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# 02

NEWSLETTER

december 2005

## district

DEVELOPING INDUSTRIAL STRATEGIES THROUGH  
INNOVATIVE CLUSTERS AND TECHNOLOGIES

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editorial

# The DISTRICT RFO and European industrial districts

Claudio Martini

President of Regione Toscana

In recent years the expression "industrial policy" had mostly disappeared from the political lexicon. It was the European Commission which - by publishing two orientation documents about policy for SMEs and manufacturing and the new guidelines for industrial policy in the direction of the Lisbon objectives - caused its comeback as a central issue in the economic agenda.

DISTRICT partner regions never lost sight of industry - still the most important ingredient in their local economies - thereby including both the localized industrial districts as well as the manufacturing systems spreading throughout the territory.

A basic scenario to design regional industrial policy should include at least two issues:

- continuity of EU cohesion policies in advocating centrality of regions and local development;
- reorganization of manufacturing units as a consequence of major technological innovations, opening of world markets - with countries such as China joining the WTO and expansion of the EU.

Whereas the first issue refers to the overall governance of development policies, the second issue hints at the uprooting of manufacturing from the local territory - a major cause of change in local enterprises. Delocalization must be part of the political agenda - the other side of the coin in the internationalization of local manufacturing systems. At the same time, institutional decision-makers should not deal with economic growth only - they should deal with competitiveness of regional and local economies and a better quality of development, too.

In this way, the local and Community political agendas for the manufacturing systems should

look at industrial districts as hands-on laboratories where changes in the global context are early perceived and reacted upon.

Another issue in regional policy is to foster regional competitiveness and promote enterprises by involving external economies. To this end, infrastructures should also qualify to support economic development - thereby including industrial areas, enterprise incubators, innovation and research transfer systems - research centers rather than service centers, environmental platforms, territorial certifications, etc.

DISTRICT holds that regional spending for research and innovation should be increased both in the public and - even more - private sectors. As regards providing incentives to enterprises, the aim should be:

- providing selective subsidies in the form of favourable investments in research and innovation, acquisition of qualified services, improved credit eligibility for small enterprises;
- fostering the creation of public/private networks between enterprises, research and university centers, to manage and implement common projects;
- providing incentives to interventions along the chain by creating pools of enterprises covering one segment of the local manufacturing chain.

In the next future, industrial policies should include such structural objectives as:

- strengthening SME manufacturing systems by helping most competitive businesses to grow in size by providing incentives to the aggregation of companies;
- fostering the diversification of manufacturing towards innovative sectors, bearing in mind that creation of spin-offs from research and existing firms is a slow, difficult and complex process;
- improving the effectiveness of

technological transfer - the real thorn in our manufacturing systems: in spite of the obvious excellence in the field of knowledge, a weak transfer and a slow creation of new enterprises in the most advanced sectors;

- improving the access to credit by SMEs in the new "Basel 2" context by making the credit system more responsible and active in taking part in the regional economy;
- sustaining internationalization by increasing available market shares and attracting qualified foreign investments.

Territorially focused policies are still en vogue in several regions. They most likely won't be enough in the future. Given the increasingly uncertain context of available resources - from the reform of structural funds to the enhancement of fiscal federalism to decentralization of responsibilities - selectivity in accessing and allocating public funds for development must go hand in hand with an improvement in local governance - that is, the way local players unite to take strategic decisions.

All in all, there is a massive need for knowledge on the side of manufacturing structures. Adoption of major technical innovations and improved skills by both workers and entrepreneurs is the main challenge for the new regional policy today. Tacit or local knowledge only won't be any longer sufficient to confer competitiveness to the enterprises.

## DISTRICT good practices for technological innovation against industrial decline

The DISTRICT Interreg IIC Regional Framework Operation was designed to counteract the risk of decline of the partner's economic systems due to globalization and related factors. In order to achieve this goal, the partners launched their initiative to create adequate tools to design political programmes avoiding marginalization of our regional economies.

The occasion offered by the European Commission to the Regional Framework Operation DISTRICT to manage funds for subprojects for about 4 millions euros was considered by all partners as a unrepeatable chance. A focused work of animation on the territories was led in the months immediately before the opening of the public call for subprojects by the partners. The four regional secretariats tried to involve in the implementation of subprojects all those excellence poles that, at the regional level, could give a most possible convincing answer to themes and issues presented by the original Interreg project.

