

Connecting the territory

*through the innovation **network***



2012



At the Andalusian Technology Park in Málaga (Spain)

REPRESENTATIVES FROM 8 EU COUNTRIES PARTICIPATE IN THE FINAL CONFERENCE OF INTERREG IVC PROJECT INOLINK

More than 40 delegates participate in the conference, during which 25 bilateral meetings were held between the project partners and various science parks and technology centres in Andalusia, to explore possibilities of cooperation in innovation

Representatives of 10 organizations from 8 European Union countries have participated in the final conference of the European project Inolink, organized by the Andalusian Technology Network (RETA) and held in the Technological Park of Andalusia (PTA).

During the conference, in which more than 40 representatives, have analyzed the main activities carried out during the three-year-long project. Inolink has among its main objectives to increase the reach of regional innovation policies in different European areas, through better links between the actors in innovation systems.

To this end, there have been exchanges of experiences between European regions participating in the initiative, as well as among the actors who have been part of Inolink.



Participants in the Inolink Final Conference

Specifically, during the project, a total of 18 study visits have taken place, where 13 good practices in innovation have been identified. As a result, it should be noted that several of these good practices are already being implemented by various project partners.

Furthermore to the result of Inolink, new contacts have been established between the project partners and other innovation players, which have materialized in new partnerships. In this regard it is noteworthy that the Science and Technology Park of Cordoba, Rabanales 21 and Coventry University Enterprises, through its technology center, the Serious Games Institute, signed an agreement to conduct joint research, development and innovation and facilitate investment initiatives in the field of Information Technology and Communication (ICT).

The agreement was signed by the CEO Rabanales 21, Juan Ramon Cuadros, and Frank Mills, president and CEO of Coventry University Enterprises, accompanied by General Director of RETA, Daniel González-Bootello. According to Mr. Cuadros, this agreement reflects "the commitment of the Science and Technology Park of Cordoba with the innovative sectors with economic potential related to digital entertainment and multimedia content".

The day was completed with bilateral meetings between members of Inolink partners and science parks and technology centres belonging to RETA. A total of 25 meetings were held, with the objective of studying possibilities of collaborative innovation.



RAPIV AND CUE LTD ARE CONTINUING THE EFFORTS OF PREPARATION FOR THE TRANSFER OF TWO GOOD PRACTICES

At the Final Conference in Malaga, on 25th October 2012, Dr. Radev and Ms. Tsin presented the steps that are made within INOLINK project for preparation of the transfer of the good practices. Memorandum of Understanding is signed between RAPIV (Dr. Radev) and CUE Ltd. (Mr. Mills) for the transfer of the good practices of Coventry University Technology Park to the North East Region of Bulgaria.

Good Practices explained

According to INTERREG, “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.”

Transfer of the Good Practice of CUE Ltd for the establishment of a technology park in Bulgaria



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Memorandum of Understanding is signed between RAPIV (Dr. Radev) and CUE Ltd. (Mr. Mills) for the transfer of the good practices of Coventry University Technology Park to the North East Region of Bulgaria.

RAPIV has developed Regional Improvement plan within INOLINK project, including a preliminary concept for the establishment of a Black Sea Technology Park and an Action plan for the realization of the transfer. The Regional Improvement plan will be presented to the local authorities and regional stakeholders in order to be included in the regional strategic documents.

Transfer of the model of the Institute for Applied Entrepreneurship to the activities of Varna Free University

On 27th November Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar", represented by prof. Anna Nedyalkova, Rector and Coventry University Enterprises (CUE Ltd.), represented by Mr. Frank Mills, Chairman, signed a Memorandum of Cooperation during a visit of VFU team.

The cooperation between the two educational institutions also provides for the working out of an adapted model and an action plan to transfer CUE's experience in teaching entrepreneurship to VFU. The objective is Coventry University's experience and good practices to be adopted and implemented in a real environment – in the entrepreneurial groups at VFU.



The model for transfer of CUE's experience is realized within the international academy "Knowledge and Innovation", which was established at VFU in the current academic year.

SPECIAL SECTION: MARIBOR DEVELOPMENT AGENCY ORGANISED THE FIRST PUBLIC PRESENTATION OF REGIONAL INNOVATION SYSTEM OF PODRAVJE REGION (SLOVENIA)

“Podravje, the region of innovation”

Maribor Development Agency organised the first public presentation of Regional Innovation System of Podravje region (Slovenia), prepared within INOLINK project and in collaboration with key stakeholders of the innovation ecosystem of the region on 23rd October 2012. It is the first regional innovation strategy, prepared on the NUTS III level in Slovenia. It represents the key strategic document for the economic breakthrough of the region, based on innovation policy.

The preparation of the RIS Podravje was inspired by the strategies, prepared by other INOLINK partners and would not be prepared without the opportunity given by interregional cooperation programme (INTERREG IVC).

