Summary Report on PIKE's Launch Conference

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1. Introduction

Promoting Innovation in the Knowledge Economy (PIKE) is an initiative of the ERNACT network of regions and the project partners consist of Derry in Northern Ireland, Donegal and Galway in Ireland, Emcanta in Spain, Olomuc in the Czech Republic, South East Bulgaria, Central Greece, the City of Bologna in Italy and the County of Vasternörrland in Sweden.

The PIKE project is funded under the EU Interreg IVC Programme 2007 – 2013 and has a total budget of €1.665 million covering the period to 2010.

The aim of the PIKE project is to improve regional and local innovation and knowledge economy policies through the exchange, sharing and transfer of E-Government and Wireless Broadband good practices across the different regions.

1.1   PIKE Objectives
The formal project objectives have been agreed:-

To exchange experience and to transfer E-Government and Wireless Broadband good practice pilots and tools within a group of regions with different degrees of experience

- To share the identified E-Government and Wireless Broadband good practices and to develop an Action Plan to transfer them into the mainstream Structural Funds programmes (mainly Convergence and Regional Competitiveness and Employment) of ALL the participating regions.

- To disseminate information about the project, its objectives, the approach, results and lessons learned to a large audience including policy and decision makers at local, regional, national and EU level, as well as EU local and regional authorities.
- The launch conference of the PIKE project was held in Derry, Northern Ireland on 25 November 2008. This document provides a concise report on the proceedings of the conference and the conclusions and recommendations emerging from those proceedings.

1.2   Structure of Report
- **Section 2** of this summary report describes the conference proceedings, and
- **Section 3** draws out some themes from the proceedings and suggests some of the conclusions which could be drawn from the conference.

Copies of the presentations used by speakers at the conference are available from
http://www.derrycity.gov.uk/economicdevelopment/pan_european_conference2.asp

2.   Conference Proceedings

The one day conference held on 25 November 2008 was preceded by and followed up by a range of bi-lateral and multi-lateral working meetings between the partner organisations and their hosts. This report focuses on the formal conference proceedings.

2.1   Introduction & Welcome

The delegates were welcomed to Derry by **the Mayor of Derry, Councillor Gerard Diver** and the context for the Conference and for the PIKE initiative were provided by **Councillor Gerry McLochlainn, the Chair of ERNACT**. Councillor McLochlainn explained the context in which ERNACT had been created by Derry City Council and Donegal County Council working together on a cross-border basis almost 20 years ago and how the ERNACT network of regions had grown and matured. However, ERNACT and its partner regions felt that the degree of co-operation achieved had to move up a gear further and the result is the PIKE project funded by the Interreg IVC Programme 2007 – 2013 and sponsored under the Regions for Economic Change Fast Track Initiative.

2.2   The European Drive for Innovation

Katja Reppel of the "Development of Innovation Policy " Unit of the European Commission then spoke on 'The European Drive for Innovation'. Katja described the policy context for EU innovation policies, EU support for ICT initiatives in regions and EU support for the transfer of good practices into the implementation of Structural Funds Programmes.

The policy context is provided by the Lisbon Partnership for jobs and growth and the Lisbon Guidelines issued to all Member States, which included Guideline 9, to facilitate the spread and effective use of ICT and build a fully inclusive information society through a range of actions including spreading the use of ICT in public services – a theme particularly relevant to PIKE.

EU support to ICT includes the i2010 Strategy promoting a Single European Information Space, Innovation and Investment in R&D and Inclusion, Better Public Services and quality of life, the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7), the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP) and support under Cohesion

Policy from the Structural Funds, particularly the ERDF. All regions have in principle the possibility of supporting appropriate ICT measures (the range of measures being more extensive in Convergence Regions). Under the Territorial Cooperation Theme

- Cross border actions to improve access to information and communications networks and services and joint use of infrastructure can be supported
- Trans-national actions can be funded to improve access to and the quality of telecommunications services and networks, enhanced interoperability of systems and advanced ICT.
- The Interreg IVC Programme promotes inter-regional cooperation on innovation and the knowledge economy and exchanges of experience and identification, transfer and dissemination of good practices.

