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Key features of Capitalisation projects

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INTERREG IVC
INNOVATION & ENVIRONMENT
REGIONS OF EUROPE SHARING SOLUTIONS

CONTENTS

NOTE: The methodology presented in the leaflet is valid for all Capitalisation projects. Nevertheless, when developing a project, the specific conditions of a particular call must be carefully followed as they may be changed or limited. The INTERREG IVC website has the latest news on calls and conditions: www.interreg4c.eu

This publication is dedicated to one specific type of INTERREG IVC project – Capitalisation projects. It explains and promotes the idea of capitalisation and thus facilitates potential applicants to better understand this concept. The leaflet provides examples of solutions applied by partners in projects approved under the programme's first call: from building the partnership to project development, from involving regional authorities to transferring good practices to operational programmes.

In addition, you will find interviews which will provide a wider perspective on capitalisation.

PROGRAMME PHILOSOPHY

INTERREG IVC is, by nature, a networking programme which creates links between regions, whether part of 'Convergence', 'Competitiveness and Employment' or other 'European Territorial Cooperation' programmes. INTERREG IVC capitalises on the experience and good practices of these regional and local authorities.

In this context capitalisation is understood as a process of collecting, analysing, transferring and disseminating good practices. It helps increase the effectiveness of regional and local development policies in the selected field of cooperation.

CAPITALISATION PROJECT

Within the programme, it is also possible to develop one specific type of project, called Capitalisation project.

What is it about?

It is an interregional cooperation project which focuses on the transfer of good practices, which were previously developed and identified by the partners, into the mainstream Structural Funds programmes in the participating regions.

Who is it for?

Capitalisation projects are addressed to Managing Authorities – or intermediate bodies set up by them – who are aware of existing good practices and seek solutions to more efficient implementation of their own Structural Funds programmes.

What are the effects?

Each region will develop an 'action plan', signed by the respective Managing Authority and relevant regional stakeholders. It will describe how the good practices will be implemented in the selected operational programmes.

Capitalisation projects – figures

Under the 1st call 41 projects have been approved, involving 443 institutions from all over Europe. From these, 67 project partners are working on 6 Capitalisation projects dealing with Innovation and the knowledge economy. Five Capitalisation projects are receiving 'Fast Track' assistance from the EC.

Capitalisation projects can also receive 'Fast Track' assistance from the European Commission. This is in order to contribute to the EC's 'Regions for Economic Change' initiative. So what is this all about? Mr Mikel Landabaso, head of the unit that coordinates this initiative, among other things, explains.

Mr Mikel Landabaso Alvarez is Head of Unit in the regional policy department of the European Commission. He has responsibility for coordinating the Regions for Economic Change initiative as well as policy coordination work with other Commission Services. He has extensive experience both in supporting national and regional authorities in delivering strategic programmes and in promoting networking and innovative approaches in a regional context.

How would you assess the success of the Regions for Economic Change initiative so far?

The initiative has at its heart the idea that regions and cities need to accelerate their policy learning. It integrates several good practice tools supported by Cohesion Policy – the networking programmes INTERREG IVC and Urbact II, annual conferences, the RegioStars awards (now in their third year), a database of case studies and related evaluations. The greatest challenge of the initiative is the number and range of thematic priorities that are relevant within Cohesion Policy.

On balance and within available resources the initiative has already had a number of key successes – raising the focus on spreading good ideas, integrating the fast track experiment in IVC and the popular RegioStars awards. But I also acknowledge that "the jury is out" on other elements – such as to what extent all the partners in the fast track networks will implement their shared ideas.

What kind of support does the Commission provide to INTERREG IVC Fast Track networks?

Fast Track Networks – FTNs – are one of the main vehicles for delivering on the capitalisation of good practice – going beyond identifying good practice and focusing on the intelligent transfer of good policy ideas between partners.

The Commission actively supports FTNs by participating as a partner in their work and bringing its knowledge to the table, linking network partners with the managing body of the right operational programme where necessary, encouraging the transfer process through action plans and giving a wider platform to the work of the network.

What advantage do you see for the EC in promoting 'Fast Track' cooperation networks?