Regional policy has the main role also in Strategy Europa 2020, especially in achieving “smart growth” and within the framework initiative “Innovation Union”. Regional policy is the essential tool for the applied innovations in the period 2014+: *“Looking for fields of smart specialization is basically an entrepreneurial process, where the creation of new knowledge and technologies focuses on the fields that could be promising for regional specialization. Public policies play the central role by encouraging entrepreneurs in private and public sectors, especially in universities and public research institutes, to look for and develop products and marketing niches. During this innovation process, public policies can help them with mutual coordination and networking.”*



- **Regional development position**

In Slovenia and Podravje, the onset of the global crisis in 2008 almost annihilated the progress of the economic and social development of the past decade which was already hampered due to deviations and abuse of privatization in the 90s. The crisis revealed many structural deficiencies, especially that the GDP growth in

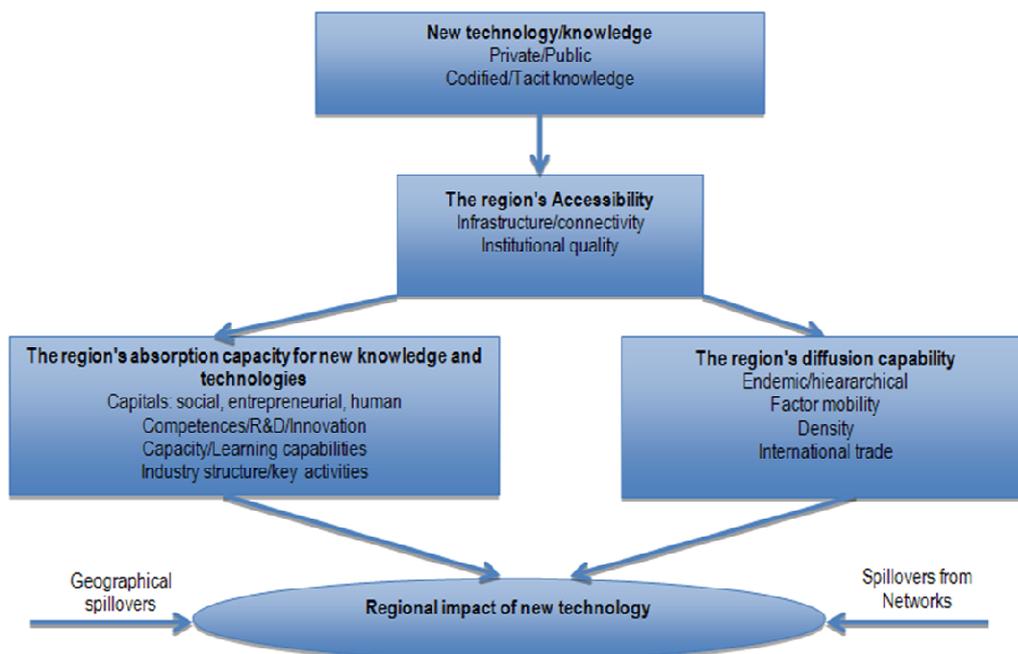
Slovenia and Podravje depends too much on low-tech industry and traditional services that limit the competitiveness of the economy. In toughened conditions, the country and the region have to rapidly focus on reaching high cohesiveness of the society and raising the competitiveness of the economy, while consolidating and restructuring public finances. To do this, they have to build on creativity and knowledge – two basic values and assets of Slovenia and Podravje necessary for successful development in the future.

Podravje is relatively weak in the field of investing into research and development, despite the presence of the University of Maribor. This tells us a lot about the R&D weakness of the economy. From 42 million EUR invested into research and development activity in Podravje, 55% was invested by the government, 35.4% by companies, 6.0% of resources came from abroad and higher education provided only 2.7% of resources.

- **Model of RIS Podravje**

According to Wintjes R. and Hollanders H. (2011) the development position of a region and its attitude towards technology and knowledge is largely dependent on three factors. These three factors are also the key dimensions of their conceptual model of innovation (see Figure 1), which was the basis for the brainstorming and discussion activities during the RIS Podravje 2020 preparation.

Figure1: Overview of the regional impact of New Technology and Knowledge



Source: Wintjes R. in Hollanders H., 2011.

- **The vision**

The economic results of the companies of Podravje and high unemployment rate have clearly stressed the need for raising competitiveness of the economy of Podravje, including strengthening entrepreneurial and innovative abilities. An important part of the effort will therefore have to go to upgrading companies and sectors in the productive fields that have fallen behind, with the help of concurrent and pragmatic programmes. At the same time, it is necessary to accelerate further development of the best functioning sectors.

