

# What to expect from RIS/RITTS projects in a region ?

Testimonials by two former RTP and RITTS regions

## A REGIONAL TECHNOLOGY PLAN (RTP) IN CENTRAL MACEDONIA

**Mr Nikos Komninos, RTP project leader in Central Macedonia**  
(Urban and Regional Planning Department of the Aristotle University in Thessaloniki)

• **What is the impact of the RTP exercise in your region today ?**

"The objective of the RTP in Central Macedonia is to support our regional innovation system, i.e. our technological innovation development, transfer and utilisation system. It brought about a regional consensus, taking the form of an action plan consisting of six priorities and 22 projects. The priorities covered:

- 1) financing of innovation
- 2) cross-company technological co-operation
- 3) technological staff training
- 4) technology transfer
- 5) in-house technological development
- 6) follow-up to, and evaluation of, the Plan."



### RESULTS ?

Six of the 22 projects tagged as priorities have been launched to date :

- Northern Greece Textile Institute
- Technology Transfer Centre in the Thessaloniki Technological Park
- Association for Industrial Information Technologies
- Food Industries Network
- Training in horizontal technologies
- Expansion of the Central Macedonia Innovation Observatory

• **In your opinion, what is the key to succeed in such a project ?**

"According to me, the key is project management. It must help build a consensus in support of the plan and develop practical initiatives to meet the needs of regional actors. The RTP in Central Macedonia is led by a Management Unit staffed by four, which has supported the Planning Orientation Committee and co-ordinated the work of the study group and of the experts and representatives of the seven prefectures of the region. An estimated 200 persons from companies, research centres and regional administrations and institutions took part in the

design of the Plan. The Management Unit's main task consisted in compiling their contributions and translating their participation into operational support for the Plan".

• **What is the main difficulty in carrying out such a project ?**

We met with two types of obstacles. First, we had to motivate companies, and especially SMEs, in the region to get involved in the Plan and in particular in technological innovation, which was rather difficult in view of our regional innovation system, regional technology market and latent quality of supply of, and demand for, technology. We identified four major tendencies in Central Macedonia :

- classically, companies buy technology with their mechanical equipment
- technological co-operation among companies is curtailed by (in)tense sub-contracting relationships
- co-operation between local research and industry is rather limited and companies are adequately informed only about the potential of new technologies
- industries in the region are essentially competing on the basis of production costs, instead of on quality and innovation

### KEY FIGURES ABOUT CENTRAL MACEDONIA

Area	18.811 km <sup>2</sup>	
Population	1.736.000 ('91)	
Unemployment	9,1% ('95)	
Jobs ('95)	Agriculture	20,8%
	Industry	26%
	Services	53,2%

R&D jobs : 3.119 personnes (93)  
The region is eligible under  
Objective 1 of the Structural Funds.

**RTP**  
CENTRAL MACEDONIA



Because of this, technological innovation only features low in industry's list of priorities.

Therefore, it was rather difficult to trigger a regional mobilisation around innovation or to generate strong and enduring support for technological initiatives under the RTP.

The second hurdle was linked to the implementation of the projects and co-ordination between the RTP and the Structural Funds. The decision-making process within the RTP was totally different to that of the Operational Programme of the 2nd Community Support Framework (CSF), both in terms of the procedures and in the very membership of the respective selection committees. This meant trouble and uncertainty in financing the RTP from the CSF (see text in frame).

- **How do you see the future of this exercise ?**  
"Our objective right now is to make headway in the implementation of the Action

Plan. The Orientation Committee, and especially the Management Unit, are still operating as lobbies to further the Action Plan and RTP projects. In parallel, another objective for the near future is to have a debate on technological innovation. the RTP in Central Macedonia has done a lot to improve our understanding of innovation-related issues. On several occasions, we have referred to the RTP and its impact on the regional innovation system and on demand for and offer of, technology at regional level. The RTP has triggered a debate on

regional innovation, and we think it should be pursued."

A more detailed description of the RTP is available on the Central Macedonia Innovation Observatory's web page at [Http://rtp.rc.auth.gr/](http://rtp.rc.auth.gr/).

