



Evaluation of INTERREG IIIC RFO TOWER

Final Report

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Executive Summary

TOWER ("Towards Sustainable Excellence by Innovating Regions") is a Regional Framework Operation (RFO) funded by the European INTERREG IIIC programme. TOWER's main objective is to create and improve strategies, methodologies and tools for sustainable economic growth, through interregional cooperation.

A process oriented evaluation was conducted by TAURUS-Institute in order to analyse the success of the TOWER approach, to enhance its quality during the implementation phase and to identify approaches for future improvements in interregional co-operation.

TOWER concentrates on four fields of regional development (components), supported by the component 'Management and coordination'.

A) THE TOWER COMPONENTS - OBJECTIVES AND RESULTS

Component 1: Management and coordination

Objectives: Management and coordination of the TOWER Programme

Results: The TOWER Programme was effective and efficient in delivering its objectives. All objectives on the strategic level, project level and inter-regional level have been attained.

Component 2: Strategies for sustainable economic growth

Objectives: "Improving the economic growth strategies and their implementation through an exchange of experiences and best practice of tools and instruments in a mutual learning process"

Results: The projects approved cover a big range of possible approaches for improving or contributing to regional growth strategies. All of them proved effective and yielded interesting outcomes, either on the level of general and comprehensive approaches or on the level of specific approaches, which focus more on target groups like women or young alumni or on specific tools.

Component 3: Strengthened technology infrastructure/transfer to SME'S

Objectives: "Creating strengthened technology infrastructure in regions and transfer to SME's. Strengthening the competitiveness of SMEs by increasing their level of innovation and offering them improved support services, development of knowledge-based business clusters/networks".

Results: The projects supported were very heterogeneous; one was a pilot operation providing innovation services, the other supported spin-offs from companies and the third the creation of a tool to

evaluate business weaknesses and then to provide the right support. All of them have been successfully implemented, contributing directly to the component's objectives.

Component 4: Competitive and knowledge-based entrepreneurship

Objectives: "Projects will exchange experience of how to stimulate entrepreneurship and increase the competitiveness among SMEs, fuelling entrepreneurial mindsets, new ways of supporting start-ups and existing SME's, and implementing new instruments for increasing spin-offs."

Results: The projects run are very much in line with the objectives of the component to contribute to a competitive and knowledge-based entrepreneurship. The approach to fuel entrepreneurial mindsets respectively to improve the capital base of young enterprises was dealing with bottlenecks of the region in an innovative way and has potential to be further elaborated, not only in the participating regions.

Component 5: Sustainable SME's

Objectives: "strengthen the competitiveness and viability of SME's by adapting sustainable development concepts, create a joint knowledge basis for SME's environmental performance by collected regional best practice, identify and test tools for support of environmental improvement and marketing of sustainability among SME's."

Results: The three projects under Component 5 address the promotion of sustainable development in a different way. One focuses on social responsibility, the second focuses on the support of the development of eco-products and the third on the creation of specific environmental technologies aiming at the resolution of environmental negative impacts within agro-food clusters. The success of the projects under Component 5 is indicated by the big number of businesses who participated and the considerable number of eco-products and eco-innovations which have been developed.

Horizontal objectives

Objectives: The TOWER programme had as horizontal objectives the equality of opportunity and the promotion of environmental sustainability.

Results: The equality objectives have been reached to a considerable extent, but almost exclusively for women. In future interregional initiative projects incentives for the better integration of ethnic minorities, disadvantaged elderly or young or disabled people should be set.

The TOWER programme yielded some very interesting and successful projects regarding the environmental sustainability objective. However, the mainstreaming dimension, i.e. the consideration of environmental aspects in *all* projects, should be emphasized more in the future. This could help not only to stimulate more economic growth, but also to encourage 'green growth'

B) IMPACTS OF THE TOWER PROGRAMME IN THE PARTICIPATING REGIONS

The TOWER programme has promoted a variety of approaches and functioned as a **laboratory for innovative ideas and tools**. Thus, it has had many positive impacts in the cooperating regions. These will help to enhance the competitiveness of the whole participating regions and to improve their positions in the global knowledge economy. The main impacts can be structured according to three groups:

1) Contribution to the competitiveness of the businesses in the participating regions

- ↳ identification of new business opportunities, from the extension or possible extension of the market to other regions, in many cases from the promotion of international complementarities within the product chain;
- ↳ development and testing of new products and methods, e.g., for business development, thus the possibility to increase the revenues of the company or to create new companies;
- ↳ installation of new equipments providing support to companies or the preparation of conditions for their future installation (e.g. InnoCenter as "single-contact point" for several services regarding innovation);
- ↳ improvement of qualifications or know-how relevant to improve the company's competitiveness; (e.g., training courses on international relations or knowledge about the benefits of having sustainable development in a company);
- ↳ increase of entrepreneurship/leadership capacities aiming at different target groups: young students; women; alumni;
- ↳ understanding and consolidating local/regional clusters.

2) Stimulation of sustainable growth of the regional economy through development and application of approaches for regional analysis, strategy and development and planning

- ↳ development of new tools and methods for different approaches or aspects of regional development (e.g. methods for a better SWOT analysis, concepts for cluster development, rural development);
- ↳ impacts on the strategic level such as the acceleration of processes already started; the introduction of new approaches; the mainstreaming of project results (tools) by integrating them into the existing support infrastructure for regional development;

↳ new ideas (new from the point of view of the participating regions) were put on the agenda of the regional strategy shapers and tested in pilot projects. Some of them seem to have a big potential for future development and strategies;

↳ the outcomes of the projects were taken into account for drafting new operational programmes for EU funding.

3) Improvement of technical as well as cultural competences of various stakeholders (in development agencies, in research institutions, in politics, in businesses, in education, in consulting services sector)

↳ exchange of technical know-how - learning and/or the common development of methods or strategies to address a specific problem; learning from each other;

↳ promotion of a "cooperation culture" - to recognise that there may be others facing the same problem and looking for solutions to address it.

↳ encouragement of intercultural learning, as important prerequisite for a successful future international cooperation, (e.g. knowledge of different working methods, knowledge about the regional policies of the other countries, the functioning of public administration or decision processes);

↳ Contribution to the capacity building of the participating institutions and the participating individuals in the fields of project management/ EU administrative procedures and technical competencies.

C) RECOMMENDATIONS

Application Phase

1) Better identify and clarify the interests, competences, objectives, methods, target groups and financing of the different partners in the preparatory phase.

- a. Reinforce a multi-step project initiation and monitoring;
- b. Guarantee the in-depth discussion and quality control of the project at the very beginning as well as through the implementation phase;
- c. 'Do not re-invent the wheel' - evaluate and monitor the innovative character of the projects (e.g., involve external experts, apply a multi-step project initiation);

- d. Guarantee more balanced budgets between all project partners, to avoid frustration and lack of motivation;
- e. Avoid "key-in-the-hand" methodologies or tools, i.e. developed or applied only by one partner;
- f. Promote projects with clear objectives and with well defined focus of intervention (avoid projects with interventions in many different fields);
- g. Clearly define the complementarities between the supported projects and other regional complementary interventions;
- h. Think about incentives and instruments which could enhance the quality of the projects with regard to the horizontal objectives (e.g. bonus on funding/ funding rate for extra efforts);
- i. Emphasize more the environmental sustainability dimension - promote the "green growth"

Implementation Phase and Follow-up

2) Check possibilities of cooperation and/or complementarity between the different projects, set incentives to make use of them and monitor them;

3) Build regional 'antennae' to receive information about new developments:

- create/improve the capacities of regions in order to have up-to date information about ongoing trends of regional development on the national and international level;
- improve the skills of the staff in regional development agencies etc. to be able to better use the possibilities of regional development;
- improve the cooperation with the applied researchers and consultants for specific issues of regional development;

4) Envisage to produce and/or to disseminate the innovative results of the Programme in a larger scale/EU level.

- Check the options to participate in or to initiate a capitalization project under the INTERREG IV C framework.

1 Introduction

TOWER ("Towards Sustainable Excellence by Innovating Regions") is a so-called Regional Framework Operation (RFO), funded by the European INTERRE IIIC programme. RFOs are set up as "Mini-Programmes", in order to develop and improve strategies for regional development policies.

TOWER is based on the co-operation of five European Regions: Östra Mellansvige, Schweden, North West England, UK, Gelderland, Netherlands, Del-Alfold, Hungary and Rhône-Alpes, France.

TOWER's main objective is "to create and improve strategies, methodologies and tools for sustainable economic growth, through interregional cooperation"¹. It concentrates on four fields of regional development (components), complemented by the component 'Management and coordination'.

1. Management and Coordination;
2. Strategies for sustainable economic growth in regions;
3. Strengthened technology infrastructure in regions and transfer to SMEs;
4. Competitive and knowledge-based entrepreneurship;
5. Sustainable SMEs/ Greening of entrepreneurship.

The core of the activities of TOWER programme lies in its sub-projects which strive for a unique and innovative combination of tools, all trying to stimulate entrepreneurship and growth within regions. The target groups of the tools are SMEs, universities, research centers/institutes, company associations and other public actors.

The projects are supposed to serve as a kind of laboratory where innovative actions and tools which have already been tested on a regional level will be further elaborated and tested in a European context. The experiences and findings from the sub-projects shall be used to "improve regional strategies"² on the level of the participating regions as well as for inter-regional innovations and (action) learning processes.

Hence, TOWER focuses on three different levels with different tasks:

The *project level* for the development and testing of improved tools for regional development;

The *strategic level* for the development of new tools for strategy shaping based on the findings of project level;

¹ cf. Evaluation of INTERREG IIIC RFO TOWER, tender from 10.10.2005, p. 1

² cf. Evaluation of INTERREG IIIC RFO TOWER, tender from 10.10.2005, p. 1f

The *interregional level* for increased co-operation between the participating regions and enhancement of international exchange of the best practices.

In order to assure the successful implementation of the TOWER programme, a process-oriented evaluation was commissioned to TAURUS-Institute. The overall objective of the evaluation is:

To assess the levels and quality of co-operation and joint working between partners in the TOWER region, and to gauge the impact of the activities financed by Tower.

Within that objective, the evaluation must address certain key questions:

1. Does TOWER improve co-operation between the regional partners and between the regions?
2. Does TOWER improve economic development strategies and programmes?
3. Does TOWER improve methods and tools for stimulating economic growth?
4. Is the TOWER programme effective and efficient in delivering its objectives?

The final report of the evaluation provides the findings and conclusions for all key questions and is structured in the following way. After a presentation of the concept and the methodology in chapter 2, the management of the TOWER programme – an important prerequisite for the delivery of its objectives – is being analysed in chapter 3. The basis for the evaluation of the outputs, results and impacts of the TOWER programme are the activities of the projects. On the level of the projects, we find the most concrete kind of activities which directly yield outputs and results with regard to the objectives of the programme. Therefore, chapter 4 provides brief characterisations and assessments of all projects as a base for the analyses of results and impacts on the strategic and interregional level. Chapter 5 addresses the question whether TOWER yielded innovative tools and instruments for regional development. Then, the evaluation focuses on the effects on regional strategies and programmes (chapter 6), followed by the examination of the ways and benefits in the inter-regional cooperation dimension (chapter 7). Chapter 8 discusses an important issue of all trans-national funding schemes: the added value of inter-regional cooperation. The report concludes with a summary of conclusions and recommendations for the improvement of future inter-regional cooperation.

The final evaluation report includes also the results from the progress report in March 2006 and the feedback report in August 2007.

2 Conceptual Remarks

The final purpose of the evaluation is to answer questions about whether the co-operative approach pursued and tested in the TOWER RFO contributes to amelioration with regard to competitiveness of the businesses in the participating regions, the stimulation of sustainable growth of the regional economy and the competences of the regions to further improve their strategies and positions in the global knowledge economy. Answers to these questions have to be found on all levels: project, strategy and inter-regional co-operation.

The conceptual approach for evaluating the TOWER programme is a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative methods such as indicators for the measurement of outputs and results build the base for further in-depth analyses of the more qualitative effects. As the evaluation was process-oriented, it was designed as an action learning process. Feed-back loops for the presentation and discussion of intermediate results and workshops with the relevant groups of actors ensure the process of learning.

After the kick-off meeting with the TOWER Management Team, the evaluation started with the analysis of documents on the programme and the project level. Thus, the necessary information was gathered to analyse specific aspects such as project selection and assignment of projects to components in more detail. The method of the Bottle-Neck-Analysis was applied with the help of a written questionnaire to examine the network processes in the TOWER partnerships. The Mid Term Conference provided the chance to meet representatives from all projects and to have workshops with them about their expectations and achievements, in particular with regard to inter-regional cooperation. During the final phase of the implementation of the projects, personal or phone interviews were conducted with at least two members of each project, the regional-coordinators and the central management unit of the TOWER programme. In addition, the outputs and results– as far as available as documents, internet-presentations, reports, brochures etc. – built the base to finally assess the results and effects of the TOWER programme. The results were discussed at a meeting of the Management and Steering Committee during the final conference in September 2007. In the cases where there were still doubts with the assessment of the project, we contacted the responsible persons once more in order to reach clarification. The results of the MSC meeting and the update of project outcomes and results are included in the final report.

3 Management and co-ordination

3.1 Bottle-Neck-Analysis Methodology

For the management and co-ordination issues, the following aspects are relevant for the evaluation:

1. Is the TOWER programme effective and efficient in delivering its objectives? Are the management and governance processes appropriate and effective?
2. Are the 'horizontal criteria' effectively delivered through the overall programme management?
3. How is learning transferred from projects to the programme as a whole?
4. How is the overall learning from projects disseminated? Which forms and techniques are being applied, e.g. conferences, seminars, reports, brochures, information on websites etc.?

TAURUS developed the Bottle Neck Analysis (BNA) as an instrument for the evaluation of the network processes in international co-operation projects. The BNA aims to analyse the potential of goal achievements on management issues. Thus, it is an appropriate instrument for a formative evaluation in order to optimize interregional co-operation networks. The focus of the TAURUS Bottle Neck Analysis is on the review of applied instruments, organisational structures and competences of the involved organisations.

The BNA includes six Key Areas defined for the analysis of co-operation on the RFO level, which are listed subsequently.

A. Composition of the partnership

Including: mainly the selection of partner regions and organisations.

B. Communication and information

Including: mainly the information flow and ways of communicating, as well as the dissemination of the results.

C. Working atmosphere

Including: mainly the interpersonal way of communicating and the working atmosphere.

D. Strategic orientation and agreement on common objectives

Including: jointly worked out objectives and strategies to reach these goals.

E. Structure and procedures

Including: mainly the working structures as decision- making and implementing measures.

F. Resources and Management Abilities

Including: mainly the resources used as well as the needed skills.

Those Key Areas are supposed to have strong effects on the success of an interregional co-operation network. The BNA helps to identify strengths and weaknesses of the programme management.

In order to collect information about TOWER management and co-ordination issues, a written survey was conducted in an early phase of the evaluation (in 2006). In addition, specific issues were analysed in phone or face-to-face interviews with all regional coordinators and also with the project partners in a later phase (in 2007). Results of both are presented in the following chapter 3.2.

In the written survey all Regional Coordinators, all Members of the Monitoring and Steering Committee, the Programme Financial Manager and the Programme Coordinator from the 5 TOWER partner regions have been involved. We received feedback from 11 people, the two non-participants had communicated their view with the participating representatives of their region. Details regarding the extent of the survey are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Extend of the survey

Region	No of addressed people	No of returned questionnaires
Östra Mellansvrige (SWE)	5	5
Gelderland (NEL)	2	2
Del-Alford (HUN)	2	1
Rhône-Alpes (FRA)	2	1
North West England (GBR)	2	1
Total	13	11

The questionnaire consisted of two types of questions. One type gave the possibility to assess special issues within a scale of 6 nuances from 1= "not satisfied" to 6 = "very satisfied" or from 1 = " I don't agree" to 6 = " I fully agree) Those questions build the base for the BNA.

The other type of questions gave the opportunity to make qualitative statements concerning a topic. These answers are used for an in-depth analysis of the Key Areas.

The parameter values for the *Key Areas* are calculated as mean values of all answers. This was done step by step starting from the calculation of sub-question values, up to question values and ending with

the Key Area values. For a more detailed analysis, the frequency distribution of the single ratings has been consulted.

The results for the single key areas are described in the following chapters.

3.2 Results from questionnaires and interviews

The overall results in each of the 6 Key Areas do clearly range above the medium value of 3.5. This can be appraised as a very good result. The values for all Key Areas of all Regions are shown in Figure 1: Results of the BNA for all regions, the values by region in figure 2 and table 2. The total mean values for the Key Areas differ from 4.3 as the lowest value for Key Area D "Strategic orientation and agreement on common objectives" up to 5.3 for Key areas C. Working atmosphere, E. Structure and procedures and F. Resources and Management Abilities.

This total range of only 1 point shows all Key Areas lying very closely together in terms of their quality specification. None of the Key areas shows extreme values which would indicate a significant Bottle Neck. Nevertheless, the results indicate possibilities for an enhancement of the TOWER management and co-ordination, which will be clarified in the following.

From two regions, there was only one answer sent. Therefore, the results by region have only a vague signification. Because of this, we will refrain from an analysis per region.

Figure 1: Results of the BNA for all regions

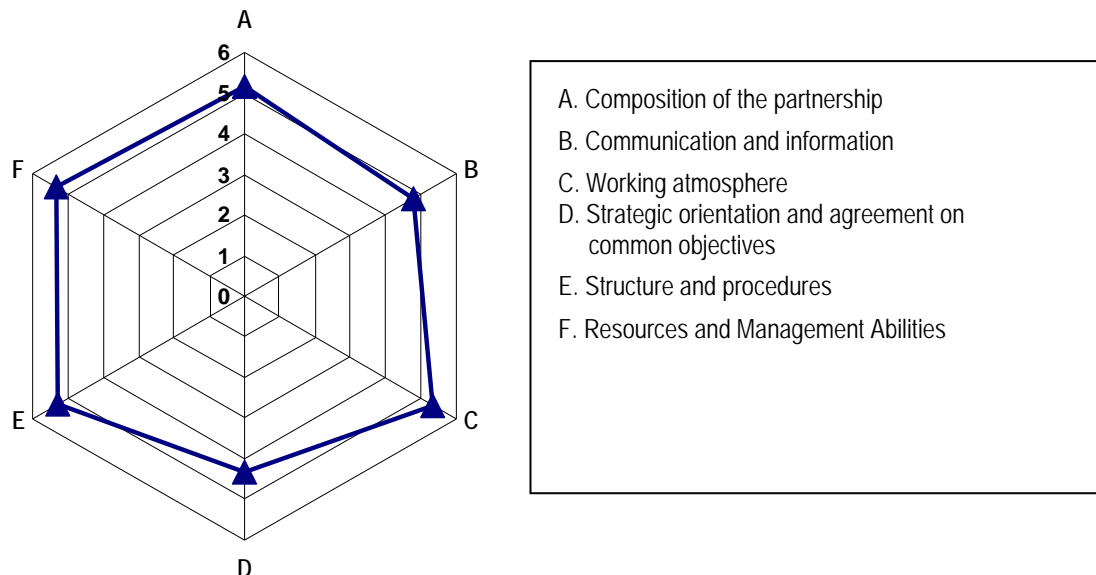
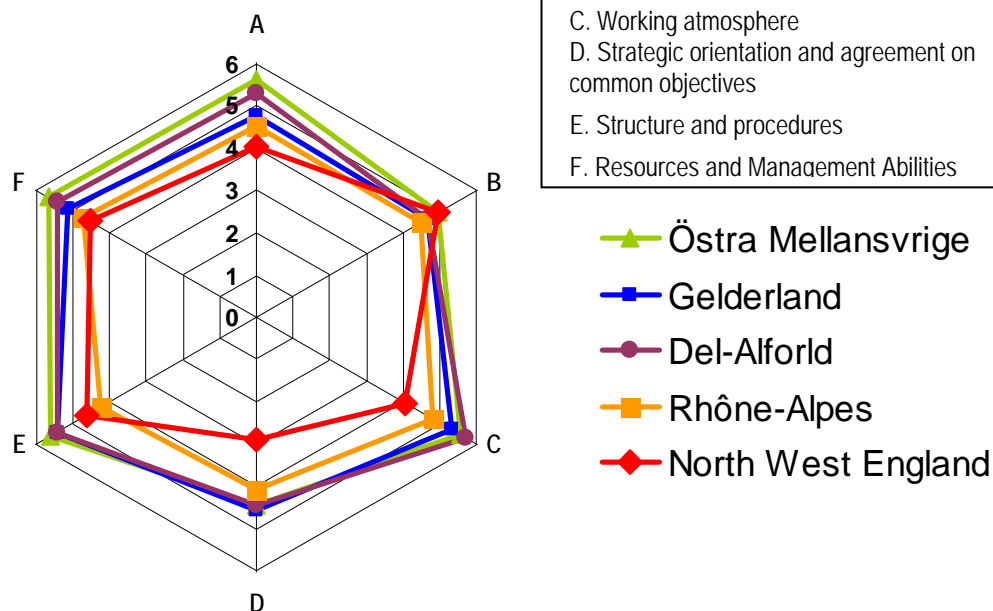


Table 2: BNA results by region

	Östra Mellansvrig	Gelderland	Del-Alford	Rhône-Alpes	North West England	Total
Key Area A	5,6	4,8	5,3	4,5	4,0	5,2
Key Area B	4,9	4,6	4,6	4,5	4,9	4,8
Key Area C	5,5	5,3	5,7	4,8	4,0	5,3
Key Area D	4,4	4,6	4,4	4,1	2,9	4,3
Key Area E	5,6	5,4	5,4	4,2	4,6	5,3
Key Area F	5,6	5,1	5,4	4,7	4,5	5,3

Figure 2: Results of the BNA by region



A Composition of the partnership

The mean value for Key area “A - Composition of the Partnership” is 5.2 which is a very positive result. The satisfaction regarding the composition of the partnership was also corroborated by the project partners during the interviews (see for more detail chapter 7.2).

