

# SPIDER Project

## Increasing Regional Competitiveness through Futures Research Methods

### Basic Project Information

The SPIDER project is concerned with increasing regional competitiveness through futures research methods. It is conducted by three project partners: Turku School of Economics and Business Administration / Futures Research Centre (project coordinator, Finland) The Destree Institute (Wallonia, Belgium) and Z\_punkt GmbH The Foresight Company (Germany).

The SPIDER project is supported by the European Commission, in the context of the **“Regions of Knowledge” pilot action**. The project has started on 1.2.2004 and will continue until 31.1.2006. It focuses on exploring future potentials of emerging fields of economic activity in the three regions which participate in the project.

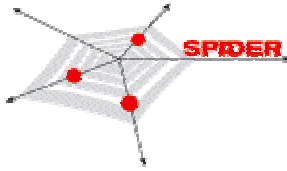
The **aim of the SPIDER project** is to **increase potential of intrinsic regional strengths**. The output of the networked co-operation is a selection of **regional visions** that focus on exploring future possibilities in promoting European economic progress. **Future potentials of emerging fields of economic activity in the regions**, the competitive advantages, are explored by the project partners to reach these aims. Futures studies / foresight exercises are conducted to overview and discuss policy options and opportunities.

A main feature of the project is **learning via the sharing and benchmarking of comparative performance and good practice**. Therefore, regions with economic growth potential of some specific economic fields are selected as target regions of the research. The evaluation model of regional competition and innovation systems presented by the Ståhle & Sotarauta (2003) “Regional Innovation Activities in Finland – Current Status, Significance and Developmental Challenges” (published by the Finnish Parliament, Committee for the Future), is applied. **The regions** to be evaluated and compared have been selected among three EU countries:

- **Etelä-Suomi, Finland,**
- **Wallonia, Belgium,**
- **Regierungsbezirk Düsseldorf, Germany.**

### Theoretical background

The project’s theoretical background draws from the above-mentioned evaluation model of regional competition and innovation systems presented by the Ståhle & Sotarauta (2003). **Four basic requirements for an innovative environment**, i.e. self-renewing development, which will be focussed upon, are:



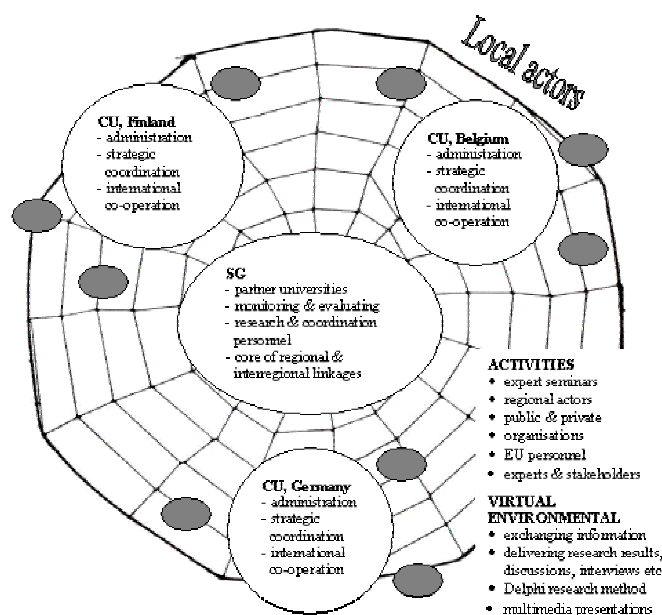
1. Players: identity, sense of belonging and charisma
2. Networks: links, trust and mutual dependences
3. Knowledge management: information flows and communication
4. Mastering timing: situation awareness and the courage to act.

In addition to self-renewal, **creative tension** can be considered a key factor in innovation-based regional development. The ability of self-renewal is born spontaneously of the creative tension generated by interaction and leadership.

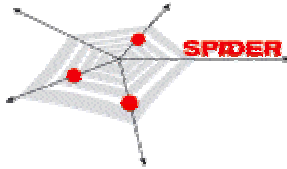
The **local and regional actors** are seen as networked innovators and “players”, and nodes for knowledge creation. Making inter-regional (and international) comparisons gives information on creative ideas of policy implications and actions that emerge in reinforcing the economic progress of the regions.

The higher research / education units (universities) have a central role in knowledge creation and formulation of European futures. The final aim of the project is to demonstrate how the assimilated higher research and education institutions can play a significant role in promoting European regional development and consolidating the cohesion of the regions. This is done by **experimental co-operation**, with collaboration between the higher research / education units and by recognising other relevant local actors and good practices and carrying out the project. Stimulating integration between university units, companies, regional and local authorities and other regional actors is of importance.

### Project Structure:



The background idea of carrying out the SPIDER project is to **facilitate co-operation between higher research/ education units** by establishing the European Futures Academy (EFA), a European university network (academic institutes or units) operating under the



Steering Group (SG), which is composed of the **European Nodes of the Millennium-Project**, UN University, American Council. In line with the objective of supporting the Millennium-Project mission, the EFA aims at scientific breakthroughs, economic and social progress and cross-border (public-private) interaction in those fields, which promotes sustainable (EU) futures. The EFA core-competence therefore resides in trans-national and -regional futures visions analysis and advice (policy implications) on scientific and economic progress of EU society.

Piloting the network means creating visions for the knowledge-based European society and economy. These visions are based on regional actors as driving forces of European Union social cohesion and economic progress.

### **Project Partners / Further Information:**

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### **Links:**

- Regions of Knowledge pilot action: [http://www.cordis.lu/era/knowreg\\_about.htm](http://www.cordis.lu/era/knowreg_about.htm)
- European Research Area: <http://www.cordis.lu/era/home.html>
- The Millennium Project for the American Council of the United Nations University: <http://www.acunu.org>