

VERITE: Kick-off meeting

On 29 and 30 November 2001 took place in Thessaloniki, Greece, the kick-off meeting of the new thematic network of Innovating Regions 'VERITE'. Scope of the meeting was to discuss and validate the focus, organisation, activities, and co-operation of the network. The acronym stands for **V**irtual **E**nvironment for **R**egional **I**nnovation **T**Echnologies, and the activities of the network during 2002 and 2003 will be supported by the Innovation Programme (5th FP) of the European Commission (DG Enterprise).

Focus

The aim of VERITE is to provide a platform for all European regions, which are interested in regional innovation strategies, policies and schemes to exchange experience and get access to good practice on the management of innovation.

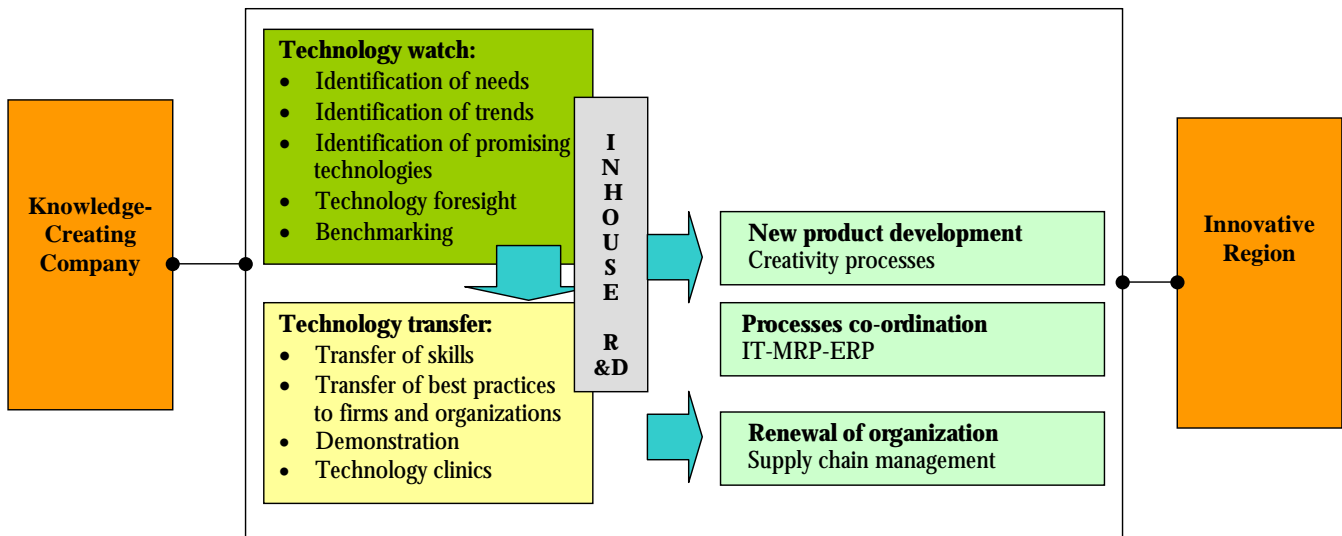
Focus of the network is the common interest of its members about the methods, techniques, tools, and technologies, which allow various organisations (companies, technology and consulting intermediaries) to create and manage effectively innovations. Working assumption is that this technical capacity to innovate is linked to fundamental knowledge processes, such as:

- *Technology watch*: Benchmarking, economic intelligence, foresight
- *Technology transfer*: Licensing, skills transfer, technology clinics
- *Knowledge-based product development*: Creativity, product development teams, testing of prototypes, product life-cycle management
- *Co-ordination of production processes*: Material requirements planning, enterprise resource planning, business process reengineering
- *Knowledge sharing*: Networking, improvement of supply-chains, stock management, outsourcing.

These knowledge-creating activities extend beyond the organisational limits of the company involving many actors of the respective regional system of innovation, such as R&D institutions, technology transfer organisations, innovation finance institutions, and innovative companies. Thus, the capacity of a company to innovate is based on a knowledge interaction between its internal and external environment: the internal knowledge capability of personnel to create, assimilate and transfer knowledge to products, and the regional capability for original R&D, learning, and technology co-operation.

VERITE is a discussion and dissemination forum. On the one side of the discussion is the innovative (knowledge-creating) company and on the other side the innovative (learning, intelligent) region. In the middle, are the fundamental knowledge processes and the techniques or technologies to manage innovation (Benchmarking, Technology clinics, New product development, MRP-ERP, Supply chain management).

Figure 1. VERITE discussion and dissemination focus



Organisation

The organisation of VERITE is made according the concept of ‘smart community’. These are communities of people sharing a common interest or goal; a virtual environment supports the community’s activity, facilitating the communication and interaction among members and allowing the socialisation of knowledge and spread of technical know-how inside the community.

The people and organisations of the network and the participants to the activities of the network compose the community of VERITE. The network partners will meet in 7 major workshops and conferences to discuss the content and implementation of specific innovation management techniques (IMTs). The community of VERITE may include also the providers of IMTs as well as any region or institution wishing to share its effort, discuss and disseminate innovation management tools.

A portal of European IMT providers, a database of articles and reports on IMTs, and an internet-based discussion group make the virtual environment supporting the activities of the VERITE community. This virtual community uses the Internet in order to support three functions: communication and discussion between members (discussion group), improvement of knowledge about IMTs (article’s database), and the application of IMTs (portal of providers).

Based on the above real-virtual structure, the activities of VERITE include: (1) a kick-off meeting in Thessaloniki to finalise the characteristics of the network, the schedule of its activities and forthcoming events, the detailed operational plan, and the Steering Committee, (2) a workshop in Berlin to start the construction of the three IT applications composing the virtual community of VERITE (discussion group, database, portal of European IMT providers), and

(3) five conferences on selected IMTs to present the state-of-the-art, review the literature, and discuss offline and online applications, IT platforms, and articles suitable for the database. These conferences are focusing on:

- *Benchmarking and economic intelligence* in Stuttgart, to be organised by Steinbeis Europe Zentrum (May 2002)
- *New product development* in Mantova, to be organised by the Province of Mantova and Politecnico di Milano (September 2002)
- *Supply chain management* in Cardiff, to be organised by CMI – U.K. (December 2002)
- *Technology clinics and technology transfer* in Finland, to be organised by TEKES (April 2003)
- *Enterprise resource planning* in Bilbao, to be organised by LEIA (July 2003).

Membership

Today, the network is composed of 20 partners representing 18 regions and 13 EU and Newly Associated Countries. The network is open to new members and looks forward to enlarge the participation to discussions and dissemination activities on innovation, knowledge-creating companies, innovative regions, and innovation management techniques/ technologies. Members of the network are:

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