



# Rural Expertise in the North

## REN

### Rural Expertise in the North

Advanced technologies offer a way to guarantee future growth and success in today's international marketplace. For smaller, rural centres this is more challenging because of a strong bias towards greater concentration in bigger cities, resulting in fewer opportunities for the small, rural centres in the Northern Periphery. Technology centres in the fields of advanced technologies need to be better prepared to face these new challenges, and to find new innovative solutions to guarantee competitiveness and future growth in sparsely populated areas. New innovative solutions and tools are therefore needed.

The REN project aims to create new, innovative management practices in the field of advanced technologies and to develop new tools suitable for small communities in the Northern Periphery. The project will combine the know-how and expertise gained through technology development projects in the Northern Periphery Programme region and will allow the participating regions to develop new and innovative instruments in order to keep advanced technology expertise in the regions. The key to success in this area is the development of a knowledge based economy, which is based on an innovation system that links the various "nodes" in a chain involving business, financial, academic, infrastructure and human networks.

### Objectives

Specific objectives include:

- To create tools and methods to develop competence, "Know how" and entrepreneurship in high technology businesses outside regional centres in sparsely populated and remote areas
- To introduce and test new instruments to catalyse the growth and success of small technology centres in Northern Europe, especially in sparsely populated and rural areas
- International benchmarking of best practice in the chosen technology centres
- Analysis of the critical success factors of the participating technology centres taking into account factors such as production shifts to cheap labour regions, high technology concentration trends, co-operation projects such as the Multipolis project in Northern Finland
- Analysis of the role of local communities in the creation and development of technology centres in sparsely populated regions
- Development of a "hands-on" action plan for participating technology centres
- Analysis of the specific issues of small technology centres such as: co-operation/competition with larger technology centres (urban-rural partnerships), importance of research community and locomotive companies, factors in attracting a qualified labour force, stemming youth out-migration by increasing interest among local young people in working in the rural region

## Project activities

The REN project aims to contribute to the growth of science and technology firms in the Northern Periphery by reviewing the innovation systems in each participating region, identifying good practices and problems, and based on these developing new tools and knowledge transfer models applicable for rural areas.

Throughout the project, there will be ongoing international comparison and exchange of ideas between the regions. This will be organised through meetings, teleconferences, seminars etc. There will also be a final conference, targeted at all NPP regions, as well as other north Atlantic and North European regions.

## Expected results

- New, innovative and concrete instruments that can be introduced and tested in each region. Such instruments could include new methodologies for linking rural SMEs with corporate research labs, guidelines for regional agencies on networking and linking innovation and incubation centres in rural areas, innovative financial instruments aimed at encouraging increased R&D activity in rural SMEs etc.
- Updated knowledge and expertise on the present status and challenges of the participating actors in the field of advanced technology
- Analysis of the critical success factors for advanced technology centres in the rural areas of Northern Europe
- Enhanced cooperation network between the key actors in the field of advanced technology in the participating regions
- Action plan for concrete future cooperation between the participating REN actors



## Partners

Luleå University of Technology, Luleå-Arjeplog - County of Norrbotten, Sweden  
Highlands & Islands Enterprise Highlands - Scotland

## Project website

<http://www.micropolis.fi/ren>

**Measure**  
2.2

**Total Budget**  
600 000

**NPP Award**  
300 000

**Project Period**  
02/01/2006 – 31/12/2007

**Countries Involved**  
Finland, Sweden, Scotland

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