Acknowledging the barriers to the identification, transfer and dissemination of good practice Katja pointed to the Regions for Economic Change initiative as an initiative to improve the functioning of policies by a range of actions intended to embed agents for change at the regional, inter-regional and national levels of policy and to bring a knowledge management approach to learning the lessons arising from the various cooperation initiatives and applying them across Structural Funds Programmes. Besides the fast tracking of Interreg IVC projects, such as PIKE, the Regions for Economic Change initiative includes a good practice database and the organisation of conferences (the next of which will be on 16 – 17 February 2009).

2.3   Illustrative Approaches

John Hewitt of ESRI Ireland spoke next on the subject of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and with the theme that the only limitation on the use of GIS is our imagination. John identified the benefits of GIS as

- Raising awareness
- Saving resources
- Improving efficiency, and
- Making better decisions.

John explained that a GIS has the components of data management, analysis of information and visualisation of information. He provided examples of innovative and compelling use of GIS techniques across a range of fields, including

- Land and asset management
- Planning
- Public safety and law enforcement
- Managing natural disasters
- Transportation
- Environmental management
- Social issues and human health
- Community development and data sharing, and
- Climate change and renewable energy.

Overall, John presented GIS as a practical tool with a great deal of, as yet, untapped potential to create a strong, evidence-based foundation for action across many disciplines and organisations.

John Price of Local Government Policy Division of the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland then spoke on the subject of 'Successful E-Government in Rapidly Changing Times'. John spoke of the constancy of change both in general terms and in the specific context of public policy in Northern Ireland where the existing 26 Council are to be restructured into 11 Councils with much expanded powers by 2011, about ever-rising consumer and citizen expectations and about ever-contracting resources to meet those expectations. John was concerned to celebrate what is already good, about building on what is 'as-is' that is successful and about sharing, collaborating and building a community of good practice. John felt that flexible, responsive strategies could learn from other organisation's strategies and did not need to be reinvented afresh every time. He argued that pilot projects could be used to demonstrate the case for change (under the slogan 'don't talk – show') and John felt that the reasons often given for inaction, such as absence of resources or of time, reflected an underlying lack of will to undertake new initiatives.

Ritse Klink, Microsoft's Local and Regional Government Lead for Western Europe then spoke on the subject of 'Empowering Governments to Serve Citizens'. Ritse identified some of the key challenges facing local and regional governments in Europe, including the polyglot and polycultural nature of modern society, the increasing proportion of the total population who are elderly and the increasing urbanisation of European society, all of which bring additional challenges to local and regional governments across Europe. Ritse identified a growing gap between the capability of local and regional governments to deliver for their citizens and the expectations of those citizens. Ritze presented Microsoft's Citizen Service Platform, which is designed to break the public sector's tendency to rely on 'siloed mammoth applications' and presented examples of how Microsoft works with local SME providers to deliver the Citizen Service Platform for local and regional governments across Europe. Ritse provided a case study of how Microsoft and other providers had worked with the City of Bergen to reduce its use of paper by 90% within 12 months of a commitment to that policy, using existing and off the shelf solutions to provide a range of efficiency, environmental and financial gains for the City.

Ian Neild, BT's Disruptive Futurologist then spoke on 'The History of the Future'. Ian provided an array of information and visual resources to demonstrate the pace and disruptive nature of change now occurring. Among the facts quoted by Ian was that 13 hours (780 minutes) of video is uploaded to You Tube every minute of the day.

2.4 Themed Talks

In the afternoon session themed talks were provided on E-Government and Wireless Cities and Applications.