Important parts of the regional innovation system Podravje are also *public education and research institutions*, predominantly the University of Maribor. In the future, the University of Maribor can contribute a lot more to the design of the high-tech environment in Podravje, as it creates knowledge and can attract the capital and high-tech companies, as well as train a competent work force. A requirement for this is of course its significantly bigger integration into the economic development of the region. For the development of innovative society, *good cooperation of the economy with the research sphere* is important, as well as *the ability of companies to absorb new technologies*. Investments of the private sector into research increase the openness of companies to new technologies, which enables a positive flow of knowledge and technologies from the public sector to the private sector in the long run. The research includes researchers from the economy and public research institutions, which highlights the collaboration of the economy with the academic sphere.

Besides encouraging the innovative activity of already existing companies, it's perhaps even more important to encourage start-up of new companies on the basis of excellent knowledge and technologies of research organisations, as well as new innovative companies of entrepreneurial individuals from the entire Podravje region.

Beside the development of its own existing and new companies, it's also important for Podravje that it attracts foreign companies and investors that would bring new programmes and jobs to the region, as well as are based on technologically more complex and knowledge-based business processes.

- **The vision of RIS Podravje 2020**

By 2020, Podravje will become a region recognizable by:

1. Investing in innovation
2. Encouraging the creation of new innovative companies and growth of already existing companies
3. Encouraging the creation of excellent knowledge and technologies and their commercialization in practice and
4. Offering stimulating environment for work and life of innovative individuals.

When developing Podravje, we rely on the knowledge and potential of the people we will support, so they can express their innovation potential and contribute to a more successful development of the region and the well-being of all its inhabitants.

In the table 1 the priorities, measures and programmes of RIS Podravje 2020 are presented.

Table 1: Priorities, measures and programmes

Priority	Measure	Programme
I. Incentive packages for strengthening innovation abilities and growth of the already existing companies in Podravje	Promoting private investments into research and development	<i>Programme for increasing the number of researchers and developers in the economy</i>
		<i>Programme of the guarantee scheme and revolving credits for the investments into R&D infrastructure and technological equipment</i>
	Incentives for strengthening innovation capability of companies	<i>The programme of innovation vouchers meant for strengthening innovation capabilities of companies</i>
		<i>Programme for co-funding planning joint R&D activities of companies</i>
		<i>Programme for strengthening the connection of the Podravje economy with knowledge institutions based on excellence and searching for fields of specialisation</i>
	Promoting internationalisation (global diffusion) of companies	<i>Programme for supporting companies investing into internationalisation activities</i>
		<i>Programme for co-funding joint market activities of companies</i>
<i>Programme for encouraging participation in international research</i>		
II. Incentive package for creating start-up companies with growth potential in Podravje	Incentives for strengthening the innovation ecosystem for knowledge commercialization in the university environment	<i>Programme for encouraging the functioning of the university innovation ecosystem and establishing its support infrastructure</i>
		<i>Programme for promotional events, trainings and consultations for researchers, students and other innovative individuals, with the goal of developing start-up companies within the university innovation ecosystem</i>
	Encouragements for strengthening the start-up of new innovative companies in Podravje	<i>Programme for promotional events and trainings, as well as consultation services for the companies incubated within the regional network incubator</i>
		<i>Programme for the development of the infrastructure of the regional network incubator in Podravje</i>
	Incentives for the scheme of financial subsidies for the set-up and initial work of companies	<i>Programme of initial subsidies for the set-up of the company on a regional level</i>
III. An incentive package for attracting technologically advanced investments to Podravje	Attracting foreign investments to Podravje	<i>Programme of co-funding the work of qualified management in order to attract foreign investments</i>

When preparing the regional innovation strategy for the economical development of Podravje the actions and programs were prepared based on three priorities and estimated the necessary amount of public co-funding:

- An incentive package for building innovation abilities and growth of existing companies in Podravje (amount of public funds: 22,355,400 EUR)
- An incentive package for building start-up companies with growth potential in Podravje (amount of public funds: 39,654,600 EUR) and
- An incentive package for attracting technologically advanced investments to Podravje (amount of public funds: 1,409,800 EUR).

All three priority sets with actions and programmes amount to the total value of 63,419,800 EUR.

- **Implementation model of RIS**

The CEO of the Maribor Development Agency names the *Strategic Board for the implementation of RIS Podravje 2014-2020* as the strategic organ of the region. Strategic Board RIS Podravje (hereinafter referred to as the Strategic Board) is an advisory body of the Regional Development Council and the Region Council. It directs the implementation of the RIS Podravje as the developmental part of Podravje 2020 ("RRP" – Regional development plan); of Podravje region of development 2014-2020). The task of the Strategic Board is to monitor the functioning of RIS – whether it achieves measurable goals, results and effects.

The strategic board prepares the reviews and recommendations, as well as gives its consent in the agreement for regional development, namely in the part that concerns regional innovation and the first developmental priority: Innovation as the basis for development.