The Commission's primary aim is to extract maximum benefit from the work of IVC networks by working with the Fast Track partners on the process of transferring good ideas. The challenge here is to more quickly achieve innovation in the broadest sense and attain the efficiencies promised by proven good ideas. We need to remember that it is only in the widespread application of innovative practices that we can achieve the results we seek in our search for more effective support to innovation or faster ICT networks, to name but two important themes.

I should add that the networks are also improving our understanding of what works and why and giving us valuable evidence and partners in the formulation of policy.

What are your expectations in terms of building on the results of Fast Track networks?

Key outcomes from the Fast Tracks are the individual regional action plans. The ultimate success of the FTNs will be determined by the follow-up given to these action plans in each region. They must be taken over by relevant regional stakeholders and followed through to action and results.

I believe that we will have evidence of the success of this experiment in capitalising and that, on that basis, there will be a greater expectation in future on capitalisation in the network programmes supported by Cohesion Policy.

Capitalisation projects are designed to facilitate the transfer of new practices from one region to another. The focus lies on the transfer process, as the good practices have already been identified. This means that projects are more limited in duration and budget than Regional Initiative projects. Capitalisation projects have some specific characteristics, which distinguish them from the more usual form of interregional cooperation projects. Here we present four main features, which are further described and illustrated on the following pages.

The programme manual has full details of the features and requirements of Capitalisation projects. Download from www.interreg4c.eu (Programme section).

STARTING POINT – GOOD PRACTICE

The starting point of every Capitalisation project is a pool of good practices, which have already been identified and successfully tested by the partners. The good practices can result from any successful policy experience at the local, regional, national or even European level.

Page 5 gives more detail on identifying and selecting good practices

CORE ACTORS – PARTNERSHIP

Managing Authorities are the core actors of Capitalisation projects as the success of any policy implementation depends mainly on them (or the intermediate bodies carrying out some or all of their tasks). Often, the partnership will be wider, including other policy makers such as relevant members of the monitoring committee of the regional operational programme, and best practice owners.

Page 6 describes the importance of partnership in Capitalisation projects

MAIN ACTIVITY – TRANSFER

As the good practices are already identified in the regions, the focus of Capitalisation project activities will be on preparing their transfer into regional operational programmes. However all activities linked to implementing the good practice will be financed after the end of the project by the regional operational programmes, not by INTERREG IVC.

The projects use typical tools for exchange of experience – seminars, study visits, workshops, staff exchange, and so on. It is also important to disseminate the findings widely beyond the partnership of the project.

Page 7 details the transfer process in a current project

MAIN RESULT – ACTION PLAN

The main result of Capitalisation projects is considered to be the development of an 'action plan' for all participating regions. These plans specify how the good practices will be transferred and implemented under the regional operational programmes. Each action plan will be signed by the respective Managing Authority and relevant regional stakeholders.

Page 8 explains the objectives and challenges of the action plan

In addition to these main features, projects might have to meet additional requirements set by the programme. These are announced separately for each call for proposals.

The 'Application' section on the INTERREG IVC website at www.interreg4c.eu has the latest information.

Good practice

The basis of all Capitalisation projects is a ready-available stock of good practices to share (see below for the programme's definition). Despite the differing stages of policy development in each region, the overall character of the exchange is 'win-win' for the partners. Less experienced regions have access to workable policy solutions whilst more experienced regions are exposed to new ideas and practices that they may not have considered.

A good practice is an initiative (e.g. methodologies, projects, processes, techniques) undertaken in one of the programme's thematic priorities which has already proved successful and which has the potential to be transferred to a different geographic area. Proved successful is where the good practice has already provided tangible and measurable results in achieving a specific objective.

SHOWCASE

For example, the management software for demographic change – OWL – was developed under the "Innovative Measures" funding of the European Social Fund (ESF) regulation, article 6. The software takes into account the objectives of a specific company as well as the unique potential of each employee. It has been tested in public and private bodies in Italy and Finland to study the potential of older workers and their working conditions, to increase their motivation at work and extend their productivity period during their working life.

This is one of the 13 good practices available for transfer to partners within the ESF6 CIA Capitalisation project.

Another example: the Autonomous Region of Cantabria, Spain. They developed a model for introducing e-government into Local Authorities (eLocal) in a bid to modernise these bodies. The model allows the management of applications and provision of services to citizens and businesses over the Internet and was introduced in Cantabria in August 2006. Potentially 80% of the population in this Autonomous Community can interact electronically with its Government.