Ever since the DISTRICT partnership formed, we tried to virtually bring together extremely heterogeneous regions which could distill an ideal passage from a basically industry - mostly manufacturing - based economy to a knowledge-based economy. Every DISTRICT partner region symbolizes a stage of this transition. Their institutions and excellence poles at the local level are a clear example of it. The bet, launched by the call for subprojects, was to bring together various experiences and obtain important results in the three thematic sectors of

the RFO.

Particular attention, in evaluating the submitted proposals, was given to rewarding subprojects focusing in an innovative way to the new phase of the European programming, trying to anticipate problems and opportunities presented by the new Community regulations and by the enlarged Europe. Subprojects were asked to be immediately active in trying to provide concrete answers to the challenges of the new Europe.

The result of the call was: to finance actions with the aim of supporting the ability of small and medium-sized enterprises to have access to technological innovation, as well as opposing the trend of medium and large-sized enterprises to relocate their production in areas with lower labour costs; to favour and encourage universities and research institutes in the analysis and proposal of innovative processes able to raise our territories competitiveness; to define, starting from single experiences, concrete cases and adequate tools to the individual contexts, bearing in mind their local specificity.

The cooperation among the four DISTRICT regions and the 50 participants involved in the public call will allow the exchange of information and good practice, and the joint development of methodologies and new tools to plan and implement regional strategies, strategic planning and pilot projects aiming at improving regional politics for development and cohesion, drafting measures to strengthen relations and connections between small and medium-sized enterprises and knowledge-promoting technology-linked institutions and services.

## The call for sub-projects

On the 28th March 2006 the first public call for proposals of the DISTRICT Interreg IIC South Zone Regional Framework Operation opened. The call - ending on the 9th May 2006 - launched the invitation to submit proposals for the implementation of sub-projects in the framework of thematic components 2, 3 and 4 of the RFO.

Eligible to take part in the call were Public Bodies or Equivalent Public Bodies belonging to one of the four partner regions. Eligible partnerships should include two or more local Public or Public Equivalent Bodies belonging to at least two DISTRICT partner regions.

The call requested proposals should include such activities and results as:

- studies and methods to implement new policies aimed at enhancing research and technological innovation;
- new methods and approaches to increase co-operation between industrial SMEs and R&D institutes and develop industrial business networks and clusters;
- development of new tools for territorial management, foresight analysis, territorial analysis and planning of transformation of local economies;
- creation of networks to increase R&D and innovation transfer to support transition of mature SME systems to the knowledge economy;
- development and test of new methods to increase the number of innovative business ideas and products from Universities and R&D institutes.

Proposals were also asked to implement such initiatives as to deal with core issues of the new framework of the next programming period of the

Structural Funds (2007-2013) - they should create a bridge between the current programming phase and the new Community Strategy for Cohesion Policy.

In front of an available budget of euro 3,543,990 the 12 submitted proposals asked for a contribution of 5,519,669 euro (1,995,679 euro in excess). 11 proposals were approved by the DISTRICT Steering Committee. A total of 45 public bodies belonging to the four regions participated: 8 from RT, 13 from WM, 13 from SA, and 11 from VG.