The E-Government themed talk featured presentations on Donegal County Council's Online Planning System (DOPS), which has revolutionised the traditional manual systems of administering planning applications in Donegal, and on Cantabria's E-Local initiative, which has improved the speed, efficiency, quality and transparency of the provision of public services to citizens in Cantabria and the Cantabria Integrated Aid System (IAS) which provides a single access point and transparent and open administration of aids to farmers and stockbreeders in Cantabria.

The Wireless City and Applications themed talk looked at Derry's Wireless City Flagship Project and its components of the Wireless Campus at the University of Ulster and North West Regional Colleges, the Wireless Council implemented by

Derry City Council and the Wireless Walls project which provides 100% coverage of the historic walled city, offering benefits to local users and to tourists. The talk also considered the development of Bologna's Iperbole Wireless City Project which is used by citizens of Bologna, staff and students of Bologna University and employees of Bologna Municipality.

Facilitators brought out the best practice lessons of both themed talks. These included

- Clear demonstration of need and of benefits to citizens and users from the outset of the project
- Vision and leadership from public sector organisations and the existence of a clear institutional and political mandate linked to the wider strategic approach of the sponsoring organisation
- Partnership in planning and delivery
- Improvement in efficiency (for example through improved document management) and transparency as well as in services to the citizen
- Progressive implementation, building on what has already been achieved and widening and deepening the offer to the citizen as experience develops, and
- Learning from the experience of other regions, but also understanding the legislative, institutional and cultural context in which the technology will be deployed.

2.5   Feedback and Question & Answer Session

The conference closed with an active feedback and question & answer session which provoked a genuine debate between the speakers (acting as an expert panel) and the other participants. Among the topics discussed were

- Means of recognising good practice at the local level, for example by a local award scheme similar to the EU wide RegioStars Scheme
- The constraints imposed on the full implementation of technological capabilities by the legacy of legislation developed for manual systems
- Ways of encouraging and incentivising public servants to take reasonable risks by overcoming the audit and blame cultures which can dominate public organisations, and
- The implications of technology for E-Government and E-Democracy.

2.6   Demonstration & Innovation Zone

Throughout the Conference proceedings a networking zone and a demonstration and innovation zone operated. Ten companies participated in the demonstration and innovation zone showcasing a variety of applications and technologies directly relevant to the conference themes. The companies and their associated products were

- **Cora Systems**, specialising in programme, performance and project management
- **E-Hub**, a cross-border E-Procurement service for public authorities
- **ESRI Ireland**, offering GIS services
- **Evolution Systems**, reselling Wireless City Network products
- **Interoperable Delivery of European E-Government Services to Public Administrations, Businesses and Citizens** (IDABC)
- **Learning Pool,** providing a suite of e-learning subscriptions to the UK public sector.
- **Node Explore**, offering a platform for the creation and delivery of location based media experiences
- **Singularity**, providing Business Process Management and workflow solutions and demonstrating a case management system for administration of insolvencies
- **Tascomi Ltd**, which provides advanced IT systems for local and central government, and
- **Trapeze Networks**, offering enterprise class wireless local area network (WLAN) products

3. Conference Themes & Conclusions

The PIKE launch conference showed a high degree of solidarity and common purpose among the participants, who came from several regions of Europe and from a variety of sectors and professional perspectives. There was a high degree of consensus about the value of the PIKE project and the value of such trans-national and multi-sectoral exchanges.

Each participant will have taken their own lessons from the conference. In drawing out the themes and some emerging conclusions, the Rapporteur can only reflect his own reflections and those arising in discussion during the conference sessions and in one to one discussions in informal sessions.

