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**district**

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june 2008

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editorial

# Innovative pathways into the knowledge-driven economy

**Claudio Martini**  
President of Tuscany Region

Ever since its creation, the European Union Cohesion Policy has aimed to promote economic and social cohesion throughout the territory of Europe. To the present day, regions are still unequally armed to face globalisation and the new impacts of the global market. The opening up of the European market at the global scale is bringing in more competition, more restructuring and more competitive relocation of productive activities. New growth and opportunities are inevitably accompanied by new economic, social and territorial cleavages. This means that inequalities are likely to increase, as globalisation bears the seeds of heightened territorial inequality resulting by the enhanced competition. The cohesion policy should on one side aim at rebalancing the reciprocal position of European regions in the internal market but also - at the same time - try to improve the overall position of the European economy in front of the single global market.

Given the above challenges, the start of the new political framework for the European Union in 2007 has been accompanied by an increasing attention to the Lisbon Strategy and its innovation related objectives. The 2010 deadline is fast approaching and results aren't quite satisfactory so far. Therefore, some seven years after the launch of the Lisbon strategy, the new regional policy for 2007-2013 is at last taking into account the extremely urgent need to boost European competitiveness, particularly by encouraging innovation, entrepreneurship and the growth of the knowledge economy.

While communicating its renewed focus on the Lisbon agenda the Commission has affirmed that a great potential for growth and innovation lies in the exchange between actors at the local scale but also between regions at the European scale.

The re-affirmed importance of innovation and research in the new regional policy by the Commission indicates that regions and cities are expected to provide significant contributions to the modernisation of economy and the achievement of the Lisbon objectives in the enlarged Europe.

Programmes like the former INTERREG and the current Objective 3 try to foster approaches to innovation that can be shared across borders, among regions and cities. Local and regional economic, social and political players are networked and mobilised by such initiatives - they can then throw a glance beyond their borders. By exchanging experiences and ideas with each other, regions can learn most effective practices and policies from all over Europe, and thereby become themselves more efficient and effective in their decision-making procedures.

The DISTRICT Regional Framework Operation - together with a number of other projects funded by the Structural Funds in the framework of regional development policies - has concretely tried to foster innovation, research and competitiveness of the partner regions. The project has brought together four partner regions from the four corners of Europe (Tuscany, West Midlands, Saxony and Västra

Götaland) - regions that have shared their analysis and diagnosis of the economic prospects and accordingly formulated a joint way ahead. This was practically implemented through a number of interregional actions and networks - taking the form of interregional subprojects - that have contributed and fostered the innovation and knowledge-based development paradigms in these regions.

This final newsletter is an epitome of a three-years long experience that has involved and transformed four regions, some fifty local institutions and a significant number of people belonging to regional and local bodies. These people have learned to look, listen, talk and eventually better understand each other. They have shared their concerns and jointly imagined and designed their innovative pathways into the knowledge-driven economy. It is our and their hope that this collective experience can contribute to turning the challenge of globalization into a shared winning opportunity.



## Innovation Challenges for Established and Embryonic Clusters in the West Midlands

As part of the final dissemination event for DISTRICT – the West Midlands Secretariat ran an evening seminar on the innovation challenges for established and embryonic clusters in the West Midlands at the West Midlands in Europe Offices in Brussels. Clusters and Networks, more generally, being one of the three thematic areas for the DISTRICT project.

Since 2001, the West Midlands Regional Economic Strategy has adopted a cluster-based approach as one of the delivery vehicles for economic growth in line with policy at national level. In the UK, the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR, previously known as the DTI) defines clusters as concentrations of competing, collaborating and interdependent companies and institutions connected by a system of market and non-market links. This implies a focus on supply chain linkages and also specialist infrastructure in terms of finance, research, services, and labour market.

In 2005, the West Midlands regional Innovation and Technology Council identified five priority themes which cut across ten business clusters that offered potential for significant growth through innovation. The five priority themes for innovation are, health and medical technologies; energy; advanced materials and nanotechnology; digital media (and ICT); and transport technologies. Screen Media and Medical Technologies, as the two embryonic clusters, are the smallest, and the cluster mechanism provides a means

for focusing on well targeted opportunities for development, and new and innovative routes to market.

