



REGIONAL COMPETITIVENESS ATLAS

BEST PRACTICE BROCHURE
EDITION 2007



Introduction	3
Executive Summary	4
Common success factors	5-7
Enterprise creation	8-9
Employment	10-11
Innovation	12-13
Communication Networks	14-15
Infrastructure	16-17
Internationalisation	18
Contact	19



In the global environment, Europe is facing important competitiveness challenges. Other rising economic powers – from the Far East particularly – knock hard on the doors, or have made their first steps into the European market, taking over those market segments where quantity and not quality are essential.

Europe is moving away from an industry-based economy to a service oriented one, and the “knowledge-based” economy has over the last decade become the cornerstone of European economic growth.

Besides the economic competitiveness challenges, Europe is facing substantial demographic changes: the European population is ageing, considering that the renewal rate of the population remains below the replacement rate. This means that if Europe does not want to loose out in population terms, increasing migration flows towards Europe is the only solution. Nevertheless, the question of migration into the Union poses specific problems to all concerned countries, both in economic and social terms.

The picture would not be complete without speaking about the environmental and energy challenges that Europe is facing. Climate change is making itself felt all over Europe and rising energy prices pose the question of alternative energy sources, away from traditional energy channels which will either disappear in the medium term or which place a heavy environmental burden on the generations to come.

If Europe is to face all these challenges and play its role as a global player, it needs to focus its efforts on key fields of competitiveness:

- creating and fostering a business friendly environment via the development of relevant infrastructures and communication networks
- enhancing entrepreneurship, as entrepreneurs are key to wealth creation
- creating employment thanks to targeted education and lifelong learning, allowing the population to adapt to the changing working environment and enabling enterprises to rely on a skilled workforce
- promoting innovation in the broad sense, not limiting it to R&D aspects
- assisting companies in becoming global players.

The role of European regions is key to fostering economic growth and generating employment, as they are both front and centre stage.

Within the regions, Chambers are key players for the promotion of economic development and the creation of jobs, considering that they are rooted at that level, representing and assisting their members, enterprises, with the objective of increasing the competitiveness of the latter, and thus the competitiveness of the regions.

The present document is part of EUROCHAMBRES regional competitiveness atlas, which offers a snapshot of the competitiveness of European regions with regard to key economic indicators.

Its objective is to offer the reader an insight into good Chamber practices in the key competitiveness fields mentioned above, with the objectives of

- highlighting the positive implication of Chambers in the regional/local economic development process
- showing the added value of the cooperation between Chambers and other stakeholders (public authorities, enterprises, civil society...)
- stimulating the debate on how to improve existing partnership structures and how to overcome potential shortcomings

Executive Summary

The “Regional Competitiveness Atlas” is a snapshot of the economic situation of European regions in key priority fields that contribute to fostering the overall growth and job targets.

It is made up of an economic part that describes the economic background in the regions (classification according to NUTS, level 2) for selected indicators, and of a “best practices” part that highlights the positive involvement of Chambers in the regional economic development process.

The main economic indicators that have been retained for the economic part of the atlas are:

GDP, employment, education, innovation, infrastructure and internationalisation.

The present brochure is the practical part of the “Regional Competitiveness Atlas”, showing the positive involvement of Chambers in regional economic development.

The priority themes of the best practices part are in line with those of the economic part of the atlas:

Enterprise creation, employment measures (training and lifelong learning), infrastructure development, innovation, communication networks, and internationalisation.

Helping companies to go global is one of the key services that Chambers offer their members, and a separate brochure is being dedicated to the internationalisation services of Chambers. Consequently, internationalisation activities are not described in detail in the present document.

The best practices collection is the result of a consultation that EUROCHAMBRES launched with its members during the summer months of 2007. Chambers were invited to describe successful regional development projects according to a predefined template.

The projects submitted to EUROCHAMBRES were as varied as the European regional landscape. All examples were interesting, alas only a limited number could be retained for the brochure.

A set of criteria was established for selecting the best practices, in line with the overall objectives of the publication. The first criterion that was applied to the

selection of projects was the existence of partnerships with stakeholders, at regional level by preference. The focus was put on partnerships with public authorities, universities, and enterprises. The second parameter was the relevance of the project in relation to the subject areas defined.

The third parameter was of financial nature: where did the funds come from? Is there a European funding dimension or not?