Concerning the composition of the partnership, the number of 5 partner regions is assessed to be adequate to attain the programme objectives. The “existence of adequate and interested partners” is seen as the most relevant characteristic of the partnership. This aspect was pointed by each of the

interviewed persons. In contrast, no one mentioned "similar administrative structures" as an important aspect for the choice of partner.

On project level, most difficulties were caused by finding project definitions satisfying to all partners, which was mentioned by 8 persons. The gathering of co-financing was only seen as a problem by two persons.

The role of the interviewed persons in the development of projects is to support networks between potential project partners. A "direct contact to the partners" is the most frequently mentioned role, followed by "contacting regional coordinators in order to identify and discuss potential project partners".

The high rating of the Key area "A - Composition of the partnership" showed that, in general, the partnerships have worked well. Nevertheless, there are some aspects which could be improved. These will be presented in the chapter 7 and the corresponding recommendations will be proposed in the chapter Conclusions and recommendations.

B Communication and information

The total mean value Key Area "B - Communication and information" is 4.8. Compared to the other key areas, this is the one with the second lowest parameter value, but it is still highly above the average.

Looking at the different questions of this key area, the lowest satisfaction can be seen in the information flow between the partners. Especially the extent and the speed of the information flow have been rated only 3.

Other aspects which give hints for possible improvements are some notes concerning the accomplishment of the meetings. The arrangement of an appropriate time schedule was sometimes impossible and the meeting minutes were too brief.

The English language capabilities are assessed to be sufficient for the co-operation in TOWER.

Concerning a regular review of the TOWER progression almost everybody stated that the review is taking place regularly, only one person was unsatisfied with the way of reviewing.

The analysis of the minutes of the meetings shows that the progress of the implementation of the projects is reviewed regularly and intensively which seems to be adequate.

The main intermediate information documents on the projects were the semester project reports and in annex the project outputs. From our point of view these have been rather too synthetic to really be able to understand the projects results and specially to be used for transfer of information (specially directed to the regional and strategic level) during the programme implementation and also at the end.

Other aspects which were rated comparably low (around 4), but still higher than the mean value of the scale were dissemination and publicity activities of TOWER, aiming at making the TOWER programme known to potential project partners and at disseminating the Programme to a broader audience interested in TOWER activities and results.

It is recommended in case there may be a successor of TOWER to enforce the publicity and dissemination activities. A more regular publishing of actual news from the projects e.g. in the TOWER newsletter would be helpful in order to provide actual information to a broader audience. Another way of disseminating results from the TOWER programme could be the participation in international conferences concerning INTERREG and SME activities.

C Working atmosphere

The mean parameter value for Key Area "C – Working atmosphere" is 5.3, which is a very good result. The only parameter value under 5 is given for the dependability of information flow among one another with 4.3. This is the only hint for a possible enhancement in this key area.

D Strategic orientation and common agreement on objectives

Key area "D - strategic orientation and common agreement on objectives" is the one with the lowest performance - 4.3, but still in the positive area of the scale.

Eight out of eleven persons had the feeling at the beginning of the project that the objectives and the structure were not clear to everybody. But this problem seems to have been solved during the implementation. In a later phase of the implementation, almost everybody had the feeling that the objectives and structure had become clearer.

Four out of eleven persons saw conflicts or different expectations caused by the different individual objectives of the partners or partner regions. Because the defined objectives were not always considered clearly in the starting phase, the prioritisation of projects with regard to the objectives can differ from one partner to the other. Also the development of projects according to the overall objectives might lead to inefficient discussions if the overall objectives are not commonly agreed on.

Looking at the achievements of the TOWER objectives when the BNA was conducted, a mean value of 4.1 shows a good performance. Concerning this question it has to be emphasized, that the long term objectives like the "improvement of economic growth strategies/programmes" or " the improvement of methodologies and tools for sustainable economic growth" could in that phase of the programme rather be assessed in terms of expectations than in terms of already achieved objectives. The interviews with the project partners and the regional coordinators some months after the BNA have pointed out that

despite the idea that the objectives might have been unclear, the final results showed that the strategic objectives have been achieved in general.

E Structure and procedures

Key area "E - Structure and procedures" shows a very high performance of 5.3. This proves that all partners appreciate the clear allocation of responsibilities and modes of decision-making. For example, the procedure for project selection and assessment is very clear and transparent (see also chapter 3.2).

As mentioned before, a crucial point for the success of the TOWER programme was the safeguarding of the results and the conclusions concerning regional development strategies. The interviews done with the different partners and regional coordinators have shown the impacts of the projects on the regional strategies and the inter-regional co-operation (see chapter 7).

F. Resources and Management Abilities

Key area "F - Resources and Management Abilities" with a mean value of 5.3 shows one of the highest parameter values. The aspects which were rated less positively, but still above the mean value, were the workload (considered very high), the resources and management abilities and the composition of the partnership (respectively 3.9, 4.8 and 4.9). All other aspects of "resources and management abilities" are rated very positively.

3.3 Conclusions from Bottle-Neck-Analysis

1. Is the TOWER programme effective and efficient in delivering its objectives? Are the management and governance processes appropriate and effective?

The results from the BNA, complemented by the interviews and workshops during the Mid Term Conference show that the TOWER Programme was effective and efficient in delivering its objectives. The expected number of 12 projects was implemented. The achievement of objectives on the strategic level and the inter-regional level can also be stated. (Cf. chapter 6 and 7).

The analysis so far proves that appropriate and effective governance processes were established and implemented. Concerning the key areas of governance of interregional co-operations, the importance of the "common agreement on objectives" became obvious. Even when the performance of this key area was very high, a potential for enhancement can be seen according to the common agreement on objectives and the transparent and open discussion of individual objectives of the partner organisations. The progress is hard to make up once the process is running.

2. Are the 'horizontal criteria' effectively delivered through the overall programme management?

See chapter 9.

3. How is learning transferred from projects to the programme as a whole?

This question can be answered by analysing which are the results of the actual TOWER projects that can be of benefit for the drafting of a next TOWER programme. In this regard, as we will see in the coming chapters, we can conclude that there is much learning from the TOWER experience which can now be appropriated in future planning. These benefits or learning are many fold, they start with the projects new methodologies and tools, which in some cases have progressed in a way that they will go on after the ending of the Programme, or potentially will evolve into projects of capitalisation of this experience, e.g., under the new INTERREG; but also, in the identification of what could have been done in a better way and now can be a good basis for the set-up of a new Programme in a more efficient way (e.g., better definition of project objectives, more balanced budgets between the regions).

4. How is the learning from projects disseminated? Which forms and techniques are being applied, e.g. conferences, seminars, reports, brochures, information on websites etc.?

As shown by the BNA Key area B "Communication and Information", the dissemination of TOWER results was assessed to have room for improvement. It has to be mentioned positively that all projects are described on the website and a contact person is nominated. A more regular publishing of the TOWER Newsletter with actual project results and its mailing to the target group of regional stakeholders could have been a good way of dissemination. The development of brochures, the realisation of seminars and conferences was implemented especially in the last months of the projects, and seem to have been very well received by regional stakeholders and target groups. (Cf. chapter 6.1).

3.4 Project Selection Procedure

The Work package on the selection criteria addresses the following questions, proposed in our bid:

1. How are sub-projects chosen in relation to strategies? Is there a clear and transparent selective instrument and procedure which secures that all requirements of the strategy will be taken into account on the project level? What are the outcomes of the project selection process, e.g. how many tenderers applied, how many were accepted and rejected?
2. What are the topics and the individual objectives of the projects? How do the projects cover the components addressed in the strategy? If it is an aim to cover all components, how many projects and which share of the budget can be assigned to the different components?
3. Which target groups have been addressed, which target groups have succeeded with their project proposal?

The method used was mainly based on desk research of the programme related documents, such as the Document "Evaluation of TOWER Sub-project proposals", the manual to support the filling in of the

applications, the minutes of the meetings and the project application forms. We were also participating in one assessment meeting.

3.4.1 Selection Procedure and Criteria

The selection procedure of the TOWER programme is based on the Document "Evaluation of TOWER Sub-project proposals". This document allows the evaluation of the proposals in two steps:

The section A) aims at the "General evaluation on eligibility and relevance of the proposal". Four main themes are analysed: Relevance to component and TOWER Programme; Consistency of the Proposal; Quality of approach, management and partnership; Quality and visibility of results.

The Section B) aims, on one hand, to check the "Compliance with selection criteria" namely on a more general level, by verifying the compliance with overall objectives of the Programme and also at EU level, such as the European value, the contribution to economic growth strategies in partner regions, the links to innovative actions programmes, the mainstreaming of gender equity, integration and youth issues and the durability of results. On the other hand, Section B) verifies if the proposal complies with the specific selection criteria of the components, being verified by two criteria per component.

A final block of criteria is linked to the level of contribution of the subprojects to overall objectives of the TOWER programme, contribution to the EU transversal objectives on equality of chances and sustainable development, the added value from interregional dimension and finally how the results are supposed to be disseminated. A scoring method is used to bring some objectiveness to the selection criteria.

The general selection criteria and the component specific selection criteria are explained in the manual to guarantee that the criteria would be understood in the same way by all partners, thus enhancing the objectiveness of the scoring system.

The selection criteria can be considered in general comprehensive and detailed, important aspects such as the contribution to the programme overall objectives and the contribution to EU horizontal objectives are taken into account.

The projects were also evaluated regarding their contribution to the specific objectives of the component. Here the relation between the Component Specific Selection Criteria and the Component Objectives is in some cases not clear. The Component Specific Selection Criteria, due to the need to have an operational instrument to evaluate the applications, are a synthesis of the component objectives, but this leads to the fact that not all of the component objectives are considered in the selection.

In Component 3 – the strategic focus is on: 1) creating a strengthened technology infrastructure in regions and improving the technology transfer to SMEs; 2) strengthening the competitiveness of SMEs, but the selection criteria are: 1) The degree of company involvement; 2) the innovative character of the cooperation between SME's, Universities and RD Centres.

In Component 4 - the strategic focus is on stimulation of entrepreneurship and implementing new instruments for increasing spin-offs, but the component specific selection criteria considers the methodology to reach new target groups or the degree of networking between the different actors.

The proposals for sub-projects were assessed in meetings where all regions were represented. The strategy until the final approval of an application is characterised by the multi-step character of the rating (preliminary assessment by help of checklist in TMT, open questions returned to applicants, chance to revise proposal, decision on funding in MSC). The support given to the applicants enhanced the chances for a quicker approval of the projects. But on the other side, the interviews with the project partners have shown that for some projects this preliminary preparation was not enough. The differences between the partners' objectives, methods, budget or target groups have caused some losses of efficiency and effectiveness of the projects. Taking into account that the number of proposals has almost allowed the approval of all of them, the selection criteria have been more used to validate the quality of the proposals than to really support a selection between alternative candidates.

There has only been one project rejected - the project TWINSTAR (Technology transfer between research and SMEs), in relation to 13 approvals. The main reason for this rejection was the unclearness of the results thus making it difficult to evaluate the impact and relevance on the overall TOWER objective and component targets.

Summing up: The criteria as well as the procedure for the selection can be assessed as highly appropriate. The organisation of the process with feedbacks and chances to improve the application encourages the participation in European funding programmes such as TOWER and facilitates multi-step learning. Nevertheless, the quality could be improved through a better check of the matching of interests, objectives, target groups and methods.

3.4.2 Assignment of Projects to Components

The following table presents a synthesis of the allocation of projects to the different components. There is a balanced distribution of the number of projects per component - almost all components include 3 or 4 projects.

Some projects have been transferred from the original component in the application form to another. For instance, the projects IWE – Inspiring women entrepreneurs and SOG – Spin-Off Generator were

initially in component 4 and have been transferred, respectively, to components 2 and 3. In the first case, this transfer implies the loss of some internal coherence, since the IWE project aims to support women entrepreneurship, thus it contributes more to the objectives of component 4 than those of component 2.

The general explanation for the transfers were many fold, the first reason was that the project would better fit in a different component than the one identified by the project partners. In the case of the IWE project the main motive was the lack of funding in the most adequate component. But considering that this project contributes strongly to the overall objectives of the programme and addresses the issue of equal opportunities, it seems reasonable to allow some flexibility within the programme in order to integrate such an interesting project which might otherwise be sacrificed because of a lack of funding within a component.

Table 3: Assignment of projects to components of programme

Component	Component 2 Strategies sustainable economic growth	Component 3 Strengthened technology infrastructure /transfer to SME's	Component 4 Competitive and knowledge- based entrepreneurship	Component 5 Sustainable SME's
Projects	AFP, DiBiC, YAB, IWE	ABBA I, InnoCenter, SOG	TOWBUSANG, FEMTO, ABBA II	SIMPLE, EASE, Rural Development

3.4.3 Target Groups

The following table compares the target groups of each component according to the groups, foreseen in the programme manual versus the groups which have been supported.

In Component 2 only regional partnerships and local/regional public authorities were foreseen to be addressed. The analysis of the projects shows that not only these groups have been supported, but also several other groups have benefited from this component, namely: students, coaches, SME's, female entrepreneurs, business supporters/developers.

In Component 3 the target groups according to the manual were more comprehensive: SMEs, universities, research centres/institutes, company associations, other public actors such as local and regional authorities. The target groups addressed correspond almost entirely to the foreseen ones, only the development agencies have also been contemplated.

In Component 4 the target groups presented in the manual were SMEs, trade organisations, universities, public actors, local and regional authorities. The effective beneficiaries included organisations providing support to SMEs; as well as students and teachers.

In Component 5 the target groups were SMEs, environmental consulting firms, industrial research institutes, trade organisations, universities, consumer-organisations, other public actors, local/regional/national authorities. Apart from these groups, also large companies have been contemplated.

Table 4: Overview over the target groups of the TOWER components

Component	Component 2 Strategies sustainable economic growth	Component 3 Strengthened technology infrastructure /transfer to SME's	Component 4 Competitive and knowledge-based entrepreneurship	Component 5 Sustainable SME's
Target groups (manual)	Regional partnerships, local/regional public authorities	SMEs, universities, research centres/institutes, company associations, other public actors local and regional authorities.	SMEs, trade organisations, universities, other public actors, local and regional authorities.	SMEs, environmental consulting firms, industrial research institutes, trade organisations, universities, consumer-organisations, other public actors, local/regional/national authorities.
Sub-project target groups	Most projects refer to all the different target groups. Others: students, coaches, SME's, female entrepreneurs, business supporters/developers.	Most projects refer to all the different target groups. Others: development agencies.	Most projects refer to all the different target groups. Others: organisations providing support to SMEs; students, teachers.	Most projects refer to all the different target groups, Others: large companies.

To sum up, the target groups of the projects approved have been in line with those anticipated in the Programme. The involvement of other groups may be considered as positive, since it shows that the Programme has been able to reach not only the foreseen groups but also others.

4 Project Level

In order to provide an overview about the variety of different projects and their specific outcomes, each project will be characterised briefly on base of a standard format.

The purpose of this project-by-project analysis is to compare the set objectives and planned activities with the level of achievement. After a presentation of the participants of the project and the main motivation to run the project, a preliminary general assessment of the achievement of the set objectives is given. This general assessment concentrates the totality of the impressions and assessments for the various aspects of the project in a grade. Grades range from 0 to 4 *. Grade 0 indicates that the project will fail to reach its objectives and grade 4 indicates that the project will fully reach its objectives.

In addition, we compare in a more detailed way the planned activities and the expected outcomes and results as they were described in the application forms with the real implementation and results achieved so far. The information base for this are the interviews with the project participants, the progress reports of project co-ordinators to TMT and additional reports and internet-presentations which were made available to the evaluation team. This analysis is complemented by the aspects of dissemination activities and the contribution of the project to the horizontal objectives of equality of chances and environmental protection/sustainable development.

* Scale for the assessment of objectives:

- 0 = objectives will not be reached;
- 1 = objectives will only be achieved to a small extent;
- 2 = objectives will be achieved partly;
- 3 = objectives will be achieved to a big extent;
- 4 = objectives will be achieved fully.

