



**Application form
European Entrepreneurial Regions (EER)
Pilot scheme**

1. Contact details

Applicant region	State of Brandenburg
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Application year:

Please note that the candidate region may apply for EER years: 2011 and 2012. One region may apply for both years, but the label would be granted only once. Please tick the appropriate box(es).

EER year 2011

EER year 2012

2. Presentation of the political vision

Please describe in maximum 3 pages – (8.400 characters) your region's entrepreneurial potential

***Note:** the document should ideally contain a SWOT analysis of the region's entrepreneurial potential, a broad political description of what it wants to achieve within the next 2 years, and a presentation of the resources at its disposal to achieve this vision.*

20 years ago, on the 3rd of October 1990, the German Democratic Republic joined the Federal Republic of Germany and, hence, the European Union. Since then every endeavour has been made in the new Federal State of Brandenburg to establish a competitive economy and a liveable environment for its citizens.

The area of Brandenburg was previously characterized by large agricultural collectives and labour-intensive industrial plants erected after 1950. Unlike other parts of Eastern Germany, e.g. Saxony or Thuringia, there has never been a significant number of small and medium sized companies nor a distinct entrepreneurial tradition in the area of Brandenburg before 1990. As in all post-socialist regions it was also confronted by the chances and challenges accompanying the subsequent transformation process. The economic development in Brandenburg during the 1990's has known many successes in the vicinity of Berlin, while it was very sluggish in the more peripheral regions.

Berlin, Germany's capital is not part of but completely enclosed by Brandenburg. With its high density of universities and research institutes, political decision makers, special interest groups, headquarters, and an ever growing creative and innovative potential, Berlin has tremendous importance for the economic development in Brandenburg.

In 2004 Brandenburg decided to put its economic potential into the focus of its political development strategy and implemented a shift of paradigm: **to strengthen its strengths**. With the support from EU Structural Funds and other EU programs and policies such as the Lisbon Strategy and the Small Business Act Brandenburg now pursues a twofold approach.

On the one hand, Brandenburg identified regional centres of growth and sectors of economic excellence, including traditional sectors such as the food industry as well as new sectors such as the geoinformation industry or renewable energies. Funding programs are focused on these regional centres of growth and sectors of economic excellence, assuming that their development has a positive impact on adjacent regions and economic sectors. Within these centres and sectors of growth, Brandenburg is supporting the formation of enterprise driven networks, consisting of companies, research institutes, and regional stakeholders.

On the other hand, Brandenburg is successfully working to establish a globally competitive knowledge based economy. For this purpose, numerous scientific and research institutions such as the famous Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research have been located in Brandenburg, creating links to and between enterprises, including those from Berlin. Brandenburg and Berlin collaborate in major fields of politics, e.g. a common innovation strategy or the new international airport which will begin operations in October 2011.

Based on this economic development structure and bearing in mind global challenges such as globalization, climate change and an ageing and shrinking population and workforce, the main objectives for Brandenburg in the upcoming years are the ecological modernization of the regional economy, fostering the innovation potential and the human resources of the region, and replacing grants with more advanced funding mechanisms for SMEs.

The ecological modernization of the economy is an essential element for a sustainable economic development of the state of Brandenburg. Climate-friendly and energy efficient production processes ensure economic development and the creation of new and sustainable jobs. The region will give preference to the extension of renewable energy and aims at further developing its position as one of the leading regions for research, production, and application of sustainable energy technologies.

Support of creativity and innovation will be a key area of the future activities of the Brandenburg government, as they are of essential importance for personal, social and economic development. The relationship between business, science and administrations will be further enhanced. In addition, universities, scientific research institutes, excellent students and professors play an important role in creating innovation. Cooperation with companies and technology transfer is necessary to put these innovations into practice and create new products or services. This is mainly important for SMEs in Brandenburg in order to survive in a highly competitive global environment.

Therefore, the joint innovation strategy of Brandenburg and Berlin is a major element in the entrepreneurial policy of Brandenburg. The capital region has the highest density of research institutions in Germany. To develop and stabilize this position Brandenburg aims at strengthening the cooperation with innovative branches, fostering technology transfer and supporting innovative start-ups. This strategy will be complemented by an intensified use of more advanced funding mechanisms such as revolving funds, loans, including micro-loans, guarantees and venture capital.

