



SPIDER Project Closing Conference

RETHINKING REGIONS - IMPROVING REGIONAL PERFORMANCE IN THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

Brussels, March 13th 2006

Background

It has been acknowledged already in the early 90s by both researchers and policy makers that knowledge will be one of the key factors for prosperity in the 21st century. During that time, it was also argued that the evolution towards a knowledge economy will dramatically reduce the importance of space. Globalization and new information and communication technologies, the argument went, will render spatial units of policy-making obsolete: Geography is a thing of the past, distance is dead, place is irrelevant.

However, things turned out differently. While globalisation indeed poses serious challenges for traditional spatial units of policy-making, it became clear in recent years, that place continues to matter, albeit its role may change drastically. A spatial unit that seems to gain importance in the knowledge economy is the *region*. Economic success continues to be deeply rooted in regional performance, witness, e.g., the phenomenon of clusters of tightly connected companies structured around a regional core. Increasing regional competitiveness, we may conclude, becomes a central challenge - for the regions themselves, but also for the EU member states and the EU institutions.

The SPIDER Project (funded by the European Union's Regions of Knowledge Pilot Action Programme), was focused on the potential of using foresight methods to increase regional competitiveness. The conference 'Rethinking Regions - Improving Regional Performance in the Knowledge Economy' will be the main dissemination event of the project as well as an opportunity to discuss the challenges regions face today, and the steps regions need to take accordingly.

Main Topics

The main topics for discussion at the conference were chosen in the light of what turned out to be key issues region face today in the course of the SPIDER Project. Specifically, the conference will discuss and compare *visions for knowledge regions* first (see programme below), and subsequently concentrate on the following topics:

- **Networking**
 - How to network knowledge regions - internally and externally?
 - What makes networks function effectively?
 - Is there a risk of over-networking?
- **New Tools for Knowledge Regions**
 - What are the new challenges of managing knowledge regions?
 - Which new tools are needed in general?
 - What role does foresight play for knowledge regions?
- **How to Inspire Innovation**
 - Innovation in R&D institutions vs. innovation in a broader sense, including social innovation, and organisational learning
 - How to attract creative people
 - Creative tension in regional development

Format

The questions mentioned above will be tackled in a one-day conference. After a presentation of the SPIDER Project results and a key note address by Dimitri Corpakis, Head of Sector „Regional Aspects of Research Policy“, European Commission Directorate General for Research (see programme below), there will be a panel discussion and three parallel workshops lead by European experts on the topics mentioned above.

Organizers and Target Audience

The conference is jointly organized by the Finland Futures Research Centre, the Destree Institute (Wallonia, Belgium), and Z_punkt The Foresight Company (Germany). The conference aims at bringing together experts from different areas, including regional policy making, private and public sector innovation experts, researchers with a focus on knowledge society, and foresight experts.

Time and Location

The conference will take place in Brussels, Belgium, on March 13th 2006 in
Novotel Brussels Centre Tour Noire
Rue de la Vierge Noire 32, 1000 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32 2 505 50 22, fax: +32 2 505 50 00
www.novotel.com/novotel/fichehotel/gb/nov/2122/fiche_hotel.shtml

PROGRAMME

8.30 Registration and coffee

Visions of Region of Knowledge

- 9.15 Introduction by *Juha Kaskinen*, Coordinator of SPIDER (Finland Futures Academy, Finland Futures Research Centre, TSEBA)
- 9.30 Presentation of the KnowReg initiative and issues *Dr. Dimitri Corpakis* (Head of Sector Regional Aspects of Research Policy, European Commission Directorate General for Research)
- 10.00 Presentation of the SPIDER Project results by the SPIDER project team
- 10.30 Issues of regional development in the knowledge society
Panel '*My vision of region of knowledge*'
- 11.00 Coffee break
- 11.30 Panel discussion, conclusions (key points to be discussed) and introduction to the afternoon session
- 12.30 Lunch break

Regional Solutions and Tools for Innovation

- 14.00 Parallel open workshops:
– Networking
– How to Inspire Innovations
– New Tools for Knowledge Regions
- 15.30 Coffee break
- 16.00 Conclusions of the workshops and exchanges with the audience supported by the conference animator
- 16.45 Closure of the conference

Registration

No conference fee, coffees and lunch are also free of charge

Please confirm your presence **latest 7th of March 2006** via e-mail, phone call, fax or letter:

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