3.1   Linkage to Wider EU Cohesion Policy

The Commissioner for Regional Policy, Danita Hübner, is opening a debate across Europe about the future of Cohesion Policy. The Commission's Communication Com (2008) 616 of October 2008 starts with the following statement

'From the frozen tundra in the Arctic Circle to the tropical rainforests of Guyane, from the Alps to the Greek islands, from the global cities of London and Paris to small towns and villages dating back centuries, the EU harbours an incredibly rich territorial diversity. **Territorial cohesion** *is about ensuring the harmonious development of all these places and about making sure that their citizens are able to make the most of inherent features of these territories. As such, it is* **a means of transforming diversity into an asset that contributes to the sustainable development of the entire EU.'**

The Communication identifies three main issues underlying future EU Cohesion Policy'

- Concentration – overcoming differences in [population] density
- Connecting territories – overcoming distance, and
- Cooperation – overcoming division.

The PIKE project and its launch conference illustrates the validity of these issues. The regions represented were very diverse but the technologies which they were deploying to improve the delivery of services to their citizens were effective at overcoming distance provided that there was sufficient mutual understanding and cooperation between the partners to understand the different institutional, legislative and cultural contexts in which the technology is to be deployed.

The conference demonstrated effectively that a mature and strategic cooperation can draw out common lessons and understanding whether the service is being delivered to Cantabrian farmers, to residents of Donegal making planning applications, to international visitors to the historic Walled City of Derry or to residents and students of the City of Bologna.

3.2   Rationale for Sharing of Best Practice and Experience

The underlying rationale for sharing best practice and experience between European regions is captured in the introduction to the Commission's Communication – it is, quite literally, *a means of transforming diversity into an asset that contributes to the sustainable development of the entire EU.*

In more technical terms innovation and the experience of effective delivery of E-Government is a public good. A public good is a good whose consumption by one person does not diminish its enjoyment by others.

Fine art and good music are classic examples of public goods. Other examples of public goods are clean air and a beautiful or historic environment. However, in these cases misuse or excessive use by others may degrade the environment for everyone, for example by pollution, by overdevelopment and by the congestion often associated with mass tourism.

However, in this case it is clear that Derry, for example, does not lose if the lessons from its Flagship Wireless City project are applied in Bologna, or vice – versa or if they are applied in Donegal, Cantabria or Oulu.

There is, therefore, no reason why the participants in the PIKE project should not share their experiences. However, in this case there is a further rationale for sharing best practice and experience because the best practice and experience gained has largely been paid for by the European taxpayer – in this situation it

becomes almost a moral imperative to share experience and thus to contribute to transforming the territorial diversity of the EU into an asset that can contribute to its sustainable development. While the PIKE partners demonstrate their determination to share their best practice and experience fully, there are constraints on such sharing (attributable to a variety of factors discussed below) and it is for this reason that the EU support provided for cross-border, inter-regional and trans-national cooperation and exchange of experience is so important. The financial and other assistance provided by the EU for cooperation and exchange of experience overcomes a market failure which would mean that, in the absence of the EU actions, the full potential development of the EU would not be achieved.

3.3 Institutional Barriers to Spreading Best Practice & Experience

The barriers to sharing best practice across Europe and across sectors are many. Taken together they constitute a market failure which means that in the absence of the types of action supported by the EU (and by organisations such as the OECD and the World Bank at a wider scale) market-based social and economic outcomes would be sub-optimal.

It is important to understand the nature of the barriers to spreading best practice and experience and this was an issue which was discussed in a number of the PIKE conference sessions.

Institutional barriers exist in all organisations and at all levels. In an individual organisation barriers may arise from inertia, lack of knowledge and the sheer complexity of the organisational environments within which people have to work. These factors can lead to barriers to exchanging best practice and experience, for example, within one of the Directorates of the European Commission and, even more so, between the Directorates, or – as a further example, within Derry City Council or between Derry City Council and its neighbouring Donegal County Council. What is unique about Derry City Council and Donegal County Council is that they have, jointly, established ERNACT as a specific mechanism for overcoming such barriers in the field of ICT.