The agreement concerning the development of the region is a bilateral implementing act, with which the regional development program is implemented by determining funding sources and key regional and sectional projects for overcoming obstacles in development. Projects for achieving regional development specialisation have priority in the inclusion in the agreement. The Strategic Board mostly checks the consistency of the proposed projects with RIS Podravje and their contribution to achieving the goals of RIS Podravje.

COVENTRY UNIVERSITY AND RABANALES 21 SIGN AGREEMENT TO COLLABORATE IN ICT SECTOR PROJECTS

The Serious Games Institute, specialized mobile application technology, video games and 3D environments, learns in-situ about the Science and Technology Park of Cordoba

The Science and Technology Park of Cordoba, Rabanales 21 and Coventry University, through its technology center Serious Games Institute, signed an agreement to conduct joint research, development and innovation initiatives and facilitate investment in the sector of Information Technology and Communication (ICT).

The agreement was signed by the CEO of Rabanales 21, Juan Ramon Cuadros, and Frank Mills, president and CEO of Coventry University Enterprises, Ltd. At the event, they stressed the importance that an agreement like this has in its potentialities towards enabling a cooperation in the multimedia fields that can bring new and interesting projects and products, as well as new means of commercialization and broaden the reach of both entities to new markets.



The Serious Games Institute is a world reference in the development of mobile technology for interactive applications, serious games, educational applications, and immersive 3D environments. The English center currently has offices in Johannesburg, Singapore and Dallas. The agreement signed during the final conference of project INOLINK brings closer the possibility to have a presence of the Institute inside the Rabanales 21 park.

The agreement is intended to facilitate cooperative efforts for mutual benefit and support services and technical assistance for both parties in research, development and knowledge transfer to companies or other entities located in their respective areas of influence.

In addition, the two institutions will help each other in identifying grants, subsidies, programs and other innovation initiatives that may be of interest to both parties or companies located in their areas of influence.

The agreement signed by Rabanales 21 and Coventry University, led by the Andalusian Technology Network (RETA), is part of the exchange of experiences phase of the European project INOLINK. This project aims to increase the scope of regional innovation policies in different parts of Europe, as well as detection and exchange of best practices in innovation.



CONCLUSION: INOLINK MAIN RESULTS

INOLINK is a European project that involves entities from eight European Countries: Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Rumania, Slovenia, Spain and United Kingdom, led by the Andalusian Technology Network (RETA).

The INOLINK project was approved in the framework of the INTERREG IVC Programme, co-financed by the European Union through FEDER Funds, with a budget of 1.97 million Euros.

The INOLINK overall objective is to increase the reach of regional innovation policies through a better connection of actors within the regional innovation systems, especially on those located in the most peripheral and backward areas. This contributes to increase the number of regional actors involved in innovation activities and to a more balanced economic and technological development throughout the EU territory.

To achieve this objective, the INOLINK project has carried out the exchange of experiences in the setting up and functioning of public structures and networks, which support innovation and the participation in R&D cooperation and knowledge transfer of actors in peripheral areas and less innovative sectors, within the regional innovation system.

During these three years, all the activities implemented have been addressed to achieve the main objectives and the expected results planned.

The results in the framework of the project have been highly satisfactory. Some of the results are the following:

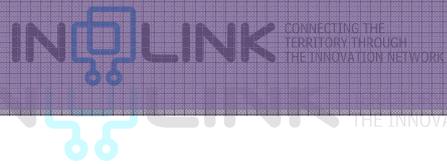
- Two Memoranda of Understanding signed between RAPIV and COVENTRY and among COVENTRY and RABANALES 21 Technology Park.
- 3 studies on innovation have been published
- 13 study visits have been made to identify good practices.
- Transfer of the good practices identified in the framework of the project by 4 of the partners.
- The elaboration of the first regional innovation strategy in Slovenia

Also, the results foreseen in the Application Form have been achieved:

- Improved knowledge of people responsible for innovation policies at regional level on needs for innovation services in their peripheral areas, and on instruments and policies to respond to such needs.
- Increased awareness among actors in the regional innovation systems on the offer and demand for innovation services from the other actors in the system and on the potential for cooperation and collaboration.
- Improved competences of staff from public institutions and other organizations with a public mission on tools, methods and policies for the regional diffusion of innovation, entrepreneurship and technology.

The project has had an important impact in the partners regions where the relationship with the final beneficiaries has been increased through the dissemination of the project activities and the higher contact with them and with the final beneficiaries.

The successful results, the collaboration and the positive and pleasant atmosphere between the partners have encouraged them to capitalize the results of the project in future project calls in order to advance in the objective of increasing the reach of regional innovation policies through a better connection of actors within the regional innovation systems.



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