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## THE ISSUE OF FINANCING

The main sources of finance for RTP projects today are the Structural Funds, the second Community Support Framework (CSF) and a few targeted Community initiatives. Nevertheless, integration of the RTP in structural programmes is fragmented. This is because of structural programme procedures : RTP projects have to fit into competitive calls for tenders. It is therefore difficult and random to finance the RTP under the Structural Funds, because it is not an autonomous programme within the CSF or other initiative.



# RIS/RITTS projects

## ONE OBJECTIVE : REGIONAL STRATEGY

Regional Innovation Strategy projects are two-stage exercises:

- In-depth analysis of (a) the region's social and economic environment, (b) major technological and industrial trends, (c) innovation needs among SMEs leading to (d) the offer of innovation being organised in the region.
- Based on the results of this analysis, a strategy is drafted to optimise the innovation

policy and regional infrastructures, with a special focus on SMEs.

Once the strategy is developed – and accepted by a majority of actors in the region –, practical projects can emerge and receive support, possibly financial, from competent local, regional or national organisations.

## ONE PRIORITY : INNOVATION

Community support for the elaboration of such innovation strategies – which are agreed by public, scientific, economic and social authorities at local or regional level – is twofold. For several months now, the economic and social impact of innovation has ranked high among the European Commission's priorities. Indeed, the White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment and the Green Paper on Innovation published in 1994 exposed a severe shortage of

investment in Research and Innovation in Europe, a lack of co-ordination among the various actors and a relative incapacity to turn scientific and technological advance into industrial and commercial success stories.

Moreover, in line with the principle of subsidiarity, regional and local authorities are clearly the decision-making levels which are closest to the regional economic process and, in most cases, they have acquired skills in supporting innovation.

## ONE FOUNDING PRINCIPLE : CONSENSUS

In practice, one basic principle underpins the development of regional innovation strategies: building a consensus at regional level. The process starts with an analysis of the social and economic framework and the demand for and the supply of innovation continuing with the drafting of priorities and culminating in a list of actions to support.

It is on the basis of such a consensus that a sustainable strategic debate can exist in practice. And that is exactly what RIS / RITTS aim to

build. In order to stimulate such initiatives, each project is led by a Steering Committee with balanced representation of the various actors involved in innovation and economic development: local and regional elected representatives, development agencies and organisations representing the economic fabric of society (chambers of commerce, industry, professions and crafts, trade associations, businessmen themselves) and the suppliers of innovation support services

(universities, technology transfer centres, financial organisations, R&D laboratories, etc.). Typically, the Steering Committee is chaired by the regional authority. It may also be led by a representative of the private sector – sometimes appointed in itinere.

## ADDED VALUE : INTERREGIONAL CO-OPERATION

Over the last four years, close to 100 regions initiated Regional Innovations Strategies.

The 43 current RIS / RITTS projects capitalise on the experience accumulated during the first batch of projects started between 1994 and 1996. 22 RITTS projects and 7 RTP (Regional Technology Plans) projects – precursors of the RIS

projects – have enabled the European Commission to test the relevance of the method on which the new projects are based.

A series of interregional activities are organised and animated by the RIS / RITTS Network in order to foster exchange and benefits among participating regions.

Following Directorate-General XIII's new call for proposal (OJEC n° C 280, 16 September 1997), some 30 new RITTS projects will soon be added to the current network, along with a dozen of projects of cooperation between different regions based on the results of their RITTS or RIS project.

