



SERN 2005-2020

Italy and Sweden building Europe together





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Lubiano Montaguti

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Preface

SERN. PLANNING WITH EUROPE. PROMOTING DEMOCRACY.

SERN looks to Europe with confidence. A Europe at small steps.

"Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity."

(Robert Schuman, Paris 9th of May 1950)

SERN is a unique European network between Italy and Sweden created in 2003 and officially established on 1 February 2005; a bilateral network working between North and South; a network with a multi-level institutional membership (regions; counties; provinces; associations of municipalities; municipalities); a network open to non-public actors; a network promoting relations and long-term partnership.

Swedish and Italian members make use of SERN to plan activities in Europe.

Projects aimed at improving our capacity of integration and governance in territorial, planning, as well as in the design of economic, social and cultural policies and, educational and training actions.

SERN plans with Europe.

SERN supports the internationalisation of local communities and the use of European resources; we are not just talking about funds and resources to finance projects for our cities, but rather the circulation of innovation and knowledge, the exchange with other contexts, the exchange of ideas and solutions.

It is useful to highlight the quantity, variety and quality of the projects implemented and the resources gained for interventions in strategic areas for our cities, and for the future itself of our communities and young people in particular.

Projects for energy saving and reduction of land consumption, projects introducing innovations in the field of technological and digital growth, projects developed to provide the city with new spaces and cultural identity policies, projects for youth employment and for combating violence against women, projects in the field of education and training, projects in the social field and on immigration issues.

Swedish and Italian members use SERN to promote democracy.

Actions to develop long-term collaboration between "people", "communities" and "territories" namely "citizens" through the exchange of good practices; exchanges of information and knowledge; exchange of expertise and skills.

SERN promotes democracy

Europe cannot be made just once: a concept that applied then, and still needs to be remembered, repeated and put into practice today. Especially today. We live in years in which the anti-European, populist and sovereigntist forces are waving the flag of fear, closure and selfishness. Our duty instead is to build bridges.

Europe is definitely the best idea we have ever had.

Europe means peace, means growth, means democracy. Three are the fundamental elements to talk about Europe.

The first value is solidarity, meaning doing things together, doing things for someone else, doing things especially for those who need it most.

The second value is trust, to do things together you have to trust each other, respect each other, putting yourself in someone else's hands is one of the most difficult, most complicated exercises. I am in your hands, I trust you, that is the heart of democracy. At the core there is the fundamental principle of tolerance

The third value, the most important one for a network like SERN, is participation. It is up to us, we have to get involved and not wait for someone else to solve our problems or someone else to blame...

Europe is us, we can and must do things ourselves. Planning with Europe, promoting democracy, making politics to change Europe, to improve our cities and communities.

"It is impossible to impose on such a huge movement of masses a single intellectual uniform, a single religion, a single philosophy, a single morality" (Carlo Rosselli, Il socialismo liberale)

Europe is not the problem, Europe is the solution! It is true that the European Union, as organised, is incomplete and needs to be improved. Three priorities: young people, women and employment; the education system and welfare; environmental policies.

If our work made sense before the Coronavirus, the work of the SERN Network today becomes fundamental: citizen participation, environment, digitalisation, education for active citizenship, which are the cornerstones of our new strategy, become fundamental for our future, for the future of this European Union.

"Because the European Union is not just an institution. It is the definition of a feeling. It is the declaration of a feeling. The European Union is all of us. Every day." (Ezio Bosso, November 2018)

Here, the history of SERN that we illustrate in this "notebook", the Assemblies and the Boards, the projects and the international exchanges, are the testimony, the "photography" of the strategies and the values, of the people and the communities, of all the work done in these sixteen years to build Europe together, every day, in small steps.

*Lubiano Montaguti
Chairman of the SERN
Executive Board*

The origins 2003 - 2005



*SERN IS THE RESULT OF A PROCESS THAT HAS
UNFOLDED BETWEEN 2003 AND 2005.*

The Conference Town Twinning Sweden Emilia-Romagna (TTSER) was organised in the spring of 2003 by a pool of municipalities (Bertinoro Municipality, Ravenna Municipality, Brisighella Municipality, Faenza Municipality, Cesena Municipality, Cervia Municipality and Cesenatico Municipality) together with AICCRE Emilia-Romagna and had as an objective the launch of a wide process of cooperation among local authorities (and not only) of Emilia-Romagna and Sweden. At the TTSER Conference more than 120 representatives of local authorities, schools, no-profit organisations and economic actors took part coming from many parts in Sweden. At the end of the conference it was decided to organise a follow-up conference in Sweden during 2004 and it was agreed to set up two “contact groups”, one in Emilia-Romagna chaired by AICCRE and one in Sweden chaired by Norrbotten.