Sub-project	Lead Partner	Lead Region	Thematic Component	Partners
Serious Games	University of Skövde	Vastra Gotaland Sweden	3	University of Coventry, UK
InTechTex	Saxon Textile Research Institute (STFI)	Saxony - Germany	3	IFP Research AB, SV - Coventry City Council, UK - Sviluppo Italia Toscana S.C.p.A., IT (Tecnofessile) - Innovation Netzwerk Textil e.V, DE
INNOTRAD	University of Wolverhampton	West Midlands - United Kingdom	2	UCE Birmingham UK-Coventry City Council Clothing Centre UK - PIN s.c.r.l.IT
TechnologyMall	VEMAS	Saxony - Germany	3	Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry, UK
PICTURE	IRIS - Istituto di Ricerche e Interventi Sociali	Tuscany - Italy	2	Florence University Department of Economic Sciences, IT- University of Birmingham, UK - Florence University Department of Political Sciences and Sociology, IT - URBAN SpA, IT
FORECO	Provincia di Pisa	Tuscany - Italy	2	Coventry University, UK - Espira GrowthCentre, SV - Sviluppo Italia Toscana, IT
SEARCH	CIP Professional Services	Vastra Gotaland Sweden	4	Coventry University Enterprises, UK - PIN Srl, IT - GUF1 Research and Innovation services, SV - CIT Chalmers' Institute for commercial R&D, SV - SAXEED TU Chemnitz, DE
ETI-NET	RKW	Saxony - Germany	2	IMREG Dresden, DE - Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry International Trade, UK - Coventry University Enterprises Ltd, UK
CLINIC	Black Country Chamber of Commerce	West Midlands - United Kingdom	2	PIN Srl, IT - RWK, DE - Birmingham University, UK
RICE	Warwickshire County Council	West Midlands - United Kingdom	3	University of Warwick, UK - Sächsisches Textilforschungsinstitut, DE - Fraunhofer-Institut für Keramische Technologien und Systeme, DE - AGROVÄST Livsmedel AB, SV
STIM-SME	Espira Tillväxtcenter AB	Vastra Gotaland Sweden	4	IVF Industriforskning och Utveckling AB, SV - Espira Inkubator AB, SV - CIEL Sweden AB, SV - Innovatum AB, SV - Gothia Science Park AB, SV - Coventry University Enterprise Ltd, UK - Consorzio Pisa Ricerche, IT - Technologie Centrum Chemnitz, DE

Several assessment criteria were taken into account evaluating the proposals submitted, among them :

- Degree of coherence and impact capacity of the Project in relation to the goals of DISTRICT.
- Coherence and articulation of the commitments undertaken by the transregional Partnership in relation to the objectives and operations scheduled in the Project.
- Adequacy of the budget and the organisational and managerial solutions identified for the realisation of the Project, with specific reference to the implementation experience and the breakdown of competencies as well as the human and material resources of the partners involved.
- Potential actions to give continuity to the transregional and intra-regional Partnership activities even after the conclusion of the project.
- Cost effectiveness and synergies with on-going regional projects/measures.

The maximum score for each individual project proposal was 100 points. In order to guarantee that the selection would lead to the funding of projects that were more than satisfactory from a quality aspect, it was established that only the Projects that reached an overall score of not less than 60 points would be proposed for approval.

Using these criteria the selection list was the following:

No.	Sub-project	Score
1	ETI-NET	84,375
2	InTechTex	84,25
3	CLINIC	73,25
4	SEARCH	68,75
5	STIM-SME	68
6	RICE	67,25
7	TechnologyMall	66,75
8	INNOTRAD	66,25
9	PICTURE	63,25
10	FORECO	61,5
11	Serious Games	61,25

After the evaluation of the eligibility by the DISTRICT Managing Committee, the 13th June 2006 took place in Brussels the DISTRICT Steering Committee that confirmed the selection list approved in Prato and definitely admitted to financing 11 of the 12 submitted proposals.

## The 11 sub-projects: an overview

### THEMATIC COMPONENT 2 subprojects to connect clusters and business networks to innovation

Among approved proposals five belong to Thematic Component 2 "Connecting Clusters and Business Networks to Innovation". These are: CLINIC, ETI-NET, FORECO, INNOTRAD and PICTURE.

#### CLINIC (Co-operation Linking Interactive Networks and Innovative Clusters)

The CLINIC subproject is led by Black Country Chamber of Commerce (WM). Other partners include RKW Sachsen (SA), PIN University of Florence/Prato (RT), and the Birmingham Business School (WM). The aim is to maximise learning and achieve significant improvements in cluster policy and support to the benefit of the global competitiveness of enterprises in the participating regions. CLINIC brings together diverse and expert partnerships from the public and private sectors, adding the academic rigour of Universities. The project brings together practitioners and expert representatives of enterprises to identify and develop cluster best practices for the promotion and development of clusters both regionally and transnationally. Three

new transnational Cluster networks - piloting a range of new techniques and transferring learning from existing tested regional models - will be established. The total budget of the sub-project is 277.100 euros.

