



# ADVANCING INNOVATION AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Identification of and  
Improvement to Technology  
Transfer Best Practice

Work Package 2 - Appendix 1.0



European Regional  
Development Fund  
The European Union  
Investing in Your Future



## **Summary of the identification of the range and scope of knowledge transfer activities in Bretagne, France and the South West and South East regions of the UK using quantitative analysis of government and regional statistics and qualitative assessment based on interviews with key staff from partner institutions and stakeholders across the regions.**

PROTTEC Work Package One (2009), undertaken by the University of Plymouth, details regional demographic and economic profiles across four regions: two from France (Bretagne and Nord-Pas-de-Calais) and two from the UK (South East and South West). Work Package Two, undertaken by the University of Exeter, mainly focuses on, but not exclusively, the identification of the range and scope of knowledge transfer activities from interviews with key staff from partner institutions and stakeholders from the South West, UK and Bretagne, France. This was done so that the University of Exeter could interview stakeholders from comparable organisations.

Also, both Bretagne and the South West have analogous qualities: they are coastal, with most demographic and economic activity taking place in and around the coastal areas and benefit from marked economic diversity, but are largely dependent on a rural economy.

Employing the findings of the University of Plymouth's Work Package One (2009) report, a number of comparisons can be drawn between the quantitative analysis of government and regional statistics and qualitative assessment based on interviews with the stakeholders. Also, Work Package One identifies numerous suggestions for filling innovation and knowledge transfer gaps; regional stakeholders strengthen these findings through their observations.

Findings highlight that all stakeholders are aware of knowledge transfer activities and innovation strategies within their respective organisations. Each of their roles comes with some degree of knowledge transfer expectation and differing knowledge transfer channels.

Stakeholders are keen to undertake the expectations essentially set out by Regional Economic Strategies or Regional Innovation Strategies, in the UK, or through Regional Economic Development Strategies (Stratégie Régionale de Développement Economique – SRDE) in France. However, how strategic these were for engaging SMEs in knowledge transfer activities differ considerably.

Almost all stakeholders made suggestions to improve innovation uptake and the effectiveness of knowledge transfer activities. Bretagne highlights include: research positions need to be strengthened; more companies need to be attracted to the region to ensure its economic sustainability; universities need direct links with industry to be more efficient; funding limits technology transfer; and a more strategic approach is necessary.

South West stakeholder suggestions include: the need to identify and break down barriers where they exist; fund the best mechanisms for innovation; investigate the mechanisms behind successful clusters; create more of an incentive for knowledge transfer; encourage business work placements, secondments and job rotation; employ the region's retired source of business acumen more extensively; continue to offer support in a variety of forms to SMEs.

Others general observations from stakeholders include: an identification of the need to have more joined-up thinking from policy makers; develop an understanding that innovation only happens if there is a customer need, the technology and resources available to meet it, and the skills to make it happen; develop boundary spanners that can facilitate interactions between separate stakeholders; spend money effectively and develop more professional administrative mechanisms; provide seed funds for more proof-of-concept projects; build capacity in the academic community itself (by training academics); marketing, publicity and events for en masse interactions, which raise profiles and the ability to network; and take into account the effectiveness of physical proximity in places such as science parks.

There is no quick-fix, but findings suggest that consistent, correctly-targeted, ring-fenced funding allocated to these activities would improve the effectiveness of these activities and therefore generate more innovating regions.

HEIs, public research organisations and the government bodies that support them need to improve communication with each other and the best way to do this is through face-to-face contact.

Industry also needs to understand that HEIs, rather than being relatively cheap, non-commercial, antiquated organisations, are a valuable resource of innovation that can directly impact a company's success.

Regional comparisons from Work Package One (2009) with input from regional stakeholders from Work Package two, include:

- Where Work Package One (2009) finds that all four regions support activities around the development of clusters, supply chains and company networks to support objectives addressing internationalisation and foreign investment. Stakeholders unanimously suggest at different points that clusters, in various forms, such as technopôles and science parks, support knowledge transfer activities.

Stakeholders also support suggestions that these activities could be enhanced through cross-border collaboration to enable regional companies' access to a network of international companies.

- Work Package One (2009) finds that the South East and South West of England and the Bretagne region of France all adopt activities to support companies in transferring their technology and knowledge at an international level to improve their international competitiveness. And highlights a potential gap in the application of innovation and knowledge transfer activities to

improve international competitiveness within the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region.

Although mention of transferring technology at an international level was limited, the majority of stakeholders from Bretagne and South West, saw the promotion of knowledge transfer activities on broader international platform as important and stakeholders such as, the France and UK Knowledge Transfer Office representatives, saw international collaboration as key to their knowledge transfer activities.

