



# SEEL

## Supporting Excellence in E-Learning

- ▶ ***"Learning in a knowledge society probably requires new skills, and new approaches to quality"***





# Quality policies for e-learning regions and cities

## Lisbon, 19 and 20 May

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- ▶ **HOW CAN ORGANISATIONS CONTRIBUTE AND BENEFIT FROM *eLearning*:**
  - ▶ **THE CASE OF SMALL FIRMS IN LESS FAVOURED REGIONS**
    - ▶ Teresa de Noronha Vaz





# The Issue

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- ▶ The LFR have development handicaps:
  - ◆ location disadvantages,
  - ◆ structural adjustments,
  - ◆ lack of consistent development strategies.
  
- ▶ Our theoretical approach is based on the role of SMEs and call local actors and institutions to perceive constrains and to develop new opportunities for regional development.
  
- ▶ e-Learning is presented as a powerful instrument:
  - it expands the regional knowledge base
  - it changes the internal capacity of firms to innovative.





# The Problem (1)

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- ▶ Europe faces problems related to the spatial impacts of new political scenarios:
  - globalisation and delocalisation
  - the enlargement and integration of eastern European countries
  
- ▶ Uncertainty and new entrepreneurial determinants are felt:
  - Urgent need for job creation,
  - environmental impositions,
  - different capital flows





## The Problem (2)

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- ▶ European regional Gap is whitening in:
  - Germany, ( ex D. R.), Greece, United Kingdom, Portugal and Italy and in a few cases Ireland, Netherlands, Spain and Denmark.
- ▶ The rise of variable geometry to which soon was associated a model of differentiated integration:
  - It accepts distinct development opportunities among the European regions and economic agents.





# The theoretical solution

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▶ **The interdependent adjustment:**

- convergence at a macro economic level, territorial articulation at a meso-economic level and integration of actors at the micro level of production, consumption and distribution.

▶ **Requirements for it to take place:**

- new local development processes that happen in terms of socio-economical change
- new financial and political logic that reduces territorial and consumer specificities.
- The adaptation capacity of agents

▶ **Innovation and Knowledge Base**

▶ **Territory, Institutional co-operative Choices and Collective Learning**





# Innovation and Knowledge Base

- ▶ When applying the R & D policy, the EU has given preference to the most advanced regions and the so-called high-tech industries (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 1997).
- ▶ One of the problems of the S & T paradox is that science is often made without obtaining good technological performances.
- ▶ The innovative activities of the enterprises are fed by the "knowledge bases" that allow to discover the solutions to the technological problems (NELSON and WINTER, 1982).
- ▶ A complex process combines different forms of learning:
  - The global learning with interactive dimensions (LUNDVALL, 1988).
  - The diversified know-how and capacities to solve problems (DOSI, 1988).
  - The learning inscribed in the technological regimen and the routine regimen (NELSON and WINTER, 1982).





# Territory, Institutional Co-operative Choices and Collective Learning

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- ▶ Recent empirical evidence is shown growth patterns based on:
  - production systems and institutional frameworks distant from mass production and product standardisation
  - territorial agglomeration of production and the interconnections of social practices and institutions: inter-relationships co-operation
    - Emilia Romana, Toscana, Southern Germany, Southern California, Japan, and Silicon Valley
- ▶ These relationships can be described as external to the market or internal to the hierarchy, and co-operative.
  - In these cases, not only the economic agents interact but social structures induce a knowledge capacity
  - The introduction of time as a major factor of the territorial dynamics permits us to transform the previous concepts of relationship and co-operative behaviour into "learning" and "interacting", giving origin to very consistent and original new approaches.





# The Learning Region

- ▶ **The territory can not be reduced to its spatial dimension:**
  - It should be understood as an historical construction
  - One of the main characteristics of the territory is the proximity among socio-economic agents. Whether the agents benefit or not from this attribute depend on their technological and social capacity to interact and co-operate.
- ▶ **There are discussions on the concepts of geographical and technological "proximity":**
  - While the first one indicates increases in the relation among economical activities and settles the idea of organisational and institutional proximity,
  - The second one suggests the importance of the interaction among agents, particularly the one that results from learning, reducing uncertainty in firms.
- ▶ **The complementarily between both concepts:**
  - stimulates different forms for relations of proximity and can ease the enterprises to relate and institutions to integrate.
- ▶ **The learning region is:**
  - A territorial space where innovation is due to a collective *user* that reduces the degree of uncertainty for the firms by organising their functional and informational inter-dependence and informally performing functions like: search, signalling, selection, trans-coding, transformer and control.