#### ETI-NET (Innovation Perspectives for Industrial Cluster and Network Initiatives)

ETI-NET is led by RKW Sachsen (SA) with the participation of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce (WM), the Research Institute for Medium-Sized Businesses and Regional Development (IMREG) of Dresden (SA) and the Coventry University Enterprises(WM). ETI-NET has two main objectives: to set impulses for a future-oriented regional clusters and network policy and to initiate and support shared innovation activities by companies in the network and cluster initiatives. The goal is to improve competitiveness of enterprises. Three phases of activity are envisioned: an analysis and foresight exercise on innovation perspectives of clusters and networks, including cluster and funding policies and innovation and knowledge absorption capability of SMEs; a planning phase focused on strategic approaches for clusters policy and development by means of the foresight approach; a final step to identify concrete internationalisation activities and strategies for international co-operation projects between SMEs in the field of innovation. The total budget of the sub-project is 349.550 euros.

#### FORECO (Foreseeing Competitiveness)

FORECO is led by the Province of Pisa (RT) with the participation of Sviluppo Italia Toscana (RT), the Coventry University Enterprises Ltd (WM) and the Espira Growth Centre (VG). The subproject wants to implement and compare, in different territorial clusters, a set of perspective methodologies to analyse the development and transformation processes of local economic systems and their competitiveness. Starting from these results, the project promotes a deeper focus on industrial districts of the partners territories. The final aim is to establish - through comparison and participated growth - a set of tools for a comprehensive scenario analysis, liable of application to other territories, too. The total budget of the sub-project is 385.000 euros.

#### INNOTRAD (Innovating Tradition)

INNOTRAD will run in West Midlands and Tuscany, involving the University of Wolverhampton (WM) as lead partner, and the University of Central England (WM), PIN s.c.r.l (RT) and Coventry City Council Clothing Centre (WM) as partners. INNOTRAD will review knowledge transfer mechanisms within the leather and the clothing and textile manufacturing sectors and related support centres in both regions. The approach is based upon the recognised expertise and experience in working with such traditional sectors. The project will run a pilot clustering programme in the West Midlands with a small number of SME companies from each of the two sectors (clothing and textile manufacturing and leather goods). The pilot will assess the impact of innovation on businesses planning to process with the support from knowledge providers. The total budget for this subproject is 247.000 euros.

#### PICTURE (Promoting Innovative Clusters Through Urban Regeneration)

PICTURE with an Italian lead partner IRIS Istituto Ricerche e Interventi Sociali (RT). Other partners include: University of Florence - departments of Economic Sciences (RT) and Political Sciences (RT) - University of Birmingham, and the Consortium for Urban Transformation Urban SpA (RT). The project aims at developing new methods to promote innovative clusters between manufacturing and service companies in urban areas under transition to a more knowledge-based structure. The subproject will experiment in the Prato urban area, whose Municipality has already started implementing its strategic plan to support the current transition phase. PICTURE should support the City Council by means of studies and analysis and designing locally relevant proposals in the economic, social and urban fields. The total budget for the subproject is 264.000 euros.

### THEMATIC COMPONENT 3 subprojects to support collaboration among universities, R&D and technology centres for smes

Thematic Component 3

"Innovative projects of a common collaboration with Universities, Research & Development Centres and Technology Centres for SMEs" includes four subprojects: SERIOUS GAMES, INTECHTEX, RICE and TECHNOLOGY MALL.

#### SERIOUS GAMES (Serious Games Cluster and Business Network)

SERIOUS GAMES aims at developing an Interactive Learning Media Network to steer regional policy and help disseminating innovation across EU States. The term Interactive Media incorporates e-Learning and serious games, that is, the successful exploitation of video games technology across non-entertainment sectors. The international partnership - including University of Skövde (VG) as the lead partner and the University of Coventry (WM) - in this subproject will allow the partners to become the leading European clusters and the national knowledge regions for serious gaming, too. This entails that the regions become the focal point of development of a completely new and rapidly growing knowledge intense industry. Partners can utilize this knowledge and support the development of SMEs and other locally collaborative partners, and improve their competitiveness as well as the rate of new innovative business

concepts and innovative products. The total budget of the sub-project is 185.000 euros.