- Work Package One (2009) finds that the South West of England aims to support an ‘aftercare’ service to organisations investing in the region to help secure their long term future in the region. This is an activity that could be applied in other regions to develop more sustainable internationalisation and foreign investment.

The UK local authority stakeholder representative supports this finding. However, in general, all stakeholders believe that some input is invested at the end of knowledge transfer activities to improve the chances of competitiveness and success.

- Work Package One (2009) finds that the South West of England and Nord-Pas-de-Calais region of France both support activities to promote their regions internationally in some way. These activities could be enhanced within each region to provide a more rounded promotional approach to internationalisation, and also be applied in other regions.

Again, mention of transferring technology at an international level was limited, but the majority of stakeholders from Bretagne and South West, saw the promotion of knowledge transfer activities on broader international platform as important.

- Work Package One (2009) finds that both English regions support a number of activities to promote an innovation culture amongst young people, while the South East of England and Bretagne region both support a number of activities to promote an innovation culture and entrepreneurial mindset through competitions. The similarities in the types of activities supported offer the opportunity for sharing experiences, best practice and expertise across the regions to maximise their impact in developing a culture of innovation.

From a stakeholder perspective, the UK local authority stakeholder representative supports this finding and notes that its organisation undertakes a lot of work with 14 to 19 year-olds. It has enabled particular projects that look to engage young people with industry, such as the maritime sector. It also suggests that as successful business people tend to retire in the South West, they could give the region significant advantage in the form of a valuable resource of experienced business personalities and a youthful population ready to learn.

- The South East, South West and Bretagne regions all support activities to deliver business support which presents an opportunity for the regions to share

best practice in terms of the business support mechanisms they adopt.

All the stakeholders, in one form or another, highlight knowledge transfer activities that deliver business support, from funding equipment or schemes to offering training and networking opportunities. Stakeholders report that a range of mechanisms are helpful, but a more targeted approach could be more effective.

- Work Package One (2009) finds that the South West of England's RES supports a comparatively large number of activities focusing on technology and knowledge transfer actions in order to address the promotion of an innovation culture and entrepreneurial mindset compared to the other partner regions. This offers the opportunity for other regions to consider the impact such activities might have on addressing objectives to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurialism.

Stakeholders from the region do comment about the need to enhance the innovation drive, mostly because it has a rural lifestyle-led economy, and the RES is designed to meet this need.

- A number of the regions support the development of networks to assist in the promotion of a culture of innovation. There is an opportunity for knowledge sharing across the regions regarding the structure, working practices and communication of their networks, and partnerships between the regions to maximise their impact on business innovation.

The majority of stakeholders mentioned some form of networking and iterated how important this activity was to the effectiveness of knowledge transfer. One stakeholder from the South West also stressed how important communication was to innovation, saying that for many activities modern methods of communication have pretty much negated the need for travel, however, nothing replaces the impact that face-to-face contact creates.

- The South East, South West and Bretagne regions all support activities to market the regional innovation profile which offer opportunities for sharing best practice and expertise across the regions to enhance each region's promotional activity with a view to promote a culture of innovation.

There was limited mention of the regional innovation profile and best practice considerations from the stakeholders.

- Work Package One (2009) finds that the South East and South West of England both recognise the importance of engaging with HEIs to ensure they are providing the right skills to the labour market, each adopting activities to support this process. Activities to engage with HEIs in this way could be applied within the French regions to assist in the appropriate development of their workforce skills to compete in the global economy.

Stakeholders from France support this finding and stress that a more strategic approach to engagement would be beneficial.

- Work Package One (2009) finds that the South East of England and Bretagne region of France both adopt activities to develop a directory of their competencies. This highlights an opportunity for both tools to be further developed through cross border collaboration to enable them to be utilised regionally, nationally and internationally.

Again, some stakeholders from Bretagne stress that a more strategic approach to this type of tool would improve cross-border collaboration.

- Work Package One (2009) finds that the South East of England supports a number of activities to provide enhanced innovation support services and infrastructure in order to promote innovation in SMEs. However, neither region's in France adopt activities within this criterion, highlighting a potential gap in their innovation activities.

The majority of stakeholders, in both the UK and France, were not aware of specific strategies to engage SMEs in knowledge transfer activities. Contact with SMEs was arranged, for the majority, on an ad-hoc basis. The two respondents that highlight specific strategies were from corresponding UK and France competitiveness clusters.

- The South West of England directly supports a number of activities to provide enhanced innovation support services and infrastructure which focus around the Business Link service. Bretagne's Regional Council supports activities to place advisors within the Innovation Network and to develop tools and skills within the innovation structures that support companies through the innovation process. These activities could be enhanced through the sharing of best practice with established schemes operating within the South West of England.

Again, some stakeholders from Bretagne stress that a more strategic approach to the use of these types of tools would enhance their use.

[ends]



<http://www.prottec.eu>