Last but not least, the origin of the Chamber was considered, whereby projects from as many countries as possible were to be retained, allowing for a geographic balance.

A snapshot of the most recurrent success factors and benefits of all projects as well as of their partnership structure in the different subject areas is given prior to the detailed project description of the 10 most successful examples.

Each of the best practices is described according to the same pattern:

A general project description including the results and success factors sets the picture. Then the partnership structure is mentioned, as well as the benefits of the partnership for the implementation of the project. The fiche concludes with the financial information – how the project was financed – and contact details for further information.

If one overall conclusion is to be drawn from the project descriptions it is: One size does not fit all!

All projects have unique features given that they seek to reply to the needs of the enterprises of the regions in which they were implemented.

Two recurrent subjects that could be found across the projects were networking and communication. In all cases, networking and efficient communication contributed greatly to the projects’ success.

Even though the best practice examples may appear very specific, it is possible to take inspiration from them, and ideas for new projects may be triggered, thus contributing to the further enhancement of regional economic development.

Enterprise creation

In the case of enterprise creation, the main benefits of the different projects were enhanced entrepreneurship, a better handling of employment shortages and better training for employees and entrepreneurs-to-be.

Success factors of the projects were the capability of the project to respond to regional and local enterprise needs, strong regional political support and early involvement of the project partners.

From a management point of view, it emerged that an experienced project management team contributes greatly to the success of the project, as well as the availability of experienced facilitators/experts. The networking dimension, as well as the good organisation of the project activities, were also quoted as success factors, together with an effective promotion of the project with target groups.

Depending on whether the project was carried out with the financial assistance of the European Union Cohesion funds or not, and on the nature of the partners involved (public authorities, NGOs, enterprises, universities...) the partnerships took different forms. The Chamber was either leader or partner, and working either independently or under the supervision of public authorities. In specific cases, external experts took on determined project tasks, otherwise Chambers were project partners/leaders and service providers at the same time.

In every case, the efficient exchange of information and precise definition of project tasks were quoted as crucial success factors for the management of the project consortium. Networking also played an important role, together with the early involvement of all concerned parties.

Considering that the main beneficiaries of the activities in the "enterprise creation" chapter were enterprises, the proximity of Chambers to the local business base was an additional asset for the involvement of the Chambers in the projects.

Even though the partnerships functioned very well in most cases, some difficulties had to be overcome. Money, time, and human resources questions were quoted most frequently as hurdles to take in the project management. They

were generally overcome thanks to a good personal engagement, good contacts to ministries and enterprises. The administrative burden was cited as a permanent stumbling stone.

Employment

The projects were designed to meet the needs of the concerned regions. In general, three key objectives were set out which aimed to create job opportunities, equip employees with better skills and retain highly qualified employees in low performing regions. Besides the obvious benefits such as reductions in unemployment and a better educated workforce, the positive effects often spilled over to the region as a whole, improving its economic health.

Enhancing employees' skills and competencies laid the basis for increased competitiveness for the SMEs. Training programmes and databases were tools used to match companies with available job applicants. The most commonly cited benefits of the projects were the opportunity to obtain skilled workers or improve their qualification together with the creation of employment opportunities, in particular for young people experiencing difficulties commencing their professional careers. Moreover, the projects also encouraged self-employment, often promoting female entrepreneurship.

Linking educational institutions with enterprises created an excellent opportunity to remedy the mismatch between conventional education and businesses needs, and Chambers acted as successful intermediaries.

Common success factors for projects and partnerships





Innovation

Research and innovation are costly areas of business development. Nevertheless, they are essential activities for enterprises so as to ensure continuous growth and competitiveness. Therefore, one of the most valued benefits in engaging in innovative projects was the opportunity to pool knowledge and know-how creating scope for extensive knowledge transfer. Exchanging ideas and possible solutions to persistent problems were also cited as major benefits arising from the projects.

Companies operating in other fields than the R&D intensive sectors were encouraged to use innovation as a competitive tool in their business strategies, thus further enhancing their competitiveness and growth potential. Since access to finance is an essential issue, a number of projects were solely focused on the question of research funding. By establishing a forum where companies could meet, other indirect benefits emerged, such as networks and international exchanges of personnel.