4.1 Accelerative Bio Business Activity I+II(ABBA)

(Note: Since both ABBA projects are strongly linked we have considered them always as a single project for the purposes of evaluation)

Project partners	
<i>Name</i> (lead partner in bold letters)	<i>Country of Origin:</i>
CCI Lyon	(F)
Development Agency East Netherlands	(NL)
Universitetsholding i Linköping AB	(SE)

Main Motivation
<p>Business development within Health (Biomedical Life Sciences) has to do with many issues, depending on the specific product/market, technology and the phase of development of the latent or existing company (and product). Within ABBA the different regions want to exchange experiences and learn from differences (caused by the regional circumstances and the development phase of a company or product).</p> <p>This subproject recognizes the problems associated with early business development from idea to incubation.</p>
Achievement of objectives
<p>The initial objectives of the project were: To develop and apply methods/tools to improve commercialization in Life Science for early and late stage SMEs/projects. The question whether starting companies or further developed companies are the target group depends on the region and also on the Part of the ABBA project.</p> <p>Specific targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigating the different circumstances for innovative business development in the distinctive regions; • Screening and selecting the propositions for innovative business development in the regions; • Developing a (uniform) tool to position the different propositions, to define the actual needs for further development and develop a roadmap on how to fulfill these needs. • Applying the tool for the selected propositions and make action plans. • Implementing the action plans within the latent and existing companies/projects, in collaboration with the distinctive entrepreneurs and necessary external partners. • Evaluating the different experiences and results and providing new methodology and tools to contribute to future policies for business development within biomedical life sciences. <p>Objectives achieved: grade 4, scale from 0-4</p>
Implementation of activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accomplishment of local studies and business plan design • Development of business plans • Selection and acquisition of companies • Recruiting of business consultants for individual business cases <p>Stage of implementation: Activities already done, delays, problems Most of the action plans are finished or will be finished soon. (end of August) The conference was</p>

<p>held in July to discuss the results among the project partners. The Report will be ready in the middle of September.</p> <p>There is no relevant delay.</p>
<p>Achievement of expected final outputs and results</p>
<p>Expected:</p> <p>From a methodical viewpoint to learn with workshops, regional conferences, studies, local surveys and other tools about appropriate diagnostic tools (Trans-national diagnostic tool), action plan definition and realisation, talent pool constitution, global evaluation.</p> <p>From a qualitative viewpoint to advance the development and viability of biotech companies, to increase the employment in healthcare sector, to increase the entrepreneurship activities, to ameliorate the viability of the start-ups. Further on an increase of attractiveness in terms of new companies and projects due to the success of the local companies.</p> <p>Achieved:</p> <p>Transfer of competencies, i.e. the competence of bargaining. A network was implemented, there is now relation with persons who do the commercial part.</p> <p>Because there are different cases different needs of the firms have to be identified. The process "identify competences - search for an expert - application of solutions" was elaborated/advanced.</p> <p>For every region between 6 and 8 projects are finished. Some projects already turned into real companies, which is considered as biggest success.</p> <p>The evaluation which measures the impact of the action in the projects for the company business development can be considered as soon as there are more results.</p>
<p>Impact on regional / strategic level</p> <p>Better acknowledgements about the Clusters in the regions. Institutionalized links between SMEs and mortgagees. The developed tool can be given to other actors.</p> <p>Good acceptance in the regions, in France for example it is possible to have a continuation of the project, namely extending the methodologies to other companies, with the support of regional funds.</p>
<p>Dissemination activities conducted</p> <p>Main target in the ABBA project is to spread information to people who care about business development. This was already done in regular meetings and will be done in future. The publicity or already established companies do not care so much about this information. The project was presented on seminars, local press releases have taken place. Most interesting point was to get together local firms for an informative meeting. Especially the action plans which were performed during the project rose big attention under the SMEs.</p>
<p>Contribution to the equality of chances of discriminated groups</p> <p>No specific approach to address this issue.</p>
<p>Contribution to environmental protection/ sustainable development</p> <p>No contribution to environmental protection, and it is too early to say something about the environmental compatibility of the later projects/companies.</p>

4.2 Analysis, Forecasting, Planning (AFP)

Project partners	
<i>Name</i> (lead partner in bold letters)	<i>Country of Origin:</i>
Cumbria County Council	UK
Sörmland Regional Council	SE
Regional Council of Uppsala County	SE
County Administrative Board of Örebro	SE
South Great Plain Regional Development Agency	HU
Development Agency East Netherlands	NL
Lyon Commerce International, WTC Lyon	FR

Main Motivation
<p>The objective of this project is to examine and analyse the processes and mechanisms for the development of regional growth strategies.</p> <p>AFP will study tools and techniques for turning strategies into actions. Within the partner regions, regional toolkits will be developed for improved development strategies. This project is a wide cooperation between all of the five TOWER partner regions; cooperation in which seven partner organisations meet in this project to share experience and improve their work on regional development processes.</p>

Achievement of objectives
<p>The initial objectives of the project were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to improve the understanding between regions of the methods and processes for developing growth strategies to develop toolkits for each region that will demonstrate best practice in the development of strategies and in their implementation to strengthen the links between the Tower regions and partners, to act as a platform for future project development to provide a context for bringing together the learning from all Tower projects, so that Tower becomes truly a 'learning partnership' <p>Objectives achieved: grade 3-4, scale from 0-4</p> <p>Overall objectives achieved (except the functioning of the AFP project as a platform of exchange for all other projects within the TOWER programme).</p>

Implementation of activities
<p>According to the Application Form, the project will focus on 4 work packages, each of them to be conducted on basis of a seminar and a questionnaire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic analysis (where are we now?) Economic visioning and forecasting (where do we want to be in the future?) Action planning (how will we get there?) Regional Governance and Partnerships (who can deliver?) <p>Stage of implementation: Activities already done, delays, problems</p> <p>WP2 questionnaires returned and summarised, WP3 questionnaires returned, WP4 questionnaires circulated to all partners</p> <p>closure of WP1 - report will be part of the good practice guide</p>

<p>1 seminar (WP1) with 11 attendees 1 seminar (WP2) with 36 attendees Small delays respectively expansion of project duration; all work packages concluded by project end.</p>
<p>Achievement of expected final outputs and results</p> <p>Expected: Successful Seminars, Completed work packages (questionnaire for each one), Production of good practice guide, Completed report; Toolkits /Guide demonstrating best practices in the development of strategies and their implementation.</p> <p>Achieved: Quantitative outputs achieved. A variety of different tools were developed in the different regions such as more quantitative analysis (e.g., concept of related variety in Netherlands) or more qualitative methods like scenario techniques. Due to very different framework conditions in the participating regions (e.g. character of the region as rural or agglomeration, political, administrative and legal conditions for planning and promotion of economic development) the transfer of tools and methods from one region to another is difficult. Hence, the project partners came to the conclusion that 'good practice' is something of a redundant concept in regional strategy development. So label was changed to 'final report' which did take into account that tools which are successful in one region have to be adapted to the specific conditions of other regions to make transfer fruitful. A simple copying of tools and methods is very risky and not recommendable. The identification of generic principles for developing regional growth strategies is therefore an important issue for the good practice guide. The recommendations to the target groups take these reflections into account and provide the key findings in a very attractive way which raises the readers' interest to get to know more about the projects findings. Participants appreciate the provision of new ideas, the learning from the different cultural and political/planning background, the broadening of individual perspectives and the enrichment of the personal skills of participants for EU projects as an important result. A culture of mutual learning could be developed. This has stimulated changes for the governance of new regional development plans in the UK and Sweden. <u>Weak points</u> are the bringing together of the ideas and learning from all TOWER projects as well as the findings from the various case studies and methods which are partly inconclusive and cannot be transferred easily. Partly problematic was the different degree of engagement of participants.</p>
<p>Impact on regional / strategic level: New ideas and concept for economic analysis applied in the Netherlands (concept of related variety); facilitates better identification of economic potentials like prospering branches, multi-party collaboration of regional stakeholders implemented (at least in the Netherlands); involvement of regional stakeholders partly successful in seminars, Hungarian and Swedish partners benefited in particular from discussion on governance, such as clearer assignment of priorities on national and regional level.</p>
<p>Dissemination activities conducted Summary report of workshop for WP2 is ready for dissemination (will be circulated to policy-makers); Good practice guide will be disseminated to practitioners; short version of final report (including recommendations) available which will be send to target groups. > target groups have been reached to a high degree</p>
<p>Contribution to the equality of chances of discriminated groups (young people, old people, handicapped, women, minorities)</p>



No specific contribution.
Contribution to environmental protection/ sustainable development
No specific contribution.



4.3 Developing International Businesses in Clusters (DiBiC)

Project partners	
<i>Name</i> (lead partner in bold letters)	<i>Country of Origin:</i>
Development Agency East NetherlandsNV	NL
The County Administrative Board of Sodermanland	SE
Universitas Cooperational Research and Technological Transfer Centre	HU

Main Motivation
This project gives deeper understanding around different methods, strategies and forms of implementation around competitive business clusters and how they may get stronger at the international scene. The members of the clusters and their cluster management teams will get at better understanding of best practices from other parts of Europe during the learning journeys. Gained knowledge and understanding of using different methods and analyses is an important factor that can be used by new cluster initiatives.

Achievement of objectives
<p>The initial objectives of the project were:</p> <p>Understand the processes that lead to new or more dynamic existing clusters.</p> <p>Development of at least two pilot clusters in two regions</p> <p>Gelderland - "Fruit Port Europe"</p> <p>definition of niche / analysis of import and export perspectives, SWOT analysis, interesting products and /or activities are defined on basis of the strengths, markets and future needs. Information of the existing (and missing) activities with respect to cluster formation is collected.</p> <p>Mobilization of relative stakeholders - platform building</p> <p>Analysis how to expand the cluster - technologies, organisations required</p> <p>Hungary - "Vegetable and Flower Gate Europe"</p> <p>Importance Analysis of Highway, definition what kind of effects the implementation of the technology for storing frozen vegetables has</p> <p>Sweden – not focussing on one specific cluster, but on support of existing ones</p> <p>cluster change management activities are focused, try out different methods Communicate those methods to get learning between the cluster initiatives.</p> <p>Visitation of other clusters.</p> <p>Objectives achieved: grade 3-4, scale from 0-4</p>

Implementation of activities
<p>According to the Application Form, the project will focus on</p> <p><i>WP 1: Feasibility studies</i></p> <p>Feasibility report with SWOT analysis (HU & NL), report of the workshop, recommendations and needs of relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>Change Management analyses (Södermanland)</p> <p><i>WP 2: Action Programmes</i></p> <p>Mobilisation private sector (workshops with companies and public authorities)</p>

Inventory is made in which aspects more information has to be collected, which logistic combinations are possible, which new technology is on the market, which land has to be acquired, but also legal aspects, market, platform formation, lobbying, political and financial aspects, etc (HU & NL)

Report: Action plan and programme.

Workshop focusing experiences around the developed methods.

WP 3: Learning Journeys

Report about the philosophy and strategy (methodology), and the process of how these clusters have developed. Special attention to critical success factors.

WP 4: International aspects and exchange of information and experiences:

Establishment of the "Europe Fruit Axis"/ "Europe Vegetable Bridge" (from the Port (NL) up to the Gate (HU).

WP 5: Formulation of blueprints with "script"

A blueprint and the good/best practices from the three successful clusters will be made.

WP 6: Dissemination

A symposium on this will be organized for stakeholders in Hungary.

WP 7: Project management

Project management is done by the Development Agency East Netherlands.

Communication between partners. Notifications of dates/deadline to partners, reporting to the Steering Committee members of TOWER project

Stage of implementation: Activities already done, delays, problems

Feasibility study (for all regions), with workshop for fruitport Europe (information about possible partners in SGP -HU).

SWOT analysis for Fruitport Europe, results workshop fruitport Europe.

Learning journeys.

Study on trade opportunities in fruit and vegetables between the Netherlands and Hungary and the Netherlands and Sweden conducted.

Blue print for detecting and developing regional clusters written by Dutch partner.

Blue print/ manual for developing regional clusters written by Swedish partner.

Analysis of the Fruit Logistics in the river area (BETUWE) written by Dutch partner.

Change Management analyses (Södermanland) conducted and delivery of support.

Action plans for Hungary written, but implementation in very early phase.

Achievement of expected final outputs and results

Expected:

As outputs: feasibility reports, action plans, workshops for the different work packages.

As results: interest of companies to participate in cluster activities, support from industry and government to develop the clusters further .

Achieved:

for Gelderland:

All reports and plans conducted and available; very high level of activity.

All results achieved, activities accelerated the development of the fruit port idea and the fruit cluster much; engagement of businesses and other regional stakeholders like banks, government and support agencies is documented by the signing of the BETUWE 'fruit-pact' between companies and public sector in June 2007, this indicates the willingness to continue activities for cluster development;

<p>also positive unexpected outcomes like new ideas and contacts between Dutch and Hungarian companies for investments on a hub in the fruit/vegetable sector. study visits facilitate important personal contacts and provide new ideas. For Södermanland: Pilots in the field of food processing and marketing successfully run ('food-experience' cluster), development of specific cluster management plans For all partners: study visits facilitate important personal contacts and provide new ideas cultural difference are a source for new ideas and activities as well as for problems <u>Weak points:</u> Common tools not really developed, partners preferred individual approaches, but non-the-less learning from each other; different levels of experience, knowledge and skills between partners; Hungarian partners were not so familiar with cluster development; partly language problems; partnership not satisfactory in all aspects, due to different levels of experience and skills but also due to differences in competences of partners in their specific regional and national contexts.</p>
<p>Impact on regional /strategic level New analytic tools developed and applied for the identification of potentials for clusters in Gelderland; appreciated much by strategy shapers and regional stakeholders, awareness for specific, fruit port oriented cluster activities raised. Impact on strategic level through co-optation of project partners in regional boards who are responsible for development plans and strategies; ideas to improve existing cluster management strategies affected current discussion. Awareness of regional stakeholders for the need and the potentials of inter-regional co-operation increased and fuelled by specific and concrete activities of the project. Support of cluster change management activities in Sweden Learning for Hungarian partners from further elaborated concepts in the Netherlands and Sweden</p>
<p>Dissemination activities conducted A symposium on this will be organized for stakeholders in Hungary. Press conference (HU), with publishing of articles, broadcast in TV with several interviews Information about DiBiC at STand Up (strategic network in biotech) Information on the regional Cluster meeting (SE) > Target groups have been reached</p>
<p>Contribution to the equality of chances of discriminated groups (young people, old people, handicapped, women, minorities) No specific contribution</p>
<p>Contribution to environmental protection/ sustainable development No specific contribution in Gelderland Eco-labelled products in 'food-experience' as positive side-effect (Sweden)</p>

4.4 Experimentation of sustainability actions for enterprises (EASE)

Project partners	
<i>Name</i> (lead partner in bold letters)	<i>Country of Origin:</i>
CCI Lyon	F
Sustainability Northwest	UK
Novum Association	HU
Malardalen University	SE

Main Motivation
This project will broaden and embed sustainable development issues management within SMEs by developing the capacity and competencies of existing business support bodies, networks, intermediaries and sector organizations used by small businesses in order to make management of social, environmental and economic issues a core service to be provided.
Achievement of objectives
The initial objectives of the project were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the knowledge and tools of professional organizations, consultants and other intermediaries; • Assessing the level of sustainable development implementation in regional SMEs; • Collective training of a core group of SMEs; • Communication and dissemination of the SME/sustainable development agenda. <p>Objectives achieved: grade 3, scale from 0-4</p>
Implementation of activities
According to the Application Form, the project will focus on <i>WP 1:</i> assessment of existing tools and training of relevant experts (private and public); <i>WP 2:</i> formulation of an Action Plan, communication to and mobilization of the private sector, (meetings and mail). Implementation of assessments with selected tools (5 to 8 per region). One day seminar on sustainable development and its potential impact on SMEs; <i>WP 3:</i> Best practices exchange clubs and web tools, visiting successful SMEs or institutions with concrete actions in terms of sustainable development. Commercial meetings/matching trips; <i>WP 4:</i> Action plan implementation: collective training program of selected SMEs for implementation of management systems pertaining to Corporate Social responsibility and sustainable development issues; <i>WP 5:</i> Evaluation of the process and PR activities with use of consumer organizations and environmental NGOs (market study, communication, advertising, ...); <i>WP 6:</i> Project information and dissemination of the results.
Stage of implementation: Activities already done, delays, problems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>WP 1</i> - Difficult to find consultants who want to become experts in the subject of social responsibility, the market not sufficient (the only possibility is that this training is a complement to other expertise, e.g., in the field of environment), but done 2 training with 16 participants.

- *WP 2* - Expected 25 assessments, according to the planned. Raising awareness, e.g., 65 SME's in France and around 17 in the United Kingdom.
- *WP 3* - Web tools were not created because it was not necessary - the information is disseminated on the web sites of the partners. Best practices exchange clubs established in France, United Kingdom, Hungary (although more difficult to involve companies) and Sweden.
- *WP 4* - Training of selected companies: had to be adapted to the characteristics of the different regions, in France 65 companies took part, good exchange of ideas and contents. this activity will also take place in the United Kingdom. In Hungary it was more difficult.
- *WP 5* - In France it is difficult to articulate SME's with NGOs such as consumer organisations (no tradition of cooperation); in the United Kingdom it was easier.

Small delay: project to be finalised in October instead of September, to guarantee the reinforcement of dissemination activities.

Difficult to obtain results in only 18 months, the raising of awareness regarding sustainable development issues and the mobilisation of companies to be more sustainable or to have a higher social responsibility is a long-term process (returns are not tangible or not immediate).

In France, in the CCI, there were no experts in sustainable development, need to work with an external NGO.

Achievement of expected final outputs and results

Expected:

Increased SME knowledge of sustainable development concepts;

Increased knowledge of sustainable development concepts by consultants;

Transregional methodology for sustainable development implementation in SMEs;

Dissemination of sustainable development concepts;

Assessment of consumer and NGO expectations (market study); Partnerships between NGOs and/or consumer organizations.

Achieved:

Raise of awareness regarding sustainable development practices within SME's or institutions (e.g., also in the CCI de Lyon) or in some regions (e.g., France or Hungary) were these themes were not so relevant.

Good participation of companies in the workshops. Lots of dissemination materials sent out to companies (1000 flyers in Hungary).

The idea of Best practice clubs on sustainable development existed already in France, so it was easier to transfer this experience to the other partners.

Although not planned, it was possible to establish a best practices club at European level.

High mobilisation of regional stakeholders to the workshops.

Weak points:

Still a lot of work to be done regarding this theme, in particular in the two regions where it was not so developed, but having to face the constraint that companies focus on the short term, for them it is difficult to see the advantages of having sustainable policies.