Also interestingly, as the concentration of jobs in the interiors and lifestyle cluster is higher in the West Midlands than elsewhere in the UK and with the region also boasting a fast-growing service sector, and the largest concentration of professional firms outside London - it was a focus on this more traditional cluster and the other highlighted innovative clusters that formed the main platform for the seminar to discuss the impact and effect that clustering had.

Glynis Whiting the Director at West Midlands in Europe (WMIE), welcomed the delegates to WMIE's Brussels Office and encouraged delegates to network informally before the event was opened by Massimo Bressan, DISTRICT Lead Partner for the Tuscany Region. Massimo outlined the remit for the DISTRICT project and some of the resulting spin out activities, such as two recent Leonardo sponsored visits. The next speaker Nils Gabrielsson from the consultancy firm inno Scandinavia, who had recently carried out an independent evaluation of DISTRICT, shared the Good Practices from Innovation Networks that the project had identified.

Mike Barton, the Regional Development Agency (RDA) cluster manager for interiors and lifestyle stressed the importance that the West Midlands region placed on clusters in its new economic strategy and outlined the impact of clusters and networks on the interiors and lifestyle cluster - using the INNOTRAD project (a sub project within DISTRICT) to illustrate his point.

He then introduced Ian Rea

from Lariot. Lariot's is a leather saddlery business classed as a Small or Medium Enterprise (SME). Ian explained that Lariot's had been recruited to the INNOTRAD project, along with a number of other SMEs from the active cluster in Walsall. He had found the cluster vital to his business and participation in the

Wolverhampton University led INNOTRAD project beneficial.

Coventry University has recently opened its Serious Games Institute and David Wortley, the Director of the Institute, explained that the University was pursuing the development and use of 3D virtual worlds for business and

social applications due to the potential impact on SMEs and the regions' economy.

Building on this innovative and interesting area Per Backlund, Senior Lecturer and Researcher, University of Skövde presented a "Serious Games: a DISTRICT Sub Project Case Study". The industry is using technology to identify affordable mechanisms to provide vital training to, amongst others, rescue and emergency services.

John Otter, European Project Manager, UK Trade and Investment informed the audience that the Commission

would be funding two additional events through the West Midlands Secretariat; a Study Tour of Poland in May and one of the West Midlands region in June 2008 – as well as highlighting the importance of study visits.



## Sharing Regional Excellence: Successful International DISTRICT Conference at ICC Dresden - Saxony

Facing the global economic challenge Europe is setting up innovative measures to foster the infrastructure of technological resources. Projects under the frame of Interreg IIIC like DISTRICT gave a strong contribution to transform these objectives.

In order to demonstrate how regions could benefit from technological oriented projects with European partners the DISTRICT conference Saxony "Sharing Regional Excellence" dated 29 May 2008 at the International Congress Center Dresden in Germany has been organized by the Saxony Economic Development Corporation. Numerous Best-Practices from interregional cooperation have been presented.

Attended by 132 participations from 13 countries the conference has been a great success for the DISTRICT project. Representatives of national and international economic development agencies, chambers of industry and commerce, enterprises, universities, research and transfer institutes have participated from Sweden, the UK, Italy, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Romania, Estonia, Slovenia and others.

Experts from the European Commissions like Olivier Baudelet, Dorothee Fischer from INTERREG IIIC Joint Technical Secretariat Valencia and Andrea Forti from the Committee of the European Regions have introduced the new policies and frame programs of the Commission.

The lecture of Dr. Axel Rhode, Carl Zeiss SMT AG pointed out innovative strategies by his presentation on "Mastering Technology by Cooperation". Zeiss has been a leading example to demonstrate a European network project consortium that has developed a specific lithographic high technology for the chip production. Klaus Friedrich from the textile enterprise C.F. Weber has estimated his profitable achievements through the cross-border "EuroTextilRegion" particularly by exchanging capacities of knowledge and technology.

The Swedish textile research institute SWEREA from Mölndal, represented by Ronald Pederson could awake the public opinion while identifying future-oriented niche markets for technical textiles in the scopes of automobile, medical technology, sports' textiles and other functional textiles as a result of the "InTechTex" project that has been effected in cooperation with the Saxon Textile Research Institute, Chemnitz.

