



Eco-innovation

**Why reinvent the wheel?
Capitalising on regional
policy achievements in
boosting eco-innovation**



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Why reinvent the wheel? Capitalising on regional policy achievements in boosting eco-innovation

Eco-innovation presents many new challenges but also opportunities for regional policymakers. In this context, the interregional cooperation programme, INTERREG IVC, has recently published the results of an important policy analysis, one in a series of 12, each focusing on a different policy theme. This brochure offers just a brief preview of what you can find in the report on 'Eco-innovation', which details a raft of tried-and-tested good practices and offers evidence-based policy recommendations.

Eco-innovation: why it matters

Eco-innovation is not limited to specific industries or sectors of the economy: it can be introduced into manufacturing, services, organisations, management styles, urban and rural planning, and design, agriculture and many other areas. It can therefore be instrumental in building healthy, competitive, and sustainable regional economies. For regions, these benefits include:

- Reduced use of natural resources and a decreased ecological footprint by restricting the release of harmful substances;
- Economic benefits, such as reduced material costs from a better use of resources and increased energy and resources savings;
- Opening up of new market opportunities that create jobs and make SMEs more competitive;
- Social gains from more sustainable practices. Eco-innovation can make a difference by changing citizens' behaviours, which can often result in more collaborative approaches, increased cohesion and improved quality of life and health.

Figure 1: Benefits of eco-innovation



Source: EIO 2012



Eco-innovation: challenges at regional level

Among the 204 INTERREG IVC projects, there are seven that focus on eco-innovation. The projects employ a variety of approaches: while some promote the development and uptake of environmental technologies, others focus on particular sectors or on policies in selected areas. Certain strengthen institutional capacity or target specific populations/groups, such as SMEs. The projects analysed have focused on specific challenges, namely:

- promotion of eco-innovation in the construction sector
- promotion of eco-management in companies
- promotion of responsible innovation via Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in SMEs
- environmental sustainability and competitiveness of road transport
- supporting cleantech incubation
- finding an effective regional policy mix to support eco-innovation
- fostering eco-innovation and green technologies through a wide range of support measures.





Meeting the challenges: good practices from INTERREG IVC

In total, 110 good practices were identified by the seven INTERREG IVC projects with regard to eco-innovation. Most are non-financial, but a few do focus on grants, subsidies, and vouchers. They generally have a supply-side focus supporting networks, partnerships, education, training, and mobility. The few demand-side practices focus on setting regulations and standards. Some cover other areas of innovation as well as mainly eco-innovation. While most focus on energy efficiency/renewable energy, others cover sustainable construction and transport themes.

In addition, three types of good practices can be identified (Figure 2):

- **Good Practice Policy** related to specific policy instruments (e.g. policies, programmes, strategies, initiatives, etc.)
- **Good Practice Support Tools** related to eco-innovation analysis (e.g. benchmarking instrument, technology atlas, genuine progress indicator - GPI, etc.)
- **Good Practices related to technology**, including various technical solutions to an environmental issue (e.g. low energy housing, biogas plant, etc.)

A few examples of good practices identified by the analysed projects follow.

Promoting eco-innovation in the construction sector

The Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH), UK – FRESH project

CSH is an assessment method for housing projects and a standard for sustainable construction. Introduced in the UK in April 2007 as a voluntary national standard, it became an essential standard in 2010. It measures the environmental impact and potential running costs against nine design categories, rating the ‘whole home’ as a complete package.

Promotion of eco-management in companies

REMake Green Innovation Vouchers, Germany – RECOMMEND project

This two-stage voucher scheme (auditing and implementation) was set up to give easy access to public funding for manufacturing SMEs looking to become more environmentally friendly and save resources. It focuses on the demand side, allowing SMEs to hire an external expert to assess resource use and waste production and then to oversee the introduction of new technologies and services. The rationale behind the vouchers is that SMEs, particularly manufacturing, have many innovative ideas, but cannot always implement them due to a lack of technical or business expertise.

