creative industries, touristic activities related to health/welfare and ecotourism, renewable energy and agri-food industry.

The most innovative domains have, in Algarve, some lack of connection to the market. In this sense, the main issue due to this fact is that the regional economy is limited in terms of innovation dynamics and for this reason the absorption of innovation for the companies is very weak. To overcome this problem, the regional actors increasingly become involved in invest in the university-enterprise relations, reducing the gap between knowledge produced and its exploitation in the market.

In the next sections of this report it is possible to see that the main innovation barriers identified

are related with the cooperation between actors, the qualifications and creative skills of human resources, the innovation management skills and the access to information, networks, funding and international markets. These barriers constrain the performance of the regional economy and the companies' capacity to incorporate innovation in their processes. In a broad range, the regional actors have been responding to these needs with measures that promotes an entrepreneurial culture and the access to information, networks and funding. The major problem that can be consider is that the majority of these measures aren't connected to specific sectors, which can constrain its effectiveness.

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Report on good practices on regional diffusion of innovation and the mentoring plan

INOLINK has already published two main reports. The first publication "Article on Innovation Networks 2011" was a report looking at the importance of Innovation Networks in large, and how each region was performing.

Partners were asked to look at active regional networks in order to understand the synergy and dynamic that occurred between the different networks and regional actors. This exercise was important at a regional level to have a first overview of the existing Networks in each region but also to have a first look at similarities and differences according to the region.

It was clear from this first report that the regional innovation networks mix is crucial to the regional well being and underpins the way that stakeholders and organisations interact regionally. The second report "A Study on Regional Innovation Systems in the EU" was a more

in depth in understanding of how each region performed based on the socio-economic factors. While the Innovation Networks were identified through the first report, the second report attempted to gain an in-depth understanding of the reasons behind the performance of a region.

A comparative study based on regional, national and EU statistics was the starting point which was complimented with specific stakeholder interviews and questionnaires. The emphasis of this report was not only to verify the value of nation or EU available public reports on innovation but also to understand the view of the stakeholders on the performance of their own region, in particular around innovation networks.

Both reports were very valuable in helping partners to have an understanding of other regions and the context of the Good Practices they would be pre-

sented as well as having a better understanding of regional needs when wanting to learn from other regional experiences. The partners understood from the start that there would be some limitations in terms of Good Practices impact assessment, analysis and benchmarking that could be carried out.

For mentoring activities to be carried out at a later stage with a more detailed and specific knowledge exchange the partners agreed that each hosting region should present a selection of Good Practices. Based on several factors; such as the transferability of the Good Practice, the resources needed, the process or the known impact of the Good Practice, each hosting region would need to review their available Good Practices and select the most appropriate examples. After discussions and brainstorming sessions the INOLINK partners agreed a definition to present and

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classify the Good Practices. It was agreed to classify the Good Practices by the following:

- Finance
- Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)
- Network/Clusters
- Ideas Selection
- Technology Transfer
- Incubation
- Training/Qualification
- Graduate Retention
- Internationalisation
- Proposal/Partnering Support
- Cluster/Park Management
- Applied Research/Commercialisation of research

THE GOOD AND BEST PRACTICE

What is a Good practice? A Good Practice is to carry out a function or testing using only recommended or approved methods. Good practice documents may include guidelines, codes of practice, procedures manuals, regulations, and other documents. The word 'good' means that the practice is an ac-

tion of excellent results. When we talk about good practices, we are referring to those professional practices which turn out to be the best among any other practice accomplished by a professional, in order to achieve its clients expected results. Therefore, a good practice can be either a very simple action or a number of more complex and notable actions. The INTERREG IVC framework defines a good practice as: "a good practice is defined as an initiative (e.g. methodologies, projects, processes and techniques) undertaken in one of the programme's thematic priorities which has already proved successful and which has the potential to be transferred to a different geographic area. Proved successful is where the good practice has already provided tangible and measurable results in achieving a specific objective."