Difficult to mobilise business consultants to become also experts on sustainable development and

<p>social responsibility. Cooperation between NGOs and companies is not easy.</p>
<p>Impact on regional / strategic level Strategic level: New tools applied in some regions (e.g., Hungary). Improvement of tools in regions that were more advanced regarding these issues (e.g., Sweden, France). Raising awareness in the regions regarding the benefits deriving from taking into account sustainable development issues within the firms/institutions.</p> <p>Regional level: Strengthen or establishment of links to regional stakeholders.</p>
<p>Dissemination activities conducted Workshops. Seminars. Information on the partners websites. Regional conference meetings between partners and SIMPLE project partners. Press releases to be done when the project is finished, managers will take part on these press releases and talk about their successful experiences.</p>
<p>Contribution to the equality of chances of discriminated groups (young people, old people, handicapped, women, minorities) It was not an aim in itself, but will have positive impacts: First, the raising of awareness regarding the social responsibility of companies will contribute to the increasing of the equality of chances; Second, the NGO giving support to the project has presented to the companies a Charta for companies on diversity and non discrimination.</p>
<p>Contribution to environmental protection/ sustainable development Direct contribution: training of business advisors on sustainable development; raising awareness of companies in regard to these issues; dissemination of the concept of sustainable development.</p>

4.5 Fuelling Entrepreneurial Mindsets in the TOWER Region (FEMTO)

Project partners	
<i>Name</i> <i>(lead partner in bold letters)</i>	<i>Country of Origin:</i>
(Uppsala University)*	SE
(Business Link for Cumbria (BLC))*	UK
Cumbria Business Education Consortium	UK
Mjölbi Kommun	SE
young enterprise	UK
Future seeds	SE

*Partners in brackets left project

Main Motivation
stimulate entrepreneurship by fuelling entrepreneurial mindsets (interaction with all TOWER regions) Develop (& deliver) best practice and specific tools to encourage entrepreneurial mindsets, particularly amongst younger entrepreneurs.
Achievement of objectives
The initial objectives of the project were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify existing practices in delivering entrepreneurship. • Source and interview real business entrepreneurs to identify common threads and success measures. • Facilitate focus groups of young people to identify perceived challenges in starting a business and to highlight what inspires them. • Develop models/activities/workshops to assist the delivery of entrepreneurship <p>Objectives achieved: grade 3, scale from 0-4</p>
Implementation of activities
According to the Application Form, the project will focus on: Identifying practices, Source and interview, Facilitate focus groups (6 groups), Develop models/act. (Final report (1); Workshops (4)), Meetings steering group (4)
Stage of implementation: Activities already done, delays, problems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with 304 business to establish support for placement opportunities • 3 local business facilitated the event to increase knowledge amongst 152 student, 7 teachers • CBEC presented project at TOWER meeting in Amsterdam • Mjölbi & FutureSeeds visited England (discussion of project objectives) • website, young people radio broadcast³ • 1000 students involved in this project aspect • questionnaire survey with 900 responses from business (information about young people skills and skill needs) • part of activities was not planned, but developed during the course of the project
Achievement of expected final outputs and results

<p>Expected: Increased knowledge amongst young people (100 students participating), Increased knowledge amongst teachers (10 teachers participating), Increased awareness amongst enterprises and entrepreneurs (10 businesses participating), Improved expertise in support of entrepreneurship activities (4 new organisations)</p> <p>Achieved: Development of models for delivery of entrepreneurial mindsets was not in the focus, more the exchange and transfer of ideas and methods and the adjustment to the specific needs of the partners; Tools were already available in UK, activities focussed more on the application in order to provide practical experience for students and teachers, both groups were very content with outcome, in particular the Swedish group who visited the UK; Study visit of Swedish group lead to inspirations and high motivation amongst teachers and students to apply tools for stimulating entrepreneurial mindsets and to bring these ideas to Sweden, internal network between Swedish teachers was founded; Learning in support organisations took place; Awareness in target groups was raised .</p> <p><u>Weak points:</u> Purpose of project was not clear enough at the beginning; Lead partner left project, other partners changed as well; Composition of partnership not well enough planned at the beginning, also discontentment with role and share of budget of some partners; Activities could not all be carried out as planned; Dissemination via website insufficient (by 17. November 2007)</p>
<p>Impact on regional / strategic level Bringing together adults from real businesses and young students who are interested in entrepreneurship raised awareness among regional stakeholders for the importance of the entrepreneurial mindsets Placement of students into real businesses improved awareness and direct mutual experience between businesses and students as well</p>
<p>Dissemination activities conducted Website as good promotion tool but it is in early stages of development. Media coverage obtained for the radio project in the local paper which has 15000 copies to the local community. Swedish partner disseminated attractive newsletter</p>
<p>Contribution to the equality of chances of discriminated groups (young people, old people, handicapped, women, minorities) Tools applied take into account gender differences in interests, e.g. that specific measures are helpful to stimulate girls interest in technological things.</p>
<p>Contribution to environmental protection/ sustainable development No specific contribution</p>

4.6 Innovationcenter (InnoCenter)

Project partners	
<i>Name</i> (lead partner in bold letters)	<i>Country of Origin:</i>
CCI Lyon	FR
Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Békés County	HU
Eurofocus Cumbria Ltd	UK

Main Motivation
InnoCenter aims to develop Innovation Centres which will serve as a strategic contact point for the provision of advanced innovation services to SMEs.
Achievement of objectives
<p>The initial objectives of the project were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developing innovation practices in SMEs by : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A better communication regarding the proposed services : The Innovation Centre is the central point of contact to be involved in the local network of innovation and to discover all the services offered by each partner. • Expertise on specific markets by a clustering approach, in order to be more efficient and to deliver the keys of innovation to SMEs. • Acting as consultants through face-to-face contact : assessment, proposal, networking to help SMEs in the engineering and development of their new products. 2. Offering specific services : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prospective - R&D : building a prospective centre with technological experts to deliver the keys of innovation on specific markets. • Human Resources : consultants to give advices to SMEs and organise the day-to-day life of the Innovation Centre. <p>Objectives achieved: grade 3-4, scale from 0-4</p>
Implementation of activities
<p>According to the Application Form, the project will focus on</p> <p>WP1 - General and technical specifications of an innovation centre, WP2 - Strategic and functional analysis of the services offered, WP3 - Consulting approach, WP4 - Physical prototype of innovation centre, WP5 - Developing the concept in the regions, WP6 - Coordination of the project, Communication between partners. Notifications of dates/deadline to partners, reporting to the Steering Committee members of TOWER project</p> <p>Stage of implementation: Activities already done, delays, problems In France all activities done - Innocenter has opened already.</p>

In Hungary and United Kingdom the partners are working on WP 6 - adaptation of the guidelines to the specificities of the regions.

Achievement of expected final outputs and results

Expected:

As outputs: One Pilot Innocenter in France. Preparation of the basis (Guidelines) for the installation of Innocenters in the other two regions

As results: reinforcement of the role of the local network; to provide diagnostic of SMEs; to develop a consulting programme; to disseminate the concept of Innocenter.

Achieved:

for France:

Innocenter has been opened to the public. All outputs have been delivered.

Results:

In France: Reduction of spontaneous contacts asking for information and instead increase of contacts through the new network. Those who come to the Innocenter have really interest to have specific innovation services, vs. before the existence of the Innocenter, where people came to the CCI for support without having anything specific in mind.

Recognition and improvement of the CCI role as a contact partner for innovation services.

Development of a new model to provide services (single "Guichet"/contact point) which may now be used for other domains, e.g., environment.

Negative results: concurrence with the Regional Agency for Innovation, so the later has to adjust its innovation services (e.g., to focus on the transfer of technology).

for Hungary:

Adapting the guidelines to national particularities. Not foreseen to implement one Innocenter soon - no financial capacity. But knowledge how to do it, so it may be possible in the future.

Starting of a new network project adapting the Innocenter methodologies.

For United Kingdom:

The participant role was a bit more limited due to the low level of funding. Still the partner gathered information about the regional structure, base for a potential implementation of a regional Innocenter.

Weak points:

Partnership not completely satisfactory due to the different level of involvement in the project, as a consequence of lack of funding in the United Kingdom and in Hungary for the physical implementation of the Innocenter.

The definition of the tools/methods was mainly done by the French lead partner, thus the guidelines provided to set up a Innocenter could not be fully applied to the other regions due to the different economic frameworks. Therefore, the guidelines had to be revised to be adjusted in the other regions, with a loss of efficiency in the project development.

<p>Impact on regional / strategic level</p> <p>Impact on regional level: in France: Strong impact on regional level: creation of a new equipment providing support to SMEs. In the other countries impact not so obvious, maybe in Hungary in the future.</p> <p>Impact on strategic level: In France: Multiplication of the project within the innovation domain (other CCI in the region will adopt the same model) but also potentially for other domains (e.g., environment). In Hungary: The Innocenter is the base to start a new project to set-up a network/cluster of industrial machinery.</p>
<p>Dissemination activities conducted</p> <p>In France: Innocenter opening event with many guests. Dissemination of the project through the CCI magazine and leaflets.</p> <p>In Hungary information to SMEs will take place when the guidelines are finished. Dissemination through mailing lists and letters to associates.</p>
<p>Contribution to the equality of chances of discriminated groups (young people, old people, handicapped, women, minorities)</p> <p>No specific contribution.</p>
<p>Contribution to environmental protection/ sustainable development</p> <p>In France no specific contribution, but many of the companies that are supported focus on environmental technologies.</p>

4.7 Inspiring Women Entrepreneurs (IWE)

Project partners	
<i>Name:</i> (lead partner in bold letters)	<i>Country of Origin:</i>
Voluntary Action Cumbria	UK
Norrköpings Kommun	SE
Länsstyrelsen i Örebro län	SE
Action'elles	FR

Main Motivation
<p>The purpose of the project will be to encourage long term co-operation and mutual learning between women entrepreneurs and persons from a range of private/public and social women's enterprise support structures across 3 regions of Europe through an innovative series of trans national, inter-regional and regional workshops over 18 months.</p> <p>These workshops will offer a continuum of peer-to-peer support and promotion of female entrepreneurial mindsets, exposure to good practice, a platform for the sharing of ideas, experience and knowledge and the development of management and workplace skills and abilities through action learning. A good practice guide aimed at improving the effectiveness of policies and instruments aimed at supporting entrepreneurs will be produced and disseminated widely.</p>
Achievement of objectives
<p>The initial objectives of the project were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To run a sensitive, flexible and dynamic process over 15-18 months for developing regional and trans national partnerships and person to person networking for inspiring female entrepreneurs and persons from the support structure to extend and improve female entrepreneurship. • To exchange experiences, knowledge and ideas between female entrepreneurs and business supporters/advisers from local and regional levels in North West England – Cumbria, France - Rhône Alpes and East Central Sweden – the municipality of Norrköpings and the county of Torero. • To run a series of workshops/lectures/ activities designed to inspire women entrepreneurs and representatives from the support structure at local, regional and trans national levels to develop female owned businesses and to keep up and boost their and the female entrepreneurial spirit. • To maintain sustainable regional and transnational networking between the entrepreneurs involved and public/private partners. • To improve the effectiveness of policies and instruments for female entrepreneurship in local and regional development. • Exchange of Experiences between regions (best practice)
Objectives achieved grade 3-4, scale from 0-4
Implementation of activities
<p>According to the Application Form, the project will focus on initial planning event, development work, Pre launch/ baseline questionnaire,</p>

transregional and regional activities (12 regional workshops with 114 participants),
3 transnational workshops,
Evaluation and documentation
1 Project report/good practice guide

Stage of implementation: Activities already done, delays, problems

2 transnational workshops conducted, one in SE attracted media attention
subsequent interim meetings;
Lectures to partners of Action'elles;
information to organisations, attendance at regional/ national events;
formation of web based forum for communication between entrepreneurs;
small delays, but all work packages will be concluded by the end of project.

Achievement of expected final outputs and results

Expected:

- Increased entrepreneurial mindset, knowledge and skills of female entrepreneurs
- Increased expertise in entrepreneurial support and cooperation between business supporters
- Legacy contribution through strengthened, sustainable transnational networks and dissemination of good practice guide to other business supporters
- encourage female entrepreneurship and strengthen support networks, make local and national businesses more aware of female entrepreneurship

Achieved:

Good practice guide..

Copies of questionnaires for internal evaluation respectively synthesis of results sent.

Proof for increased entrepreneurial mindset, knowledge and skills of female entrepreneurs by participation in workshops and self-evaluation by questionnaires which were applied after each workshop, only little drop-out of participants;

participants are content to a high degree with the outputs and results of the project, for many participants the first chance to exchange experiences on the international level

Process oriented proceeding facilitated focusing on the needs and the delivery of services and support for the practical problems of the participants (such as marketing, finance for SMEs, accounting)

Regional as well as interregional networks have been established and seem to have the potential for future common activities, positive impact through encouragement and inspiration

Combination of (network) external consultants and internal experiences and skills from existing female entrepreneurs has proved successful

Cultural differences between participating partners and language problems were a big challenge and caused problems as well as new ideas and a better mutual understanding

Weak points:

Not all potential participants could be involved due to financial restrictions

no regulations for the decision taking in cases of conflicts between project partners were defined, should be established for future projects

no contacts to TOWER Business Angels project which had focus on finance for SMEs

Impact on regional /strategic level

Impact on strategic level through networking in informal as well as formal contacts and talks to regional strategy shapers and stakeholders such as representatives from chambers, rural affairs

<p>organisations etc</p> <p>View on the female potential for entrepreneurship has been influenced positively so that now it is getting a more serious issues for regional development plans and support activities</p>
<p>Dissemination activities conducted</p> <p>Several workshops attracted media attention, Good practice guide, Press promotion, Face-to-face presentations.⁴ web site for electronic communication between participants</p> <p>> target groups have been reached</p>
<p>Contribution to the equality of chances of discriminated groups (young people, old people, handicapped, women, minorities)</p> <p>Important contribution because women were in the centre of the project; but also involvement of women from ethnic minorities</p>
<p>Contribution to environmental protection/ sustainable development</p> <p>Positive impacts due to the promotion of regionally and partly organically produced goods, unintended side-effect</p>

4.8 Rural development

Project partners	
<i>Name</i> <i>(lead partner in bold letters)</i>	<i>Country of Origin:</i>
Unicotech	HU
OOSTNV	NL
Cumbria County Council	UK
Main Motivation	
Development of competitiveness and sustainability for SMEs in rural areas by forming and enlarging innovation clusters. The strategic focus of the project is to strengthen the competitiveness and viability of SMEs in regions by adapting sustainable development concepts, create a joint knowledge basis for SMEs environmental performance by collecting regional best practice, identify and test tools for support of environmental improvement and marketing of sustainability among SMEs.	
Achievement of objectives	
The initial objectives of the project were: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exchange and collection of Best Practises of clusters of SMEs within the framework of international cooperation in three regions. 2. Creating a joint knowledge basis in cooperation with university research centres. 3. Forming and developing successful bridges between knowledge centres and regional market players: producers and users. 4. Establishment and enlargement of the clusters in all of the three regions. <p>Objectives achieved: grade 3, scale from 0-4</p>	
Implementation of activities	
According to the Application Form, the project will focus on <i>WP 1</i> : Formulation of targets of development of supporting sustainable innovation clusters for SMEs in rural areas. <i>WP 2</i> : Collection and exchange of practice. <i>WP 3</i> : Formulation of feasibility studies of joint knowledge basis for development of competitiveness and environmental sustainability of SMEs in rural areas. <i>WP 4</i> : Forming and enlarging SME clusters in rural areas. Organisation of meetings for SMEs to get acquainted with the knowledge basis. Selection and future development of know-how. <i>WP 5</i> : Dissemination Symposium with report, which will be disseminated by newsletters and website. The production of a film (DVD) together with the other participants about rural development in the three regions. Production of an interactive website. <i>WP 6.</i> : Project management Stage of implementation: Activities already done, delays, problems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All activities concluded. No problems during the project development: 5 action plans developed for the 5 clusters. List of best-practices done. Production of DVD. 	

Achievement of expected final outputs and results

Expected:

Outputs:

1 strategy study + 1 integrated master plan + 1 list of recommendations + 1 feasibility study for each region. 8 declaration of intention in total. One symposium, including report. One DVD. One website.

Achieved:

Outputs:

All outputs achieved, except the website (still to be concluded until the end of the Programme). In Netherlands creation of a "Knowledge centre" and a "Rural park". In Hungary consolidation of the pig cluster.

Results:

The Rural development project consists of one sub-project per country. In the Netherlands this sub-project is part of a wider project: the Protein Highway project, in Gelderland, consisting of 13 actions. Of these, only 5 are supported by the TOWER, so it is difficult to isolate the effects of the TOWER programme.

Sharing of experiences regarding animal cluster development, the Rural park sub-project has a common approach in the Netherlands and Britain; Hungary and Netherlands share experiences regarding a pig cluster.

There have been some non-expected positive achievements, namely that the strong collaboration between the countries, lead to the exploration of production complementarities within the "pig cluster", mainly between the Netherlands and Hungary.

The pig cluster companies in the Netherlands and in Hungary will start cooperation in the field of pig breeding, exploring the specific climate and technical advantages of each country. The project will also integrate a component of production of biogas.

Also a further cooperation between Hungary and the UK may be the breeding of an almost extinguished wild boar.

Finally, the Dutch partners learned about the Hungarian research on microorganisms which can be used to have a more efficient production of biogas.

An important result of this project is its continuation after the ending of the TOWER programme. The institutions and the companies in the clusters have established a long lasting cooperation and have already planned new common activities.

Weak points:

The link between the projects is not completely clear, specially regarding the activities outside the animal clusters

In the Netherlands it is difficult to identify the specific results of the support from the TOWER Programme in relation to the other parallel projects.

The British partner was changed in the beginning, this implied a certain delay which by now has been overcome.

Impact on regional /strategic level

<p>In Netherlands the project helped to identify trends regarding the local cluster development and to provide recommendations for its improvement. These recommendations have been adopted by the local Government. In Hungary two Deputy Mayors, as a recognition of its importance for economic development, have supported the project and hosted the project closing conference.</p>
<p>Dissemination activities conducted DVD is a very successful way of dissemination, allowing to reach new stakeholders.</p>
<p>Contribution to the equality of chances of discriminated groups (young people, old people, handicapped, women, minorities) No specific contribution expected. In Netherlands, there is an indirect contribution - the promotion of familiar farms within the project, supports in particular the activity of women and young people.</p>
<p>Contribution to environmental protection/ sustainable development Some of the Rural development sub-projects include specific measures addressing the resolution of environmental problems, e.g., elimination of liquid manure to produce biogas and also potential reduction of energy consumption. However as one of the results of the cooperation within the pig cluster is the transfer of newborn piglets from the Netherlands to Hungary to grow, and then to bring them back into the Netherlands, having as a consequence the negative environmental impacts of the transport, the final net result is not clear.</p>

4.9 Successful Implementation of Eco-design in Small and Medium-sized Companies (SIMPLE)

Project partners	
<i>Name</i> (lead partner in bold letters)	<i>Country of Origin:</i>
Uppsala CAB	(SE)
Lancaster University (LancU)	(UK)
Östergötland CAB	(SE)
Main Motivation	
The principle aim of the SIMPLE project is to develop eco-design methodologies and approaches (product development with the aim to reduce environmental impact), and to facilitate implementation and use in small and medium-sized enterprises (SME's).	
Achievement of objectives	
The initial objectives of the project were: Develop eco-design methodologies to facilitate implementation and use in an SME (or group of SMEs). The development is rapid and SME's have problems with keeping up the front in eco-design. This means that the need for external expertise is high. The support can be e.g. advice, education, financial incentives and network creation.	
Specific targets:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to run eco-design projects in SME's in the participating regions (25 total); • to describe good examples of eco-design activities for marketing; • to create networks between different actors with an interest in eco-design; • to increase interest for eco-design among business development personnel in general; • further develop working methodologies and approaches for stimulating eco-design activities in SME's. 	
Objectives achieved: grade 4, scale from 0-4	
Implementation of activities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening and selection of companies • National network meetings • Support of individual product development project and development of methodology • Development of new software • Test of software and individual support • Screening and selection of new companies and final testing • International networking, SIMPLE • International networking, SIMPLE and EASE • Writing of book/publication • External evaluation, auditing and reporting 	
Stage of implementation: Activities already done, delays, problems	
Start Up meeting, Joint meeting with EASE on mid term conference	
translation of software for eco-design into English	
International networking event in Blackpool (with SME's)	
Journey of Lancaster University to Linköping - to learn about teaching sustainability	

<p>Start of individual product development project at SME's Lancaster University - 5 projects finalized 22 committed companies, 14 projects started 4 of 5 planned networking events scheduled > most activities have been conducted, only minor changes Software has to be developed for a web based use, which was not originally foreseen but can be considered as improvement External evaluation has to be conducted</p>
<p>Achievement of expected final outputs and results</p>
<p>Expected: Committed companies, New/improved product/process concepts, Improved methodology, Progress reports, Final report, Journal/Conference paper, Events for attendance by participating SME's, SIMPLE Project partner meetings, EASE-SIMPLE Project partner meetings, Evaluation and audit report</p> <p>Achieved: More than 25 SME's run eco-design projects in the participating regions; 15 companies have finished some kind of project such as new product development, technical solution in production process, improved equipment for organic farming, recycling bin, prototype of eco-friendly chair) Methodologies and approaches for stimulating eco-design activities were developed further and finally designed as web based tool; Close co-operation between partners Partners assess study visits and following exchange in teaching and research possibilities as very precious Conference papers and publications in journals indicate appreciation of results in scientific community Business support organization such as ALMI in Sweden will contribute to dissemination of project results and tool for eco-design Interest for eco-design among business development personnel was enhanced through concrete Co-operations and strict orientation of advice to SMEs according to their individual needs Networking between different actors with an interest in eco-design were created resp. strengthened on the regional, national and international level Joint venture between Swedish and British companies foreseeable Participating SMEs are very content</p>
<p>Impact on regional / strategic level SIMPLE project was already derived from present regional growth programme in Sweden which has a focus on environmental innovation and product development respectively in line with regional economic strategies in UK; outcome of SIMPLE will contribute to strengthening of this strategies and – inter alia - lead to the establishment of an environmental technology centre in Swedish region; by this, it also contributes to the objective of the component 'Sustainable SMEs' to create new infrastructures; SIMPLE has contributed to a rise in awareness that eco-technologies and products in SMEs and their support through the public sector can be an important module in a regional economic strategy; awareness also increased among the participating SMEs</p>
<p>Dissemination activities conducted Committed companies, New/improved product/process concepts, Journal/Conference paper, Events</p>

for attendance by participating SME's, SIMPLE Project partner meetings, EASE-SIMPLE Project partner meetings
Contribution to the equality of chances of discriminated groups (young people, old people, handicapped, women, minorities) No specific contribution
Contribution to environmental protection/ sustainable development Big contribution because eco-friendly product design is in the centre of interest

4.10 Spin Off Generator (SOG)

Project partners	
<i>Name</i> (lead partner in bold letters)	<i>Country of Origin:</i>
Development Agency East Netherlands	NL
Chamber of Commerce of Lyon	FR
Novum Association	HU

Main Motivation
Goal of this project is stimulating entrepreneurship of employees within SME's and creating awareness within SME's that generating spin-offs contribute to the innovative capacity of the company. This will be done by the development of tools and methodologies to stimulate and support spin-offs: based on experience and based on current needs of companies. Furthermore, spin-off scans and workshops will be carried out and organisations will be involved to support spin-offs in this project.