The two contact groups have had the task to grant continuity to the whole process between the two conferences and work as point of reference for those actors, in particular municipalities, interested in participating in the process.

Furthermore, the two groups have had the task to identify the phases through which achieving the formal creation of the network. In order to address the issue a meeting was arranged between the two contact groups in the spring of 2004 in Stockholm.

In the meeting a joint draft proposal for a statute was elaborated and four areas on which to concentrate the activities of the network were identified. It was decided to set up four working groups.

The Conference Active European Citizenship was organised in Luleå in June 2004 by the counties of Norrbotten and Stockholm in cooperation with the Region Västra Götaland, in partnership with NUTEK and The Swedish Association of Municipalities and County Councils. The Conference saw the participation of more than 80 Italian local authorities and a number of private actors coming from all over the region.

The Conference objective was twofold. On the one hand, the aim was to deepen the mutual knowledge in a number of (local) policy areas while on the other hand, the objective was to launch the constitutive process of the SERN Network.

In the framework of the conference the four working groups (environment, social economy, culture and education and entrepreneurship) have gathered for the first time and identified a number of themes which could be developed further.





DEED OF PARTNERSHIP

Herewith the signatory parties agree to what follows:

Art. 1

It is constituted among AICCRE EMILIA-ROMAGNA, MUNICIPALITY OF FORLÍ, ASSOCIAZIONE INTERCOMUNALE "BASSA ROMAGNA", MUNICIPALITY OF IMOLA, MUNICIPALITY OF RIMINI, ASSOCIAZIONE INTERCOMUNALE "TERRE VERDIANE", MUNICIPALITY OF JOKKMOKK, CITY OF STOCKHOLM, MUNICIPALITY OF MÖLNDAL, MUNICIPALITY OF NORRKÖPING, MUNICIPALITY OF MONTECHIARUGOLO, COMUNITÀ MONTANA VALLI DEL TARO E DEL CENO, MUNICIPALITY OF RAVENNA, ASSOCIAZIONE INTERCOMUNALE "IL TRICOLORE", STOCKHOLM LÄNS LANDSTING, KOMMUNFÖRBUNDET NORRBOTTEN, MUNICIPALITY OF RUSSI, MUNICIPALITY OF ÄLVSBY, MUNICIPALITY OF ARJEPLOG, MUNICIPALITY OF SCANDIANO, MUNICIPALITY OF ARVIDSJÄUR, MUNICIPALITY OF SKÖVDE, MUNICIPALITY OF BERTINORO, MUNICIPALITY OF BORGO VAL DI TARO, MUNICIPALITY OF TRAVERSETOLO, MUNICIPALITY OF BRISIGHELLA, MUNICIPALITY OF FALKÖPING, NORRBOTTENS LÄNS LANSTING, MUNICIPALITY OF CERVIA, VÄSTRA GÖTALANDSREGIONEN, PROVINCE OF PARMA, MUNICIPALITY OF TROLLHÄTTAN, MUNICIPALITY OF CANOSSA, MUNICIPALITY OF PARMA the Association called "Sweden Emilia Romagna Network."

Art. 2

The Association seat will be at AICCRE Emilia-Romagna, Via Aldo Moro 50, Bologna, Italy.

Art. 3

The Association is a non-profit organisation and pursues the statutory objectives. The objective of the Association is the development of international ties and partnership activities among its members. It shall also support the initiation of innovative projects of cooperation that will create synergies among various types of actors.

Art. 4

The financial and patrimonial means at disposal of the Association for the achievement of the statutory objectives are:

- a) annual fees;
- b) sources of financing which may come from the European Union;
- c) other sources of public and private funding from the local, regional and national levels.

Art. 5

The rules regulating the workings of the association as well as the rights and obligations of the members are stated in the attached statute.