To achieve its aims and to put this vision into practice:

- Brandenburg encourages and supports all relevant forms of entrepreneurial activity and responsibility,
- Brandenburg supports regions and companies to ensure adequate workforce despite the decreasing number of graduates leaving schools and universities,
- Brandenburg improves its attractiveness for national and international companies and employees,
- Brandenburg supports innovation and creativity as these are the key factors for a successful economic development in the German capital region.

The Ministry for Economic and European Affairs is the *chef de file* government department for the entrepreneurial approach of Brandenburg. Important partners for the implementation of this process are the Brandenburg Economic Development Board (ZAB), Brandenburg's agency to promote Brandenburg as a business location, the InvestitionsBank des Landes Brandenburg (ILB), the public bank, implementing financial aid programmes for the state of Brandenburg, and Brandenburg's Agency for Structure and Workforce (LASA), the service institution implementing the labour market policies. Furthermore, the chambers of commerce and trade, the federations of commercial or industrial enterprises as well as the mediaboard Berlin-Brandenburg and the Brandenburg representative for media and creative industries will be involved in the implementation process.

3. Action plan

Please present your action plan in maximum 10 pages – (25.300 characters)

Note:

Candidate regions should list the measures they intend to launch in at least four out of the six areas listed below in the run-up to the EER year and in the EER year itself, and demonstrate the overall sustainability of those measures:

- a. Mainstreaming the EU's Small Business Act principles at regional level: prospective measures to achieve the 10 principles¹ of the Small Business Act;
- b. Introducing entrepreneurship in schools and training programmes: prospective measures to introduce and encourage entrepreneurship in school curricula, prospective measures to introduce and encourage entrepreneurship in training programmes;
- c. Guaranteeing support at each critical level of the business growth cycle: prospective measures to strengthen support throughout the business life cycle;
- d. Development of a (inter)regional cluster policy: prospective measures to strengthen the regional cluster policy;
- e. Making optimal use of the EU's structural funds and other public funding: prospective measures to guarantee the effectiveness and proper management of the funding (structural funds, JEREMIE initiative, and non-EU funds).
- f. Building-up cost-efficient forms of partnerships between public and private sector as well as within national and EU level - able to create and sustain and entrepreneurial environment.

a) Mainstreaming the EU's Small Business Act principles in Brandenburg

The Land of Brandenburg is highly dedicated to implement all principles deriving from the Small Business Act at regional level within the coherent framework of its economic policy.

Creating an environment to foster the development of entrepreneurial spirit is the objective of all measures that have been set up within the framework of the region's policy for enterprises and which will be continued and elaborated with regard to past experience and adapted to current needs. Several elements form an integral part of support measures meant to strengthen the economic development of regional actors.

Start-up support

First of all, special emphasis has to be put on the start-up support measures that have been rewarded with outstanding success: Brandenburg has acquired its status as Eastern Germany's top region for start-ups due to extensive activities in order to foster self-employment and start-up activities.

The self-employment rate is the highest among the East German Länder and well above national average. This mirrors the success Brandenburg has had in promoting start-ups and entrepreneurship

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The 10 principles are: "Create an environment in which entrepreneurs and family businesses can thrive and entrepreneurship is rewarded" (1); "Ensure that honest entrepreneurs who have faced bankruptcy rapidly get a second chance" (2); "Design rules according to the "Think Small First" (3); "Make public administrations responsive to SMEs' needs" (4); "Adapt public policy tools to SME needs: facilitate SMEs' participation in public procurement and better use State Aid possibilities for SMEs" (5); "Facilitate SMEs' access to finance and develop a legal and business environment supportive to timely payments in commercial transactions" (6); "Help SMEs to benefit more from the opportunities offered by the Single Market" (7); "Promote the upgrading of skills in SMEs and all forms of innovation" (8); "Enable SMEs to turn environmental challenges into opportunities" (9); "Encourage and support SMEs to benefit from the growth of markets" (10).

which is especially owed to the integrated approach of the main regional players who joined forces in the so-called „Gründungsnetz Brandenburg“, a network of institutions such as ministries, chambers of commerce and trades, the Employment Agency, Guarantee Bank, ILB and ZAB and the LASA.