The diverse partnership laid the basis for pioneering and experimental projects. The mix of stakeholders ranging from enterprises, research institutions to universities set out to bridge the gap between science and business. Since the initiatives often emanated from the business community rather than vice versa, the commercial relevance of the projects was ensured. By entering into partnership, the different actors had the opportunity to engage in costly, large-scale projects that would have been an impossible task for a single enterprise or institution.

Communication networks

As the title indicates, the objective of the projects in this field is to create communication networks between different stakeholders.

The benefits of the projects consist in the cooperation and exchange of information between companies and between companies and other stakeholders (universities for instance), the creation of networks, the bundling and usage of regional resources.

The success factors are closely linked to the benefits, as they determine the outcome of the project activities: the fruitful cooperation of the different

stakeholders in the creation of the networks was quoted most frequently. To that effect, efficient communication was necessary with all parties involved. The project leader had to take full responsibility and manage the different interests at stake.

Depending on the objectives of the projects, partnerships were formalized or not. In particular cases, legal entities were set up to promote the project results. In those cases, arrangements were made for the legal entities to continue their existence after the project finishes in order to achieve long term effects.

The benefits of communication network projects were the creation of networks that allow companies to exchange information, look for common solutions in case of problems, rely on expert help from other instances (like universities), and above all increase their competitiveness.

For the project examples received in this section, no problems with the management of the partnership were reported.

Internationalisation

Entering into foreign markets requires thorough market research and awareness about the prevailing business climate. This can be a considerable challenge for larger companies and even more so for SMEs, which are further disadvantaged due to their limited financial resources and time constraints. Through the internationalisation projects, SMEs with little or no knowledge of international business had the opportunity to enhance their export potential.

Innovation and access to markets are a pre-condition for internationalisation. Thus, the projects often had a dual aim: improving innovativeness and facilitating the entry into foreign markets which ultimately was expected to lead to an overall improvement of the SMEs competitiveness.

Networking is an important part of the initial internationalisation process. Thus, with the help of databases, potential business opportunities and partners abroad could be identified, and enterprises matched successfully. The openness of the European partners and the mutual interest to enter into

partnership were emphasised as key assets. In subsequent steps, analysis and recommendations were customised to take into account the particular needs of the individual SMEs.

A number of projects involved the recruitment of qualified consultants to assist in the first stages of the internationalisation process. However, a large amount of effort was also directed towards equipping the entrepreneurs with the sufficient skills to independently expand the business abroad. This training also provided a forum for the exchange of advice, experiences and problem solving.

Although the partnerships were differently structured according to their aims and objectives, the multinational dimension was always the cornerstone of the projects. The partnerships presented an opportunity for all actors to build and strengthen relationships across borders, creating better prospects for businesses. International networks were established which benefited the companies both in the short and long run.

Infrastructure

In the case of infrastructure projects, there were direct benefits for the region, and for its enterprises. Thanks to the development of infrastructure, the region's attractiveness was enhanced, leading to the creation of new enterprises. Enterprises, from an overall perspective benefited from better traffic connections and faster transportation, entailing a better economic development potential. Among the main success factors was the belief in the importance of the project by all project partners and their concerted action. The availability of scientific data to underpin the project's objectives and potential benefits was also highly relevant. The proximity to the target groups was a determining factor for the success of the projects, as well as the clear focus on the target groups' needs and interests.

The partnership structure of the different projects varied, and was closely linked to the project's objectives and the legal background. In all cases, the partnership structure was target oriented, whereby each partner fulfilled a specific role. In some cases, separate legal entities were set up for the management of the project, in other cases, one partner took the lead of the consortium.

The principal benefit of the partnerships was better project results, as the necessary critical mass could be achieved.

In general, partnerships did not experience management problems. Efficient communication with all partners was quoted to be a crucial factor for the success of the partnership. In some cases, the availability of visible results was also put forward as a criterion for the direct and successful involvement of businesses.



Enterprise creation

SATURNO

Promoting and developing entrepreneurship in Lombardia through a networking system

in collaboration with:

**Camera di commercio
di Milano**

Project description

The general objective of the programme is to strengthen regional development by setting up very high quality services in training, information and assistance through a Grant Scheme and a Voucher Counselling Scheme for:

- The dissemination of business culture
- The promotion of entrepreneurship (self-employment)
- The support to new companies
- The promotion of generational transfer
- The promotion of support measures
- Promotion and research, monitoring and administration

The target groups of the programme are newly set-up SMEs, would-be-entrepreneurs and self employed, and family-owned business in the phase generational change

Saturno has created a coordinated network between entrepreneurs and advisors in the sphere of technical and general business management.

