



SIXTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

NICE



A BRIEF PROJECT DESCRIPTION

03 January 2006



Project Objectives & Background

The overall objective of NICE – Networking ICT Clusters in Europe, a Coordination Action funded by the European Commission under the 6th Framework Program, is to strengthen the European ICT sector by networking clusters, having in mind that business clusters are the focal points for the creation of new jobs and a breeding ground for innovative business ideas.

The creation of an innovative-friendly environment throughout the EU, and the stimulation of technological innovation is important for the setting up of innovative technology businesses and thus, for the development of high quality, lasting employment and sustainable economic growth. Networking and exchange of experience support the process of innovation and the transfer of 'excellent' innovation management methodologies; tools and activities can be successfully fostered through co-operation at the European level. It became apparent that not the development of the single business itself is important, but also the surrounding: the sector and the region come to the fore. Being embedded in an innovative-friendly environment, exchanging knowledge with suppliers as well as competitors and having strong connections with universities, research institutes and regional authorities is the perfect precondition for success. These 'nodes' within a sector, defined as clusters, are considered as one of the driving forces in innovation processes.

A further aspect which has to be taken into account in this project is the Lisbon Strategy which aims at making the European Union "the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world" by 2010. Information and communication technologies (ICT) were identified as playing a key role in achieving the main objectives of the strategy. Programmes and initiatives like eEurope have been launched and address the challenges of a European Information Society. Besides the permeation of ICT throughout society there is the need to step up investments and innovation in ICT itself.

Against this background NICE seeks to bridge the gap between regions with a highly innovative business environment due to ICT innovations and cluster building and those regions less advanced. Therefore, NICE aims at supporting networking, co-operation, transfer of knowledge and initiation of joint projects between advanced ICT clusters of European Economic Area and associated countries. The question that arises is, how an innovative environment can be built up and what are the key success factors for prosperous clusters? Are there idiosyncratic patterns according to different sectors? Does the ICT sector and do ICT clusters have special roles in the dual position as an innovation sector itself but also as a driving innovation force for other sectors?