#### INTECHTEX (European Regional Strategy for Innovation in Technical Textiles)

The InTechTex sub-project is led by the Sächsisches Textilforschungsinstitut (STFI) (SA). Other partners include IFP Research AB (VG), Coventry City Council Clothing Centre (WM), Sviluppo Italia Toscana (RT) - together with Tecnotessile as subcontractor (RT) -, and Innovation Netzwerk Textil (SA). The main aim of InTechTex is to develop different strategies for new technologies, products and markets in the sector of Technical Textiles, such as automotive textiles, agro textiles, industrial textiles, smart textiles, protective textiles, etc. A transregional partnership for close cooperation will be established sharing experience and know-how in restructuring the textile & clothing landscape. InTechTex has a total budget of 382.100 euros.

#### RICE (Regional Innovation for a Competitive Europe)

RICE's main aim is to facilitate the transition of land-based industries (mostly SMEs) from current traditional activities (i.e., food production) to innovative ones, by exploiting technical and scientific knowledge for new non-food plant-based products and markets. Topics addressed by the project include: health and wellbeing (nutraceuticals and plant-derived pharmaceuticals), bio-energy (biomass, bio-ethanol, biodiesel), and novel materials (including textiles). RICE is led by Warwickshire County Council (WM). The other partners are: the University of Warwick (WM), the Sächsisches Textilforschungsinstitut (SA), the Fraunhofer Institut für Keramische Technologien und Systeme (SA) and the AGROVÄST Livsmedel AB (VG). RICE total budget is 367.784 euros.

#### TECHNOLOGY MALL (Development of a virtual Mall for active technology marketing and international business development)

TECHNOLOGY MALL is led by VEMAS (Verbundinitiative Maschinenbau Sachsen) (SA) together with Birmingham Chamber of Commerce (WM). The subproject is aimed to provide an Internet-based Technology Mall focusing on: 1) technology push to SMEs by active interregional marketing of latest R&D results from regional technology providers such as universities, R&D centres, technology centres and high-tech companies; 2) business development of SMEs by active international marketing of innovative products and services. The fundamental objective is to become a transnational, market-oriented partnering platform ("a virtual innovation marketplace") for all DISTRICT regions to present their high-tech providers to technology-seeking SMEs and for high-tech SMEs to establish new sales networks and market their innovations to new customers. The total budget of the sub-project is 260.000 euros.

### THEMATIC COMPONENT 4 subprojects to support financial engineering, seed and venture capital, start-ups and spin-offs

Thematic Component 4 "Financial engineering, seed and venture capital, start-ups and spin-offs" includes two sub-projects: SEARCH and STIM-SME.

#### SEARCH (Scanning and Evaluating Activities for Research Commercialization Handovers)

SEARCH features 6 partners: CIP Center for Intellectual Property Studies Professional Services (VG) as the Lead Partner, Coventry University (WM), PIN (RT), GUF Research and Innovation Services (VG), CIT - Chalmers Institute for Commercial R&D (VG) and SAXEED TU Chemnitz (SA). The subproject responds to the increased need for consolidation and development of university-based resources for research commercialization. University-based innovation systems mostly handle the downstream phases of the innovation process, by supporting newly started ventures with advice, incubators and seed capital. SEARCH aims at bridging the gap between university research and venture creation by developing innovative methods and approaches to increase the number of new technology- and knowledge-based companies in the global competition. One primary objective of SEARCH is to improve the commercialization of research, by increasing academic innovative ideas, products and start-ups and developing relationships, methods and tools within research and development institutes. SEARCH total budget is 491.350 euros.

#### STIM SME (Innovation Perspectives for Industrial Cluster and Network Initiatives)

STIM-SME includes Espira Tillväxtcenter (VG), IVF Industriforskning och Utveckling (VG), Espira Inkubator (VG), CIEL Sweden (VG), Innovatum AB (VG), Gothia Science Park AB (VG), Coventry University (WM), Consorzio Pisa Ricerche (RT), and Technologie Centrum Chemnitz (SA) as partners. The subproject aims at assessing innovation activities of existing regional sector-related clusters in the context of regional development and innovation policy. STIM-SME considers innovative SMEs, clusters, the regional innovation system and the regional development policy as integrated interdependent elements. STIM-SME is planned to attract external experts, responsible policy makers, administrators and cluster managers by providing them with original methodological tools. STIM-SME total budget of 431.400 euros.

