

Minutes of the ACENET meeting #2

**Veneto/Trieste, Italy
26th - 28th June**

ACENET meeting #2

Location:

Day 1 Regione Veneto (Venice), Chamber of Commerce (Treviso) and Boot Museum (Montebelluna)

Day 2 AREA Science Park (Trieste), "Bosco del Merlo" (Annone Veneto, Lison-Pramaggiore)

Day 3 VEGA Science Park (Marghera)

Date: 2002.06.26 – 2002.06.28

Participants: See Attachment 1

Agenda: See Attachment 2

This was the second meeting of the thematic network ACENET. The meeting was focused on study visits and presentations by regional policy makers and cluster representatives, to communicate the experience of the industrial districts of the regions. The last day was set aside for discussions and workshops on hot topics as well as network formalities.

The meeting focused on experience sharing from the Veneto region, mainly organized by the Eurosportello Veneto. A study visit and presentation was also conducted at the AREA Science Park in the region of Trieste. At the meeting, new "products" were presented and discussed. The new homepage, with a separate member area, have recently been launched, and a marketing folder is being developed.

Day 1

“Initiatives and actions for clusters in the Veneto region”

Overview of the regional policy for industrial development

Marino Finozzi, the Regional Chancellor for SMEs Policy within the “Regione Veneto”, accounted for the special economic conditions in Veneto and the development of the policies concerning industrial districts in the region.

Since the industrial districts are seen as a focal point in the industrial system of Veneto, and since they are facing a tough future due to harsh international competition, there is a consensus that they have to be strengthened by governmental intervention.

Mr. Finozzi spoke in favour of integration between different regions in Europe and put out a request to the members of ACENET to consider mutual collaboration on technological development and production outsourcing, as well as on the topic of importing workforce, protecting SMEs against large multinationals and the creation of new markets for quality products.

The role of the Chamber of Commerce concerning industrial districts

Dr. Renato Chahinian, Secretary General of Chamber of Commerce of Treviso (C.C.I.A.A), accounted for the special function the Chamber of Commerce has in supporting the development of the industrial districts of the region.

The Chamber of Commerce is the focal support organisation in the region, responsible for networking activities between companies and between companies and other support organisations. Through the Chamber of Commerce, the main economical policy in the region is directed towards the industrial districts.

The most famous districts in the region of Veneto are:

- a) Sports footwear district in “Montebelluna”
- b) Stainless steel valley in “Conegliano”
- c) Wood working and furniture district

However, there are also other important districts, like the district of glasses and lenses in “Belluno”, as well as leatherwear, textile fabric and clothing districts.

Study Visit to the Montebelluna shoe cluster

Prof. Aldo Durante, the director of the Boot Museum Foundation (Fondazione Museo dello Scarpone), presented the district activities and development. The Montebelluna shoe district is one of the most important districts in Italy with market/world leading companies in e.g. ski boots, football shoes, and trekking shoes.

Out of the around 500 companies working in the shoe manufacturing sector in Montebelluna, around 150 are paying members of the district. Of these 10 are very big companies (e.g. Nike, Salomon, Lotto, Diadora etc), 30 are middle-sized companies (between 50-100 employees) and around 100 are small (less than 50 employees). Montebelluna is recognised world wide as trend setters for the future of sport shoe design and production.

Beginning as merely a museum, the “Boot Museum Foundation” is now the residence of the coordinating office of the district and is the natural meeting point for companies. The primary functions of the “Museum” was is the record keeping activities for the shoe development in the territory, e.g. patent following and recording, archive keeping of old shoes. The museum however now also facilitates a school and centre for technicians and designers. Sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, the Museum also conducts technology watch in the area of trends and fashion.

Prof. Aldo Durante is also the board director of the “Club of Districts” in Italy this year, since the Montebelluna district is holding the chairmanship of the club this year. The club acts as lobbying representative, raising awareness for topics of concerning all districts. The club is also a partner to organisations and institutions providing them with information about the districts.

During the meeting, a representative from a company in the district shared his view of the future, saying he believes more and more production probably has to be relocated to lower wage countries, but were convinced that the design and development would stay in Montebelluna.