Its goal is to create enthusiasm for entrepreneurship among the citizens of Brandenburg and to provide them with information and coaching services tailored to their needs throughout the whole start-up process and during the early years of entrepreneurship. The projects and services promoting start-ups in Brandenburg are funded by Brandenburg and co-financed by ESF and ERDF funds.

An ESF-co-financed directive supports the following qualification and coaching services with regards to start-ups and corporate succession.

- Regional information and coaching services, so-called “piloting services” („Lotsendienste“)
- Academic entrepreneurship programmes
- High-class coaching services for innovative start-ups as part of the programme "Innovationen brauchen Mut" („Innovation takes courage“)
- Start-up workshops for young people
- Coaching centres for corporate succession
- Additional experimental actions

Special emphasis has been and will be put on piloting services for unemployed people, women and migrants, groups who face particular challenges and therefore require specific support on their way to entrepreneurship. Piloting services are also offered to students, alumni and research staff at the universities in Brandenburg. Between 2001 and 2008, a total of 10,238 people interested in starting up were given information and support. More than two thirds eventually started a business.

Innovative scientific start-ups play an essential role for growth and employment. Increasing the number of technology-driven start-ups by improving conditions is the main task of BIEM, the Brandenburg Institute for Entrepreneurship and SME. BIEM incorporates the entrepreneurship programs of the nine universities in Brandenburg in cooperation with the ZAB, the Ministry of Science, and extra-faculty research institutions.

The “Deutsche Gründer- und Unternehmertage” (deGUT) is a transregional event organized by the public banks ILB and IBB of Brandenburg and Berlin and co-funded by ERDF. Its 26th edition will take place in Berlin this autumn. The deGUT addresses anyone interested in taking the path of self-employment as well as young enterprises. It offers visitors information about relevant exhibitors such as banks or trade associations and chambers as well as a free-of-charge seminar and workshop programme covering subjects such as marketing, sales, law and human resources. In 2010 the fair intends to expand in terms of exhibitors and visitors and to spread the word of entrepreneurship even further throughout the region. In order to embrace the ever growing number of start-ups from the migrant communities, the incorporation of a special seminar programme for migrants will be another task for this and the upcoming years.

Closely connected to the deGUT is the „Businessplan-Wettbewerb Berlin-Brandenburg (BPW)“, the biggest and most successful regional start-up award in Germany offering free-of-charge qualification and support in the business plan phase, enabling participants to develop a concept for their business idea. In three stages, from business idea to market analysis to financing, business plans can be submitted. The best plans in each stage will be awarded. BPW is organized by IBB and ILB in cooperation with the entrepreneurs association and universities. In 2009 748 business plans were submitted by 1,505 participants. To date, 209 companies and 5,373 jobs have emerged from the award years 1996 to 2008. The current BPW 2010 started with a record-breaking number of participants,

which proves an ever-growing interest in entrepreneurship in Berlin and Brandenburg and the initiative's success.

Brandenburg will build on this success in the run-up to the EER year and the EER year itself. It has recently seen the kick-off of the even closer co-operation of *Business Angels* with the Economic Development Board: the co-operation is meant to extend the consulting services offered by experienced entrepreneurs and top-managers to young innovative start-up projects via region-wide network all over Brandenburg for better support also in rural areas.

SMEs support

However, not only start ups are in the focus of activities. Putting a specific emphasis on SME characteristics and ***taking their needs into account on all different levels by the region's public administration*** is the key element for the development and further elaboration of almost all regional support activities, thus implementing the ***“Think Small First” principle***.

A significant number of the region's support programmes is explicitly and often exclusively drafted to offer financial support for SMEs. According to the target group, their procedures are usually simplified to facilitate a better access to finance for SMEs. The economic policy shall be characterised by continuity and effectiveness also in the coming years. Acknowledging their contribution to the regional development, competitiveness and employment, SMEs will stay in the focus of attention. Existing support measures will be evaluated and extended with view to further simplifying all support schemes for SMEs.

