

## North- East Region - Consultation mechanisms and stakeholders

Before 2002 there weren't any effective consultation mechanism in Romania's North - East Region. **North-East Regional Development Agency was the first regional body** that initiated and supported the setting up of two main regional consultation mechanisms dealing with socio-economic development issues.

These regional consultation mechanisms are:

- a. **Parteneriatul Regional Nord-Est** (North-East Regional Partnership);
- b. **Parteneriatul de Coordonare & Management DISCOVER NE ROMANIA** (North-East Regional Innovative Strategy Coordination & Management Structures)

### North-East Regional Partnership

This mechanism was initiated in 2002, as a regional tool allowing the involvement of a wide of stakeholders in the process of drawing up and approval of the main programming documents referring to socio-economic development of the Region in the period 2004-2006 and following 2007-2013.

The main structures included in this mechanism were:

1. Comitetul Regional pentru Planificare (Regional Committee for Planning - **RCP**)
2. Grupurile de Lucru Tematice Regionale (Regional Thematic Working Groups - **RTWGs**)
3. Grupurile de Lucru Tematice Judetene (County Thematic Working Groups - **CTWGs**)

The Agency proposed 4 main regional themes to be the subject of the regional consultation process:

- a. Business Environment Development;
- b. Rural Development and Agriculture Modernising;
- c. Infrastructure Development and Environment Protection;
- d. Human Resources and Social Services Development;
- e. Ex-ante evaluation (of the regional programming documents)

At the level of each of the 6 counties of the Region was set up a **CTWG**. Each **CTWG** has as members the representatives of local and county level public administration, business support organisations (chambers of commerce, entrepreneurs associations), education system (schools and universities) environment organisations, trade unions, banks, research and development organisations, providers of social services etc.

The main task of the **CTWG** is to express a county level point of view for each of the five regional themes mentioned above. Each **CTWG** appointed 2 representatives as members for each of the 4 RTWG

For the 5 regional themes it was set up a **RTWG**. The role of **RTWGs** is to harmonise at regional level the interests expressed by each county for the proposed themes.

Each **RTWG**, includes, besides 2 representatives appointed by the **6 CTWGs**, the representatives of other significant organizations at regional level (Regional Office for Statistics, Regional Environment Protection Agency, etc).

The **RCP** is the most representative consultation body at regional level. Its members are the representatives of the County Councils (6) in the Region, Prefectures (6), North -East Regional Development Agency (3), RTWGs (5), Regional Office for Statistics (1), Universities (2), National Council for Vocational Training Development (1), Banks (2), entrepreneurial associations (2), unions (2), Romanian Fund for Social Development (1), Regional Office for Agriculture and Rural Development (1), ethnic minorities (1). The **RCP** debates the proposals of RTWs, approves the Regional Development Plan and monitors the results of regional development programmes implementation. The main results of the activities developed by North-East Regional Development Partnership are: "The Regional Development Plan 2004-2006" and the "Regional Development Plan (RDP) 2007-2013".

One of the fifth priorities of the Regional Development Strategy included in the RDP2007-2013 is **Priority 2 „Business Support”** including 3 measures regarding business development:

- M 2.1. Investment for supporting new start-ups and the development of existing SMEs;
- M 2.2. Consulting services for business development in the Region;
- M 2.3. Research, development, innovation and technological development.

## **NORTH-EAST REGIONAL INNOVATION STRATEGY**

The general objective of the Regional Innovation Strategy Project of North -East Region Romania is to contribute to the region competitiveness rising, through the development of the regional innovation support system and the regional innovation culture and awareness. Some of the specific objectives of the project are:

- To develop an organisational structure and a regional institutional framework to coordinate, to animate and to promote innovation in North -East Region.
- To build the regional consensus about the priorities for investment of funding for RDI.
- To identify and to develop the potential innovative capacities in representative sectors of the region.
- To stimulate the innovation demand from regional SMEs, developing the innovative and competitive potential of them.
- To involve all the regional research and technology institutions in an operative and stable network at regional level and to enhance their integration into the European Union and international circuit.
- To identify the funding sources of the RDI activities, both public and private, and to elaborate a proposal of funding programme, based on the real needs and based to a regional consensus.