Achievement of objectives
The initial objectives of the project were: Stimulate regional economic growth and the creation of more jobs with the "Spin-off Generator", by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stimulation of entrepreneurship of employees within SME's; • stimulation of spin offs from SME's; • aligning organisations to facilitate spin-offs.
Objectives achieved (forecast): grade 3, scale from 0-4

Implementation of activities
<p><i>WP 1: Analysis of current needs</i> analysis of current needs of organisations; Current projects for stimulating spin-offs will be studied and translated to small and medium sized companies. This workpackage leads to a list of current needs of companies.</p> <p><i>WP 2: Development of tools, workshops and activities</i> Development of tools, workshops and activities to stimulate spin-offs - involvement of regional stakeholders / specialists. The relevant organisations will also be involved in the development and implementation.</p> <p><i>WP 3: Implementation spin-off stimulation</i> Implementation of the developed tools, workshops and activities in WP2. (workshops for at least 50 companies)</p> <p><i>WP 4: Spin-offs SCANS and support</i> Twelve companies get support with a spin off scan to develop possibilities within the company for the generation of spin-offs. Four spin-offs will be identified who get support. This spin-offs will be facilitated by (depending on needs): writing a business plan, finding capital for starting, developing relationship with the parent firm, etc.</p>
Stage of implementation: Activities already done, delays, problems

<p>All workpackages until the WP 3 are concluded: 2 successful regional workshops in both countries, One extra workshop in Hungary..</p> <p>WP 4: 6 companies scanned - 2 in the Netherlands + 2 foreseen; 2 in Hungary. Support to the creation of 2 spin-offs, the remaining 2 will probably be supported in 2008. One successful spin-off.</p>
<p>Achievement of expected final outputs and results</p>
<p>Expected:</p> <p>Understanding of the needs of companies and starting spin-offs and the ways to stimulate entrepreneurship; Tools, methodologies aimed at more and better spin-offs; Structure of organisations stimulating SME's and spin-off's, using the tools and methodologies. Companies gaining understanding of their own capabilities to stimulate entrepreneurship and spin offs. Final knowledge transfer, evaluation & dissemination</p> <p>Achieved:</p> <p>Methodologies are developed and are now being tested. More than 50 companies in both countries have been contacted. Netherlands: 6 scans done. Hungary: 14 scans. 2 companies being supported in both countries. Netherlands at least one spin-off created. Hungary two. Reinforcement of the relation with other regional actors, specially R&D institutions and Universities. Regional actors very interested on the results and want to support complementary projects. Companies who participate are also satisfied with the results.</p> <p><u>Weaknesses:</u></p> <p>Although it was clear from the beginning that the French partner, due to his higher experience, would provide the methodology and have a coaching role, it was difficult during the period of implementation of the Programme to apply this methodology in the other countries. But in the future in Hungary, there is the expectation to apply the French methodology in other project. In the beginning, in the Netherlands difficult to mobilise the planned number of companies to be scanned In Hungary no problems.</p>
<p>Impact on regional / strategic level</p> <p>The method developed seems to be an innovative way of promoting new IT companies. The strategic actors are very interested in the project results and consider to support a new project aiming at the testing of this methodology within other sectors (e.g., environment).</p>
<p>Dissemination activities conducted</p> <p>Main activity was the direct contact with more than 50 companies to ascertain their interest to participate in the project (activity only done in Netherlands and in Hungary). Production of leaflets to disseminate the project.</p>
<p>Contribution to the equality of chances of discriminated groups (young people, old people, handicapped, women, minorities)</p> <p>No specific contribution. But young people have more chances to be addressed by the project than older people, because they have more IT know-how.</p>
<p>Contribution to environmental protection/ sustainable development</p> <p>2 potential spin-offs are in the field of renewable energies.</p>

4.11 Tower Business Angels Network (TOWBUSANG)

Project partners	
<i>Name</i> (lead partner in bold letters)	<i>Country of Origin:</i>
Eurofocus Cumbria	UK
CCI Lyon	F
EU Mentor	HU

Main Motivation
To fill the knowledge gap in investment opportunities by analysing existing funding structures and investment needs in the partner regions
Achievement of objectives
<p>The initial objectives of the project were: Increase SMEs knowledge about their opportunities for inward investment and to improve expertise support. The project will develop an Investment Structure Model and will create the space to engage SMEs and the Business Angels Network in pilot applications. To develop an integrated business angels network for SMEs in 3 Tower regions, and to interact with all Tower regions in delivering the benefits. The project will bring collaboration, partnership and best practice between EU regions.</p> <p>Objectives achieved: grade 2-3, scale from 0-4</p>
Implementation of activities
<p>According to the Application Form, the project will focus on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying existing funding infrastructure at regional, national and EU level. - Defining EU and global opportunities for inward investment - Analysing individual regional investment needs for 3 target areas. - Developing an investment infrastructure model, and implementation in 3 target areas. - Developing templates for SME business plans. - Engaging SMEs and the business angels network in pilot applications for 5 target areas. - Developing sustainability for the business angels network. <p>Stage of implementation: Activities already done, delays, problems</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Steering Group meeting: (review of activities & schedule, allocation, structure of required network etc.) 2. Steering Group meeting: (investment infrastructure proposed and accepted) 3. SG meeting: evaluation of potential SME candidates (visit of excellent SME candidate supplied by EU-Mentor) computerised on-line selection process for SME candidates identification of Business Angels Groups with Accountants, Business Angels and Regional Funders <p>3 regional contact points/Business Angels Groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20+Business Angels with presentations every 2/3 months • 30 Investors with 12 projects throughout 2007 • 20 Investors with 12 projects

<p>Templates for SME business plans developed</p> <p>Draft version of computerized tool for finance information available</p>
<p>Achievement of expected final outputs and results</p>
<p>Expected: Templates for SMEs business plans. Prepare pilot applications in 5 areas. Investment Structure Model for SMEs</p> <p>Achieved: Numerous reports and documents which prove that all work packages have been conducted (except pilot application) available; pilots with SMEs in 5 areas started, some successfully funded SMEs through Business Angels Network, by end of project a relatively small number of businesses got access to funding/ finance software tool which shall facilitate to identify the specific finance needs of SMEs available, but quality is not (yet) very elaborated respectively innovative some changes in focus of activities due to specific needs of Hungarian partner positive unexpected effects such as joint venture for future co-operation between partners from UK and Hungary</p>
<p>Impact on regional /strategic level New respectively improved tools shall be applied on the regional level, specified for each of the participating regions</p>
<p>Dissemination activities conducted Templates for SMEs business plans. Prepare pilot applications in 5 areas.</p>
<p>Contribution to the equality of chances of discriminated groups (young people, old people, handicapped, women, minorities) Gender issues taken into account when staff for project was recruited</p>
<p>Contribution to environmental protection / sustainable development No specific contribution</p>

4.12 Young Alumni (YAB)

Project partners	
<i>Name</i> (lead partner in bold letters)	<i>Country of Origin:</i>
Han University	NL
Foundation for sustainable environment of South Great Plain	HU
Main Motivation	
<p>Creation of new businesses is an important source of economic growth, employment and growth in regional economies. This project aims at developing tools, methodologies and policies to stimulate starting SME's by alumni from universities. The project has an international component because most starting alumni from universities directly have to operate international. The way to achieve these goals is to develop a program in which the abilities and skills of a potential starter are assessed and a personalized training program is offered to him. Skills to facilitate international orientation and expansion can be offered through exchange programs and international master classes.</p>	
Achievement of objectives	
<p>The initial objectives of the project were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stimulate regional economic growth and the creation of more jobs with the "Alumni-project", by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) stimulation of entrepreneurship of alumni from universities in participating regions; b) facilitating international expansion of starting SME's. <p>Objectives achieved: grade 3, scale from 0-4</p>	
Implementation of activities	
<p>According to the Application Form, the project will focus on 4 main work packages:</p> <p><i>WP 1: Orientation</i></p> <p>An analysis on common competences for entrepreneurs and on international aspects in these competences. This analysis takes place in both countries and the results of this analysis are combined in a common profile. The analysis and development of the profile is done by teams of lecturers/coaches who have strong connections in the field.</p> <p>A first design of a web based environment where young entrepreneurs from different countries can meet each other.</p> <p><i>WP 2: Development</i></p> <p>Development of the following tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Content: C-scan on common entrepreneur-competences and international competences. • International portfolio: a specific portfolio that can be used in international contacts to exchange information (information on the enterprise, markets, products, international experience, ...) • A module on International Commerce 	

- Curriculum and training module schedule for the preparation of the young alumni for SME employment

WP 4: Evaluation and dissemination

Evaluation on process and product by the project partners.

Improve methodology and tools.

Organization of a conference or workshop for interested organizations in the region /country (in both countries).

Publication of results in relevant papers, periodicals, websites etc.

Stage of implementation: Activities already done, delays, problems

Mainly at WP 4 at the moment: working on the improvement of the C-Scan, organisation of the dissemination workshop and at the end publication of project results.

On the Dutch side everything is working as planned. On the Hungarian side, bureaucratic difficulties to introduce the Module on International Commerce at the University, have to wait for approval from the education system (may take 1 year).

Achievement of expected final outputs and results

Expected:

As outputs: Student exchange programmes. C-Scan tool. Portfolio tool (information check-list for international business contacts). Website. Module on the subject "international commerce". Successful Seminars. Production of guide. Toolkits /Guide demonstrating best practices in the development of strategies and their implementation.

As results: Increase of young entrepreneurs competencies in operating in international business. Increase the entrepreneurship within the researcher activity and creation of a more innovative culture.

Building of contacts between the Netherlands and Hungary. Raising awareness among SMEs and Universities to bind direct relations tighter.

Achieved:

Almost all outputs will be achieved. Delay in Hungary with the officialisation of the module on international commerce.

The most important is the promotion of an entrepreneur mindset and openness to internationalisation within students, which seems to be a success: at least two students will start a commercial relation with students from the other country. The C-Scan tool is very welcome by the students. The project outputs seem to be innovative and very pertinent within the framework of the EU Lisbon strategy. It would be useful to have the results translated into other languages and tested in other EU countries.

Impact on regional / strategic level

Strategic level:

New analytic tools developed and applied for the identification and promotion of entrepreneurship within students.

Regional level:

In Hungary:

Project in general appreciated by the stakeholders but no real feedback from their side. Main impact may be when the project is finished and the final dissemination measures will take place.

In Netherlands:

Strong articulation with the Regional Development Association and the Province of Gelderland (co-financer), also within the framework of a larger project on the promotion of entrepreneurship.

Dissemination activities conducted

Conference/workshop at the regional and national level for target groups. Production of flyers. Participation in symposium. Publication of results in relevant papers and periodicals will be done at the end.

> Target groups have been reached

Contribution to the equality of chances of discriminated groups (young people, old people, handicapped, women, minorities)

In Hungary no specific contribution (2 women out of 10 took part in the project).

In Netherlands - it was a project objective that 50% of the students should be women (attained).

Contribution to environmental protection / sustainable development

Still early to draw conclusions, it will depend on the type of activities which will develop afterwards. In Hungary, some of the new project ideas are dealing with environmental technologies, so there is potential for a positive contribution to environmental protection.

5 Does Tower improve methods and tools for stimulating economic growth?

After the presentation of the individual project outcomes, we concentrate the variety of individual outputs and results from the project level to general assessments on the programme level. This part of the analysis is structured on base of the so-called key questions which are defined in the terms of reference of the evaluation.

In this section, we start with the presentation of the outputs and results for the methods and tools (key question 3) because they are most closely related to the objectives of the individual projects.

As the TOWER programme is structured into four components (plus one for the management), each of them aiming at specific objectives, we will report the results of the projects with regard to the components.

The analysis is structured in the following way: Firstly, a brief characterisation of the component will be provided. Secondly, the main outputs and results of the projects are analysed with regard to the key question of the evaluation and the objectives of the component.

5.1 Component 2: Strategies for sustainable economic growth

The objective of this component is defined as :

“Improving the economic growth strategies and their implementation through an exchange of experiences and best practice of tools and instruments in a mutual learning process”

Four projects are being implemented to develop strategies for sustainable economic growth as shown in table 3. These four projects are very different in character which reflects the variety of approaches one can think of when pursuing the objective of this component.

The AFP project deals directly with regional economic strategies and analyses the different prerequisites for successful and well informed strategy shaping. The other projects in component 2 are all dealing with more specific approaches which can be a part of a regional strategy, but cannot stand alone as regional strategic approaches. For this reason alone, it was worthwhile having a project like AFP because all kinds of specific approaches like cluster development or promotion of new business start-ups should always be embedded in a wider regional development strategy. The AFP project has systematically worked on the four crucial dimensions of regional development strategies (Economic analysis, economic visioning and forecasting, action planning, regional governance) and identified common traits as well as the differences between the methods, tools and framework conditions. The identification of generic principles for developing regional growth strategies was finally more important than the development of really new tools and methods. The process of identifying these principles was

characterised by the participants as a mutual learning and an enrichment of the own ideas and knowledge. Transfer of successfully applied methods from one region to another does not work as a simple copying of tools and methods but must be adjusted to the specific framework conditions. The project was overburdened with its approach of functioning as an integrative platform for all other TOWER projects, in particular when taking into account its small budget.

The DiBiC project focuses on the development of business clusters through multi-stakeholder collaboration within and between three regions. Cluster development is nothing new any more, but widely acknowledged as a module for regional economic development strategies. It was good to concentrate on very concrete pilot clusters respectively on the management issues of an improved cluster development. All participating regions are content with the outcomes and seem to have learned and improved their specific skills and knowledge. New tools were developed and even applied in some cases and were appreciated by the practitioners. Nevertheless, the development of *common* tools did not really take place, partners preferred individual approaches. Partners made use of the knowledge of the ideas from other participating regions. This again proves that it is difficult to develop common tools due to the big differences in the regions and their economic structure, the governance and legal framework conditions.

Both, the AFP and the DiBiC project raise the question whether it is useful to develop further good practice guides because the findings indicate that a successful transfer depends on very specific regional conditions.

The IWE project is the only project which pays particular attention to the role of women in economic development. It runs a process oriented approach which aims at the promotion of female entrepreneurial mindsets through the delivery of good practice, a platform for the sharing of ideas, delivery of experience and expert knowledge by female consultants and the development of management and workplace skills and abilities through action learning. Despite of some problems, the outputs and results available as well as the contentment of participants show that the project has contributed to the improvement of regional economic growth strategies. One of its major effects was to highlight the potentials as well as the specific problems and approaches of women to be considered when women shall be inspired and supported to run their own businesses. The networking between existing female entrepreneurs and consultants has been improved and can function as strengthened social infrastructure in the future.

As the IWE project, the project Young Alumni in Business focuses on a specific target group of (potential) entrepreneurs. It has developed a specific tool which allows assessing the competences of young alumni from universities for entrepreneurship. This innovative method seems to be a useful

instrument in a regional development strategy in regions which have universities or research and education institutions alike.

Conclusions

The projects run under component 2 of the TOWER programme cover a big range of possible approaches for developing respectively improving or contributing to regional growth strategies. All of them proved effective and yielded interesting outcomes, either on the level of general and comprehensive approaches or on the level of specific approaches, which focus more on target groups like women or young alumni or on specific tools.

It can be doubted that products like best practice guides or blueprints for developing strategies or clusters are of big significance for those who were not directly involved in the projects. Learning seems to depend very much on the direct co-operation between the actors. Documents like blueprints or best practice guides may be useful for those who do not have much knowledge and experience, but less for the more experienced and skilled members of the target groups. For those who already have some experience with elaborated tools for developing regional strategies or cluster, focus of future projects could be more on the comparison of the different tools, decision-making processes, governance structures and legal framework conditions in order to better identify when and why tools and methods are successful.

A general recommendation for the development of growth strategies is to focus more on specific target groups or on specific modules or methods and tools which can play an innovative role in such strategies. For example, in the field of cluster policies it could be focussed on specific aspects of cluster development such as cluster analyses, cluster evolution, cluster branding, cluster dialog or cluster management. This implies the need also to reflect the way how these methods and tools could be best embedded in regional governance structures and decision-making processes (such as regional development plans) so that they are not isolated and non-effective.

An example for this is to pay more attention to women in economic development. Raising the number and size of businesses or business start-ups can – inter alia - be achieved by mobilising women's capacities through specific support. This should be taken into consideration in future interregional cooperation projects.

5.2 Component 3: Strengthened technology infrastructure/transfer to SME'S

The objective of this component is defined as:

"Creating strengthened technology infrastructure in regions and transfer to SME's. Strengthening the competitiveness of SMEs by increasing their level of innovation and offering them improved support services, development of knowledge-based business clusters/networks".

There are three projects approved in this component: the Spin-off Generator (SOG), the ABBA and the InnoCenter. The SOG could also have been assigned to component 4, since it addresses the promotion of entrepreneurship.

The InnoCenter is the project which more directly addresses the objectives of the component: its objective is to create equipments in all regions providing advanced services in the field of innovation to companies, thus contributing to the strengthening of their innovation level and as a consequence of their competitiveness. The idea of concentrating specific services in the same building is not new. However, on one side, the idea is new in the three partner regions and; on the other side, the methodology/guidelines to implement these equipments is a good tool, which has also the advantage that it can be transferred to other sectors, e.g., the environmental sector. The partnership was not completely successful, the British partner did not have enough budget to have a more active role in the project. Also, the specific context of Hungary (in particular the impossibility to guarantee funding) may not allow in the next years the implementation of an InnoCenter in the Region. However, the methodologies developed in the project will be applied to some specific clusters, thus there will be some indirect benefits from the cooperation.

The SOG project aims at the stimulation of entrepreneurship of employees within SME's, especially in the IT field, and creating awareness within SME's that generating spin-offs contributes to their innovative capacity. The methodologies developed are innovative, since they tackle a complete different type of spin-offs, focussing on those coming out of companies versus the traditional university spin-offs. Due to the innovative character, it was difficult at the beginning to mobilise companies to cooperate in the project. A positive result of this project is that the created tools can be applied to other sectors of activity, such as the environmental sector, e.g., the InnoCenter principle of "guichet unique" can be also adjusted to specific environmental services offered in a single equipment.