Regulations offering support do so free of any discrimination or stigmatisation. Also ***honest entrepreneurs who have faced bankruptcy will thus get their second chance*** when fulfilling the requirements set out in the respective instruments regardless of such history.

In respect of the current crises, Brandenburg has launched an ***“emergency aid package”*** as one of the first German regions for enterprises at risk in order to protect investments and employment. The offer is accompanied by the work of a *Task Force* bringing together representatives from the Ministry of Economic and European Affairs, ILB and ZAB in co-operation with the Guarantee Bank. The group is responsible for identifying, monitoring, and stabilizing enterprises that face severe difficulties due to the economic and/or financial crisis. This work will be continued.

Support for Internationalisation

Brandenburg also recognizes the increasing ***(European and international) opportunities of growing markets*** as an essential chance for its regional companies, even more as many of them are still lacking behind in the export statistics compared to enterprises from other regions within Germany. Therefore, the region sees its task in providing support to qualify and financially support enterprises, esp. SMEs, with regard to international, in particular export activities. Direct financial support dedicated to SMEs in the framework of grants aim at management, marketing, trade fair or market development activities of the beneficiaries (*M4 Directive*) or the promotion of exports by consulting and assistance (*Export support programme*).

In terms of structural support, the *Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)* project provides consulting and practical help for SMEs and the Brandenburg clusters with regard to their activities in the European market. It helps SMEs to benefit explicitly from the opportunities offered by the Single Market. In the run-up to and during the EER year period the *EEN* activities will be further refined: e.g. by specific workshops and trainings for SMEs on topics like EU project management or proposal preparation building up on the information events, by introducing the EU services in road shows to SMEs to reach further potential candidates or further targeted support for FP7 issues.

However, limits to the EEN activities have been identified: Appointment and resources do not allow them to provide in-depth individual support in all matters, e.g. internationalisation strategies and EU-projects. The region will provide individual consulting to develop and implement SMEs international activities complementing the offers of the EEN. Pro-active guiding and practical help will be given by additional experts at ZAB via the recently established project “*ProTraC*” over the coming EER years to support regional actors. With the project JOSEFIN, ILB and ZAB are going to elaborate a guarantee fund supporting transnational business for SMEs. It will close a gap resulting from restrictions to the application of direct regional funding mechanisms for innovative SME projects. Accompanied by a coaching, the funds reduces the risks and thus motivates banks to finance SMEs intending to engage internationally in innovation activities across borders making use of the prospects of growing international markets.

Innovation support

Brandenburg also intends to *help SMEs upgrading their skills and all forms of innovation*. In particular, innovative capabilities are seen as crucial for the competitiveness of enterprises in nowadays markets. Accordingly, the regional innovation policy forms the key element within Brandenburg’s economic development strategy both by way of providing a structural / institutional framework as well as funding schemes. The region thus provides for an all-embracing innovation support system covering support measures along the whole life-cycle of innovative products or services from the idea to the market.

SMEs are also regionally supported in their innovation activities, in particular through enhanced collaboration with the science sector: Brandenburg promotes a region-wide network of *technology transfer centres*. They are either bound to universities, linked to specific branches or sub-regional general centres in order to encourage the take-up and development of innovative ideas born in the region. United in the network “*iq brandenburg*” they are meant to be the gateway to the extensive regional scientific competencies at the interface between science and business.

Another element in Brandenburg’s innovation system focuses on the technology transfer via patented academic inventions through the patent marketing agency “*ZAB Brainshell*”. It allows enterprises quick access to academic inventions, pre-evaluated with regard to their market potential and then consequently protected by intellectual property rights such as patents already. Esp. SMEs benefit significantly from the agency’s work under the regional scheme as they often neither possess nor can afford in-house R&D competencies. “*ZAB Brainshell’s*” membership in the national network “*TechnologieAllianz*” supplements the access to academic inventions from Germany and the world. Regarding the patent marketing, decreasing funds shall lead the agency towards self-financing work independent from funding by benefiting from the increasing return flow of sold or licensed inventions.