Day 2 – Presentation of the Trieste region and network internal discussions

AREA Scientific and Technological Park of Trieste

Dr. Gabriele Gatti, the director of planning & development at AREA Science Park presented the rationale of the park. The region of Trieste holds a lot of science institutions, and AREA Science Park is the biggest multi-disciplined Science Park in Italy and was founded 15 years ago.

Trieste is considered to be the “East of the West”, and with the only free port in the Mediterranean sea, Trieste has big advantages in being a centre of trade flows between the north and the south as well as between the east and the west.

Networking and clusters are seen as a key area for innovation success. Four districts have been recognised by law in the region:

1. Cutlery production
2. Ham production
3. Furniture production
4. Chair production

AREA Science Park has plans to support additional cluster development in five high-tech areas:

1. Biotechnologies, genetic engineering and diagnostics
2. Telecommunications-, ICT and electronics
3. Space research
4. Nano technologies
5. Material science

Another area of special interest to the park is the spin off from research. To foster the exploitation of research, the park is constantly working on developing new technologies, promoting diffusion and transfer of innovation and technologies, setting up international partnerships and creating job opportunities.

Presentation of ACENET members

To sum up what has been happening in the different ACENET regions since the last meeting, and to introduce new participants to each other, all regions made a short presentation of their current situation.

Discussion of network internal issues

- *ACENET process and main goals*

Nils Gabrielsson of inno presented a holistic view on the different ACENET topics and how the activities at the meetings and between the meetings can support the ACENET goals.

- *Presentation of a preliminary agenda for the next ACENET meeting in Graz.*

Wolfgang Schabereiter presented preliminary agenda for the meeting in Styria in the beginning of October. A temporary agenda will be issued to all members in short.

- *Member's accounting for special topics of interest (including Q&A)*

Voices were raised from IDS, EIC Veneto and Plastics Valley for special interests: IDS asked for information regarding biogas for automobile engines; EIC Veneto asked for information regarding plastics and new materials, but stressed that all sectors were of importance; Plastics Valley asked for information on bio fuels.

Study visit to Biological Wine Cluster

After the transfer to Annone Veneto by bus, the group visited the wine firm 'Bosco del Merlo', who is specialised in the production of wines obtained from biological agriculture. As the environment is a driving factor for development and as cooperation between the firms was not wide spread in the beginning, the Chamber of Commerce sponsored the firms in the cluster in the initial phase.

Since the firms in the cluster are focused on a narrow sector of consumers, they had to find new markets in new countries. To prevent competition from being a destructive force, they decided not to compete in the same geographical markets.

'Bosco del Merlo' has a turnover of around 7 million Euro and employs 30 persons. After a guided tasting of a couple of wines from biologic agriculture, everybody was a "happy" bus rider back to Venice.

Day 3 – VEGA Science Park and network internal discussions

The last day of the meeting was held in the VEGA Scientific and Technological Park in Marghera. The president of the VEGA Park, Professor Zanetto welcomed everybody and introduced dr. Renato Chahinian from the Chamber of Commerce to speak more about the cluster policies in the region.

Chamber of Commerce cluster policies (continuation of previous speech)

As responsible for sponsoring and funding of the districts/cluster in the Veneto region, the Chamber of Commerce was also the natural initiator of cluster establishment in the region. To get a district/cluster going, the Chamber of Commerce tries to find leading companies, who can take the lead in a cluster development, as well as to find and appoint neutral coordinators to ensure that cooperation between the companies and the Chamber of Commerce will take place.

Presently Venetian clusters/districts need promotional activities to find linkages with other countries, especially within the EU, to enhance the level of business. International networks need to be created, in order to enter new markets and to spread business into already existing ones. Since problems can be similar in different countries, it is possible to learn from each other; and international cooperation can also increase the export rate for all countries involved!

The Science park VEGA

The president of the park, professor Zanetto, made a presentation of the different activities within the park and his view of the region. Veneto region is dominated by the many SMEs. This implies that the development needs to be supported in a special way. VEGA is made up by both private and public members. It is of utmost importance that a foundation for cooperation is established between research and companies, and in particular local universities and SMEs. VEGA is an acronym for “Venetian Gateway”, which is supposed to stress the importance of establishing a link between the two groups.

The fields of activity are among others, the ICT sector, environmental protection technologies, new materials research, restoration & conservation of the historical and cultural heritage, biotechnologies, as well as professional training. The challenge is to find equilibrium between interests, e.g. between the Port and the environment, between the Venice cultural heritage and technological development etc.