The ABBA project aimed at the business development within Health (Biomedical Life Sciences). The participating regions were in the beginning not completely satisfied with the cooperation, because the objectives were different: i) the initial tool proposed by the lead partner was not completely adjusted to the other regions, ii) the target groups were not the same - in Sweden the objective was to start new companies, while in France it was to support existing ones. But these initial difficulties have been

overcome and in the end all partners were unanimous in agreeing that the developed methodology is a good tool to support companies to identify their strengths and weakness in the different domains of business activity and thus to have a good base for their consolidation.

Conclusions

The projects supported within this component were very heterogeneous, one was a pilot operation providing innovation services, the other supported spin-offs from companies and the third the creation of a tool to evaluate business weaknesses and then to provide the right support. The conducting line for the three projects is the promotion of SME's competitiveness.

The results of this component also highlight the need to have more balanced budgets between the project partners, to avoid frustrations amongst the lead partners, due to the lack of wished feed-back. Another interesting result is the possible lack of efficiency in case the lead partner is the only one to prepare the methodologies/tools. In most projects, it was always necessary to revise the tools and methodologies in order to adapt them to local specificities. It is normal and acceptable to have some adjustment to the particularities of the Country. However, taking into account that the expected outputs should be available also to be transferred to other regions, it is important to guarantee a minimum level of transferability.

Finally, before starting a project, it is important to clearly identify the objectives of the different partners and the target groups to be addressed. This would help to improve the matching of interests with regard to target groups, objectives and methods and could help to increase the effectiveness of the cooperation, with the purpose of guaranteeing the right partners or the revision and adaptation of objectives in order to define common goals.

5.3 Component 4: Competitive and knowledge-based entrepreneurship

The objective of this component is defined as follows.

"Projects will exchange experience of how to stimulate entrepreneurship and increase the competitiveness among SMEs, fuelling entrepreneurial mindsets, new ways of supporting start-ups and existing SME's, and implementing new instruments for increasing spin-offs."

Two projects are under implementation in this component: the FEMTO and the TOWBUSANG. A third project, the Spin-off Generator, could also have been assigned to this component, but is run under component 3 due to budgetary reasons.

The approach of the FEMTO project is the delivery of entrepreneurial mindsets of young people, targeting at students at school of a wide range of age. Only two regions, one from the UK and one from

Sweden, participated in this innovative approach. The project had to cope with different problems, the lead partner left the project, other partners changed as well. There is also some discontentment with the role and the share of budget of some partners. These problems indicate that the purposes and the objectives of the project as well as of the activities were not clearly enough defined in the project design phase. The composition of the partnership was obviously also not well enough chosen because some partners left the project.

Despite these weaknesses, the remaining partners who will conclude the project are very content with the activities and outcomes. This holds in particular for the Swedish partner.

As the promotion of entrepreneurial mindsets of young people seems to be rather new to many member states of the European Union, it should be further developed in the future. International projects seem to have a big potential for this subject due to the fact that the range of experience between member states, the perception of the topic as well as the range of methods applied vary very much.

The TOWBUSANG project is focussing on the capital needs of young entrepreneurs and SMEs. Project participants have the experience that often young entrepreneurs have good ideas for developing new products, but fail to bring them to market. One of the bottlenecks is the access to capital, in particular to venture capital. So-called business angels are persons who have worked as entrepreneurs or managers themselves and are prepared to support young entrepreneurs to establish their own businesses. Support can be provided as investment in the young enterprise as well as provision of know-how and contacts. The TOWBUSANG project runs a very specific approach to improve the capital base of businesses and by this it can develop new ways of supporting start-ups. The bringing together of businesses with need for capital and business angels in regional networks has been implemented. Tools for the identification of finance needs have been developed and applied in pilot projects. Although the implementation of the project was yielding some success in the participating regions, the weaknesses of the project are the relatively small degree of elaboration and value-added in its tools compared to the state of the art.

Conclusions

The projects run under component four are very much in line with the objectives of the component to contribute to a competitive and knowledge-based entrepreneurship. The approaches to fuel entrepreneurial mindsets respectively to improve the capital base of young enterprises are both very innovative, the latter project in particular for the participating regions. This is perhaps one reason why they faced some problems. If they finally will manage to yield the outputs and results expected, they can significantly contribute to competitive advantages and stimulate regional economic growth. In this case, the issues of the projects could also be subject of further interregional cooperation projects.

5.4 Component 5: Sustainable SME's

The objective of this component is defined as:

"strengthen the competitiveness and viability of SME's by adapting sustainable development concepts, create a joint knowledge basis for SME's environmental performance by collected regional best practice, identify and test tools for support of environmental improvement and marketing of sustainability among SME's."

Three projects have been approved within this Component. Two of them - the EASE and the SIMPLE - complement each other, the EASE project focuses on sustainable development in general and the SIMPLE project on the development of eco-design methodologies.

The EASE project presented as main objective the promotion of sustainable development issues within SME's. During the project, the activities were more oriented to the aspect of social responsibility within companies and other components of the sustainable development strategy, such as the environmental issues, were not so much addressed. The notions of "sustainable development" and of "social responsibility" are not new in business management, but they have different levels of development from one country to another, thus there is a strong potential for the sharing of experience between countries. No real new tools have been developed, nevertheless the objective of raising awareness regarding sustainable development is an important result of this project. The partnership has worked well. France and Hungary, the countries less advanced in these fields, were very satisfied with the learning, in particular, from the Swedish experience. The main difficulty was the involvement of the private sector, especially the training of consultants on sustainable development methodologies.

The SIMPLE project aimed at developing eco-design methodologies and approaches and, finally, to support companies to develop eco-products. The project addressed a very concrete part of the overall objectives of the EASE project and the complementarity between both projects has been acknowledged from the beginning. Accordingly, the sharing of experiences has been foreseen and several meetings took place. The SIMPLE project has a high degree of performance and success, building on the high matching of interests and skills, good embedding of the project in regional development strategies and close orientation to the needs of the target group. The project was highly successful with regard to the transfer of knowledge, involvement of businesses as well as in the sphere of science (contributions to conferences, publications).

The Rural development project aimed at the development of competitiveness and sustainability for SME's in rural areas by forming and enlarging innovative agro-industrial clusters. The articulation and the sharing of experience between the three regional clusters were not well defined in the application forms and also during the project implementation, in part due to the complexity of the clusters at stake.

In the Netherlands, we can talk about a "protein highway" cluster, oriented to the production and transformation of animal products. The action plan to develop this cluster includes 13 sub-projects, of which only 5 are supported by the TOWER. In Hungary, the scope was the pig cluster, on salami production, vegetables/flowers and milk processing. In Britain, the focus was on a sausages cluster.

The strategy aiming at the development of clusters is not new, but the methods implemented in the project can be considered as innovative and the partners seem to be pleased with the cooperation.

The articulation with the objectives of the component derives from the need to develop environmental technologies to address the environmental impacts of the farm production.

Conclusions

The three projects under Component 5 address the promotion of sustainable development, but their orientation is different. One project discusses the overall concept of sustainable development, but then focuses on social responsibility, the second focuses on the support to the development of eco-products and the third on the creation of specific environmental technologies aiming at the resolution of environmental negative impacts within agro-food clusters, by the proper elimination of waste and manure. However, in this case it is difficult to assess the final environmental impacts of the project and its contribution to sustainable development. Although the project might have contributed to solve or to reduce some negative impacts of the animal production and even to reduce heating and cooling costs linked to the pig breeding in Netherlands or in Hungary, one of the negative impacts is the transfer of pigs between both countries, which although understandable in economic terms, has negative environmental costs.

Two of the projects face the general difficulty of mobilising companies or other profit orientated actors to become more sustainable or to take advantage of the potentials of becoming a "green" company.

In a context of growing concern regarding the promotion of sustainable development (namely at the EU level), the contribution of the TOWER projects through the demonstration of the economic benefits from adopting sustainable development measures is thus important.

6 Does TOWER improve economic development strategies and programmes?

The major objective of the TOWER programme on the strategic level is

“Improvement of economic growth strategies/programmes by:

a) the exchange of approximately 12 initiatives/pilot projects and best practice in a mutual inter-regional learning process;

b) utilization and mainstreaming of the learning experiences of the 12 initiatives into the economic growth strategies in each region”

The first dimension of the objective (a), dealing with the interregional aspects of the projects, will be addressed in chapter 7.

The second dimension (b) focuses on the impacts of the projects on the strategies and development plans or programmes of each region, existing ones as well as future regional strategies and programmes.

In the Progress Report for the Evaluation of March 2007 it was indicated that the TOWER Programme Management does not prescribe or recommend any procedures or relationships for the transfer of the experiences of the projects on the strategic level of the participating regions. So it became a task of the evaluation to find out what kind of communication and relationships between the projects and the level of strategies and development programmes evolved during the implementation phase of the programme. The following questions were guiding this analysis:

- Are there any institutionalised linkages and procedures (such as regular meetings in workshops, conferences) between the actors on the project level and the actors on the strategic level in each of the participating TOWER regions?
- Do the project partners participate in any discussions of planning activities on the level of strategies such as developing regional development plans, SWOT analysis, strategy shaping?
- Are there any dissemination measures of the projects which affect regional strategies or programmes (e.g. presentations, newsletters, websites, press releases for the communication of project results for regional stakeholders/strategy shapers)?

6.1 Relationship between project level and regional / strategic level

In general, there are not many institutionalised linkages and procedures between the projects and the strategic level (by means of cooperation agreements). Nevertheless, taking into account that many project partners are also regional/strategic stakeholders there is a priori the guarantee of a connection between the project level and the strategic level.

The contacts between the projects and the stakeholders are, in some regions, established by regular meetings between the regional coordinator and the projects in which also regional stakeholders participate (France, Netherlands). On the other side, most of the projects do at least inform regional stakeholders, strategy shapers or responsible persons for development programmes about their activities. They either invite them to workshops and presentations of their own project or attend meetings of regional boards who have an interest in the specific topic of their project (e.g. ABBA; DiBiC, SIMPLE).

The benefits of cooperation between project and regional level in this case are mutual - the stakeholders may present comments contributing to the improvement of the project implementation, but on the other side they also benefit from the knowledge about the project results and outputs, allowing eventually at a final stage of the project to integrate these in the regional strategies.

In many projects, important regional actors such as development agencies or chambers are participating themselves in the projects. They also often co-fund the projects (like for example the Province of Gelderland or the Regional Development Agency in Cumbria) and thus have a high interest of being involved in the implementation of the projects. This leads to a relatively high frequency of contacts and opportunities for adjustment of the projects in order to make them useful for the regional strategies. In some projects (e.g. AFP, DiBiC), regional strategy shapers are 'natural partners' because strategy development is in the centre of interest of those projects.

Cooperation between project level and regional level has also occurred in several other projects due to the link or affiliation of project team members in a specific institution (e.g. members of the administration board) without the latter being directly involved in the project as partner. For example, in the DiBiC project/Swedish partner (County Administrative Board of Sodermanland) some of the team members are lecturers at the University, so indirectly there is an informal link to the latter.

The participation of projects in any discussions of planning activities on the strategic level varies a lot between the projects. In some cases, we found highly intensive engagement and mutual interest (like for example in Rural Development, DiBiC) in some cases it was medium intensive (e.g. ABBA, SIMPLE; YAB), in other cases there was only little participation (e.g. IWE, FEMTO). The degree of participation in regional strategy shaping seems to depend partly on the character of the projects. But there are no distinct reasons for this variation. One thesis says that the more concrete and specific the subject of the project is, the farer away is it from general strategies and development plans and vice versa. Hence, such projects may have more problems to attract the attention of regional stakeholders. On the other hand, it can be argued that even specific topics may find attention if stakeholders consider them as relevant for their regional strategy. For example, it may be easy to attract

attention for high tech issues which are also on top of national agendas such as biotech, IT, nanotech etc. This implies that more unconventional, extraordinary ideas for projects may have more difficulties to raise interest of regional stakeholders.

In the TOWER programme, it prove to be of advantage if projects already reflected specific regional structures and approaches such as rural development or cluster development. Then they could raise interest on the side of regional strategy shapers in the subject of their project more easily.

Another reason for the variation of projects partners participation in regional strategic discussions seems to be the different legal and administrative frameworks, modes of decision taking and cultures of involving regional actors when developing regional strategies. Here we found that it was more difficult for the Hungarian partners to raise interest and to get access to regional stakeholders than for example in Sweden or the UK. Never-the-less, because of this specific framework in Hungary, it is also the country where the TOWER impacts regarding the improvement of regional cooperation may be more meaningful.

The Hungarian interviewees have pointed out that before the participation in the TOWER Programme there was little or no cooperation between the project partners and other regional stakeholders. During the implementation of the projects contacts have now been established and there are good perspectives of future collaboration for other projects.

In France, the Netherlands and in Sweden projects were in general very well embedded in more general discussions about regional development plans and strategies (like for example committees for regional innovation, regional cluster development).

Also the type and size of the partners' institution plays a role for the cooperation between the project partners and the regional stakeholders. For institutions with a significant size or for institutions whose main objectives are the promotion of regional development, the articulation with the other regional stakeholders may be easier. For instance in Lyon/France the *Chambre de Commerce et Industrie* is a very important economic development actor, acknowledged by the other actors, namely by the Region Rhône-Alpes. Thus the cooperation between both is, a priori, easier.

Although all projects do make considerable efforts for the dissemination of their results, there are not so many dissemination activities which directly target at regional stakeholders/strategy shapers. Almost all participants who were interviewed reported that it is important to get personal access to persons who are important in the regional development context. This can be persons from the planning context, the political administration, from chambers or business support organisations, universities or other research institutions or businesses. The face-to-face communication was assessed as an important way to transfer the 'messages' about the results of the project to the strategic level. This was partly done in the

official workshops, seminars, planning meetings etc, but also a lot on the informal level. Many projects have planned events in the final phase of their implementation to communicate their outcomes within their regions, but the effects of those activities cannot be assessed yet.

6.2 Impacts of projects on regional / strategic level

With regard to the impacts of the projects on the strategies and development programmes of the participating regions, we could identify the following impacts:

- The development of new tools and methods for different approaches or aspects of regional development (e.g. methods for a better SWOT analysis, concepts for cluster development, rural development) were appreciated and partly applied.
- Impacts on the strategic level in this respect can be: the acceleration of processes already started; the introduction of new approaches; the mainstreaming of project results (tools) by integrating them into the existing support infrastructure for regional development.
- New ideas (new from the point of view of the participating regions) were put on the agenda of the regional strategy shapers and tested in pilot projects. Some of them seem to have a big potential for future development and strategies.
- The outcomes of the projects were taken into account for drafting new operational programmes for EU funding (in Hungary).

It should be taken into account that the possibility of a project to impact the strategic level also depends on 'windows of opportunity'. For example, it is difficult to impact a regions strategy at a certain moment when the region has just finalised its new strategy before. On the other hand, it is easy to support ongoing activities on a certain subject with a good project.

6.3 Conclusions

Although various impacts of projects on regional growth strategies and development plans could be identified, it seems that not all of the potentials for this have been used. In a part of the projects, the effects on the strategic level could be enhanced in future activities if they focus more on their relationship with the strategic level. This aspect should be taken into account at the very beginning of the project, so that communication measures and activities to better involve important regional actors can be designed earlier and implemented more systematically. The TOWER Management as well as the regional coordinators (or a board with similar competences for future activities) should also be more pro-active in order to ensure impacts of the projects on the strategic level. This can be done by providing specific support for the development of communication and marketing strategies of the projects.

It is more difficult to put topics on the agenda of regional development which are not so much in the centre of interest in the individual regions at a certain moment. Although no strategy shaper may know about certain new developments, they can be relevant for their region. Hence, it is important for regions to build 'antennae' by which they can receive information about such new developments (like for example about the relevance of promoting entrepreneurial mindsets of students). Building 'Antennae' can for example mean:

- creating/improving the capacities of regions in order to have up-to date information about ongoing trends of regional development on the national and international level (e.g. access to information flow in the sphere of science and regional policies, in particular EU, access to databases and tenders);
- improving the skills of staff in regional development agencies etc. to be able to better use the possibilities of regional development (such as funding schemes, tools, approaches) through visit of conferences, training, exchange
- improving the cooperation with the applied researchers and consultants for specific issues of regional development such as analyses of trends, potentials, assessment of programme/project proposals on base of 'state of the art' knowledge, management, monitoring and evaluation of development plans and funding schemes etc.

7 Does TOWER improve co-operation between the regional partners and between the regions?

To answer this question two methodologies have been applied, the first is the so called "co-operation check", which included the quantitative analysis of the partnerships (chapter 7.1. Composition of the partnership) as well as three thematic workshops implemented in Arnhem, and the second were the interviews done in 2007 with all project lead partners, a sample of partners and the regional coordinators (chapter 7.2. Cooperation at the project level between the different project partners).

The overall results of the "Co-operation check", namely the quantitative and the qualitative analysis provided by the workshops, have been presented in our progress report. For the purpose of a final report we will present the quantitative aspects, since they are important to have some systematisation, but the results of the co-operation workshops will not be presented again in an individual chapter or point. They will be integrated in specific parts of this report (mainly chapter 8. The value added of transnational cooperation and chapter 9. Horizontal objectives: equality of chances and environmental sustainability), complementing the results from the interviews.

The purpose of the co-operation check was the assessment of the cooperation in the projects. Focus was put on the following questions:

1. What kinds of co-operation are being implemented in the individual projects? Which forms of co-operations are more ambitious and more challenging?
2. What are the expected advantages of the co-operation?
3. What is the influence of TOWER funding on the projects? Is it an initial impulse for a process which will be continued after the end of funding? How far is sustainability in that sense secured?
4. Do the projects sufficiently take into account horizontal objectives such as gender equality and youth issues?

The basic assumption for the co-operation check was that institutions (SMEs as well as universities, research centres, company associations and other public actors) are willing to cooperate, if they can see advantages of co-operation compared to a non co-operative situation. These advantages can be multifaceted. According to previous experiences, such advantages on the level of enterprises can be knowledge transfer and economies of scale or enlargement of a distribution area. But it is necessary to take into account the efforts respective to transaction costs associated with the co-operation activities. Those efforts are, for example, time resources for co-ordination or travelling expenses for meetings. For successful and profitable long-term co-operation in the long run the advantages have to exceed the efforts. A second assumption was, that different intensities of co-operation can be actualised in the projects. For example, the exchange of information is one form of co-operation. But also the joint development of a new product on base of a contract is a more intensive form of cooperation.

This example shows a difference in the purpose of co-operation. Also the demand for reconciliation of interests and the degree of liability corresponds with the intensity of cooperation.

In a first step, the composition of the partnerships was analysed, based on the information included in the project applications (see overview in Table 4). This was done to appraise the complexity of the partnerships in the projects and to have a quantitative overview on the partnership patterns. A further step was the organization of a cooperation workshop with project partners in order to determine the expected advantages, the most relevant outputs, sustainability aspects as well as the consideration of horizontal objectives such as gender equality, youth and environmental issues.

7.1 Composition of the Partnership

Altogether 12 projects have been approved, in which a total number of 29 project partners are involved. Some of the project partners are participating in several projects. Table 5 illustrates the involvement of

regions and regional partners in the establishing of sub –projects. As it can be seen, Great Britain and Hungary participate in 8 projects, which is the largest number compared to the involvement of The Netherlands in only 6 projects. In Sweden there are 11 different partner institutions involved in 7 projects, which is more than one partner per project. In contrast, in France there are only two partner institutions involved in 7 projects.

The Chamber of Commerce is involved in 6 different projects and one other partner institution is involved in one.