Funding programmes are meant to work alongside these structural frameworks by providing different co-funding sources to support SME activities areas of high interest for their and the region’s development. Aiming at an improved business-science co-operation on an institutional level, funding will e.g. be available for the initiation and implementation of *joint R&D projects* in the region for the benefit of SMEs. The so-called *Impuls programme* focuses on collaborations between enterprises within sector-oriented networks to elaborate solutions of common interest.

With regard to the coming years, Brandenburg aims at strengthening its transfer system and further improving its efficiency. Through the project “*ProTraC*” cross-sectoral transfer projects within the region (and on international level, described below) will e.g. constitute an important focus over the next years and boost the collaboration of business (esp. SMEs) with science supported by transfer structures and regional clusters. Additionally, the recently suggested “*Brandenburg innovation voucher (BIG)*” is supposed to complement this approach: It wants to initiate small-size joint R&D projects of regional SMEs and research institutions. An easy, time-saving application process is provided; financing between 70 and. 100% of the co-operation costs is granted.

Brandenburg has also noted limited participation of its companies in European R&D programmes. The aforementioned project “ProTraC” will react to this short-fall in the run-up to and during the EER year by elaborating and implementing a funding scheme granting SMEs subsidies to co-finance external consultation services to prepare *EU project proposals* in order to facilitate SMEs access to European funding sources. Correspondingly, a concept in order to raise interest and participation of competent actors in *INTERREG-programmes* - complementing a recently implemented funding scheme facilitating the co-funding required for participation - will be elaborated in the run-up to the EER year.

Ecological modernisation

One of the main objectives for the upcoming years is the ecological modernisation of the economy. Brandenburg has early put specific emphasis on its competencies in green technologies. It thus supports the settlement and development of providers of environmental technologies but also ***helps SMEs to turn environmental challenges into opportunities.***

To encourage an environmental-friendly and sustainable policy, Brandenburg has established a so-called “*partnership for the environment*” between ministries, chambers of commerce and trade and enterprise association. It is meant to foster the dialogue between administration and business and works as a network for enterprises interested in sustainable management, bringing forward the environmentally-focused policy as well as Brandenburg as an attractive place for investment and residence.

As the costs for energy increase permanently, clean technology is one of the most important future economic trends. Therefore, Brandenburg needs to find new strategies to strengthen its economy. Several important clean tech enterprises, like First Solar or Conergy, are located in Brandenburg. Their number is increasing, generating the development of a new high tech sector, which has a great growth potential. To foster the strong position of Brandenburg in the Cleantech industries the ZAB founded a Task Force “*Cleantech*”. Staff from different sectors form the Task Force and combine their know-how. The most important aim is to further boost the clean tech economy in Brandenburg and create jobs in this highly innovative sector. The task force scans the sector in the region permanently to provide support and arrange contacts. Events inform about policies in this field, regulations or new developments in each clean tech sector and should encourage co-operation with local authorities to implement renewable energy systems in rural areas. Furthermore the Task Force Cleantech works together with the ILB. The development of incentives for clean tech companies is one of several points of the collaboration.

b) Introducing entrepreneurship in schools and training programmes

One of Brandenburg’s main challenges in the next years will be to keep the skilled workers and young people in the region.

Therefore, a working group of different ministries and institutions elaborates projects and initiatives to help young people building their career in the region. The “Initiative Secondary School” and the “Network School and Economy” were designed to reduce the number of students leaving school without a graduation and to improve the capability for vocational training. Other programmes help young people who cannot find a job to get an external vocational training. An “Audit Job and Family” helps especially small enterprises to offer family friendly jobs.

Also the qualification is in the focus of the labour market policy. Further training for employees is supported with the objective to stabilise jobs in SME. Other measures support the qualification in special jobs and branches. Innovation via human resources is fostered by grants for personnel costs of so-called *Innovation assistants*. This scheme shall increase the innovation competence and

competitiveness of Brandenburgian SMEs, by way of employing university and technical college graduates as experts.