Enrico Venturini from Tecnotessile in Italy emphasized that eminently the small textile enterprises should specialize in the latest technologies being able to counter the pressure of the textile market competition. "Coventry University Enterprises" represented by Steve Shorthouse, one of the West Midlands DISTRICT partners, gave a summary of well-proven successful models of effective technology transfer processes from universities to companies. In capitalization of the "TechnologyMall" project, led by the Saxony Alliance of Mechanical Engineering (VEMAS) Frank Treppe has drawn conclusions for future networking among several branches in order to profit from interdisciplinary knowledge. "A transparency of the international project partners' industrial infrastructure and

market position should be communicated from the early stage of a project cooperation" said Mr. Treppe. In particular, the marketing of the Saxony location of the machine constructing industry as well as the establishment of ties with different markets by means of the British partners have successfully turned out by "TechnologyMall".

The domains of environment and renewable energies have been set up for an open discussion in a workshop that was led by Dr. Frank Scholwin from BiomasseForschungsZentrum. The termination and highlight of the conference has been the DISTRICT Best-Practice Innovation DISTRICT project of Component 3 awarded by the Saxony Economic Development Corporation to the project InTechTex led by the Saxon Textile Research Institute Chemnitz. The three years lasting project DISTRICT with its 11 subprojects have finalized, the conference was designed as well to establish advanced interregional partnerships in the frame of new EU-projects discussed at the conference workshops and at the Joint European Workshop with the international partners on 30th May 2008. Saxony could strengthen his role by DISTRICT in a strong partnership, not at least to enhance his business and technology network infrastructure.

For more information:  
<http://fotos.saxony.de/sharing2008>  
[www.sharing2008.saxony.com](http://www.sharing2008.saxony.com)

## A first account of a useful project

The idea of building the DISTRICT project was developed in 2004 with the aim of improving the regional innovation strategies of the four partner regions (Tuscany, West Midlands, Saxony and Western Sweden) through a close cooperation of their local actors. The partnership reflects an important characteristic of the project, which is the diversity of each socio-economic context. The aim was to bring together regions, which could represent an ideal continuum from manufacturing-based to knowledge-based regional economies.

The involvement of the local partners started with a public call for proposal in March 2006. The call launched the invitation to submit proposals for the implementation of subprojects in the framework of the three thematic components. The management of DISTRICT organized several meetings before the launch of the call. The potential partners participated in the meeting thereby learning the aims, tools and formal constraints of the subprojects.

This practice has been particularly important – especially considering the short time available to the networks to operate, i.e. until the end of 2007 – and should possibly develop in the future into a two stage type of procedure: a preparatory or project building stage followed by an implementation stage. The preparatory activities provided a solid background for a fast accomplishment of the formal requirements and by June 2006 the Steering Committee of DISTRICT was able to approve the list of the 11 funded networks (in less than three months from the start of the process) with a total

of 50 public bodies belonging to the four participating regions. The available budget was 3,5 millions euro, while the request from the submitted proposals exceeded this figure by 2 millions euro. Even if the main challenge for the networks was first of all the lack of time (maximum 18 months due to the close end of the 2000-2006 programming period) more than a reduced budget.

The cooperation among the four regions and the 39 participants involved in the project has promoted a consistent flow of information and good practices, the joint development of methodologies and tools to plan and implement regional and local strategies, strategic planning and pilot projects, drafting measures to strengthen connections between SMEs and knowledge, promoting technology-linked institutions and services.

The concern of the partner regions for their industrial background has been a focal point which supported the consensus on the operation's objectives and has helped in delivering valuable outcomes. A key strength of DISTRICT is the concrete nature of the policy challenges addressed by this project. The adhesion of the regional partners with the fundamental mission of the project has been clear and strong. Each of the partner regions has a solid commitment to innovation and research and a viable academic background.

DISTRICT provides quite a few examples of the specific added value, which an RFO can provide to regional innovation strategies. Where an RFO can make the difference – or simply turn useful – is the micro-approach to establish a frame of relationships between similar actors working in different regional innovation systems.