The RIS project started on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2005, lasts for 32 months and puts a lot of emphasis on achieving the regional consensus, on the long -term vision of the regional process, on the way to proceed, on the data to be collected and on the widening and systematizing of the available information. Raising awareness in the region, by mobilizing the key

economic actors and making them more aware on the value of innovation, is a further general and permanent task of the project.

During the first stage of the project, there were set up the organisational structures and the regional institutional framework to coordinate, to animate and to promote innovation in North-East Region: the Steering Committee (SC) and the Reference Panel (RP), both established on February 2006.

The objective of the **Steering Committee (SC)** is to supervise the activities of the project and to forecast the transfer process of the project results to the SMEs in the territory. The members were chosen from national and regional authorities, chambers of commerce and industry, universities, research institutes and business support organizations. SC includes 12 members, representatives from the following institutions/organizations/companies:

- North-East RDA as Project Coordinator and Head of Steering Committee
- Economic and Social Institute "Gh.Zane" Iasi
- Biological Research Institute Iasi
- CEFIDEC Vatra Dornei
- SC PLANTAVOREL SA Piatra Neamt
- SC ELECTROCONTACT SA Botosani
- Businessmen Association 2003 Iasi
- Regional Office of Statistics
- Neamt County Council
- The Centre for Research and Technologic Transfer Polytech from Technical University Iasi
- The Ministry for Economy and Commerce

The **Reference Panel (RP)** has the objective to supervise the implementation and development of the work at regional level, to elaborate and present to the Steering Committee the opportune recommendations focused on improving and spreading the wider impact of the project in the territory. Consists of representatives from the biggest municipality of Iasi, business incubators and technology parks, universities and research institutes, the national Agency for SMEs – regional representative, representatives of banks, chambers of commerce, centres of excellence, and representatives of business community. The structure is made from 12 members as following:

- Project manager from NE RDA
- Iasi County Council
- Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture Bacau
- Centre for Textile Research Iasi
- University "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" Iasi
- National Council for SMEs – Regional Office Iasi
- University "Stefan cel Mare" Suceava
- Hemeius Information Technology Park
- Romanian Commercial Bank Branch Office Piatra Neamt
- University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine "Ion Ionescu de la Brad" Iasi
- Metron SRL Italy

- Fundecyt Spain

Since the beginning of the project, the Steering Committee and Reference Panel met twice (February and June 2006).

There were organised several promotion events: the Project Kick-off Conference 6<sup>th</sup> of October 2005 in Iasi, two big RIS presentations in Slanic Moldova (12<sup>th</sup> of December 2005) and 5<sup>th</sup> of May 2006 in Iasi, four innovation related seminars in the region (Bacau, Suceava, and Piatra Neamt during February to June 2006), there were issued press notes, updated information about project activities was inserted in four periodical newsletters of NE RDA. An internet platform was designed for the project and the First Annual Innovation Forum was organised on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2006 in Piatra Neamt. Some other important activities ongoing related to the project are:

-Analyse of regional SME's needs which means different activities done by desk research basis (gather and analyse existing documents) and field activities (40 face-to-face-interviews and in-depth interviews with SME's from the main fields of activity in NE Region)

-Analyse of regional RDI and TT (technological transfer) organisations supply meaning 50 face-to-face interviews and in-depth interviews which will assess the capacity, orientation, extent of co-operation and experience of the existing RDI facilities and providers of technology and will compare the existing supply with the identified needs of the company's gaps, overlaps and areas for improvement.

All this work will be completed with bilateral meetings and interviews with the relevant organisations, covering both, private and public institutions.