Most of these measures are co-financed by ESF funds and will be continued and further developed in the next years.

c) Guaranteeing support at each critical level of the business growth cycle

Brandenburg is aware that easy and unbureaucratic access to necessary support is crucial to facilitate entrepreneurial success. For almost all relevant services ZAB is the contact point.

For the run-up to the EER year and the EER year itself Brandenburg plans to intensify its services and measures for level levels of the growth cycle:

Level in growth cycle	Ongoing support activities	Specific EER measures
Information	Website, promotion tours, publications	green economy campaign; network of European Clean Tech regions; launch of cutting-edge internet based presentation tool; BBI tour
Establishing	For investors: investor services, investment grants For start-ups and spin-offs: coaching services	provide specific BBI investment services; improve Human Resources service package launch SEED phase equity programme; extend Business Angels Network in Brandenburg
Growing	Investment grants, loans, guarantees, network programme, international business services, Enterprise Europe Network services,	Implement revolving state aid instruments
Innovating	R&D programme, technology transfer centres,	Joint innovation strategy for Brandenburg and Berlin;
Struggling	Ad-hoc monitoring group	Systemize services for crisis management and implement a suitable monitoring system

d) Development of a (inter)regional cluster policy

The region's business cluster strategy was set up in 2005 focusing on the establishment of SME-driven clusters in the growth industries in Brandenburg. The aim of the new potential-orientated promotion of the economy was and still is to strengthen existent economic structures and to facilitate the linkage between enterprises, economic, and research institutions.

The requirements of the cluster programme are: a strong cross-regional and cross-national orientation of enterprises, a close collaboration with research institutions, and a higher-than-average degree of linkage within the line of business, a high added value and particular economic growth. Up to now, 15 clusters have been set up in its identified growth industries.

The set up networks have taken up the following tasks:

- Strengthening technology transfer;
- Integration of external knowledge into the innovation process of the network partners, e.g. via training processes;
- Establishment of supplier relationships and value chains, integrating research institutes, SMEs and bigger industries;
- Initiation of collaborations via direct economic collaboration, European projects or exchanges; and
- Organization and support of the apprenticeship of junior employees.

Further clusters - e.g. in the solar energy industry - will be established extending the efforts for a sustainable development of regional companies in Brandenburg's growth industries. All advanced clusters shall now - after the formation phase - strategically be led more towards increased cross-sectoral co-operations making use of the assembled competencies along the value chain. Any support given, aims at guiding the clusters towards self-supporting sustainable networks. In the mid-term, they are expected to achieve structures that allow them to work independently from public funding.

Some clusters also built up considerable relationships with international partners such as the geoinformation cluster "GEOKOMM". Following the first best practice examples, internationalisation will be one of the major issues for the coming years.

Furthermore, the expansion of joint initiatives with Berlin will be another issue within future EER activities.

The development will be fostered by administrative support and close assistants in the framework of the GRW-funding scheme as well as by the accompanying projects such as "ProTraC" (mentioned before, here focusing on cross-sectoral technology transfer and internationalisation of clusters) or via collaborations in EU-projects like INNET (supporting SMEs' technology transfer within the framework of international cluster co-operations by identifying innovation support measures and offering innovation express calls and their funding) or CLUNET (internationalisation of clusters).

e) Making optimal use of the EU's structural funds and other public funding

Brandenburg has nearly twenty years of experience in managing and implementing European structural funds for SMEs. ERDF and ESF are the main financial sources for implementing initiatives to improve the entrepreneurial environment.

In the last structural funds period Brandenburg was one of the first German regions which implemented a venture capital funds co-financed by ERDF. The policy to use EU funding for revolving funds was continued and advanced in the running funding period:

- a new venture capital funds was issued
- a seed capital funds will start soon
- a loan funds for SME and for the creative industry is planned
- it is intended to offer loans instead of grants for technological research and development projects

These different funds follow the general economic policy in Brandenburg to offer more loans and guarantees instead of lost grants. The aim is on the one hand to reach a higher efficiency and sustainability in funding, and on the other hand to adapt to a decreasing financial aid from the European Union and the Federal Government.