This good practice is one of four being transferred within the PIKE project, with the objective of improving e-government and wireless broadband good practices.

TRANSFERABILITY

It is important when selecting good practices to verify as early as possible whether they can feasibly be transferred to the partner's regional programme. As an example, the regional operational programme of the Czech partner involved in the PIKE project does not contain a specific measure for IT development.

Efforts are thus being shifted to the national integrated operational programme, which does cover the ICT realm but is administered by a different Managing Authority.

A word of advice:
"Select good practices carefully and check at the preparation stage that the partner region's OP is compatible with the thematic focus of the cooperation" (Ancitel Sardinia, Lead Partner of ICHNOS PLUS project)

GETTING IT RIGHT

Perhaps more than in any other type of project, the right partnership is particularly important for Capitalisation projects. Indeed, because of the specific focus on transferring good practices into EU Structural Funds mainstream programmes, the involvement of the relevant bodies responsible for monitoring the operational programme in each participating region is a prerequisite. Consequently, the Managing Authority – and/or an intermediary body appointed by them – becomes the main target group for any proposal submitted to the second type of intervention.

The South West of England Regional Development Agency is Lead partner of the RAPIDE project, and this agency is also responsible for delivering the Convergence and Competitiveness programmes. In another case, the ESF6 CIA project involves the Bulgarian Institute of Sociology – specialised in the project theme of demographic change – but also the Bulgarian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy who is Managing Authority (*see interview, page 9*).

INVOLVING STAKEHOLDERS

In both cases, it is crucial to associate these stakeholders in all activities throughout the lifetime of the project. The Managing Authority should ideally support the project from the preparation phase to the very end with the formulation of the regional action plans. It is also highly recommended by the Capitalisation projects approved under the first call to involve the deep delegations in all events organised at local, regional and international level.

In addition, policy-makers and other relevant bodies responsible for policy delivery, known as 'deep delegations' (*see 'Glossary', page 11*), should naturally be involved in the project. Indeed, depending on the theme tackled, the participation of regional development agencies and other important regional economic development actors may be essential.

The launch event of the ICHNOS PLUS project gathered not only regional decision and policy-makers, but also the personnel of the municipal one-stop shops, representatives of chambers of commerce and business organisations.

NEAR AND FAR

As for all interregional cooperation projects, wide geographical coverage – going beyond cross-border and transnational cooperation areas for instance – is essential. It is also very important to carefully select partners that share an interest or expertise in a precise field of competence.

The South West of England Regional Development Agency were specifically looking for regions who shared similar challenges to them, who were keen to join the RAPIDE partnership to develop solutions for helping businesses get good ideas to the market more quickly. Based on this, an event was held to develop the project further, and finalise the partnership.

Elsewhere, the Piedmont Region (Italy) has created an internal structure, set up in 2006, to deal with international projects. This has facilitated contacts for the B3 Regions project.

Finally, the role of the Lead partner is extremely important to encourage all partners to participate in discussions and exchange of ideas. The Lead partner has to be the driving force behind the project, keeping the objectives clear.

A word of advice:
"Every partner has something to bring to the table, and the partnership needs to be quite innovative in the ways they draw knowledge from all partners."
(South West of England Regional Development Agency, Lead partner of RAPIDE)

Building partnership within the PIKE project

WHAT IS THE TRANSFER PROCESS?

It may be useful here to first clarify the notion of transfer. In the programme manual, transfer is defined as "a practice introduced by one partner, which has a concrete and measurable impact on another partner". In the context of Capitalisation projects the programme supports the transfer process, but not the implementation of the transfer itself. The concrete implementation of the practices in each region is indeed to be funded by the relevant operational programmes.

The transfer process will take different forms, depending on the context of each project. In principle, however, it consists of three key milestones: selection, adaptation, and commitment.

It is interesting to see how this works in practice by following the South East Region of Bulgaria who, in the framework of the PIKE project, is capitalising on e-Government and wireless broadband good practices.

SELECTION

First the region has to express their interest on which good practices they would like to see implemented in their territory. Usually this takes the form of a meeting where each region presents their good practices. Ideally this first step should be initiated already during the project's preparation. It is during this first step of the PIKE project that the South East Region of Bulgaria selected to transfer a good practice "Wireless Cities" from Derry City Council, UK. This good practice consisted of the deployment of a wireless access network in the city to pilot a number of key mobile services (education, tourism and local authority) to test user demand and business models for deployment of emerging wireless and mobile services.