Table 5: Involvement of partners in projects

Involvement	Region				
	HUN	NEL	GBR	SWE	FRA
Number of projects a region is involved in	8	6	8	7	7
Number of different partners in these projects	5	2	9	11	2

The involvement of partner organisations from diverse institutional sectors might encourage the comprehension of a greater variety of expectations and needs of these various sectors in the region. There seems not to be any particular disadvantage or advantage of working with many organizations. Other indicators for the kind of co-operation are the number of partners who are co-operating and the institutional sectors they belong to. As shown in Table 6, there are at least 3 partners participating in most of the projects, in one project there are 7 and in another there are only two partners. The interviews done after the application of the co-operation check with partnerships with only two partners have stated that it would have been more interesting to have had more partners. On the contrary, too many partners seem not to bring many advantages, due to the efforts of coordinating all parts, and the problem of having some partners less involved due to lower budgets.

Table 6: Number of co-operating partners per project

No. of Partners in a project	Frequency of such projects
2	1
3	7
4	2
5	1
6	0
7	1

Looking at the institutional sectors the partner institutions belong to, it is obvious that most project partners are local or regional public authorities. Especially in Sweden more than two-thirds of all project partners come from this group. Two other well represented groups are development agencies and research institutions. Finally, it should be highlighted that around 400 SME's have collaborated in the projects, for instance by testing the tools which have been developed. The next table gives an overview over the institutional sectors of project partners.

Table 7: Institutional sector of partner organisations in projects

Institutional sector	HUN	NEL	GBR	SWE	FRA	sum
Local or regional public authority	1	0	1	8	0	10
Development agency	2	1	3	0	0	6
Research Institutions	1	1	1	3	0	6
Chamber	1	0	0	0	1	2
Education and Training Institutions	0	0	1	0	0	1
Other	0	0	3	0	0	3
n/s*	0	0	0	0	1	1

* n/s = not specified

7.2 Cooperation at the project level between the different project partners

a) Establishment and consolidation of the partnerships

The organisation of the partnership was mainly done by the regional coordinators. After a first idea for a project, the lead partner asked his regional coordinator to get in touch with the coordinators of the regions where he had interest in finding a partner. In most cases, the choice was easy, since there were not so many possibilities of potential adequate candidates, and mainly based in personal contacts.

The majority of project partners are in general satisfied with the partnership, this is also indicated by the willingness of partners to continue their collaboration in the future.

Non-the-less, at the beginning of the project, there were several difficulties, which in general have been overcome.

The language knowledge seems to have been an important constraint in some projects, thus understanding the partner was sometimes difficult. But in general, the language is not perceived as a real limitation. In general the understanding was much better in physical meetings, than it was in telephone conferences and in electronic communication.

The cultural differences and, as a consequence, the ways of working were also in some cases bringing some difficulties. Despite some punctual differences of opinion, it was highlighted that in the United Kingdom and in the Netherlands there seems to be a stronger flexibility and also a quicker reaction; whereas in Sweden the consensus building may prevail, against quick answers. In France, an important part of the tools/methodologies were already prepared, so sometimes there was some lack of openness to discuss adjustments or revision of the methodologies for the implementation in other countries. In Hungary, the creativeness of the partners has been considered as very positive. On the other side, due to the less experience regarding some issues (e.g., the concept of sustainable development, development of clusters), project participants acted rather as receivers and appliers of new information and knowledge, than as active partners contributing to the project at the same level. In general, the partners agreed that the problems caused by cultural differences could be solved. In the cases where there were mismatches of expectations, all partners tried to be more flexible and to adjust accordingly ways of working or methodologies. However, in some projects these problems lead to a lower degree of cooperation and to less interesting results than were expected at the beginning of the projects.

The different level of knowledge or completely different approaches in addressing some issues was for some partners considered as a limitation to further progression and punctually a reason for frustration.

Some partnerships with only two or three partners have mentioned that it would have been useful to have had more partners in the project, to further extend the exchange of experiences.

Finally, in a few projects the people involved have changed. This has provoked partially a delay and/or the loose of efficiency, because the work had to be adjusted once more.

b) Processes and mechanisms of cooperation

The processes and mechanisms of cooperation within the projects are very diversified: they range from the simple exchange of information to the common development of new methodologies/tools or the writing together of research papers.

The main tools of communication between partners are meetings, study visits, exchange of students, telephone conferences, mailing or a common intranet/website.

The continuous contact between the different regions and the sharing of knowledge and experience almost on a daily basis (mainly trough electronic means) indicate the establishment of an interregional platform for the exchange of experiences.

However, the solidity and sustainability of the cooperation platform differs from partnership to partnership and also according to the type of institutions and aims of the cooperation . Although in most projects it was stated that there will be contacts after the ending of the TOWER Programme, most interviewees were not completely sure how this further cooperation would work out.

The projects with a higher certitude regarding a future cooperation were, on one side, those which have developed common websites or intranets for the exchange of information; on the other side those whose partners are linked to the private sphere and were the TOWER has allowed them to meet business partners (e.g., DiBic, IWE, YAB, TOWBUSANG).

7.3 Conclusions

In general, we conclude that the TOWER Programme played an important role for the establishment of cooperation between the different regions and partners. In principle, the existing partnerships would not exist without the TOWER support. These partnerships have been useful, either, to learn from the more advanced regions, or to work together aiming at the development of new common methods or tools. However, in a future interregional cooperation, it might be useful to take into consideration during the preparatory phase that the matching of the partners' expectations regarding the outcomes of the projects may need to be better verified. On the other side, it should also be guaranteed that the projects have a longer period to be implemented, to allow the partnership to be properly established and consolidated.

8 The value added of transnational cooperation

For the assessment of the value added of transnational cooperation two methods have been applied. The first was the Co-operation check workshops, applied in the Mid Term Conference in Arnhem, in which the participants have been requested to answer the questions:

- "What are the advantages of interregional co-operation on project level (compared to a non-cooperative situation)?"
- "What do you expect as the most important output of the co-operation in your sub project?"

The second source of information is the interviews with the partners and the regional coordinators in a later phase of the implementation of the TOWER programme. The following points are a synthesis of the results of both methods.

All partners have been consensual regarding the benefits of transnational cooperation. Non-the-less the assessments vary from project to project and within the same project from partner to partner. The two main areas of added value are the improvement of regional methods and implementation of strategies and the contribution to regional development.

8.1 Improvement of regional methods and implementation of strategies

a) Exchange of technical know-how

The most common issue is the learning from the other partners and/or the common development of methods or strategies to address a specific problem. The learning from the successes or failures of the partners' previous experiences was also highlighted. The participation of different types of institutions and different regions has enhanced this added value of the Programme. The exchange of experience has also brought faster results within some projects (e.g. Rural Development), thus it was possible to convince the regional stakeholders of the importance of the projects but also of the cooperation.

For some regions, e.g., in Hungary, the improvement of knowledge goes up to the level of the definition of concepts. That was the case in the EASE project and the definition of the concept "social responsibility of companies".

It is also perceived and in general well accepted that the Hungarian institutions particularly benefited from the TOWER Programme. Firstly, because they learned new methodologies and strategies for regional development which are not so developed in Hungary, such as the social responsibility of companies or the promotion of spin-offs from companies. Secondly, because they were the region with less tradition of networking and cooperation between actors, and the participation in the TOWER programme has shown the benefits of cooperation.

However, it should also be highlighted that many partners mentioned the interest in learning how the Hungarian colleagues deal with some issues, since the Hungarian colleagues are believed to be very creative and to address some questions in a different way.

b) Promotion of a “cooperation culture”

Another important learning is that a certain institution may not be the only one facing a specific problem and looking for solutions to address it - there may be others doing the same. So, there is a strong potential for cooperation in looking together for these solutions.

The TOWER Programme is thus promoting a certain "cooperation culture", directly with the project partners and, potentially on the supported regions through the dissemination activities.

c) Knowledge of other cultures

The interviewees also stated as very important the learning of different cultures, the mutual/regional respect and different working styles. These are considered as important prerequisites for the projects implementation but also for successful future international cooperation.

A part of the interviewees noted that it was useful to gain knowledge about the regional policies of the other countries, especially in what regards legislation issues, the functioning of public administration, decision making processes or the way the state provides support. Both, the knowledge of different cultures and working-styles as well as the more technical knowledge of differences in politics and legislation, can function as a cultural capital, for new project ideas, new co-operations between public actors and the promotion of the internationalization of business in the future.

d) Valorisation of the participating institutions and of the participating teams

The participation in the TOWER programme or, in general, to be supported by an EU programme, represents an important asset in particular to smaller institutions regarding future projects and partnerships.

Also, the human resources in these institutions can improve their competencies and their experience, on an administrative level (e.g. project management or expertise in EU administrative procedures); on the technical level (e.g. to have a new view on technical problems and solutions, bigger range of ideas), on the personal level (more personal experience, contact with foreign partners - understanding of national differences in terms of development).

e) Demonstration effect

Some projects referred to the demonstration effect of the TOWER projects within the regions. If a methodology/tool which is new in a specific region has been proven successful in other regions (perceived as more developed in that field, e.g. Sweden regarding the social responsibility issues or the

United Kingdom regarding the business angels), then it is easier for the local actors also to accept and to try it.

8.2 Contribution to regional development

The contribution to regional development of the TOWER programme is twofold:

1. The TOWER programme, by different and complementary means, has contributed to the increase of competitiveness of some regional companies, thus with positive, present or future, impacts regarding employment or company revenues;
2. The TOWER Programme has directly contributed to the improvement of regional strategies and the consolidation of regional clusters/ networks.

The real or potential increase of the competitiveness of companies, measured by higher turnover or investment results, is related to:

- Identification of new business opportunities, especially abroad. These business opportunities have emerged from the extension or a possible extension of the market to other regions (e.g., DiBic – trade opportunities in fruit and vegetables between Netherlands and Hungary and Netherlands and Sweden), but in many cases from the promotion of international complementarities within the product chain (e.g., Rural Development – the different phases of the pig breeding and growth will be implemented in Hungary or in Netherlands profiting from the regional climate and technical advantages);
- The development of new products and methods (e.g., SIMPLE, SOG), thus the possibility to increase the revenues of the company or to create new companies;
- The improvement of the diagnostic tools of the companies, namely regarding business development (ABBA);
- The installation of new equipments providing support to companies or the preparation of conditions for their future installation (InnoCenter, "single-contact point" for several services regarding innovation);
- The improvement of qualifications or know-how relevant to improve the company's competitiveness; (e.g., YAB – university modules on international relations; EASE – sustainable development issues);

- The increase of entrepreneurship/leadership capacities (e.g., FEMTO – to foster the entrepreneurship within young people; IWE – consolidation of female entrepreneurship skills; SOG – creation of spin-offs from universities and from existing companies);
- The consolidation and dissemination of funding structures and investment needs (TOWBUSANG);
- The understanding of the interest of sustainable development issues for the competitiveness of companies (EASE and SIMPLE).

Several projects had a more wide scope, namely by having possible positive impacts on a whole cluster of enterprises or on regional development strategies. That was the case of:

- ABBA – the project dealt with several companies from the Biomedical Life Sciences, thus the potential for the establishment of synergies is quite high;
- DiBic – aimed at the development of two regional clusters and at understanding what leads to successful clusters; project is embedded in regional development strategies;
- Rural development – consolidation of regional clusters by means of sharing of experiences regarding environmental and production techniques;
- AFP – improving the knowledge for the shaping of regional strategies and development plans.

9 Horizontal objectives: equality of opportunity and environmental sustainability

Equality of opportunity and environmental sustainability are both widely acknowledged objectives of the European Union. Hence, they have to be taken into account in structural funds policies and should be subject of the evaluation.

The overall question for the evaluation of horizontal objectives, based on the tender for the evaluation, was:

“Are the ‘horizontal criteria’ effectively delivered through sub-projects and through the overall programme management?”

The evaluation analysed the consideration of the horizontal objectives on base of three approaches:

1. It was analysed whether the criteria for project selection adequately took into account the horizontal objectives.
2. The participants of the mid-term conference in Arnhem were asked in the workshops how their projects take into account the horizontal objectives.

3. The interviewees from the projects were asked in the final phase of the projects implementation how they considered the horizontal objectives and which outputs they could name.

Horizontal objectives have been adequately considered two times in the project selection criteria: in the "General selection criteria" and in the "Results and dissemination section". Thus projects with a higher contribution of these objectives would have had a good chance to have been prioritised. However, because the number of projects applying for support was not extensive, the available budget was not exhausted, these criteria did not play a major role for the selection.

During the workshop on Arnhem the participants were asked:

"How does your project contribute to equality and environmental issues? "

The following categories were built on the bases of the participants answers:

General equality issues

- Women and men are equally involved in the project

Helping someone through the dissemination of information

Such as

- Dissemination of information to everybody
- Development of an innovation centre that can help someone to actualise his/her ideas
- Helping someone to get easier access to start-up financing

Retain and exchange business skills

Such as

- Support students who just finished studies
- Better mentoring between younger and older workers in SMEs

Practical environmental issues

Such as

- Development of techniques solving environmental problems
- Material reduction and optimisation
- Decreasing greenhouse effect
- Enhancing life cycle management in SMEs

Renewable energy

- Renewable energy resources
- Bio-energy technology

As regards to the “equality of opportunity” objective, the general aspects mentioned from the participants cannot be seen as special efforts in mainstreaming equality issues. It only indicates the openness for an equal participation of men and women as well as young or handicapped people. No specific efforts were visible which proved ambitions of the projects to take into account equality of chances issues in mainstream activities. This assessment does not hold for those projects which are addressing specifically equality issues such as FEMTO and YAB (focus on students and young people as beneficiaries) and IWE (focus on women as beneficiaries).

Concerning environmental sustainability, some projects are focussing on the development of products and services which target directly and mainly at the improvements of environmental and social sustainability (e.g. EASE and SIMPLE), some other projects have potential positive environmental outputs in the field of bio energy technologies (Rural Development) or environmental products (ABBA). Other projects objectives are more vague, recommending less concrete goals like the “reduction of greenhouse effect” or adapting sustainable development concepts in SMEs, where environmental issues are one out of many aspects of sustainability.

The findings from the interviews in the final phase of the projects implementation are based on the answers to the following questions:

1. What does your project contribute to the equality of opportunity with discriminated groups (young people, old people, handicapped, women, minorities)?
2. What does your project contribute to sustainable development / environmental protection?

Ad 1) As regards to the equality of chances, the situation in the projects can be characterised as follows:

Attempts to involve more female beneficiaries or participants have been made in some projects, but had only limited success (e.g. SIMPLE; FEMTO). Reasons are the lack of interest or confidence of female members of the target group in technologies.

Some projects try to balance the number of female and male beneficiaries. The share of females is in some projects 50% or higher (e.g. DiBiC, Swedish part).

The successful IWE project focuses on female entrepreneurs, in addition it provides special assistance to members of ethnic minorities.

The two projects with young people as target groups (FEMTO; YAB) do not focus on the disadvantaged youth, but on the mainstream. This cannot be considered as a contribution to equal opportunities.

Although there are some efforts and also positive results with regard to equality of chances, in general there is a lack of ambitions in many projects to make a serious effort to mainstreaming the equality of chances. The idea of mainstreaming goes beyond the non-discrimination. It requires a more active approach of assisting those who are in a disadvantaged structural position, may it be women, handicapped, elderly people or youth. It also means that the equality of opportunity should be considered and integrated into *all* projects, not only in some special ones.

Ad 2) sustainable development /environmental protection

Projects with focus on environmental and social sustainability like SIMPLE and EASE are very successful which proves that environmental and social issues do have economic potentials and can contribute considerably to a regional development strategy.

Other projects which did not plan to improve the environment so actively sometimes show interesting components or aspects such as renewable energies being supported, consideration of sustainability issues in development tools and strategies, environmental aspects being part of trainings or awareness raising activities, support of financial services to businesses who offer environmental friendly products or services. Although not planned, several projects contributed to environmental improvements.

A third category of projects is not really sensitive to environmental issues, either due to their subject which has only little relations to environmental sustainability or due to the projects participants who do not see the importance or the possibility to take into account environmental aspects.

9.1 Conclusions

Summing up, it can be stated that equality objectives have been reached to a considerable extent, but almost exclusively for women. There are only few positive results for members of ethnic minorities and no results for disadvantaged elderly or young or disabled people. The responsible persons for the management of RFOs or future interregional initiative projects should think about incentives and instruments which could enhance the quality of the projects with regard to the horizontal objectives.

The first conclusion for environmental sustainability is similar: Although there are innovative and successful projects, the mainstreaming dimension should be emphasized more in the future. As projects



are often busy with doing their core activities, specific support from the management would help to motivate project participants to work more intensively on environmental issues.

The second conclusion for the environmental sustainability is to better identify and promote the potentials of regions in the field of 'green industries' and nature preservation. This could help not only to stimulate more economic growth, but also to encourage 'green growth'.



10 Summarized conclusions and approaches for improvements

10.1 Impacts in the cooperating regions

The projects approved under the TOWER programme have in general highly contributed to the **attainment of the foreseen objectives**. The TOWER programme has had a number of positive **impacts** in the cooperating regions such as:

- contributing to the competitiveness of the businesses in the participating regions through delivery of innovative services and testing of new tools and strategies in cooperation with firms;
- the stimulation of sustainable growth of the regional economy through development and application of approaches for regional analysis, strategy and development and planning;
- the improvement of technical as well as cultural competences of various stakeholders (in development agencies, in research institutions, in politics, in businesses, in education, in consulting services sector).

These impacts will help to enhance the competitiveness of the whole participating regions and to improve their positions in the global knowledge economy.

The TOWER programme has promoted a variety of approaches and functioned as a **laboratory for innovative ideas and tools** or for the testing of existing tools in different regions. The interregional exchange and cooperation was important to guarantee or to facilitate more adaptable methodologies, since these could be tested under different framework conditions (e.g., political, organisational, financial, economic) and then adapted to be able to produce best practice guides or other more wide scope dissemination materials and also to be applied in the diverse participant regions.

The flexibility of some of the tools or methodologies can be appraised by their potential transferability to other fields or clusters, e.g., within the environmental sector (e.g., InnoCenter, ABBA, SOG), hence reinforcing the added value of the TOWER support.

Despite some difficulties resulting from various frameworks, objectives and expectations of the partners, it can be concluded that the partnerships were in general satisfactory for all parts. All partners stated a considerable share of **added-value** through the interregional cooperation, making reference to different dimensions such as cooperation culture, widening the horizon of knowledge about methods and strategies, improvement of technical qualifications, knowledge and mindsets on a personal level as well as on the organisational/institutional level in participating organisations, benefiting from demonstration effects, developing new products and services.

Another outcome is that the lower the tradition of cooperation between stakeholders in one region, the higher are the potential positive cooperation impacts, namely the establishment of networks of regional actors, and as a consequence the benefits for this region in participating in an INTERREG programme.

Even though the results and impact of the TOWER programme can be assessed as very positive, the analysis of the aspects which did not function so well is a good base for the identification of recommendations aiming at the improvement of future interregional cooperation projects.

10.2 Recommendations for improvement

a) Application phase

A strong potential for improvement is a **better identification and clarification** of the interests, competences, objectives, methods, target groups, financing of the different partners **in the preparatory phase**. This would prevent at a later stage changes in the partnership, having as a consequence delays in the implementation or even the need to revise the project. The management of the programme should play here an important role, namely by promoting a **multi-step project initiation and monitoring** and by guaranteeing the in-depth discussion and quality control of the project at the very beginning as well as through the implementation phase. The improvement of the projects proposals quality can also be supported in the selection phase through feed-back and requirements for clarification through the project management.

In this context, the '**Do not re-invent the wheel problem**' can also be tackled. As it is sometimes difficult for the regional stakeholders and the management of an interregional funding scheme to evaluate and monitor the innovative character of the projects, available knowledge and experience should be used (e.g. databases, researchers or other experts).

A potential problem of lack of resources (especially time) for this role might be reduced by contracting external experts to control the quality of the projects as well as the issues mentioned above, as it is the case for instance of the LEADER programme in Germany. Both, the involvement of external experts as well as a more elaborated multi-step project initiation is a current practice on other regional or national funding schemes.