ILB as the intermediate body for most of the ERDF funds has implemented a pilot project to measure the sustainability of the grants in all three parameters (economic, ecological and social). The developed system and the indicators are currently tested and advanced with the objective to reach a higher efficiency for the implementation of all measures of the Operational Programme.

With the sustainability check we can elaborate the congruence between the objectives of the projects and the Operational Programme. Subsequently, the ERDF can be used even better as a steering instrument for political and economic objectives. The project includes intensive discussions with relevant stakeholders, training programmes for desk officers and an ongoing evaluation of the process.

f) Building-up cost-efficient forms of partnerships between public and private sector

Brandenburg fosters the collaboration between public and private partners on different levels helping the region to create and sustain an entrepreneurial environment. *Clusters and networks* establish close links on the regional and interregional level. Also the network of *Business Angels* and its envisaged development counts for an active PPP policy.

Additionally, *national* as well as *transnational collaborations* of clusters and regional stakeholders like ZAB and ILB are meant to set out the framework for mutual learning and synergies within their fields of competencies to improve and extend where appropriate regional approaches from the lessons learnt.

EU-funded projects are focus to strengthen Brandenburg as EER.

As any other policy measures, also the selection of projects is oriented towards the objectives of the region's economic guidelines and thus forming an integral part within the strategy. The recent introduction of the funding possibility via innovation vouchers into Brandenburg's funding policy e.g. was a result of the joint work on best practice in the EU-project BSR InnoReg in order to compare and identify appropriate support instruments for an application in Brandenburg. Other projects deal with better access to finance for innovative SMEs (JOSEFIN) or want to help improving the innovation governance and innovation support environment for SMEs (BSR InnoReg) or clusters (CLUNET, INNET).

Accordingly, carefully selected topics for future project commitments in relevant areas will keep contributing to the safeguarding and expansion of the region's entrepreneurial environment as leading EER. Apart from this, the marketing aspect for the region should not be underestimated when regional representatives take an active role on European level.

4. EER activities and communication.

Please limit your description to a maximum of 2 pages – (5.600 characters)

Note:

As a minimum, Candidate regions should list the specific activities, events, hubs and/or conferences they intend to schedule during the EER year. Any further communication activities, before or after the EER year, can also be mentioned. A clear visibility of the European Union is requested during the whole process.

In case Brandenburg will be awarded as European Entrepreneurial Region, the award will be integrated into all communication activities regarding entrepreneurial policy.

It is foreseen to elaborate a communication concept for the respective year to ensure a consistent communication strategy, define the target groups and single activities to promote the EER as well as guarantee the involvement of as many stakeholders from Brandenburg as possible.

Several institutions in Brandenburg such as ministries, ZAB, ILB, chambers of commerce and trade as well as cities and districts with their regional economic development boards organise manifold events every year. The purposes of these events are to inform citizens and SME about trends and latest developments e.g. in specific branches, market chances in Germany and abroad, energy saving potentials etc. In the EER year, a distinctive selection of these events will be used to inform about the EER. A clear visibility of the European Union will be ensured.

The representation of the state of Brandenburg in Brussels will be also used to present the activities and potentials of the region to European stakeholders and multipliers.

The EER will be the highlight of the ERDF communication in the respective year.

In 2009 Brandenburg started an information campaign to inform the broad public and stakeholders about the possibilities and impacts of ERDF-funding in the region.

In 2009 we started with the year of creativity and innovation. 2010 sustainability will be the highlight of all communication activities. 2011 or 2012 can be all about the EER.

Within the campaign 12 projects of the month will be presented, the participation on citizen's festival in cities is planned as well as an intensive press work and special events for multipliers. For examples please visit www.efre.brandenburg.de or www.entdecke-efre.de

The major event in the next 2-3 years will be the opening of the new airport Berlin-Brandenburg International in October 2011. At this event Brandenburg will present itself as an attractive and open region for national and international enterprises with excellent economic support structures, especially for SMEs. This opening can either be the highlight of the EER communication in 2011 or the start for 2012.

*Please submit your application, together with the declaration of political commitment to:
eer2010@cor.europa.eu. **Deadline for applications: 15 January 2010.***