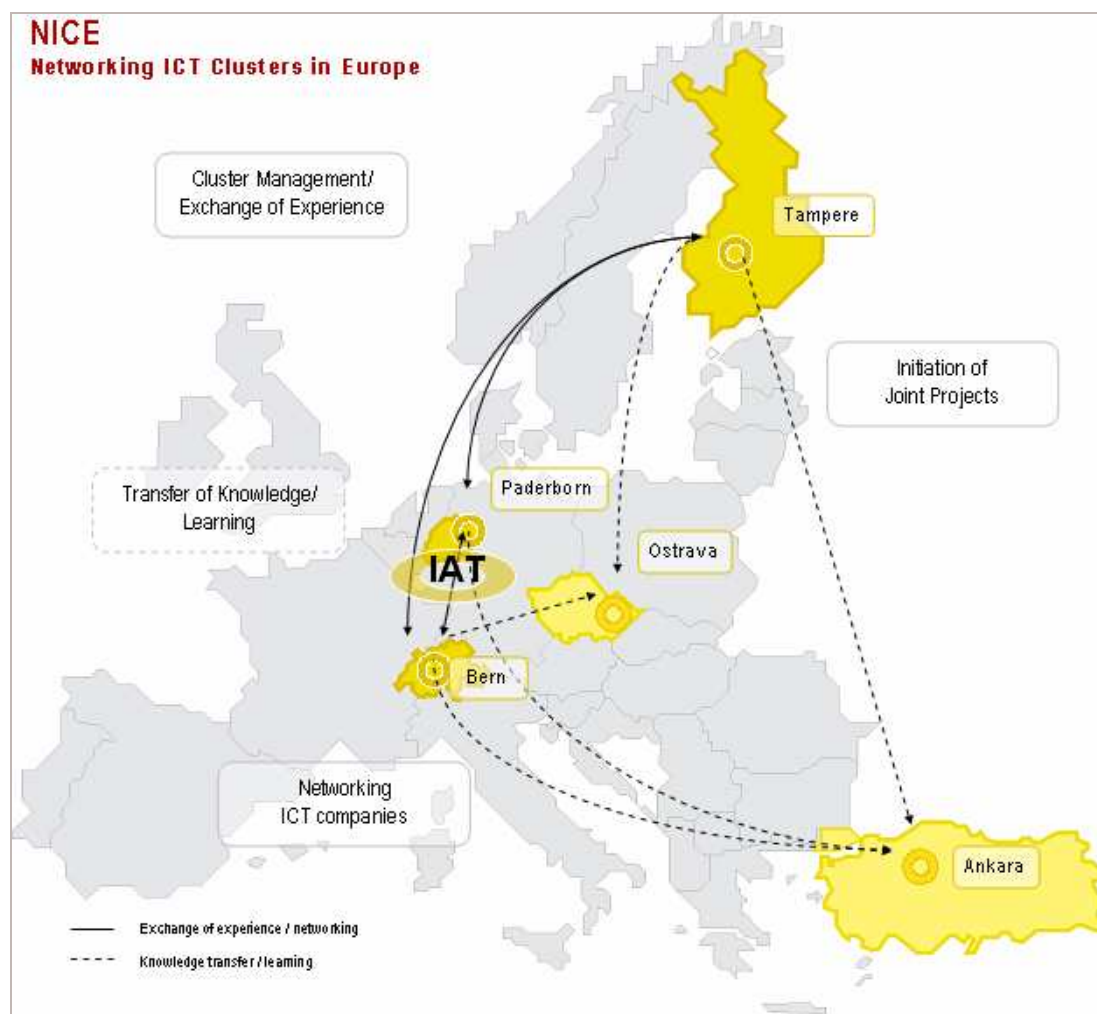
To answer these questions NICE aims

- to boost innovations in the ICT sector in Europe by bringing together actors from prosperous clusters to network, collaborate, exchange experience and expertise, learn from each other and exploit synergies;

- to obtain new knowledge on innovations in the ICT sector and their clusters, their success factors and barriers;
- to establish joint projects and business strategies among the participation clusters;
- to support the transfer of gained knowledge not only to the participation 'learning' regions but also to other less advanced regions and,
- to help building up a long standing network of ICT clusters in Europe.

Project Implementation

NICE addresses three different, closely related levels: First, the cluster management second the sector and third cluster policies. The activities to be carried out on these levels focus on different spatial levels which are the region, the country and the European Economic Area.





The implementation plan with its methodology and its roadmap reflects the objectives of NICE: Firstly, it focuses on the support of co-operation between advanced ICT clusters in Europe to create synergies and innovations. And secondly, it centres on the exchange and transfer of good practice to associated countries and new member states. The plan is organised in four phases:

- Phase 1: Development of a common understanding of the ICT value chain and analyses of the participation clusters structure, management and regional conditions
- Phase 2: Exchange of experience and knowledge in order to learn from each other, to identify good practice in Cluster Management and to initiate an ICT cluster management network on a European level
- Phase 3: Entrepreneurial networking on specific topics to initiate task forces, joint projects or initiatives among ICT-related SMEs on a European level
- Phase 4: Transfer of cluster management models and good practices to the associated regions/ ICT clusters to support their further development

The initial phase of the project (12/2005 – 05/2006) aims at developing a mutual understanding of the ICT sector and its value chain. Analyses on the clusters, regions and ICT market conditions will be conducted based on a common analysis grid. A comparative analysis on the results is to identify each clusters core competencies, position in the value chain and potential synergies among the clusters. Knowledge exchange, learning processes and the identification of good practice are at centre of stage in the second phase (06/2006 – 02/2007). The topics for the three Cluster Management workshops will be specified as the project proceeds. Phase 3 (04/2007 – 12/2007) focuses on entrepreneurial networking and is based on the assumption that besides the participating business partners other companies from the participation clusters are interested in and willing to collaboration. The objective is to initiate task forces, interest groups and joint projects among the companies which are the basis for future business collaboration. The collected information and knowledge regarding Cluster Management models, good practice and networking will be transferred to the participating region Ankara and Ostrava in order to support the further development of their clusters (01/2008 – 05/2008). Furthermore, the experience made and insights gained during the project term will lead to the formulation of policy recommendations on regional, national and European level.



Consortium

The project consortium is made up of 11 partners from five European regions:

Institute for Work and Technology, D-Gelsenkirchen (co-ordinator, <http://www.iatge.de>)

Wirtschaftsförderungsgesellschaft Paderborn mbH, D-Paderborn (<http://www.wfp.de>)

code-x GmbH, D-Paderborn (<http://www.code-x.de>)

Technology Centre Hermia, FI-Tampere (<http://www.hermia.fi>)

Tampere University of Technology, FI-Tampere (<http://www.tut.fi>)

Oy Tawasta OS Technologies Ltd., FI-Hämeenlinna (<http://www.tawasta.fi>)

Telematic Cluster Berne, CH-Berne (<http://www.tcbe.ch>)

Berne Economic Development Agency, CH-Berne (<http://www.berneinvest.com>)

ISolution GmbH, CH-Berne (<http://www.isolution.ch>)

ODTU Teknokent, TR-Ankara (<http://www.metutech.metu.edu.tr>)

Regional Development Agency Ostrava, CZ-Ostrava (<http://www.rdaova.cz>)