During the first two years of implementation, 6290 hours of orientation services were given to 1915 would-be-entrepreneurs; 33149 hours of assistance, mentoring, advice were delivered to 1925 new enterprises (0-2 years of existence); and 11457 hours of mentoring service were given to 416 companies in the generational transfer process. A Council on entrepreneurship composed by 42 external institutional actors, like universities, entrepreneurs associations, and local bodies was created, and a network of 90 public and private selected centres for the delivery of services for entrepreneurship was set up in the region.

The key success factor of the project was the networking dimension between the actors involved, which covered the whole territory of the Region, allowing for a widespread delivery of the services foreseen.

Formaper, in partnership with 11 Lombardian Chambers of Commerce and the Association of the Lombardian Chambers of Commerce, is the Project Management Unit.

The project consortium operated according to a functional model integrating a vertical approach based on the implementation of different actions foreseen by Saturno and a horizontal- territorial approach organised per provinces for the delivery of services. Part of the services to be delivered was entrusted to third parties (private and public bodies), the other part was taken care of by the consortium members.

The added value of the partnership was that the whole Region could be covered through an integrated system linking institutions, mobilizing stakeholders, selecting operators and reaching beneficiaries, to deliver services for entrepreneurship development in the most efficient way.

Funding: "Saturno" is financed by the ESF and the regional government of Lombardy. The total budget for the first edition (2004-2006) was 23.326.250 €. The funds came from the ESF/measure D3 of P.O.R. Lombardy Region. Besides the public funding, the programme benefited from private co-financing (representing 3.428 937 €).

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Note: Formaper is a special agency of Milano Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Its objective is to enhance entrepreneurship through orientation, information, training, research and assistance services.

PAEM

Programa de apoyo empresarial a mujeres

in collaboration with:

Cámaras

Project description

The main objective of the Women Business' Support Programme (PAEM) is to help women find employment, provide them with information on the new technologies available, and to promote self-employment and business activity.

The services provided by the PAEM Programme are:

- Business information, advice and guidance,
- Brief but high-technological content training courses,
- Development of strategies for sensitizing and encouraging women for creating their own company,
- Support for the creation and consolidation of Europewide and nationwide networks.

For the implementation of the project, a series of offices in the local Chambers of Commerce and Industry were set up. These departments also provide women with information and advice on the creation and consolidation of their companies. The PAEM Programme also has an online support Web site, www.e-empresarias.net, which in less than 48 hours, provides an immediate and personal answer to any question derived from business management.

Results obtained:

For the period 2000-2007:

68 220 women made use of the PAEM offices
84 085 information requests were treated
13 078 companies were created.
3 339 jobs were generated.
29 578 users are registered on the website.
67 414 online enquiries were solved.

The success factor of the project was the fact that women could get personalised advice and support at regional level.

The Spanish Women Institute, which depends on the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, proposed in 1996 a cooperation to the Council of Spanish Chambers of Commerce for the support to women entrepreneurs. Support services were to be implemented by the local Chambers of Commerce in the whole Spanish territory.

The partnership between the Ministry and the Chambers benefited the Chambers and the Ministry. The Ministry had a large service network at its disposal for the implementation of support services to female entrepreneurs at local level, and the Chambers could actively contribute to the regional economic development via the creation of new enterprises and jobs among the female population.

Funding: The total budget of the project was: 1.703.007,59 € of which 59% were financed by the National Woman Institute (ESF funding) and 41% by Chambers of Commerce and the National Chamber (Consejo Superior).

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Alternanza Scuola - Lavoro

"School-work alternance"

in collaboration with:

**Unioncamere
Emilia-Romagna**

The project aims to narrow the gap between education and enterprises' skills needs. High school students, besides their ordinary curricula, get a first working experience in companies as a means of complementing and supplementing their traditional education. These traineeships are recognised as part of the students' curricula. Businesses are stimulated to take an active role in training better-motivated, educated and enterprising students who will soon become workforce or new entrepreneurs. The project also seeks to influence the education system by helping schools to innovate their teaching methods.