Next pages contain the summaries of case studies of good practices from the eleven DISTRICT subprojects, whose activities terminated by the end of 2007. The case studies analyse the project objectives and activities, the strategic and economic context, innovation, technology transfer, innovative clusters and networkings, seed venture, spin-offs and spin-outs, and partnership in terms of innovative products. Results and impacts are also highlighted together with the strong cooperation among partners.

The documentation has been drawn from reports, studies, analyses and interviews produced by each subproject involved in the operation. This overview of the project's outcome aims to contribute to the capitalisation and dissemination of the results achieved by the DISTRICT Operation. We sincerely hope that our results might be helpful to a wider arena and we remind all the readers to check the DISTRICT website for more documents, tools and information.

## DISTRICT subprojects. Innovative cases and stories: a brief overview

### CLINIC Cooperation Linking Interactive Networks and Innovative Clusters

**Theme 2:** Connecting clusters and business networks to innovation, within the global context.

**Tackled issue:** Internationalizing Industrial Clusters.

**Partners:** Black Country Chamber of Commerce (WM) – Lead Partner  
RKW Saxony (SA)  
PIN - University of Florence (RT)  
Birmingham Business School (WM)

**Objectives:** To maximise learning and achieve significant improvements in clusters policy and to support the global competitiveness of enterprises in the participating regions.

**Outputs and results:** The CLINIC project implemented trans-regional cooperation primarily through 10 case studies of successful clusters-related initiatives like the Glass cluster between Stourbridge and Frauenau. Some 20 companies were trained in export-related skills. The project - focused on how public intervention can support clusters development - experienced cluster-to-cluster networking among partners as well as Turkey (Ankara) and

Hungary (Budapest).

**Total budget:** 277.100 €  
**ERDF Contribution:** 156.950 €  
**Duration of the project:** May 2006 to November 2007

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### ETI-NET Innovation perspectives for industrial cluster and network initiatives

**Theme 2:** Connecting clusters and business networks to innovation, within the global context.

**Tackled issue:** Economic and Technological Intelligence Techniques for Clusters Sustainable Development.

**Partners:** RKW Saxony (SA) – Lead partner  
IMREG GmbH (SA)  
Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry (WM)  
Coventry University Enterprises Ltd (WM)

**Objectives:** To enhance future-oriented regional clusters and network policies and to support innovation activities of the companies in linkages and clusters initiatives.

**Outputs and results:** The ETI-NET project developed a methodology to help regions in defining cluster policies and

strategies, and economic and technological intelligence techniques for SMEs in industrial clusters. Foresight studies based on existing scenarios and validated by international experts were also carried out.

**Total budget:** 349.550 €  
**ERDF Contribution:** 234.412,50 €  
**Duration of the project:** July 2006 to November 2007

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### FORECO Foreseeing Competitiveness

**Theme 2:** Connecting clusters and business networks to innovation, within the global context.

**Tackled issue:** Territorial Development & Competitive Perspectives of Local Economic Systems (Foresight Analysis).

**Partners:** Provincia di Pisa (RT) – Lead partner  
Coventry University (WM)  
Espira Growth Centre (VG)  
Sviluppo Italia Toscana (RT)

**Objectives:** To improve the competence of local public governments by simulating territorial policies through planning processes and experimentation in medium to long term (15-20 years) perspective visions, in order to promote actions to identify and exploit competitive advantages of the territory.

**Outputs and results:** The FORECO project delivered a foresight study on the Pisa territorial system of leather industry, integrated by four scenarios (energy, climate change, population longevity and information society) with implications for the leather district, and developed a

questionnaire-based tool for exploring SMEs within this sector. The activity involved a large number of organisations, leading to the creation of a network of more than 60 stakeholders.

**Total budget:** 385.000 €  
**ERDF Contribution:** 192.500 €  
**Duration of the project:** July 2006 to November 2007

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### INNOTRAD Innovating Tradition

**Theme 2:** Connecting clusters and business networks to innovation, within the global context.

**Tackled issue:** Innovating Traditional Manufacturing Industry (Textile, Clothes & Leather).

**Partners:** University of Wolverhampton (WM) – Lead partner  
Birmingham City University (WM)  
PIN - University of Florence (RT)  
Coventry City Council Clothing Centre (WM)

**Objectives:** To enhance innovation in SME's by identifying how to best support new regional and transnational business networks and clusters, and introducing technology as a clustering support within the traditional leather and textile sectors.