ADAPTATION

During the second step, the practice needs to be analysed to see why it was successful in a specific context and how it should be adapted to fit within the context of the recipient region(s). PIKE calls this the 'transfer roadmap'. Often, a smaller working group is created within the project between the donor region and the recipient region(s). The involvement of experts and practitioners are often necessary to ensure the successful transfer. Study visits are generally a decisive step in order to gain firsthand experience on the good practice and to discuss relevant issues with the staff involved in the implementation.

The South East Bulgaria Region involved all delegates (project managers, suppliers of equipment and services) in this process. It was therefore possible to develop the level of planning, commitment, external knowledge and partnership required to develop the practice.

COMMITMENT

The third step is dedicated to the endorsement of the transferred practices by the recipient region(s). This is carried out through the finalisation of a binding action plan by the recipient region, specifying how these good practices will be implemented under its operational programme (*see 'Action plan', page 8 for more details*).

All the above three steps are carried out through the traditional exchange of experience activities, such as thematic workshops, study visits or even staff exchanges. In addition ongoing activities to ensure the commitment of the local relevant stakeholders are necessary. These stakeholders can be invited to the main interregional events. A number of local feedback meetings may be also necessary to raise their awareness.

In the PIKE transfer example, the two partners are holding meetings and discussion with the policy-level decision makers. During this process the South East Bulgaria Region met with the Ministry responsible for managing the relevant operational programme – the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works in Bulgaria. In addition, they held meetings with the Mayor of the Bulgarian partner city and with other stakeholders (University of Burgas, City of Burgas, regional development agency), who expressed their willingness to cooperate with EU partners and share best practices, reviewed the project activities, had discussions on their level of involvement, on the transfer roadmap and on the mainstreaming into the regional operational programme.
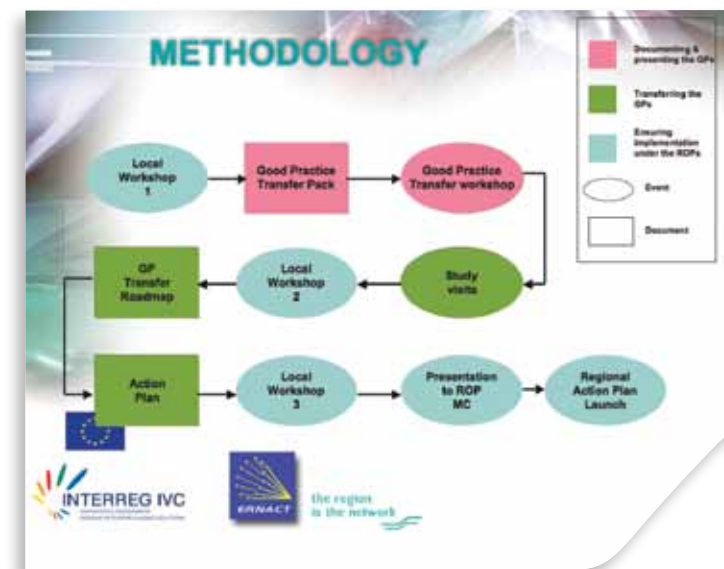
PIKE transfer methodology © PIKE

EXPECTED RESULT

The main result of a Capitalisation project is a concrete action plan for each participating region, specifying how the identified practices will be implemented under the mainstream programme of these regions. It is the logical result of the work put in during the transfer process described previously.

DETAILS, DETAILS

The action plan is the main result of the project and should be signed by the Managing Authority. It needs to contain detailed information at least covering the following aspects:

● Definition and description of good practice(s) to be transferred; what form they will take and how their implementation will be evaluated.

● Names and roles of the main stakeholders in the region that will need to be involved in the implementation process.

● Identification of the relevant priority and measure concerned in the regional operational programme, along with the budget required to fund the implementation.

● Details on how the implementation will take place.

ERIK ACTION partners have each chosen between 1 and 4 good practices to be transferred, and are currently preparing comprehensive documents, according to a common template, detailing the whole transfer process, including concrete activities and time plans. One particularly popular good practice is Innovation Assistant tool implemented in the Lower Austria Region: 8 ERIK ACTION partners are preparing Action Plans for its transfer.