For the purpose of this report the definition of a good practice shall mean an innovative practice that contributes to the improved performance of each

region, usually recognised as 'best' by other peer organisations. It implies accumulating and applying knowledge about what is working and not working in different situations. This will include lessons learnt and the continuing process of learning, feedback, reflection and analysis (What works and why). The following questions should be answered by identifying the good practice:

1. The impact of the good practice on:
 - A. Policy level (legal documents: EU/national/regional/municipal and formal decision required)
 - B. Strategic level (strategic documents, incorporating the vision, mission, goals and the strategy how to obtain them on EU/national/regional/municipal level; e.g. Regional innovation strategy)
 - C. Operational level (implementation plans/measures, programmes, projects)
 - D. Organisational (innovation agents) level: what are the benefits for it/them?
 - E. Beneficiary / companies level: the impacts that should be

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achieved by transferring the good practice?

INOLINK'S STUDY VISITS in 2011

A series of study visits were planned to be carried out through the first year of the project. The aim of the first round of study visits was for each host region to present their selection of Good Practices. A total of seven study visits were organised in seven different regions: Algarve in Portugal, Essonne in France, Saarbrücken in Germany, Andalusia in Spain, West Midlands in UK, Maribor in Slovenia and Tuscany in Italy.

Each study visit aimed to present an overview of the regional economic situation so that participants would have an idea of the context. Each partner in charge of the study visit would have the opportunity to present the Innovation Networks Good Practices that they would have selected based on their own regional performance and known success at regional, national or European level. The hosting partners would have carried out an intensive pre-

paratory stage (supported by the two previous reports) and have been in close contact with the Good Practice managers in order to capture crucial information that will be used at a later stage.

Partners had to keep in mind what the receiving partners would want to know about their Good Practices in order to select them for the mentoring process. This was even more important knowing that not all Good Practices would be able to provide the same type of information and the level of success would have been particular to the environment it has been developed. Each hosting partners was asked to fill in a Good Practice Factsheet including the same information for each Good Practice.

The template emphasized on the aim, success and the engineering of the financial and human resources of the Good Practices but also the level of involvement of the stakeholders as well as any additional evaluation available. Each host was able to have this information ready for visiting partners before the study visit so

that partners could learn and read about the Good Practices they would visit beforehand. When attending study visits, Partners were able to attend study visits where project managers were asked to present their own Good Practice. Partners had the opportunity to have a general understanding of the Good practice but they also had the opportunity to discuss more in details aspect that they were interested in.

During the first round of study visits it was decided that each partner reflects the observed good practices by nominating the good practices that are most feasible to be transferred regionally. During the first months of the project and before the start of the first round of study visits, partners have been discussing in which way Good Practices presented could be assessed and evaluated so that they could be ranked. The partners rapidly realised that due to the diversity of the partnership as well as the length of the project, it would not be feasible to undergo an extensive study of the Good Practices

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presented before each study visits. Partners decided that it was more important for each partner to understand if a Good Practice was interesting enough for them to compliment, start or transfer elements to their own regional programmes. In this mind frame, partners were able to select identified Good Practices for their own region based on their regional knowledge as well as the information that was presented to them.

MENTORING STEPS

This process was completed using a checklist to aid the evaluation of good practices after each study visit. Once selection has taken place the process of mentoring will be initiated to allow for transfer of knowledge, best practices and innovations from one institution or organisation to another, and also from one region to another.