Art. 6

The first Executive Board of the Association is constituted as follows:

NORBOTTEN LÄNS LANDSTING, Chair of the Executive Board, Kent Ögren; AICCRE EMILIA-ROMAGNA, Vice-Chair of the Executive Board, Silvia Bartolini; MUNICIPALITY OF FORLÍ, Member of the Board; ASSOCIAZIONE INTERCOMUNALE "BASSA ROMAGNA" Member of the Board; MUNICIPALITY OF IMOLA, Member of the Board; ASSOCIAZIONE INTERCOMUNALE "TERRE VERDIANE", Member of the Board; MUNICIPALITY OF RAVENNA, Member of the Board; ASSOCIAZIONE INTERCOMUNALE "IL TRICOLORE", Member of the Board;

KOMMUNFÖRBUNDET NORRBOTTEN, Member of the Board; VÄSTRA GÖTALANDSREGIONEN, Member of the Board; PROVINCE OF PARMA, Member of the Board; MUNICIPALITY OF BERTINORO, Member of the Board; MUNICIPALITY OF RIMINI, Member of the Board; MUNICIPALITY OF PARMA, Member of the Board; CITY OF STOCKHOLM, Member of the Board; STOCKHOLM LÄNS LANDSTING, Member of the Board; MUNICIPALITY OF NORRKÖPING, Member of the Board; CITY OF TROLLHÄTTAN, Member of the Board.

Bologna, 1/2/2005

AICCRE EMILIA-ROMAGNA	<u>Luz Bortolotti</u>	MUNICIPALITY OF ARJEPLOG	<u>Per Eriksson</u>
MUNICIPALITY OF FORLÌ	<u>G. Berti</u>	MUNICIPALITY OF SCANDIANO	<u>Roberto</u>
ASSOCIAZIONE INTERCOMUNALE "BASSA ROMAGNA"	<u>Giorgio</u>	MUNICIPALITY OF ARVIDSJÄUR	<u>Anders</u>
MUNICIPALITY OF IMOLA	<u>Fabrizio</u>	MUNICIPALITY OF SKÖVDE	<u>Todd</u>
ASSOCIAZIONE INTERCOMUNALE "TERRE VERDIANE"	<u>Giuseppe</u>	MUNICIPALITY OF BERTINORO	<u>Luca</u>
MUNICIPALITY OF JOKKMOKK	<u>Ernst</u>	MUNICIPALITY OF BORG VAL DI TARO	<u>Roberto</u>
CITY OF STOCKHOLM	<u>Kaaren</u>	MUNICIPALITY OF TRAVERSETOLO	<u>Roberto</u>
CITY OF MÖLNDAL	<u>Anders</u>	MUNICIPALITY OF BRISIGHELLA	<u>Vincenzo</u>
MUNICIPALITY OF NORRKÖPING	<u>Anders</u>	MUNICIPALITY OF FALKÖPING	<u>Anders</u>
MUNICIPALITY OF MONTECHIARUGOLO	<u>Roberto</u>	NORRBOTTENS LÄNS LANDSTING	<u>Roberto</u>
COMUNITÀ MONTANA VALLI DEL TARO E DEL CENO	<u>Roberto</u>	MUNICIPALITY OF CERVIA	<u>Roberto</u>
MUNICIPALITY OF RAVENNA	<u>Roberto</u>	MUNICIPALITY OF RIMINI	<u>Roberto</u>
ASSOCIAZIONE INTERCOMUNALE "IL TRICOLORE"	<u>Roberto</u>	VÄSTRA GÖTALANDSREGIONEN	<u>Roberto</u>
STOCKHOLM LÄNS LANDSTING	<u>Roberto</u>	PROVINCE OF PARMA	<u>Roberto</u>
KOMMUNFÖRBUNDET NORRBOTTEN	<u>Roberto</u>	CITY OF TROLLHÄTTAN	<u>Roberto</u>
MUNICIPALITY OF RUSSI	<u>Roberto</u>	MUNICIPALITY OF PARMA	<u>Roberto</u>
MUNICIPALITY OF ÄLVSBYN	<u>Roberto</u>	MUNICIPALITY OF CANOSSA	<u>Roberto</u>

The beginning of the activities

2005

The Network officially begun its activities in 2005. Five areas on which to concentrate the activities of the network were identified and it was decided to set up five working groups.