The project comprises different activities ranging from the provision of grants to financing on-the-job experiences based on a standard previously agreed with the Regional education authority, training for student tutors, monitoring the effectiveness of traineeships and tools, to assistance concerning job orientation and entrepreneurship. The final objective is to increase the effectiveness and quality of education.

Very positive results have been obtained so far: more than 70% of the students and more than 85% of their tutors are satisfied with the methodology; 25% of students are recruited by the company where the traineeship took place. Over 80% of the companies taking part in the programme declare their readiness to recruit these youngsters in case of business expansion.

The project would not be successful without the co-operation with school authorities, as well as with the regional government.

Unioncamere Emilia-Romagna, together with the 9 Chambers of Commerce of the region, co-operates with the "Ufficio scolastico regionale" (the regional department of the Ministry of Education), according to a common protocol.

Thanks to the cooperation with the education system and the regional government, it was possible to pool resources and expertise for a better implementation of the project.

Initial co-operation difficulties with the regional government were overcome through the setup of a working group which set the standards for the methodology. At a later stage, a protocol was signed with the regional government thanks to which actions supporting traineeships and on the job training are included in students' curricula.

The total project budget for 2006 – 07 is about 290.000 €. The funds are drawn from the "Fondo di perequazione" (adjustment fund), a national Chambers of Commerce fund.

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Carpathian Business Academy

in collaboration with:

Bokik

The project was initiated by the Association of Carpathian Chambers, the aim of which is to enhance the cooperation of the regional chambers operating in the Carpathian-basin, strengthening business relationships between entrepreneurs and cross border economic development.

Against a background of lacking business knowledge among regional entrepreneurs, the Carpathian Business Academy seeks to convey entrepreneurial and business knowledge to entrepreneurs, develop networking opportunities for them, generate cross border business activities and develop the economy in micro-areas.

The academy consisted of five courses and one final event. Three successful business trainings took place in Miskolc and two in Slovakia and Ukraine. A wide range of subjects were tackled during the trainings like international trade, trade policy of the European Union, questions related to customs inside and outside the European Union, international transport, business plan drafting, total quality management, human resources, entrepreneurial networks and clusters, employment in the European Union, vocational training, searching for business partners in web pages, and useful databases.

The trainings and the final conference were well attended, and the project gave way to a series of long term plans: the establishment of a common database about Hungarian entrepreneurs in the Carpathian basin, the development of educational centres in cross border areas, the foundation of "Call for Tenders Offices" to help entrepreneurs gain access to EU funding.

The provision of tailor-made courses, meeting the needs of the entrepreneurs, was one of the success factors of the project. The fact that the entrepreneurs could network, exchange ideas, experiences and give advice to each other also greatly contributed to the success.

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County was the project leader, and the partners were the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Sub-Carpathia (Ukraine), the Enterprise Development Association of Nagykapos (Slovakia), and ASIMCOV – the Association of SMEs in Kovászna County (Transylvania/Romania).

Thanks to the partnership, contacts between the partners could be deepened in key interest areas. The organisations were in a position to offer more partnerships to their member companies, thus contributing to the economic development of the latter.

The total budget of the five courses and the final conference was 15.340.000 HUF. The Hungarian Ministry of Economy and Transport gave its financial support to the academy.

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Economic Intelligence

in collaboration with:

**Chambre Regionale
de Commerce et Industrie
Poitou-Charentes**

and:

**Chambre Regionale
de Commerce et Industrie
Franche-Comté**

Economic Intelligence (EI) is a set of concepts, methods and tools behind the intelligence cycle actions, supporting decision making within the framework of an established organisational strategy. Market, technology, legal, macroeconomic and other issues affecting the organisation operation are covered by EI.

The regional Chambers of Franche-Comté and Poitou-Charentes developed economic intelligence projects for their enterprise members. While the Chamber of Poitou-Charentes offers direct and free access to all economic intelligence data available via a specialized web portal and an electronic newsletter, the CRCI Franche-Comté offers individual diagnosis and coaching in the field of business intelligence.

The services offered target the position of the enterprise in its respective activity segment (market, technology, customers...) and the tools used within the company to manage its information flows. The final objective is to adapt the company's in house information tools to the company's overall strategy.