Figure 2: Three types of good practices



Source: Technopolis



Environmental sustainability and the competitiveness of road transport

Evalu8, East of England, UK – PROSESC project

The EValu8 project was aimed at securing a lead position for the East of England in the UK's uptake of electric vehicles by installing and developing an interoperable networked recharging infrastructure. By the end of 2013, all residents and businesses in the East of England were within 25 miles of one of the 600 recharging posts.

The project brought together academia, industry and SMEs, all with common focus on low-carbon innovation. The 27-month project has seen 200 charging points installed (interoperable with neighbouring regions) and has had a voice in the development of national standards.



© Evalu8

Supporting cleantech incubation

The Copenhagen cleantech cluster, Denmark – CIE project

Based on the cooperation of a dozen research institutes, industry, governmental agencies and NGOs, the Copenhagen Cleantech Cluster (CCC) aims at developing one of the world's leading cleantech clusters, creating higher value for companies and supporting research.

CCC focuses on four major cleantech areas: wind energy, bioenergy, smart energy system integration and fuel cell use. Its objectives are to create continuous growth for existing cleantech companies; to support and assist new cleantech companies; and to attract more foreign cleantech companies to the region.

Today, it is one of the leading cleantech clusters in the EU, and CIE project partners have been looking into the success story of this cluster.



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Effective regional policy mix to support eco-innovation

Regional Planning Guidelines, MidWest region, Ireland – FRESH project

Regional Planning Guidelines provides a methodology for creating evidence-based policy decision-making consensus around potentially conflictual issues, such as land use and urban infrastructures. It translates into rationalised land use planning ensuring the affordable cost of infrastructures, environmental protection, and accessibility to services, thereby influencing positively all three dimensions of sustainability: environmental, economic, and social.



Discover more about current eco-innovation policy

The full capitalisation report is useful for regions looking to adopt or that have already introduced sustainability objectives in their regional development and innovation strategies. In light of the upcoming new ERDF funding period and its increased focus on sustainability, regional stakeholders will find the report helpful to learn from the experiences and the good practices outlined.

The main report provides invaluable insight into:

- experiences of several regions in promoting eco-innovation using interregional cooperation
- approaches used in tackling eco-innovation challenges

- a wide range of good practice examples
- lessons learned from the analysis of the projects
- reflections on actual and potential synergies with other programmes.

The report also includes detailed key policy messages and conclusions aimed at developing effective eco-innovation policy and gaining strategic support; establishing a long-term vision and the development of a model for sustainable and smart regions; and at identifying the drivers and barriers to eco-innovation. Lastly, it discusses the importance of building on the good practices from other EU regions and countries and taking up the useful policy tools developed within the INTERREG IVC projects.

Download the full report from: www.interreg4c.eu/capitalisation

INTERREG IVC Thematic Capitalisation



Innovation systems



Innovation capacity of SMEs



Eco-innovation



Creative industries



Entrepreneurship



E-government services



Demographic change



Rural development



Climate change



Energy efficiency



Renewable energy



Sustainable transport

Over the last seven years the INTERREG IVC programme has been enabling public institutions all over Europe – over 2000 in total – to ‘learn through cooperation’ across 204 different interregional projects aimed at improving regional policies.

In June 2012, the programme commissioned a team of thematic experts to analyse, benchmark, and capitalise on the wealth of knowledge generated by projects working on similar regional development issues. Altogether, 12 policy themes, ranging from innovation to the environment, have been covered. 12 reports are now available detailing the insights and lessons from this capitalisation process for the benefit of all regions across Europe.

In their presentation of the wide range of innovative good practices and policies improved by the projects, the reports offer a timely inventory of up-to-date evidence and experience to help regional authorities and interested stakeholders introduce or develop their regional policies. Policymakers and practitioners at all levels – regional, national and European – will find theme-specific recommendations tailored to them.

This brochure is a preview of the full-length report in the field of eco-innovation.

The Interregional Cooperation Programme INTERREG IVC, financed by the European Union's Regional Development Fund, helps Regions of Europe work together to share experience and good practice in the areas of innovation, the knowledge economy, the environment and risk prevention. EUR 302 million was granted for project funding but, more than that, a wealth of knowledge and potential solutions are also on hand for regional policy makers.



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