FROM REGION TO REGION

It is important that the right operational programme measure be identified early on in the project – ideally at the preparation phase. The South East Region of Bulgaria – project partner in PIKE – have identified the operational programme "Regional Development", Priority Axis 2: Regional and Local Accessibility, Operation 2.2. ICT Network for funding the implementation of the Wireless Cities in Burgas. This axis has the specific objective to provide access to broadband infrastructure in the context of transition to information society.

The programme will open in 2010 and the municipality of Burgas will then submit a funding application in order to implement the good practice being transferred. The application form will be based on the action plan that is under development, and which represents one of the main deliverables of the PIKE project.

FACING CHALLENGES

Precise steps and actions are needed to ensure successful transfer and overcome obstacles. The Region of Tuscany, Lead partner of ERIK ACTION, realised that partners had initial difficulties in understanding the means of completing the action plan according to the proposed template. This was overcome by organising a series of dedicated workshops with example[s] intensive peer review ses[sions]

The Piedmont Region [of] Regions project, has com[pleted] development of action p[lans] projects are meant to hav[e] period (2007-2013); how[ever] programming does not [...] timing.

It should also be note[d] guarantee implementatio[n] region. It will be subject [to] the regional funds, such [as] a monitoring committee.

Regular partner meetings are essential to prepare the action plan
© Hans Christian Jager/ERIK ACTION

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, as Managing Authority (MA) of the Human Resources Development Operational Programme, is partner in the ESF6 CIA project, dealing with demographic change. Here, general director Zornitsa Roussinova explains the reasons behind the MA's participation in this project, and the particular challenges she faces in one of Europe's newest Member States.

Mrs. Zornitsa Roussinova is general director of "European funds, international programmes and projects" General Directorate in the Bulgarian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

Why did you decide to participate in the ESF6 CIA project?

Having joined the EU in 2007, Bulgaria is in its first 7-year programming period. The Managing Authorities in our country, in particular the Managing Authority of the Human Resources Development Operational Programme, are still lacking practical experience in setting-up, implementing and monitoring programmes and projects. Additional capacity building is required in these fields and we feel that one of the possible solutions is our participation in cooperation projects.

In particular, Capitalisation projects such as ESF6 CIA aim to support the exchange of working ideas and good practices, but also establish a network of contacts which will further enhance the performance of the Managing Authority.

What do you think you have gained by participating in this policy transfer, rather than developing a policy on your own?

In my opinion policy transfer is a very important process in the development of national policies and is also a part of the cohesion process within the EU. The Managing Authority of Human Resources Development Operational Programme supports the policy-making process and is directly involved in implementation of national policies.

It is clearly in our interest to implement policies that also meet the highest criteria on EU level as well as the needs and the expectations of the Bulgarian citizens. As a result of their participation in this project, the Demographic and Social Policy and Equal Opportunities Directorate of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy are currently developing a new concept for active elderly people in Bulgaria.

Do you face any obstacles within your region or country for this kind of cooperation?

The ESF6 CIA project is expected to create a functioning network between partners tackling the same issue: demographic change. As a result, we will develop a plan to show which concepts suit best and how these concepts can be transferred to cushion the effects of demographic change in our country.

The important aspect for us – and this is something that is not yet reached in Bulgaria – is to involve all the necessary stakeholders at national and local level, including the civil society, to ensure the effectiveness of this type of cooperation.

How do you view the transfer process from another region? What difficulties can you face in implementation?

The main benefit from Capitalisation projects and the exchange of good practices is to help improve the implementation of national measures. One of the main difficulties the Managing Authority faces in the transfer process is to adapt and transform the good practice to fit not only local or regional needs, but also to ensure national application.

There are only a few cases where such a transfer can be applied directly but in general good practices which have proven their effectiveness have to be carefully adapted to better suit each local need.

In this interview, Nicolas Singer – Senior Project Officer at the Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) – explains what his team looks out for in Capitalisation projects. Essential inside information for regions considering developing this kind of project!