The web portal (www.ie-poitou-charentes.fr) was launched in March 2007. Since then, it has recorded on average some 30 000 hits per month. The newsletter is sent to 1 000 qualified contacts. During the first implementation phase (Jan 06 – Jun 07) in Franche-Comté, 45 enterprises were integrated into the programme, and 60 individual diagnoses/coachings were done.

In both cases, the added value of the project is the proximity to enterprises, and the response to their real needs. In the case of the webportal, the key factors are accessibility, a strong regional political support, and early partners involvement. The individual diagnoses/coachings are a simple and pragmatic reply to the needs of firms: specialists offer a customized reply; there is a unique contact point for enterprises; common communication campaigns were implemented; private service providers were involved in the enterprise diagnoses/coachings, thus avoiding competition with the private sector.

CRCI Poitou-Charentes is a partner to the project consortium. It acts in cooperation with the regional government delegation of the Ministry of Economy and Finance and of the Ministry of Regional Affairs. The regional confederation of business is also involved, together with the university. The project consortium is organised in 3 operational committees and 1 restricted committee.

CRCI Franche-Comté is project leader and service provider at the same time. Its partners are local Chambers, public authorities and enterprises (through development agencies, technology transfer centers, competitiveness clusters, workers and employers organisations, different state departments...).

The partnership allowed all types of knowledge to be mobilized in Poitou-Charentes, from the outset of the project. It has allowed time saving & cost efficiency in searching info and contacts resources.

For CRCI Franche-Comté, the project partnership is a pragmatic expression of State's policy on Economic Intelligence. The simple structure and use of a determined network of experts also add value to the partnership and the appreciation of the service by SMEs.

CRCI Poitou-Charentes funded the project with own means principally. A small part was covered by governmental funds, and university students contributed with working time.

The State (DRIRE), the European Union, and CRCI Franche-Comté, have invested 600.000 € over an 18 months period to run the first implementation phase. The ERDF contributed about 11% to the overall budget, the "Direction Régionale de l'Industrie, de la Recherche et de l'Environnement " (DRIRE) of Franche-Comté about 44%.

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Wetsus

in collaboration with:

**Friesland Kamer
van Koophandel**

Wetsus, centre for sustainable water technology, is a research institute for the development of sustainable water treatment technologies. The main added value lies in the multidisciplinary use of biotechnology and separation technology.

Cooperation is Wetsus' main characteristic. Commercial parties involved in Wetsus define and guide the research program to ensure the commercial relevance of the developments. The actual research is performed by Wetsus, under the scientific responsibility of the participating universities. This long term cooperation between know-how institutes and the commercial world fills the gap between top research and successful, relevant innovations.

The creation of the Wetsus institute in the Northern Netherlands region was also an important development to help in countering a number of socio-economic problems such as high unemployment and lack of a knowledge infrastructure. The creation generated 60 new jobs at the institute (of which 40 PhD), lead to the involvement of 45 companies (of which 40 % SMEs) and 8 institutes. Eighteen patents have so far been submitted, and two spin-off companies created.

A very important result is the transmission of Wetsus to the status of Technological Top Institute for Water Technology by the Dutch government as part of their innovation programme. This gives Wetsus a structural position for the next 5 years and makes the ambition of becoming the European Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Water Technology in the near future feasible.

The main success factor is that the initiative came from the business community of Friesland itself, was then supported by enthusiastic politicians of the local and regional authorities and became financially feasible through the European structural funds and the regional economic policy of the national government.

Friesland Chamber was the initiator, involved in financing the preparation and completing the implementation of the set-up. Today the Chamber is still involved as a strategic advisor, especially with regard in bringing business and government institutes together. Other partners of the project consortium are the municipality of Leeuwarden, the Province of Friesland, the Ministry of Economic Affairs, many enterprises, the northern regional development agency and universities.

The well balanced partnership made it possible to open the right doors concerning funding and helped in promoting/obtaining the necessary support with a broad range of stakeholders.

Wetsus' total budget for the period 2003-2008 is € 12.869.900 (including European financing). For the period 2008-2012, the total budget amounts to € 70.000.000 (to transform Wetsus to a Technological Top Institute, including 50% financing from the Dutch government)

In its initial phase, the project benefited from the financial support of the Structural Funds (ERDF), of the municipality of Leeuwarden, the Province of Friesland, the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the universities involved and the participating companies.