The Veneto region was a rural area with a strong rural tradition and culture. When the industrial revolution came, the same people with the same buildings and infrastructure started the industrial development. Therefore, the district culture with small businesses and cooperation became the normal way of doing business even in industry.

Industrial district policy of Veneto

Professor Mario Volpe ended the first session of the day with an extensive presentation of the local development strategies in Veneto. North Italy is considered the 1st Italy, the south the 2nd, and the middle, with Veneto region, is considered the 3rd Italy. However, as the north is slowing down, and the south has become unable to catch up with international competition, the middle has shown a remarkably better development rate. The secret to this development lies in the characteristics of the districts.

In particular there are three areas that distinguish Veneto from other regions in the north and south.

1. The new law for districts in Veneto
2. The labour market for the districts, which is characterised by many SMEs and an overlapping of districts.
3. Internationalisation of the districts, where most products are identified with a “Made in Italy” quality brand, e.g. in textile, furniture, leather, fashion and sports.

The Veneto districts are characterised by self-organisation. The secret behind self-organisation lies in the fact that districts are more a cultural and geographical thing than an economical one! That is, systematic economic support is not the key to district success, but the facilitation of making companies taking advantage of inherent growth factors in the

district seems to be more successful according to the theory of self-organisation. Therefore the study of success- and growth factors in districts are of utmost importance to understanding how to best support the development of districts.

Hot topic discussion – Communication in and between clusters

- *Cultural barriers in communication between clusters*

Erik Bunis and Ebba Wallin from LTC, one of the managing organisations of Aluminiumriktet, shared their findings from a project they worked on together with an organisation in France regarding the problem of cultural differences in trans-national communication.

Problems are most often caused by:

- a) differences in language or interpretation of words;
- b) a protective versus an open policy on communicating outside the own organisation;
- c) differences in habits and codes of conduct, e.g. are business done over lunch or not?
Are office hours or vacation periods the same? Are higher authorities always addressed before employees?

To establish a communication platform on the Internet, for the purpose of making companies belonging to different clusters (in different countries) communicate, it is essential that:

1. the needs are identified;
2. the trans-national partners are selected, both in terms of the companies within both clusters and potential intermediaries;
3. personal meetings are promoted and set up;
4. the parties also actively work together.

- *Workshop and discussion*

The participants were divided in two groups, which shared their findings on communication culture. The main point from the discussion was that cultural differences in communication were much bigger than technical differences. Basically everybody in the two groups had access to broadband Internet, mail, mobile phone, fax etc, but the way in which they were used differed.

The differences were not only national, but also in terms of age and position. Those younger were for example more inclined to use new communication technology than older. Managers were inclined to lack time to answer mail themselves, so they use their secretary to answer much of the mails. An illustrious example of how the dilemma of hierarchy can impose problems in communication was in the proposed affair between Volvo and Renault. Managers from the two corporations talked smoothly with each other, but as the integration got deeper, the organisation was not “on the train”.

National characteristics also differed in many ways, e.g. in France mobile phones are mostly for private use, while e.g. in Sweden they are widely used for business matters, in many cases more than the ordinary fixed phones. In Italy as another example, written communication is much more common than phone calls, which differed to the situation in many of the other participants' countries.

- *Communication within clusters*

Claes Helmersson of IDS presented his experiences of how the management team of IDS communicated with companies in the region in order to establish and develop the cluster.

The region of Skaraborg is not famous for the good cooperation atmosphere. Since Skaraborg is a region with close geography (34.000 km²) it was seen as a possible and necessary solution to use the F&B (“Flesh and Blood”)–method for communication! This means driving around, visiting potential member companies and promoting the membership in the cluster.

Also, the communication between companies in the cluster is based on direct contacts. Physical meeting points for companies were established rather than to rely on communication technology. IDS set up a couple (5-6) discussion groups based around a common topic of interest (external logistics, competence development, business intelligence, product development and production development).

This presentation was followed by some of the members accounting for special problems they have encountered in their region. One member had experiences that they have too few companies involved to create synergies as they meet and that the suspicion of competition is always present which further set hurdles to effective communication. Others encountered how “old management” styles prevented public organisations and large companies from being animators, rather obstructed change and neglected SMEs to take part in cooperation projects. One member had the experience that if not the public acted as animators in the beginning, the companies tended to “wait and see”.