## **Changing foresight practices in regional development - Global pressures and regional possibilities**

7 - 9 June 2006 - Turku, Finland

The future of regions is dependent on proactive interaction between companies, universities and public actors. The aim of the conference is to discuss the different strategic possibilities for regions as they adapt to the rapidly changing pressures of globalising world. Conference program consist of keynote lectures and parallel workshops focusing in following themes:

- Innovation systems in the creative economy
- Strategies for the globalising economy
- Practical applications (case studies)
- Theories of foresight and regional development
- Foresight methods in regional development
- The future of regional and global governance
- The changing roles and impacts of companies, universities and public actors in regional development

For more information, please visit: <http://www.tukkk.fi/tutu/conference2006>

## **INTERREG IIIB - IIIC programmes task-force meeting**

2-3 October 2006 - Valencia, Spain

Representatives of 14 INTERREG IIIB and IIIC programme management structures will participate in a specific task-force meeting organised by INTERACT Point Tool Box in view to exchanging experiences and gathering common conclusions on the implementation of INTERREG programme management during 2000-2006.

Bearing in mind the ongoing preparation phase of the new INTERREG programmes 2007-2013, this will be an opportunity for the current IIIB and IIIC structures to discussing the advantages and disadvantages observed in the implementation of specific tools and methods that have been used by a number of INTERREG programmes, whose implementation could be of interest to others.

Conclusions raised and their contribution to the achievement of the different INTERREG programme targets will be collected in a final document to be published by INTERACT.

For more information, please visit:  
<http://www.interact-eu.net/227138/242330/0/1155118>

## **OPEN DAYS - European Week of Regions and Cities**

9 - 12 October 2006 - Brussels, BE

Jointly organised by the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions, and partners from 106 regions and cities from 27 European countries, the OPEN DAYS 2006 will focus on regional development issues and on the preparation of the new generation of Structural Funds programmes between 2007 and 2013. More than 2000 regional policy stakeholders are expected in Brussels to participate in some 70 seminars, workshops and plenary sessions.

For more information, please visit: [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/conferences/od2006/about.cfm?nmenu=2](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/od2006/about.cfm?nmenu=2)

## **CLUSTER 2006 - The 9th Annual Global Conference of The Competitiveness Institute**

9 - 13 October 2006 - Lyon, FR

The Conference, this year focused on be "Governance and business involvement in cluster initiatives", represents a great opportunity to learn and to share experiences with competitiveness and local development practitioners. Its goal is to share ideas, build alliances and explore the best modes of economic development. Information is offered about specific clusters, introductory courses on clusters and presentations given by an array of world experts (academics, businesses and institutions). The main theme of the 9th conference will

For more information, please visit: [www.competitiveness.org/lyon](http://www.competitiveness.org/lyon).

## **INTERREG IIIC: Good Practice, network structures and future opportunities for European interregional cooperation**

23 October 2006 - Leipzig, DE

The workshop will highlight networking effects and good practices of the European Union's INTERREG IIIC programme and present the framework and funding opportunities of the future interregional cooperation programme (2007-2013).

For more information, please visit: <http://www.interreg3c.net/sixcms/detail.php?id=9560>

## **INTERREG IIIC Forum**

15 - 16 November 2006 - Lille, FR

Lead partners are invited to meet at the INTERREG IIIC Forum on the afternoon of 15 and morning of 16 November in Lille (France). The forum will help lead partners of INTERREG IIIC operations dealing with "Innovation and Knowledge economy" and "Environment and Risk prevention" to capitalise on their work in these fields and consider future partnerships. It will be a practical and interactive event, with an open area where participants are encouraged to display posters and meet informally.

## **II European Conference on Financing Innovation and Creation of New Technology Based Firms**

23 - 24 November 2006 - Seville, Spain

The Conference has the object to bring together and favour exchange of good practices between key agents in European Innovation, such as entrepreneurs, investors, intermediate bodies and public authorities responsible for financing innovation. The conference aims to present successful experiences on the use of certain Financing Innovation models in different European regions and to explore different existing mechanisms for the creation of technology based companies. It also aims to favour an appropriate platform for the learning and assimilation of good practices that allow the policy makers to plan more appropriate actions for the development of the Financing Innovation strategies and the different key agents of the system to adopt the most suitable mechanisms for the improvement of their actions within these matters.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.iat.es/cfi/>