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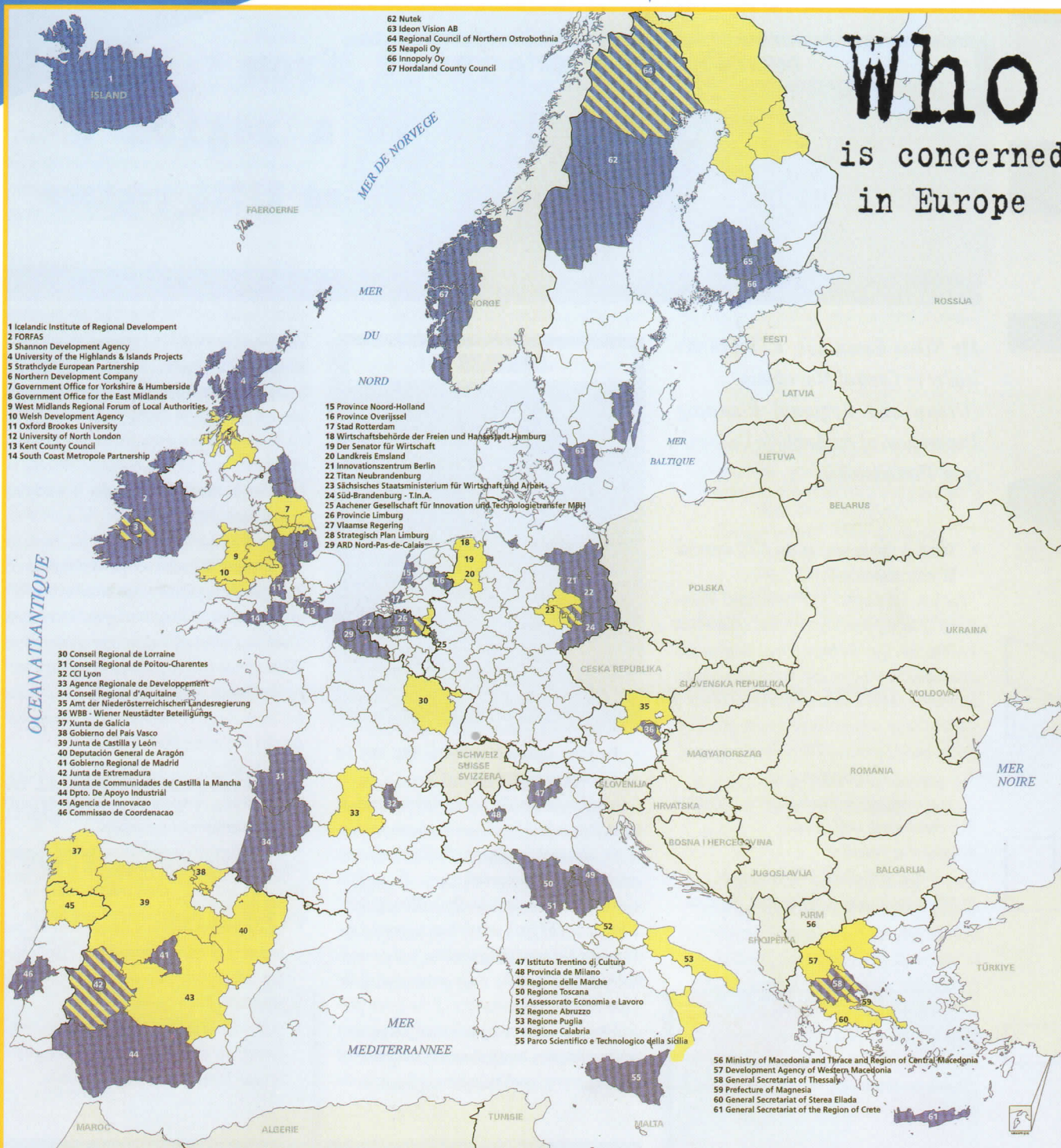
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# Who is concerned in Europe



1 Icelandic Institute of Regional Development  
 2 FORFAS  
 3 Shannon Development Agency  
 4 University of the Highlands & Islands Projects  
 5 Strathclyde European Partnership  
 6 Northern Development Company  
 7 Government Office for Yorkshire & Humberside  
 8 Government Office for the East Midlands  
 9 West Midlands Regional Forum of Local Authorities  
 10 Welsh Development Agency  
 11 Oxford Brookes University  
 12 University of North London  
 13 Kent County Council  
 14 South Coast Metropole Partnership  
 15 Province Noord-Holland  
 16 Province Overijssel  
 17 Stad Rotterdam  
 18 Wirtschaftsbehörde der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg  
 19 Der Senator für Wirtschaft  
 20 Landkreis Emsland  
 21 Innovationszentrum Berlin  
 22 Titan Neubrandenburg  
 23 Sächsisches Staatsministerium für Wirtschaft und Arbeit  
 24 Süd-Brandenburg - T.In.A.  
 25 Aachener Gesellschaft für Innovation und Technologietransfer MPH  
 26 Province Limburg  
 27 Vlaamse Regering  
 28 Strategisch Plan Limburg  
 29 ARD Nord-Pas-de-Calais  
 30 Conseil Regional de Lorraine  
 31 Conseil Regional de Poitou-Charentes  
 32 CCI Lyon  
 33 Agence Regionale de Developpement  
 34 Conseil Regional d'Aquitaine  
 35 Amt der Niederösterreichischen Landesregierung  
 36 WBB - Wiener Neustädter Beteiligung  
 37 Xunta de Galicia  
 38 Gobierno del Pais Vasco  
 39 Junta de Castilla y Leon  
 40 Deputación General de Aragón  
 41 Gobierno Regional de Madrid  
 42 Junta de Extremadura  
 43 Junta de Comunidades de Castilla la Mancha  
 44 Dpto. De Apoyo Industrial  
 45 Agencia de Innovacao  
 46 Commissao de Coordenacao  
 47 Istituto Trentino di Cultura  
 48 Provincia de Milano  
 49 Regione delle Marche  
 50 Regione Toscana  
 51 Assessorato Economia e Lavoro  
 52 Regione Abruzzo  
 53 Regione Puglia  
 54 Regione Calabria  
 55 Parco Scientifico e Tecnologico della Sicilia  
 56 Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace and Region of Central Macedonia  
 57 Development Agency of Western Macedonia  
 58 General Secretariat of Thessaly  
 59 Prefecture of Magnesia  
 60 General Secretariat of Sterea Ellada  
 61 General Secretariat of the Region of Crete