Håkan Muhr, from the newly established extrusion technology centre within Aluminiumriket, also experienced that trust was crucial for establishing communication between companies in a cluster. For example, in the region of Aluminiumriket, there are two big companies that out of tradition are fierce competitors who do not speak to each other. It was seen as crucial to find neutral areas, where the two companies could cooperate without the risk of being competitors. Education, employment of people and production development were areas where companies had a great need without being competitors. The focus in Aluminiumriket was therefore from the start on those areas.

Network formalities

- *Presentation of the new homepage*

Ebba Wallin from Aluminiumriket presented the new homepage with a restricted member area where it is possible to e.g. post questions and matters of discussion on the bulletin board. The member area also holds a calendar where all members can post events in their region or elsewhere of common interest.

- *Recap of the IRE meeting in Luxembourg - discussion of cooperating with other Thematic Networks*

At the meeting in Luxembourg all thematic networks within the IRE programme, had the chance of presenting themselves and discuss cooperation possibilities. For ACENET it showed that the thematic networks Metropolis, Strinnop and Partner also had “cluster management” as a topic on their agenda. The possibility to conduct joint meetings with those network was therefore discussed. The most suitable alternative seems to be to conduct a joint meeting with Metropolis, since both networks share a joint member, namely Oslo region. It is therefore decided that the possibilities to perform a joint meeting is further discussed, both internally and with the Metropolis network.

- *Reimbursements of costs*

The issue of cost statements and reimbursement of costs were discussed and questions were answered. Since the meeting in Venice showed a slightly biased distribution of costs

between travel and hotel in comparison to the budget, inno will discuss the matter with the commission and issue a detailed form on how costs are to be reimbursed in the future.

- *Presentation of new marketing material*

A draft for a joint marketing folder was presented to all participants. The folder contains information on the project and all member regions and makes possible to insert additional papers in the folder. The draft folder is being sent out to all members for proof reading and to stimulate ideas on how it can be made even better.

- *Summing up and discussing future meeting activities*

Apart from the previous discussions on the meeting in Graz, Yves Guyon stated that the meeting in Lyon was planned for the 4th – 6th of December with a big annual feast taking place on the 7th for those that wish to stay.

Before the next meeting the following “to-dos” need attention:

- *Completing the marketing folder* – all participants need to submit photos (2-3) that characterise the industry in their region. Photos should be in 300 dpi and preferably in tiff- or eps- format. Also, comments and ideas on how to improve the folder is welcome and necessary.
- *Preparing the meeting in Graz* – Peter Perkonigg and Wolfgang Schabereiter will arrange the main part of the meeting, but will need help with hotel booking and other matters of request from all participants. (Further information will be issued to all members.)
- *Good practice studies* – inno will put together and disseminate good practice reports from Aluminiumrikt, IDS, Veneto and Trieste.

Attachment 1

Participants

Organisation	Region	Participant/s	Wed	Thu	Fri
Länsteknikcentrum, Jönköping www.ltc.se	Aluminiumriket (Sweden)	Erik Bunis Ebba Wallin Håkan Muhr	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓
Steirische Wirtschaftsförderung www.sfg.at	Steiermark (Austria)	Peter Perkonigg Wolfgang Schabereiter	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓
Chambre de Commerce d'industrie www.lyon.cci.fr/	Rhone-Alpes (France)	Yves Guyon	✓	✓	✓
Vedecko-technologicky park Ostrava www.vtpo.cz	Ostrava (Czech Republic)	Jaromír Dudek Radim Mrázek	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓
Næringslivssekretariatet for Oslo og Akershus www.oslobusiness.no	Oslo (Norway)	Jon-Gunnar Aasen	✓	✓	
Regionalverband Schwarzwald- Baar-Heuberg www.regionalverband-sbh.de	Schwarzwald- Baar-Heuberg (Germany)	Rainer Kaufman	✓	✓	✓
MRA Maribor Development Agency www.eic.mra.si	City of Maribor and Podravje region (Slovenia)	Vladimir Rudl	✓	✓	✓
Industriellt distrikt Skaraborg www.idskaraborg.nu	Skaraborg (Sweden)	Claes Helmsersson Christer Martinsson Christer Enerskog	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓
Tarnowski Klaster Przemyslowy "Plastikova Dolina" S.A. http://pwsz.wsz.tarnow.pl/plastvalley	Tarnów (Poland)	Ursula Gacek Tomasz Gut	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓
EIC Veneto www.eicveneto.it	Veneto (Italy)	Michela Oliva Filippo Mazzariol	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓
AREA Science Park, Trieste www.area.trieste.it	Trieste (Italy)	Gabriele Gatti		(✓)	
Inno AG www.inno-group.com	coordinator	Nils Gabrielsson Ulf Moström Petra Falchetto	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓

Attachment 2

Agenda

ACENET MEETING #2

VENICE 26 – 28 JUNE 2002

ORGANISED BY EUROSPORTELO VENETO

Tuesday 25 June

In the evening Arrival in Venice, Hotel Bonvecchiati

Wednesday 26 June

- 8:30 "Initiatives and actions for clusters in the Veneto region",
Marino Finozzi, Regional Councillor for SMEs Policy
(Regione Veneto, Dorsoduro-Venezia)
- 12:30 Lunch – Buffet
- 14:00 Departure from Piazzale Roma to the Chamber of Commerce
of Treviso by bus
- 15:00 "Research activities and economic promotion of the industrial
cluster of Montebelluna carried on by the Chamber of
Commerce of Treviso."
Dr. Renato Chahinian – Secretary General C.C.I.A.A. Treviso
(Chamber of Commerce of Treviso – Council Room)
- 16:00 Transfer to Montebelluna by bus
- 16.30 Presentation of the Fondazione Museo dello Scarpone and
meeting with a representative of a company in the district.
Prof. Aldo Durante – Director Boot Museum Foundation
(Fondazione Museo dello Scarpone - Mountain Boot Museum
Foundation, – Montebelluna, Villa Zuccareda Binetti)
- 18:00 Visit to the Museum
- 19:30 Dinner at the restaurant 'Al Tiglio d'Oro' (The Golden Lime's)
in Montebelluna and return to Venice by bus

Thursday 27 June

- 8:45 Departure from Piazzale Roma to the AREA Scientific and Technological Park of Trieste by bus
- 11.00 Welcoming and presentation of AREA Science Park
Dr. Gabriele Gatti, Director Planning & Development (AREA Science Park premises in Trieste)
- 11:45 Introduction of all members and explanation of development since the last meeting
- 12:15 ACENET process and main goals
Nils Gabrielsson, coordinator
- 12:45 Presentation of agenda for the next ACENET meeting in Graz
- 13:00 Member's accounting for special topics of interest (including Q&A)
- 13:30 Buffet lunch
- 14:30 Short tour at the AREA Science Park premises
- 15:00 Transfer to Annone Veneto by bus
- 17:00 Visit to wine firm 'Bosco del Merlo' (specialised in the production of wines obtained from biologic agriculture) and presentation of the biologic wine cluster in the Lison-Pramaggiore area.

Guided tasting of a couple of wines from biologic agriculture
- 19:30 Dinner at the farm holidays restaurant 'Al Cantinon' (The Big Cellar) in Corbolone di S. Stino di Livenza and return to Venice by bus

Friday 28 June

- 9:00 Workshop at VEGA Scientific and Technological Park in Marghera:
Welcoming and presentation of the VEGA activity, President of the VEGA Park, Professor Zanetto
- 10:00 "Industrial district policy of Veneto"
Professor Mario Volpe
- 11:00 Cultural barriers in communication between clusters
Erik Bunis and Ebba Wallin, Aluminiumriket
- 11:30 Workshop and discussion
- 12:00 Internal communication within clusters
Claes Helmersson, ID Skaraborg

12:15	Open discussion
13:30	Lunch - Buffet
14:30	Presentation of the new homepage Ebba Wallin, Aluminiumriket
15:00	Discussion of cooperating with other Thematic Networks Recap of the IRE meeting in Luxembourg Reimbursements of costs Presentation of new marketing material inno AG (Nils Gabrielsson, Ulf Moström)
16:00	Summing up and discussing future meeting activities
16:30	End of event

-Looking forward to the next meeting in Graz 2nd to 4th of October.

Nils, Ulf and Petra - inno-group