# Emergency and reproduction of the collective learning and new know-how in the region

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- ▶ The territories are involved into productive organisational complexes related to two extreme industrial models:
  - The Fordist model, characterised by scale production and the loss of identity of the territories
  - And, the spatially oriented post-Fordist industrial model in which productive organisation requires flexibility, new competencies, more specific and systematically adaptable workers, permanently new qualified human resources – this imposes learning!
  
- ▶ But:
  - How may learning be introduced in the territory?
  - How, as a consequence, do structural changes happen in the territory?
  - How does the territory constitute itself to accept a different set of organisational or technical procedures, the innovations?





# *Increasing entrepreneurial capacity through e-Learning*

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- ▶ The all concept of e-Learning should be developed having in mind the new model of industrial organisation
- ▶ The advantages of E-Learning when facing the new model of industrial organization:
  - provides an opportunity for all members at the region to engage in the new technologies, and gain access to training and support to encourage entrepreneurial activity.
  - The on-line delivery mechanism has been designed in recognition of the need to introduce flexible methods of delivering education and training to the community. It also provides the potential for educational institutions to develop the skills of local populations.
  - It permits the diffusion of specific instruments: Knowing that small firms across industries, especially in the LFR, are severely lacking in key management skills in particular financial management, marketing, entrepreneurial skills and human resource issues.
  - An opened exchange among firms under fast reactive conditions can only increase the co-operative productive forms and help in market segmentation, pricing strategies and environmental analyses, strategies known to promote a better performance in business.





# Less Favoured regions toward e-Learning Regions

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- ▶ **An e-Learning region is:**
  - A territory that privileges links among the educational part (training systems) with the research part (learning institutions) and with the sectorial/entrepreneurial (industry) part in order to obtain knowledge transfer from the two first ones towards the third one.
  
- ▶ **To deliver innovative approaches to LFRs imposing the use of new technologies in small firms and in the domestic context is a quite difficult issue:**
  - capacity of general population to handle new technologies,
  - financial ways to provide the access to computer systems
  - Lack of capability to convince general opinion the many new opportunities can result from a collective use these new techniques.
  
- ▶ **The closed and individualistic behaviours of leading economic agents located in such regions suggests reluctance to new practices.**
  
- ▶ **To transform a Less Favoured Region into an e-Learning Region it is necessary:**
  - to explain to the economical agents the importance of this instrument and guarantee them an integrated political choice.
  - Many local development efforts failed due to a lack of integration in the strategic measures of the industrial, innovation and regional policies.





## Strategic Political choices (1):

- ▶ The fact is that we are facing a huge enthusiasm from part of the European Commission authorities in order to create conditions to promote ICT.
- ▶ The other player in the game is now demanded to participate. Member States should stimulate the development of local on-line communities, including financial and technical support and the dissemination of best practices, with a priority to disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods and less-favoured rural areas.
- ▶ ICT requires lifelong learning for people to constantly update their knowledge and skills and also institutions and organisations to re-arrange, as never before, their own “models” for creating value for themselves and society.





## Strategic Political choices (2):

- ▶ **Infrastructure:** Build a robust common regional infrastructure by improving connectivity to increase and lower costs and strengthening the legal and regulatory framework;
- ▶ **E-Society:** Enhance human capacity development through focusing on education and knowledge sharing and promoting local content and applications through:
  - focus on BASIC education with the development of ICT and adult skill development;
  - increased opportunities for lifelong learning (LLL) opportunities;
  - adoption of mutual recognition of ICT qualifications and remove the barriers for mobility;
  - promote the development of “Smart communities” an “e -champions”;
  - regionally coordinate the development of language translators to facilitate the exchange of local material among ASEAN countries;
- ▶ **E-Government:** Increase the e-awareness of senior policy makers, with emphasis on the benefits of e-Government for enhancing government services to constituents;
- ▶ **E-Commerce:** Encourage a pro-competitive policy and regulatory environment with a view to generating self-sustaining growth and achieving development goals which includes the encouragement of public-private partnerships in order to foster local enterprises, innovation and lifelong learning (LLL).