**Outputs and results:** The INNOTRAD project run two pilot initiatives bringing technology-related innovation to clusters of SME's in the textile and leather sectors. The leather pilot project focused on pressure measurement technology and involved five Walsall saddle-making companies in a

technology transfer programme with the Centre of Engineering Excellence of Wolverhampton. In the textile pilot project, the textile designers of eleven SMEs were introduced to high-tech production equipment, digital print and computerized systems during five workshops on technology and innovation in product design process.

**Total budget:** 247.000 €  
**ERDF Contribution:** 123.500 €  
**Duration of the project:** July 2006 to September 2007

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### INTECHTEX European Regional Strategy for Innovation in Technical Textiles

**Theme 3:** SMEs innovation projects with universities, research and transfer centres.

**Tackled issue:** Technical Textile Strategies for SMEs.

**Partners:** STFI - Saxon Textile Research Institute (SA) – Lead partner  
IFP Research AB (VG)  
Coventry City Council (WM)  
Sviluppo Italia Toscana (RT)  
INNtEx - Innovation Netzwerk Textil e.V. (SA)

**Objectives:** The InTechTex project developed different strategies for new technologies, products and markets in the technical textile sector through the collaboration among SMEs, technology centres, research and development centres and universities.

**Outputs and results:** 550 entries of companies, research

and development institutions and other organisations relevant to technical textiles, 1760 application areas, 656 business index entries and 824 Nace code entries are listed in the multilingual database available on-line for public consultation on the project website. The data collection is still continuing as more and more businesses in technical textiles are being identified.

**Total budget:** 382.100 €  
**ERDF Contribution:** 239.500 €  
**Duration of the project:** June 2006 to November 2007

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### PICTURE Promoting innovative clusters through urban regeneration

**Theme 2:** Connecting clusters and business networks to innovation, within the global context.

**Tackled issue:** Urban Strategic Planning for Transition from Manufacturing to the Knowledge Economy.

**Partners:** IRIS - Istituto Ricerche e Interventi Sociali (RT) – Lead partner  
Dipartimento di Scienze Economiche, Università degli Studi di Firenze (RT)  
University of Birmingham (WM)  
Dipartimento di Scienza della Politica e Sociologia, Università degli Studi di Firenze (RT)  
Urban SpA - Consorzio Trasformazioni Urbane (RT)

**Objectives:** To support local governments in the experimentation of shared forms of urban analysis and planning and in developing

proposals of intervention.

**Outputs and results:** The PICTURE project operated in the framework of the Prato City Council Strategic Planning. It realised studies and analysis and presented proposals dealing with the urban economic, social and urban spheres. The project identified and analyzed sectors to promote innovative clusters in the city of Prato. PICTURE shared and discussed its results with the City Council that will use them for future city planning).

**Total budget:** 264.000 €  
**ERDF Contribution:** 132.000 €  
**Duration of the project:** September 2006 – October 2007

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## RICE Regional Innovation for a Competitive Europe

**Theme 3:** SMEs innovation projects with universities, research and transfer centres.

**Tackled issue:** New Non-food Markets for Agriculture.

**Partners:** Warwickshire County Council (WM) – Lead partner  
University of Warwick (WM)  
Sächsisches Textilforschungsinstitut (SA)  
Fraunhofer-Institut für Keramische Technologien und Systeme (SA)  
AGROVÄST Livsmedel AB (VG)

**Objectives:** To develop - starting from the growing need for product and market diversification of European land-based industries and from growing environmental concerns - new non-food markets for plant based

materials and products in three application areas: novel materials (bio ceramics), health and well-being.

**Outputs and results:** The RICE project carried out regional analyses concerning renewable materials, thereby identifying 18 case studies of supply chains of existing products and creating an online database with 4000 engineering companies and research and development institutions for enhancing transregional cooperation activities.

**Total budget:** 367.784 €  
**ERDF Contribution:** 211.692 €  
**Duration of the project:** June 2006 to November 2007

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## SEARCH Scanning and evaluating activities for research commercialization handovers

**Theme 4:** Innovation financial engineering, seed, venture capital, start-up and spin-off.  
**Tackled issue:** Developments Tools to Commercialize University Research.