Currently the breakdown in shares is the following: European funds 25%, national, regional and local public funds 25%, technical universities 25%, company participants 25%. From 2008 the shares will be: national public funds 50%, universities 25% and private companies 25%.

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Communication networks

foodRegio Lübeck

in collaboration with:

IHK Lübek

Lübeck region is among the leading food processing regions in Germany. Besides its legendary marzipan, there are a lot of other large food processing companies in Lübeck or nearby (e.g. H. & J. Brügggen, Campell's Soup Germany, Hawesta).

Lübeck Chamber of Commerce and Industry, together with the major companies, the University of Applied Sciences, Lübeck Business Development Corp., Ostholstein Business Development Corp. have initiated the project foodRegio to further strengthen the food processing industry in the region.

The first objective of the project is to streamline production processes and develop innovative products.

Besides, joint activities are undertaken in the areas of goods distribution and personnel qualification.

Thanks to its advantageous location and skilled human resources, foodRegio offers an ideal platform for food processing companies wanting to enter the German market.

The involvement of universities and institutions in the region has had beneficial effects on the project implementation, and so has the creation of a network with all stakeholders concerned. The cooperation and exchange between the participating companies has generated added value for them, strengthening the food industries in the region.

The success factor of this project is the participation of the major food processing plant, engineering companies and the research institutes of the Lübeck Region. While they did not cooperate in the past, they have realised now that they can develop new products or optimize the logistics chain together. The companies have created a network for companies in the same industrial sector, they are working together in one project. This project has strengthened the location / region.

The partners have set up an association and every partner contributes financially to the implementation of the project. The added value of the partnership can be found at different levels. First of all the participating companies strengthen their competitiveness thanks to the cooperation in the network. They solve problems together with other companies and/or with the assistance of the universities.

The project is financed up to 70% through the "German Joint Agreement on Improving Regional Economic Structures" (Gemeinschaftsaufgabe, GA) a national public fund. The remaining 30% are covered by the association, i.e. all involved partners.

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NEXOPYME

Information and Communication

in collaboration with:

Cámaras

NEXOPYME seeks to improve companies' competitiveness and to strengthen the corporate system through the introduction of ICT in the business processes of SMEs, micro-SMEs and self-employed workers.

Within the programme, two types of actions are developed:

- 1) Customized actions - the Nexopyme Services Pack: for one year, companies are provided with a wide range of special and customized on-line contents and services. The companies receive basic computer hard and software and are trained in their usage. Specialised advisors can also assist the participating companies in defining the "e-commerce" needs/suitability, the recommendable computer security settings, and the advanced use of office automation tools and built-in business management systems.
- 2) Global Actions: They relate to the overall promotion of the programme with targeted companies. The Global Actions also include horizontal activities, such as the development and promotion of the Nexopyme website, www.nexopyme.com.

Since its launch, around 7.000 SMEs and self-employed workers all over Spain (in ERDF Objective 1 regions) joined the programme. The main success factors of the programme are the quality of the services provided and the advantageous financial conditions for participating companies.

The Spanish Chambers and the regional governments have signed an agreement for the development of the Nexopyme programme. The added value of the partnership is that the common target can be pursued in the most efficient way. The regional governments have contributed financially to the project and have supported it in the regions involved. The Chambers have developed and implemented the different project activities.

Thanks to the good cooperation between regional authorities and Chambers, the project obtained excellent visibility and results. It is foreseen to last until December 2008.

The budget of the NEXOPYME programme amounts to almost 45 million €. It is co-financed by the European Union's Structural Funds. The contribution of the ERDF to the programme amounts to 50% for Objective 2 regions, and 70% for Objective 1 regions. The Spanish Chambers of Commerce, the Autonomous Governments of the participating regions and other national public institutions have agreed on a national co-financing system that covers most of the remaining costs. The participating companies contribute to the NEXOPYME programme with the last part of financing.

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A22 – A31 – closing the gap

in collaboration with:

**Industrie- und
Handelskammer für
Ostfriesland und Papenburg**

and:

**Oldenburgische Industrie-
und Handelskammer**

Easy access and good connections are essential elements for the economic development of enterprises and regions. Northern German Chambers joined forces with all regional stakeholders, including private households, to improve the infrastructure of the region and facilitate access and transit.