R.I.S. projets présélectionnés 1996-98  
 R.I.S. pre-selected projects 1996-98  
 R.T.P. projets prépilotes 1994-96  
 R.T.P. pre-pilot projects 1994-96  
 R.I.T.T.S. projets présélectionnés 1995-98  
 R.I.T.T.S. pre-selected projects 1996-98  
 R.I.S. & R.I.T.T.S.  
 R.T.P. & R.I.T.T.S.  
 Autres régions  
 Other regions

Cette carte n'a aucun statut légal.  
 This map has no legal status.  
 CE-DGXVIGIS, source GISCO, XVI-A.2  
 Les frontières régionales de l'Union Européenne sont de niveau NUTS2  
 European Union region boundaries are level NUTS2

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Les territoires non continentaux et outre-mer des Etats Membres

The new RITTS projects are not indicated on this map.

If you wish to receive a list of contact persons for each of these regions, please get in touch with the Secretariat of the RIS / RITTS Network :

A WHO'S WHO of projects is available !

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# Regional Innovation and Technology Transfer Strategies

NEWS  
RIS/RITTS

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## EDITOR'S COLUMN

Respectively co-financed under Article 10 of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the INNOVATION strand of the Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development, the RIS (Regional Innovation Strategies) and RITTS (Regional Innovation and Technology Transfer Strategies) projects are an opportunity for regional bodies – in co-operation with the main actors concerned – to understand and agree on assets for and obstacles to, innovation in their region, and then to establish action plans to stimulate the former and remove the latter.

As early as 1994, the European Commission decided to co-finance, on an trial basis, the development of strategic plans based on innovation in certain regions of the Union. By the end of 1996, some 40 RIS / RITTS projects had been launched by the European Commission. Another 30 RITTS will be started this year, which brings the total to around 100 regional innovation strategies over the last four years. The average cost per project ranges between ECU 350,000 and 500,000, up to 50 % of which can be financed by the European Union. Project duration varies from 18 to 24 months.

RIS / RITTS exercises are not isolated efforts within Community policies. Indeed, it is recognised more and more frequently in Commission

studies that innovation is one of the main factors of competitiveness and a net job contributor<sup>1</sup>. It is interesting to note that a number of regions such as Schleswig-Holstein (D), Flevoland (NL), Upper Austria (A), have become aware of the importance of innovation and have undertaken RIS / RITTS-type exercises without applying for European Union support.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the network's activities and action in the regions have led to the publication and circulation of many synthesis documents, case studies, analyses of good practices, syntheses of seminars, which can be made available to any region interested in developing a regional innovation and technology transfer strategy.

The next issue of the Innovative Regions Newsletter will focus on how to capitalise upon the current efforts and on testimonials about the practical results achieved in regions having completed the exercise.

<sup>1</sup> Green Paper on Innovation, Communication of the Commission, 20/11/96. First Action Plan for Innovation in Europe, Communication of the Commission, 20/11/96. Towards the Fifth Framework Programme : scientific and technical objectives, COM(97) 47, 10/02/98. Agenda 2000, COM(9)2000.