**Partners:** CIP Professional Services Ltd (VG) – Lead partner  
Coventry University Enterprises Ltd (WM)  
PIN-University of Florence (RT)  
GUFI - Research and Innovation Services, Göteborg University (VG)  
CIT - Chalmers Institute for Commercial R&D (VG)  
SAXEED TU Chemnitz (SA)

**Objectives:** To support the

development of inventions born within universities until they can be handed over to incubators and spin-offs thereby shortening the gap between university research and venture creation and increase the number of knowledge-based companies.

**Outputs and results:** The SEARCH project fostered the commercialization of early-stage inventions by establishing relations with researchers and developing a database of some 200 key contacts and cases. The project identified 25 cases for marketing, licensing and spin-out – and achieved the commercialization of 8 projects.

**Total budget:** 491.350 €  
**ERDF Contribution:** 267.512 €  
**Duration of the project:** July 2006 to November 2007

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## SERIOUS GAMES Serious Games Network and Business Cluster

**Theme 3:** SMEs innovation projects with universities, research and transfer centres.

**Tackled issue:** Business Simulations to Train Young Graduates and Future Entrepreneurs.

**Partners:** University of Skövde (VG) – Lead partner  
Coventry University (WM)

**Objectives:** To create serious games clusters and networks in order to bring developers and potential users together. A serious game is a software application developed through game technology and game design principles but with a primary purpose which is other

than pure entertainment.

**Outputs and results:** The prototype of SIDH fire fighter game, produced by the project in cooperation with the Swedish Rescue Services Agency (SRSA), was presented to 50 potential users and also resulted in a spin-off company (Sevenatus AB) with a high-tech and scientific profile. The project also developed a Graduates Enterprise Game, a business simulation and role-playing game which has been designed to foster an awareness of key business concept such as sales, marketing and finance to recent University graduates and creators of new EU enterprises.

**Total budget:** 185.000 €  
**ERDF Contribution:** 92.500 €  
**Duration of the project:** July 2006 to September 2007

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## STIM-SME Stimulation and facilitation of new business creation from industrial SMEs

**Theme 4:** Innovation financial engineering, seed, venture capital, start-up and spin-off.

**Tackled issue:** Supporting Tools for Spin-offs from Industrial SMEs.

**Partners:** Espira Tillväxtcenter AB, (VG) – Lead partner  
IVF Industriforskning och Utveckling AB (VG)  
Espira Inkubator AB (VG)  
CIEL Sweden AB (VG)  
Innovatum AB (VG)  
Gothia Science Park AB (VG)  
Coventry University Enterprise Ltd (WM)  
Consorzio Pisa Ricerche (RT)

Technologie Centrum Chemnitz (SA)

**Objectives:** To foster new business creation in the industrial sector by developing methods and tools to identify and validate high-potential spin-out projects in industrial SMEs and to support their development into new business ventures.

**Outputs and results:** The STIM-SME project developed a diagnostic kit to evaluate the spin-out potential of ideas and a spin-out manual to help companies and other players to better manage the spin-out process. Out of 350 companies scanned in the four partner regions, 7 cases have been validated by the diagnostic toolkit and 2 of them went through the spin-out process.

**Total budget:** 431.400 €  
**ERDF Contribution:** 224.200 €  
**Duration of the project:** June 2006 to November 2007

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## TECHNOLOGYMALL Development of a virtual mall for active technology marketing and international business development

**Theme 3:** SMEs innovation projects with universities, research and transfer centres.

**Tackled issue:** Commercial Portal for Mechanical Engineering.

**Partners:** VEMAS (SA) – Lead partner  
Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry (WM)

**Objectives:** To encourage the transfer of technologies and knowledge from universities and research and development institutes to SMEs and provide industries with a tool for direct marketing of technology products and services; moreover to foster the internationalisation of companies and clusters.