Nicolas Singer holds Masters degrees in International Trade (Lille, France) and in European Management Strategy (Stoke-on-Trent, UK). Before joining the JTS in 2003, Nicolas worked for regional authorities on a series of European cooperation projects in the framework of cross-border (Kent / Nord-Pas de Calais) and transnational (North West Europe) cooperation. He also worked on several other Structural Funds programmes (e.g. Innovative Actions, Objective 1 and 2).

What makes a good Capitalisation application stand out?

There are important features that apply to all projects. For example, the proposed approach has to be as consistent as possible. Also, it is often the level of details provided that makes a huge difference between abstract and convincing applications.

Specifically for Capitalisation projects, I would point out three more things.

● First, we always check whether the Managing Authority is directly involved in the project to make the mainstreaming feasible. It is never just enough to say that "our organisation has a close link to the Managing Authority". Either your organisation *is* the Managing Authority or you describe this clear link, even providing names, if possible!

● Second, the availability of good practices and the transfer process itself have to be described in detail. The detailed activities must clearly relate to the transfer process between donor and receiving regions. It also adds credibility if it is stated which measure or priority will be targeted in the Operational Programmes and if the stakeholders are defined or even named. To assess whether the project is feasible, we also check whether the number of activities and outputs is reasonable for a 2-year project.

● Third, we always look at the geographical coverage. It is particularly important for Capitalisation projects to have a good mix of less and more advanced regions. Especially the involvement of new Member States should be carefully looked at as they are the newest in the Structural Funds world.

There seems to be a predominance of the 'Innovation and knowledge economy' priority with the current Capitalisation projects. Do you know of any reason for this?

It is true that around 2/3 of the Capitalisation applications received so far concerned the first priority. It is difficult to say why the best applications in the first call all came from this priority. We received several environment and risk management applications during the second call and I am convinced that there are many good practices at regional level concerning environmental issues.

We expect to see more solid applications in this domain, especially with the advice given in this brochure. All the recommendations here apply equally to projects in all fields.

Any final recommendations for regions preparing Capitalisation Projects?

Because of the demanding conditions set for Capitalisation Projects a lot of effort will be required to succeed. I would encourage all applicants to prepare carefully and use the support the programme is providing – take part in information events and contact Information Points for feedback on project ideas!

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS USED IN CAPITALISATION PROJECTS

Managing Authority (MA) is the body managing Structural Funds at national, regional or local level; designated by the Member State.

Intermediate body (IB) is any body which acts under the responsability of a Managing Authority and which carries out, on their behalf, duties related the management of the Operational Programme.

Operational Programme is a document developed by EU countries and/or regions, approved by the European Commission, which defines their priorities as well as the programming required to achieve these priorities.

Action plan is a strategic document that defines precisely how the good practices will be implemented in the operational programme of each region participating in a Capitalisation project. It should be signed by the MA of each of the participating regions.

Deep delegation refers to the wider stakeholders that each partner needs to have on board to ensure successful implementation of the good practice(s) transferred e.g. regional development agencies, monitoring committee of operational programme. Only costs of partners listed in the application form can be reimbursed.

Mainstreaming also called 'transfer process', is the process of integrating new knowledge and good practices into the Convergence, Competitiveness & Employment and European Territorial Cooperation objectives, through interregional cooperation.

CAPITALISATION PROJECTS' WEBSITES

B3 Regions: www.b3regions.eu

ERIK ACTION: www.eriknetwork.net

ESF6 CIA: www.esf6cia.eu

ICHNOS PLUS: www.ichnos-project.org

PIKE: www.pike-project.eu

RAPIDE: www.rapidenetwork.eu

FOUR INFORMATION POINTS

Four Information Points, coordinated by the Joint Technical Secretariat, assist potential applicants develop their proposals, depending on the location of the lead applicant.

- North – Rostock (DE)
  Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden and Norway
  IP-North@interreg4c.eu

- East – Katowice (PL)
  Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania
  IP-East@interreg4c.eu

- South – Valencia (ES)
  Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain
  IP-South@interreg4c.eu

- West – Lille (FR)
  Belgium, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, United Kingdom and Switzerland
  IP-West@interreg4c.eu

CAPITALISATION EVENT

INTERREG IVC Capitalisation conference
9/10 December 2009 – Gothenburg, Sweden

- Targeted at Managing Authorities of Structural Funds programmes

- Conference sessions, workshops, exhibition and partner search

More details: www.interreg4c.eu