



SERN STRATEGY 2007-2009

BACKGROUND

The first two years of activity of the Network have proven that the decision to formalise the creation of SERN and provide a stable framework of cooperation has given a positive outcome. The members have provided inputs for the creation of projects to be submitted at EU level for co-financing but have also been involved in various activities ranging from study visits to promotional activities as well as business activities. SERN as an organization has granted support to its members in the initial phase of the projects as well as through the implementation of horizontal initiatives like the Intensive Training programme.

However, the first two years of activity have shown space for improvement and capitalization on the efforts done in the context of the Network so far. SERN has identified and works with five priority areas (environment, welfare, entrepreneurship, tourism and education) that falls in the framework of our interpretation of the Lisbon Strategy.

As the Board has pointed out in February 2007, the statutory purpose of contributing to the "development between Sweden, Emilia-Romagna and Italy" and the "development of ties and partnerships among its members" can be achieved more effectively through the identification of a clearer focus for the network.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the current strategy is to define the themes in which the Network can grant to its members the greatest added value and therefore contribute effectively to the achievement of the purpose for which it was created. In this light, the strategy shall serve as a framework of reference for the members as well as the Secretariat in the definition of the activities that will be carried out in the context of the Network.

SERN operates in a bilateral dimension but also in a European context and therefore it is of utmost importance that the strategy is deeply rooted in the broader strategies set out at EU level.

The goal of the Lisbon strategy for growth and employment is to modernize the European economy in order to secure our unique social model in the face of increasingly global markets, technological change, environmental pressures and an ageing population. The challenges that are to be faced at EU level focus on facilitating the transition towards a knowledge-based economy and society through better policies for the information society and Research & Development, as well as on stepping up the process of structural reform for competitiveness and innovation by investing in people and combating social exclusion.

The territories participating in the network are fully engaged in implementing the Lisbon agenda as the local/regional policies they express are oriented towards the creation of a solid economic growth and the continued attention towards high standards in public services particularly in the field of welfare policies and

education.

The Network as a whole should therefore capitalize on the priority attached by its members to the issues of sustainable growth and social inclusion and gradually become a context where to find and articulate common answers to the challenges Europe is facing thanks to the outstanding best practices and policy-making tools that many of the members can contribute with.

TWO DRIVING THEMES FOR THE NETWORK

In the period covered by the current document, the members of the Network shall give priority to the development of projects and activities contributing to the objectives set out in the Lisbon and Gothenburg strategies. In particular, on the basis of the experience emerged so far in the Network, the attention shall focus on results and policy outcomes geared towards producing a sustainable economic growth and the development of high quality public service with particular attention to the theme of social inclusion.

Sustainable local /regional growth

The creation of more and better jobs is deeply linked to an acceleration towards a knowledge based society. The main focus of the Network should be on activities producing results that make the areas of SERN more competitive in the European context. The creation of regional growth will contribute to the welfare of the citizens of the areas involved.

In particular, the activities among the members (EU projects, exchanges of information, study visits etc) should give centrality to actions aiming on the one hand at the creation of a local/regional growth based on innovation and transfer of knowledge and, on the other hand, to a greater attention to quality and innovation in public service.

Sustainable Social inclusion

The attention given by many of the members to themes like violence against women, integration in schools, elderly care and support to parenthood in the first two years of activity indicates the centrality of the issue of social inclusion in the local/regional policy-making and should therefore be recognised as a driving aspect . The development of actions aimed at favouring social inclusion and preventing marginalization should be prioritized. The activities should also support actions towards those that are most affected by the transition towards a knowledge-based society.

ACTIONS/METHODS

The members constitute the driving element in the development of the activities.

The overall purpose of the network is to create added value for its members. The Board shall develop guidelines for how the activities can contribute to the added value. SERN has two main characterising elements that define its nature: the multilevel membership, the involvement of actors of the civil society. These aspects should be strengthened and made a key character of all the activities. The main added value from a structural involvement of different levels of government in the two countries stands in the increased political and administrative synergies deriving from a close cooperation in a transnational context and a

consistent approach to policy outcomes in the areas of cooperation. At the same time the presence of the non-public actors is crucial for the tangible contribution that they can provide to fulfil the objectives set out in this strategy.

The working methods shall be developed with the aim of maximizing the outcome of concrete processes of cooperation that correspond to the objectives of the network such as exchange of good practices, study visits, seminars, conference meetings, project meetings etc. Depending on the type of collaboration, the identification and the search for internal and external financial support (i.e. local, national and European) might differ. The development of EU funded projects will require increased efforts towards the creation of ad hoc partnerships with organizations from other EU countries.

MONITORING

The Annual Report submitted for approval to the General Assembly will be monitoring the progress of the implementation of this strategy.