A particular aspect to take into account in this initial assessment is the need to **have more balanced budgets between all project partners**. The experience has shown that projects where some of the partners have a very small participation, due to low budget, have had some problems in the partnership, mainly as a feeling of lack of interest or motivation from the partners with the small participation.

Another aspect to be checked at the beginning is whether only one partner is developing/or has already developed before the project starts the methodology or the tool of the project. Although the distribution

of workpackages is in principal a practical and efficient idea, the evaluation has shown that the efficiency in presenting a methodology by having it done by one partner, may lead at a later stage to the need to revise it, adapting it to the local circumstances or in the worst case not using it at all and having to produce a specific methodology more adjusted to the regional context. Therefore, all partners should have at least a basic **knowledge on the methods** to be developed/applied and should be able to contribute substantially to the further development and application of methods.

The analysis of the applications should also take into account the level of focus of the project, i.e. the level of "dispersion vs. concentration" of the objectives. Projects with too disperse objectives, e.g. which deal with too many different clusters or activity sectors, may have difficulties to have a good cooperation between all partners, risking to have bilateral cooperations and/or even having to drop some of the initial objectives.

Also for the purpose of clarity, it should be clearly exposed in the application, in case the project is regionally very inter-connected with other projects, which actions will be conducted under the programme and which other complementary actions will be done under other programmes. This would help to **better assess the workload and the budget of the project** to be funded by an interregional funding scheme.

It can be stated that **equality objectives** have been reached almost exclusively for women. There are only few positive results for members of ethnic minorities and no results for disadvantaged elderly or young or handicapped people. The responsible persons for the management of RFOs or future interregional initiative projects should think about incentives and instruments which could enhance the quality of the projects with regard to the horizontal objectives.

The **mainstreaming of the environmental sustainability** dimension should be emphasized more in the future. As projects are often busy with doing their core activities, specific support from the management would help to motivate project participants to work more intensively on environmental issues. In addition, methods for the identification and promotion of the potentials in the field of 'green industries' and nature preservation should be further elaborated. This could contribute not only to more economic growth, but also to more 'green growth'.

a) Implementation phase and follow-up

During the project implementation and possible already at the beginning, it is recommendable to check potential possibilities of cooperation between the different projects being supported by the interregional programme. The cooperation between the projects EASE and SIMPLE is a good example. However this potential has not been fully explored in other projects: during the interviews we have identified that in some regions there was little knowledge about the other regional projects and in some cases it become

obvious that there could have been some complementarity between them – e.g. some projects needed financing but there were no contacts with the project TOWBUSANG aiming at exactly identifying sources of financing. Hence, the potentials for cooperation and the objective to use the **potential synergies should be better identified**, for example through an exchange between projects and instructions of the management of the interregional programme to actualize the synergies.

It is important for regions to **build 'antennae'** by which they can receive information about new developments they otherwise might lack. Building 'Antennas' can for example mean:

- creating/improving the capacities of regions in order to have up-to date information about ongoing trends of regional development on the national and international level (e.g. access to information flow in the sphere of science and regional policies, in particular EU, access to databases and tenders);
- improving the skills of the staff in regional development agencies etc. to be able to better use the possibilities of regional development (such as funding schemes, tools, approaches) through visit of conferences, training, exchange
- improving the cooperation with the applied researchers and consultants for specific issues of regional development such as analyses of trends, potentials, assessment of programme/project proposals on base of 'state of the art' knowledge, management, monitoring and evaluation of development plans and funding schemes etc.

Taking into account the innovative character of many projects and their potential benefit also for other regions in Europe, it should be envisaged to produce and/or to disseminate these results in a larger scale. The new INTERREG IV C Programme may be the right framework for this through its Capitalisation approach.

But also for the further elaboration of already tested approaches and tools there is the option to continue as a regional initiative project in the **INTERREG IV C Programme**. It is important to mention that there are not only many possibilities under priority 1: Innovation and the Knowledge Economy, focusing on research, technology and development; information society; entrepreneurship, SMEs and economic sectoral development, employment, human resources and education, but also under priority 2: Environment and Risk Management, focusing on energy and sustainable public transport, biodiversity and preservation of natural heritage, natural and technological risks, water & waste management and cultural heritage. In particular the second priority extends the options for interregional cooperation also for other groups of actors.



Annex 1: Synopsis of the projects approved under the TOWER programme

Component	Name	Lead Participants	Objectives	Final outputs	Dissemination	Beneficiaries
2	AFP - analysis, Forecasting, Planning	Cumbria County Council (UK)	Improve the understanding of the methods and processes for developing growth strategies between regions To provide a context to bring together the learnings from all Tower regions, so that Tower becomes truly a "learning partnership".	Toolkits /Guide demonstrating best practices in the development of strategies and their implementation.	Seminars/conferences. Good practice guide.	Local/regional authorities. Personnel from universities. RD institutes.
2	DiBiC - Developing international businesses in Clusters	Development Agency East Netherlands (NL)	To understand the processes that lead to new or more dynamic existing clusters.	Development of three pilot clusters. Instruction manual with rules and lessons supporting the creation of clusters.	Symposium on the lessons learned in Hungary. Workshops in the different regions.	Companies. Clusters.
2	IWE - Inspiring Women Entrepreneurship	Voluntary Action Cumbria (UK)	To encourage long term co-operation and mutual learning between women entrepreneurs.	Several workshops. Good practice guide.	Several workshops. Good practice guide. Press promotion Face-to-face presentations.	30 female entrepreneurs. 8 business supporters or developers.
2	YAB - Young Alumni	Han University (NL)	Developing tools, methodologies and policies to stimulate starting SME's by alumni from universities. Introduce organisations to the methods of support start-ups.	Exchange programmes. International master classes. C-Scan for entrepreneurs. Portfolio tool (information check-list for international business contacts). Website. Module on the subject "international commerce"	Conference/workshop at the regional and national level for target groups. Publication of results in relevant papers, periodicals, websites.	Student's Entrepreneur Organisations.
3	ABBA - Accelerate Bio Business Activity - part I + II	CCI Lyon (FR)	Development in European Healthcare Biotech SME's/start-ups/spin-offs	Build transnational commercial assisting platform. Talent pools of consultation. Learning sessions. Call centres.	Publication describing case studies	



Component	Name	Lead Participants	Objectives	Final outputs	Dissemination	Beneficiaries
3	Innovation Centre	CCI Lyon (FR)	To set-up in each region an Innovation Center.	3 Innovation Centers, providing services related to innovation.	Publication with case-study. Presentation of results in other European Networks and other projects where partners are active members.	Entrepreneurs. SME's.
3	Spin-Off Generator	Development Agency East Netherlands (NL)	Developing tools and activities to generate spin-offs from SME's by stimulating entrepreneurship.	3 Workshops in 60 companies. Spin-offs SCANS in 10 companies.	Reports. Workshops. Final congress with relevant stakeholders from the different regions.	Entrepreneurs. SME's.
4	TOWBUSANG - Creating and developing a Business Angels Network	Eurofocus. (UK)	Development of an integrated business angles network for SMEs in 3 TOWER regions and to interact with all Tower regions in delivering the benefits.	Templates for SMEs business plans. Prepare pilot applications in 5 areas.	Regional events to create awareness of the project opportunity to SMEs and others. Transnational events. Distribution of CD. Project Website.	330 SME's. 3 organisations providing support
4	FEMTO - Fuelling entrepreneurial mindsets in the Tower regions	Cumbria Business Education Consortium Ltd (UK)	To facilitate exchange of knowledge and experiences on how to stimulate entrepreneurship by fuelling entrepreneurial mindsets.	Develop models/activities/workshops	Regional events. Minimum of 3 international meetings + final international workshop. Use of participants websites to support dissemination. Creation of Newsletter.	100 students/young people. 10 teachers. >10 Businesses. 4 new organisations.
5	SIMPLE - Successful implementation of eco-design in SME's	Östergötland County Adm Board (SE)	To develop eco-design methodologies to facilitate implementation and use in SMEs.	New or improved environmental products. Software.	Book/publication. Dissemination events.	Entrepreneurs. SME's. Business support organisations.
5	EASE - Experimentation of sustainability actions for enterprises	CCI Lyon (FR)	Improving knowledge in order to integrate sustainable issues into management.	Trainings. Assessments. Best practices exchange tools. Transregional methodology for Sustainable development implementation in SME's.	Workshops. Press release. Website. Regional conference meetings between partners and SIMPLE project partners.	Entrepreneurs. SME's. Business support organisations.
5	Rural Development	Unicotech (HU)	To strengthen the competitiveness and viability of SMEs by adapting sustainable development concepts.	Collection of best practices of clusters. Joint knowledge basis in cooperation with RD centers.	Symposium. Interactive website. Instruction manual. Newsletters. DVD.	Entrepreneurs. SME's. Local/regional organisations.

Annex 2: Questionnaires for interviews (regional coordinators, project participants)

Guidelines for interviews with project partners- TOWER Programme

Project/Region:

Name:

Institution:

Date; time:

Interviewer:

A. Evaluation of the Project (comparison of targets and actual state)

a. Objectives (general assessment): (Introduction with citation of objectives from application form)

1. Are the objectives still the same or did they change during the course of the project? If so, what was changed?
2. Will you achieve the foreseen objectives and outputs? If not, what will be revised?

b. Stages and state of implementation (implementation model in application form)

3. What is the status of the project? Have the planned stages and activities been implemented?
4. Is the project running according to the time plan or are there any delays? If so, which tasks/activities are critical and why?

c. Outputs and results (Introduction with citation from application form)

The expected results of your project were described as

5. How much of the expected outputs and results did you achieve up to now?
6. Do you actually face any major difficulties for the achievement of the targeted results until the end of the project? If yes, which ones?

d. Achievement of objectives/ Impacts

1. The activities of your project have been reported in the progress reports. One of the major tasks of the evaluation is to assess the more qualitative dimensions of goal achievement and of the

impact of the project (meaning the non measurable impacts, e.g., how the project promoted more entrepreneurial mindsets). *(Hence, we have some questions addressing these aspects).*

(When relevant, add project specific questions on base of targets and target groups defined in applications forms)

2. In general, did the achievements lead to a reduction/solution of the problems which should be tackled?

e. Evaluation of the relation between the project and the regional / strategic level/ Impact on strategic level

1. Are there any institutionalised linkages between the actors on the project level and the actors on the strategic level in each of the participating TOWER regions?
2. Do the project partners participate in any discussions of planning activities on the level of strategies such as developing regional development plans, SWOT analysis, strategy shaping? If so, in which? (Are the regional stakeholders willing to work together with the project partners?)
3. Do the project partners have any **recommendations for the shaping of regional development** strategies (e.g. the addition of certain funding measures in EU structural fund programmes)? What are the main difficulties in doing that? What do you plan to overcome these constraints?
4. Are there any **dissemination measures** of the projects which contribute to regional strategies or programmes (e.g. presentations, newsletters, websites, press releases for the communication of project results for regional stakeholders/strategy shapers). If yes, which ones? If no, which ones could have been useful?
5. (Suggestion to prove the link between the project level and the strategic level: Will the sub-project have support from regional stakeholders after the ending of the TOWER programme?)
6. What are **concrete activities and results of the projects** (already achieved or to be achieved during the Programme timeframe) which could **impact the strategic level**?

questions to be adapted according to the type of project)

(The next questions refer only to the relevant component of your project)

Component 1 – Strategies for sustainable economic growth in regions

- Do projects provide specific new ideas or tools for the analysis and planning of regional development (like the AFP project for example does)? If so, which ones? what is new?
how are they appreciated by the regional strategy shapers?

Component 2 - Strengthened technology infrastructure in regions and transfer to SME

- Do projects provide specific innovative approaches for the strengthening of network and cluster activities which could contribute to regional growth? If so, which ones?
what is new?
how are they appreciated by the regional strategy shapers?

Component 3 – Competitive and knowledge-based entrepreneurship

- Do projects apply new methods for the qualitative improvement of measures for the promotion of business start ups such as funding, consulting, addressing specific target groups of business founders? If so, which ones?
what is new?
how are they appreciated by the regional strategy shapers?

Component 4 – Sustainable SMEs

- Do projects provide specific innovative approaches for the creation of new infrastructures which could contribute to regional growth? If so, which ones?
what is new?
how are they appreciated by the regional strategy shapers?
- Do projects provide specific innovative approaches for the creation of new products which could contribute to strengthening of particular regional competences? If so, which ones?
what is new?
how are they appreciated by the regional strategy shapers?

f. Cross-cutting issues / achievement of horizontal objectives

- What does your project contribute to the equality of chances with discriminated groups (young people, old people, handicapped, women, minorities)?
 1. What does your project contribute to sustainable development /environmental protection?

g. Interregional cooperation

- What are the ways the inter-regional co-operation between the participating regions is practised? (e.g., exchange of information, meetings, development of a common tool...)

(Complement to previous questions:)

- Are there any co-operating actors beyond the level of the projects?
- What are their objects of co-operation (e.g. new ideas and insights which lead to a better quality in strategy shaping, individual skills of the participating partners)?
- Has the interregional platform, i.e. the exchange of experiences in a mutual learning process between the participating regions been established?

h. European added value

- What is the added value of transnational cooperation for your project? How did you benefit from the transnational cooperation? (e.g., what did you learn from the other partners)?
- What do you want to/ could you achieve through international cooperation which otherwise you would not have? (Complement to the previous question). Issues which could be of relevance:
 - a) Recognition of the meaning of regional policy and application at the national level
 - b) Improvement of regional policy methods and implementation of projects (eg, formulation of strategies)
 - c) Contribute to the regional development;
 - d) Positive impacts on the process of regional development (p.e., long term strategy, partnerships, exchange of experience);

i. Dissemination activities

1. How do you assess the dissemination of your project activities and results? *Do you think you are reaching the right publics (not just beneficiaries – eg. trainees - but also regional actors)? (Complement to previous questions)*
2. Are you satisfied with the transfer of results to the target groups?
3. What should be improved?

j. Monitoring and evaluation

1. Which methods do you apply to monitor and report project performance?
2. Do you apply any evaluation techniques (e.g. self-evaluation techniques, use of external evaluators) in assuring that the project is running as planned? If so, which?
3. Do you have any documentation of the results of monitoring and evaluation? Would you please provide them to the evaluators?

To sum up

k. What are the most positive results and experiences of your project (in general - e.g., development of a new tool, improvement of the link to a regional institution, or others)?

B. Evaluation of the partnership

1. How was the organisation of the partnership? (eg, the selection of partners, the identification of the lead partner)
2. Did you have main difficulties in building the partnership, e.g., finding the (right) partners, cultural differences? If there were difficulties, are they resolved now? What should be taken in consideration in a future programme?
3. How do you evaluate your partnership? What are the strengths and weaknesses of your partnership? [Do you think you have the right partners (and lead partners) or should they be from another region or another type of institution]?

C. Evaluation of the importance of the TOWER Programme

(QUESTIONS ONLY FOR THE REGIONAL COORDINATOR) (1-5):

1. *What are the most positive aspects of the TOWER Programme?*
2. *What are the most negative aspects of the TOWER Programme?*
3. *Did the TOWER Programme support the right type of institutions?*
4. *Did the TOWER have the right objectives?*
5. *How do you think the negative aspects could be eliminated in case there would be a follow up of the Programme?*
6. What are the specific advantages of having the project supported by TOWER and not by another programme (e.g, national operational programmes/FEDER-ESF)?
7. Would you have implemented your project without the support from the TOWER Programme?
8. Are there any insights from the project which should be considered within a new Programme?
9. If there would be a follow up of the TOWER Programme would you apply again?

D. Evaluation of the management system

10. How do you assess the TMT? Was there enough technical support in the preparation phase of the applications? Is the support to the projects during the implementation considered as sufficient?



11. What could be improved at the management level?

12. How do you evaluate the financial system?

E. Evaluation of the project viability/ sustainability

1. What are the project perspectives? Do you expect that the project will go on after the end of the TOWER Programme? What will be the main objectives of the new project? Will the partnership be the same? If not, why not?

2. What role does TOWER play in the existence of your institution/company and future activities?

THANK YOU!



Topics for the interviews with the regional coordinators

- Objective of the evaluation/interview, identify eventual deviations from the planned...
- From your knowledge of the projects, do you think they are progressing well, or are there eventual limitations and why?

A. List of the relevant projects in the region (to talk shortly about all of them)

B. Evaluation of the relation between the project and the regional / strategic level/ Impact on strategic level

1. Are there any institutionalised linkages between the actors on the project level and the actors on the strategic level in each of the participating TOWER regions?
2. Do the project partners participate in any discussions of planning activities on the level of strategies such as developing regional development plans, SWOT analysis, strategy shaping? If so, in which? (Are the regional stakeholders willing to work together with the project partners?)

C. European added value

1. What is the added value of transnational cooperation for the regional projects? How did the regional partners benefit from the transnational cooperation? (e.g., what did you learn from the other partners?)
2. What did the regional partners achieve through international cooperation which otherwise they would not have?

(Issues which could be of relevance

- a) Recognition of the meaning of regional policy and application at the national level
- b) Improvement of regional policy methods and implementation of projects (eg, formulation of strategies)
- c) Contribute to the regional development;
- d) Positive impacts on the process of regional development (p.e., long term strategy, partnerships, exchange of experience);
- e) The acceptance of regional policy as a real expression for the solidarity between the richer and the poorer parts of EU.)

D. Evaluation of the partnership

1. How was the organisation of the regional partnership? (eg, the selection of partners, the identification of the lead partner)
2. Where there difficulties in building the partnership, e.g., finding the (right) partners, cultural differences? If there were difficulties, are they resolved now? What should be taken in consideration in a future programme?

E. Evaluation of the TOWER Programme

1. What are the most positive aspects of the TOWER Programme?
2. What are the most negative aspects of the TOWER Programme?
3. Did the TOWER Programme support the right type of institutions?
4. Did the TOWER have the right objectives?
5. How do you think the negative aspects could be eliminated in case there would be a follow up of the Programme?
6. What are the specific advantages of having the projects supported by TOWER and not by another programme (e.g. national regional operational programmes)?
7. Would the regional project partners have implemented their projects without the support from the TOWER Programme?

F. Evaluation of the management system

13. How do you assess the TMT? Was there enough technical support in the preparation phase of the applications? Is the support to the projects during the implementation considered as sufficient?
14. What could be improved at the management level?

Annex 3 Names of Interviewees

Project Name	Name of Interviewee	Organisation (Country)
SIMPLE	Olof Hjem / Bernt Dalbäck	(SE)
	Allan E W Rennie	(UK)
Rural Developpment	Hans Hoekman	(NL)
	Valastyán Pál	(HU)
YAB	Szöko Janos	(HU)
	Fokke Aukema	(NL)
IWE	Ruth Evans	(UK)
	Samantha Blackwell	(UK)
	Angélique Da Silva	(FR)
DIBiC	Peter Eklund	(SE)
	Joep Koene	(NL)
AFP	Ian Hill	(UK)
	Frank Eetgerink	(NL)
EASE	Péter Nagyvári	(HU)
	Marc Magaud	(FR)
Spin Off Generator	Gilles Gaquere	(FR)
	Joep Koene	(NL)
	Péter Nagyvári	(HU)
Innocenter	Gilles Gaquere	(FR)
	Csaba Szikszai	(HU)
ABBA	Maria Schwartz	(SE)
	Rodolphe Bernard	(FR)
FEMTO	Svensson	(SE)
	Fay Davies	(UK)
Towbusang	George Mc Donald	(UK)
	Denis Feuillant	(FR)
Regional Coordinator	Gerard van Gaalen	(NL)
	Robert Kopasz	(HU)
	Cedric Doger	(FR)
Regional Coordinator / Project Coordinator	Anna Jackobson	(SE)