**Outputs and results:** The TechnologyMall project implemented a multilingual virtual technology platform for research and development providers and small-medium enterprises (SMEs) with almost 500 companies, more than 160 innovations, 92 research providers and over 2000 business contacts. This internet-based virtual trade fair allows companies to follow developments, find new technologies and products, establish new sales networks and to market their latest innovative developments to new customers not only within DISTRICT regions

**Total budget:** 260.000 €  
**ERDF Contribution:** 177.500 €  
**Duration of the project:** July 2006 to September 2007

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## **DISTRICT Final Conference "Innovation pathways and knowledge economy": some remarks on a successful experience**

The DISTRICT Final Conference, that took place on the 16th April 2008 at the Espace Monte Paschi in Brussels, represented one of the final important steps to the project closure and the first occasion to share the RFO results and outputs.

The event - organised by Tuscany Region and DISTRICT Secretariat - has been opened by Claudio Martini, President of the Tuscany Region and Marco Romagnoli, Mayor of Prato, together with Michele Pasca-Raymondo, deputy director general of DG Regional Policy European Commission and a representative of Interreg III C Managing Authority.

Speakers also included Kypros Kyrianiou Interreg III C, 'European Territorial Cooperation' unit; Bertil Törsäter, CEO Regional Development, Regions Västra Götaland; Helena Papazacharopoulou, III C South JTS Coordinator; Albino Caporale, DG Economic Development, Tuscany Region; UKTI, Alexander Eickelpasch, DIW Berlin and Jon Bloomfield, European Team, Advantage West Midlands.

The Conference, with three sessions focused on the project thematic components and a final round table, has been successful both for the important indications on good practice and on the political point of view, and also in term of participation, such as nearly 100 persons attended the meeting.

In this occasion, some video interviews and reportages documenting significant samples of innovative excellence from the DISTRICT partner regions have been shown and distributed to the participants together with the DISTRICT publication.

Further information on the Conference, including speakers' presentations and the publication, are available on the DISTRICT web site: [www.district-rfo.eu](http://www.district-rfo.eu)

The full audio podcast and sample videos of the event are available on the DISTRICT Media Lab: [www.district-rfo.eu/podcast/index.php](http://www.district-rfo.eu/podcast/index.php).

## **DISTRICT Study Tour in West Midlands "Design for the Future"**

11-13th June 2008, Coventry

The three days visit focused on regeneration projects within the West Midlands as Fort Dunlop and Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter.

In the evening on the first day of the study tour there was the opportunity to visit the recently opened Coventry RICOH Arena (home to Coventry City Football Club), which was an unused gas site, during the Clusters and Networks dissemination event dinner.

On the Thursday 12th June, the DISTRICT delegates visited the CUE Technology Park and the Serious Games Institute. Moreover the 2nd day incorporated a tour of the Wedgwood visitor centre and the option to see innovation in ceramics.

For more information please visit: <http://www.district-rfo.eu/events.php>

## **DISTRICT Study Visit in Lower Silesia, Poland**

12th - 14th May 2008, Wroclaw

The West Midlands Secretariat organized 2 days study visit in Wroclaw, involving a DISTRICT Delegation that had the chance to visit the region, meet the new partner in DISTRICT + proposal and present the DISTRICT experiences and results.

The delegation visited in particular the Wroclaw Technology Park that aims to create conditions for the use of scientific and industrial potential of Wroclaw and the region and to stimulate the advanced technologies industry. At the Wroclaw Technology Park the partners attended to a seminar illustrating other West Midlands ERFD projects in the Region, the polish cluster network (in particular the Nutri BioMed cluster and the ABC Energy Cluster), the Enterprise Europe Network that, launched in 2008 by the European Commission, combines and builds on the former Innovation Relay Centres and Euro Info Centres. Its key aims are to assist SME's to identify commercial partners in global markets, develop new products, access new markets and provide general advise of IP, EU legislation, raise awareness facilitate business cooperation and identify funding opportunities. And finally the EIT + Project, European Institute of Technology a new flagship research university for excellence in higher education, research and innovation and is based on the example of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and its combination of world class education, research, and deep engagement in effective innovation processes.

On the second day the delegation moved to Wroclaw Centre for Technology Transfer: a self-financing, non-profit organisation/ department of Wroclaw University of Technology. Its mission is "to enhance competitive advantage and effectiveness through innovations", and its goal is to stimulate innovative entrepreneurship and the creation of new innovation-based enterprises.