In the absence of such specific mechanisms barriers to spreading best practice and experience can arise in a variety of ways

- Between Member States and Regions, for example, there are institutional and legislative differences, differences in their stages of development and linguistic differences
- At the EU level the different management structures for FP7, the Information Society initiatives and the Structural Funds can create different focuses for attention which can lead to opportunities for cooperation being overlooked. Within the Structural Funds themselves management arrangements tend to be different for mainstream regional Operational Programmes and for Interreg, which itself has different management arrangements for cross border (Interreg IVA), inter-regional (Interreg IVB) and trans-national (Interreg IVC) initiatives
- More generally, hierarchical structures can limit opportunities for sharing, for example the Northern Ireland Civil Service plans a strategy for how it serves the citizens of Northern Ireland, but this strategy does not encompass the important and growing roles of local authorities in Northern Ireland
- Human nature seems to like to reinvent the wheel where possible. If an application or an approach was '*not invented here'* it is often overlooked in the search for a bespoke 'perfect' solution
- The legacy of 'siloed monolithic applications' in public sector organisations can also act to inhibit flexibility and identification of areas of potential cooperation
- There can also be an important gap of understanding between those who establish organisational strategies and priorities and the technologists who are able to identify technical opportunities for cooperation, and
- Very often it is not clear whose job it is to lead cooperation on behalf of a public sector organisation. If cooperation is not part of the job specification of an individual and part of the employee's appraisal system, then cooperation is likely to be a low priority and not a central part of the individual's work plan. As the examples provided by the City of Bergen and by Donegal showed, such innovation and cooperation may need a strong top-down imperative linked to the overall corporate strategy of the organisation in question or linked to legislative or other regulatory requirements.

These tendencies to inertia and active barriers to sharing of best practice and experience are in tension with the moral imperative to share best practice developed largely through the support of European taxpayers and the need to overcome market failures to ensure the full development of the entire EU territory. They provide the rationale for EU financial and other support for cooperation and exchange of experience. However, a fuller understanding of these barriers and a policy of directly identifying and tackling the barriers in the design of each programme or project is also an important element of policy and one which requires fuller attention in subsequent policies.

3.4   Limiting Constraint on the Delivery of E-Government

An issue which arose, implicitly, in a number of contributions to the PIKE conference was whether the effective constraint on delivery of E-Government for citizens was the available technology, in terms of particular applications and approaches, or the human or institutional capability of making use of existing technology.

A number of contributors touched on this point

- John Hewitt argued that the only limitation on the use of GIS is our imagination
- John Price argued that we should make greater use of our 'as-is' systems
- Ritse Klink pointed to the value of using existing platforms and minimally modified approaches
- Ian Nield illustrated the impossibility of a single person keeping up with all the available applications, and
- In the themed talks one of the emerging findings related to the need to respect institutional, legislative and cultural differences between regions.

In other aspects of innovation policy it is a common place finding that the successful innovators are not necessarily the most technologically sophisticated but those organisations which most effectively develop and apply an innovative business model and bring a product to market in an attractive and successful manner.

If the supply of appropriate applications is ahead of our intellectual or institutional ability to make use of them then the real constraint on the delivery of E-Government to citizens across Europe lies in the intellectual and institutional capacity to understand and successfully deploy existing technologies and these aspects of policy need a further emphasis. This is not to suggest that there should be some form of moratorium on technical innovation, but rather that there should be a rebalancing of policies, programmes and projects to address these issues directly.

3.5   Top-Down &/or Bottom-Up?

Katja Reppel's presentation referred to the importance of using a knowledge management approach to keeping pace with innovation at the European level – and this is a valuable component of the Regions for Economic Change initiative. It is clearly essential for an organisation such as the European Commission to have a structured approach to identifying and assessing best practice projects across several sectors and across the territory of the EU.

However, the counterpart to this requirement is local knowledge about initiatives at the level of the individual region. How does a citizen of Derry, Donegal, Oulu or Bologna know what is going on in his or her own region?