The objective of the projects was to raise funds in order to start the construction of the missing highway stretches well in advance of the officially planned schedules.

In the case of the A22, the new motorway is the logical consequence and continuation of the A20 that starts in Stettin (Poland) and ends in Lübeck (Germany). Together, both highways increase the potential exchanges between the regions they cross and ease the pressure on other highways that may collapse in the near future due to very heavy traffic.

In the case of the A31 motorway gap, companies in the region around Emden had to take into account high transportation costs and time constraints for their connections with the rest of the country and the Netherlands. The initiative was welcome on the Dutch side also.

In both cases, the Chambers, in cooperation with all other parties concerned raised the funds that were necessary to start the construction. For the A22, more than 600 companies, finance institutes, NGOs, and private households, were persuaded in less than a year to sponsor 750.000 €. The communes and the land Lower Saxony sponsored 750.000 € each also, and consequently the project could be initiated.

For the A31, federal and state governments, districts, regions, cities and about 1.500 German and Dutch entrepreneurs and private persons worked together to collect the money in order to “close the gap”. The total costs of the A31 were about 23,4 million €. The ERDF contributed with approximately 21 %, the Dutch public authorities with 26 %, the German counties with 39 % and the other partners with 14 %.

The success factor for both cases was that all partners involved firmly believed in the importance of the project, and the fact that they all defended the project and acted in concert. For the A31, a scientific report on transport, partly financed by the Chambers in Emden and Osnabrück, which projected very high benefits from the completion of the motorway, underpinned the relevance of the initiative.

The projects took the form of PPPs, whereby the Chambers took a leading role and acted as link between public authorities on the one hand and private enterprises on the other.

The benefits of the partnership are clear. Besides reaching the critical mass in financial terms by joining forces, all stakeholders acted in concert to get the necessary permissions from national authorities and finally complete the construction.

It is also to be noted that the esteem by the public for the communes and the Länder involved increased, given that the latter kept their promises and acted in the interest of the businesses and the population of the region.

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Shaping the regional development policy and creating conditions and instruments for the establishment of zones (clusters) of high product specialisation in the Wielkopolska region.

in collaboration with:

**Wielkopolska IZBA
Przemysłowo-Handlowa
W Poznaniu**

With the huge economic development potential of Wielkopolska region in mind, the regional Chamber decided to start the project.

The overall objective is to strengthen the innovation capacity and competitiveness level of the region thanks to the creation of specialised clusters. On the one hand, closer links are to be created between universities and enterprises, on the other, specialized networks and B2B partnerships are to be generated and enhanced.

In order to achieve its objectives, the Chamber develops a methodology for defining the product specialisation of a cluster, its localisation, and management. It further foresees trainings for companies concerning the creation and development of cooperative relations. Last but not least, the Chamber intends to compile all information relating to the form, legal background, methodology and strategic functions of clusters in the region.

Once the methodology is finalised, enterprises will be in the position to use it. This will be one of major benefits of the project. Thanks to the trainings, the analytical and organizational abilities of the participating companies will be enhanced, and, last but not least, the workforce of the beneficiary companies will be able to increase their knowledge resources and personal development.

The target group consists of enterprises (all kinds of enterprises – from micro-enterprises to large ones, in all sectors), institutions representing particular sectors, and Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Wielkopolska Chamber of Commerce and Industry is the project leader. For the specific project tasks it works in partnership with the Regional Development Agency in Konin, Poznan University of Technology (Corporate Management faculty), La Sapienza University in Rome, Italy, and the Polish – German Office Angelika Menze Ltd.

The partnership has not been formalized. Each of the partners brings in its specific knowledge for the project implementation.

The total budget is 173.000 €. The project is implemented with the assistance of the European Union's structural funds – in this case the ERDF – which covers part of the financing. The national Treasury covers the other part.

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Internationalisation:

Helping companies to go global is one of the key services that Chambers offer their members, and a separate brochure is being dedicated to the internationalisation services of Chambers. Consequently, internationalisation activities are not described in detail in the present document.

The Internationalisation brochure is being produced by the Council of Spanish Chambers of Commerce and Industry together with EUROCHAMBRES.

INTERNATIONALISATION SERVICES

Survey on the activities in the companies' internationalisation carried out by the European Chambers of Commerce

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