This process coordinated by MRA should assist in the specific regional and innovation connected to good practices within the Inolink Project. The mentoring process will also allow for the contribution to the develop-

ment of the entire region through creation of efficient innovation network. The second round of the study visits will be implemented at least by 6 partners. The following procedures (optional) could be implemented:

- A. The wished deepening of special good practice by at least one Partner;
- B. The availability of the good practice holder (preparedness to share the knowledge); the conditions (if apply);
- C. Successful mediation between them with the assistance of the domicile Partner.
- D. The agreement between the PPs and the good practice holder about:
 - The nature of the visit (e.g. on bilateral basis or participation in the event not customised only for the INOLINK PPs);
 - The methods of the knowledge deepening:
 - workshop
 - lecture
 - training
- E. Duration of the 2nd study visit
 - min. 1 working day;
 - max 3 working days
- F. Number of the participants per PP
 - The number should be limited

ted according to the available budget. However, min. 1 and max 5 representative (of single PP) should attend the study visit. The expected content of the study visit To be defined according to the needs of the PPs and transferability of the good practice: related to the institutional set up content related processes and likely impact related.

E. The monitoring of the 2nd round of the study visits. The monitoring should be done according to the elaborated Mentoring plan.

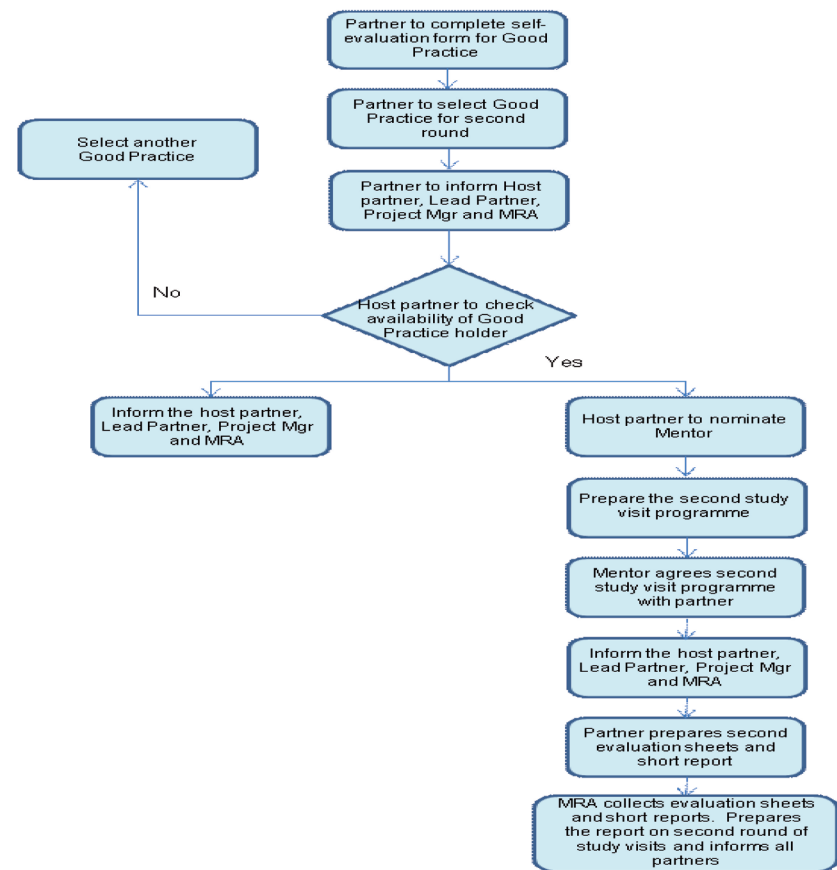
F. The reports to be produced and shared among partners on the basis of evaluation sheets.

Report on GP and Mentoring Plan This document presented the intent of the Good practice catalogue by stating the overall objectives of the project, how this report fit within the project lifetime and the mentoring activities. The Good Practice catalogue has been the collection of the good Practices that each host region For more information:

has presented during the first round of study visits. It is worth mentioning that the list of the good Practices presented is not in any way exhaustive and it is the final selection of the regional partner. We have also described the methodology used to select the good

Practices for the study visits but also the identification of the interesting good Practices that partners would like to take into consideration for the second round of the study visits and the mentoring. This guide would also permit policy makers to have

a flavour and type of good Practices to look at when they have not been involved in the study visits themselves. This document should serve as a starting point before further detailed inquiry could be made for the last stage of the INOLINK project.



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