This raises the issue of whether we should be putting more effort into the **information components of the information society** so that ordinary citizens in each region – rather than just an informed elite – can fully understand and participate in E-Government. Many of the best practice examples provided at the PIKE conference included efforts to encourage digital inclusion (such as the use of public access points in libraries, town halls and planning offices) but these approaches are, inevitably, partial in their impacts and cannot fully tackle aspects of digital exclusion such as lack of understanding, limited keyboard skills or limited literacy or numeracy. As understanding of ICT, keyboard skills, literacy and numeracy are not randomly distributed in society there is a danger of creating a two-speed version of E-Government which may exclude particular groups or communities in society.

The principle of subsidiarity suggests that the coordination and dissemination of information and of E-Government approaches should be carried out at the local level, nearest to the citizen and the results could then be aggregated upward

from the regional to the national level and then to the EU level. This is not to suggest that the existing top-down approaches are not valuable and are not required at present, but rather that they would be enhanced by bottom-up region by region compilation of initiatives and approaches actively disseminated to citizens by the public organisations with which they have a frequent interface. Top down and bottom up approaches are not competing alternatives but rather complementary approaches to the promotion of E-Government, but to date the bottom up approach appears to have been relatively poorly resourced and deserves increased attention in future policies, programmes and projects.

3.6   Overview of Emerging Findings

There are a number of consistent themes emerging from the PIKE conference. They include

- the value and necessity of cooperation between diverse regions to maximise the development of the European territory
- the importance of understanding and directly addressing the institutional barriers to cooperation and sharing of best practice and experience – including the need for corporate commitment and championing of cooperation initiatives in a top down manner
- the importance of understanding the human, institutional, legislative and cultural contexts in which E-Government is delivered
- the importance of making E-Citizenship real at all levels and in all regions in an inclusive manner available to all citizens
- the relevance of PIKE and similar projects to future cohesion policies for the EU which aim to transform the diversity of the EU regions into an asset which contributes to the sustainable development of the entire EU.

3.7   Relevance of Conference to PIKE Objectives

The formal PIKE project objectives are:-

- To exchange experience and to transfer E-Government and Wireless Broadband good practice pilots and tools within a group of regions with different degrees of experience
- To share the identified E-Government and Wireless Broadband good practices and to develop an Action Plan to transfer them into the

mainstream Structural Funds programmes (mainly Convergence and Regional Competitiveness and Employment) of ALL the participating regions.
- To disseminate information about the project, its objectives, the approach, results and lessons learned to a large audience including policy and decision makers at local, regional, national and EU level, as well as EU local and regional authorities.

The Conference proved to be very relevant to each of these objectives and provided an excellent starting point for the exchange of experience within a group of diverse regions. The briefing provided by Katja Reppel provides the framework by which the individual participating regions can transfer the good practices into their respective Structural Funds programmes and – as this document evidences – there are lessons arising from the PIKE experience with have much wider implications and are to be shared with policy and decision makers at regional, national and EU levels.

3.8   Quality & Maturity of PIKE Network

It is important to be clear that much of the quality of the work initiated at the conference is based on the quality and maturity of the network which has been developed by ERNACT and its member organisations over a number of years and across a range of projects. The characteristics of a mature and high quality network evidence by the PIKE participants include mature relationships between people who have known each other for some time, who value each other and seek to work together across a range of projects, exhibit corporate commitment to cooperation and sharing of best practice and experience and have a commitment to working together in the future and not just on an individual project.

These characteristics are in stark contrast to those of many other networks – in which participation is instrumental and seeking individual and immediate gain and which lack the commitment to long term partnership and to a joint collaborative intent seen in the PIKE partnership. The network and civic relationships seen in the PIKE partnership are capable of being developed and deployed around a range of topics of interest to the partners and relevant to the overall goal '*of transforming diversity into an asset that contributes to the sustainable development of the entire EU'*.