1 Welfare policies

2 Education and culture

3 Environment

4 Entrepreneurship

5 Tourism

During the first SERN General Assembly the SERN Executive Board was elected: Kent Ögren, from Norrbotten County Council, was elected as Chairman of the SERN Executive Board, Silvia Bartolini, AICCRE Emilia-Romagna was elected as Vice-Chair. The Assembly elected also the Board of Auditors formed by 4 representatives of member organizations which were not members in the Executive Board.

The SERN Executive Board met twice in 2005 and the decisions taken concerned the Appointment of the coordinators and vice-coordinators of the 5 Working Groups, the Appointment of the Secretariat, the approval of the guidelines for the Secretariat activities in 2006 as well as the guidelines for the participation of the Network as a partner in projects at EU level. The guidelines identified three main focus areas: internal strengthening of Network; visibility of the Network and Relations with third actors; internal actions with added value.



2 GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Imola (IT), March
0 EXECUTIVE BOARDS
0 Imola (IT), March
5 Norrköping (SE), October

In January 2005 the Network counted 32 (founding) members and all of them were local and regional authorities. During 2005 SERN acquired 13 new members of which 4 were non-public bodies and therefore in December 2005 the members of the Network were 45.

The activities of the Network in 2005 have given important results not only in terms of contacts and exchanges but also in terms of tangible projects which were granted co-financing by the European Commission.

If in 2005, being the first year of activity, the focus has been more on developing new ideas and projects, 2006 has been dedicated not only to project development but also of implementation and of the definition of working methods and the beginning of a process of definition of the objectives of the network. The external visibility of the Network improved substantially thanks to the projects that attracted attention locally and regionally in both Sweden and Italy and to the development of initiatives like the Swedish days in Emilia-Romagna. The involvement of two Embassies and contacts with other relevant organisations like AssoSvezia (Italian-Swedish Chamber of Commerce) and Visit Sweden in Italy increased. The increased visibility on the one hand, and the promotion of projects on the other was coupled with the establishment of links with other actors like SERN operating in Europe.

- 2** GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Trollhättan (SE), March
- 0** EXECUTIVE BOARDS
Rimini (IT), January
- 0** Trollhättan (SE), March
- 6** Castelnovo di Sotto, (IT), October

In 2006 SERN was invited by the European Commission DG for Education and Culture to address the Europe for citizens Forum in Brussels, and contribute to the debate about the role of an active citizenship in an enlarged Europe, and to participate in a consultation meeting on thematic networking organised by the DG EAC opened to a small number of networks in Europe.

An important initiative organized by the Network in 2006 was "SWEDISH DAYS IN EMILIA-ROMAGNA" that took place between October 27 and 29th and raised a large interest and participation in all events: seminars, Business to Business meetings, concerts, presentation of books of Swedish authors, study visits and presentations of the Swedish areas of the Network to the citizens in the "Sweden House" in Parma and Rimini. More than 130 Swedish participants representing institutions, companies and civil society organizations from the areas of Norrbotten, the Region Västra Götaland and the cities of Stockholm and Norrköping attended the events that took place in the whole region.



The year 2007 has been crucial for SERN, as for the first time, the Network adopted its first strategy. The first two years of activity indeed, shown space for improvement and capitalization on the efforts done in the context of the Network. Thanks to the strategy five long-term priorities areas for the Network were identified: environment, welfare, entrepreneurship, tourism and education.

2007 GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Salsomaggiore Terme (IT), May

00 EXECUTIVE BOARDS
Luleå (SE), February
Salsomaggiore Terme (IT), May
Falköping (SE), November



STRATEGY 2007-2009



Two driving themes for the network

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.

The SERN Strategy underlined the importance of developing joint projects in line both with local priorities and the strategies set out at European level, i.e. the Lisbon and Gothenburg strategies. Two cross-sectoral themes were identified: sustainable local and regional development and social inclusion. It also was pointed out that the network as a whole must have as its priority to provide added value for its members and a develop into a common platform for the elaboration of innovative common solutions.



In occasion of the General Assembly 2008 the Italian members arranged in cooperation with Norrköping municipality the Emilia-Romagna days initiative aimed at promoting the territories of the network in all their peculiarities. The initiative was divided in two parts, one part with a market and the other one on tourism and promoting of the Emilia-Romagna area in a tourism perspective.

Swedish representatives of tourist agencies attended a seminar with the introduction of the different areas from the tourism point of view.

People living in Norrköping had the opportunity to taste typical food of the region during the two days market held at Knäppingsborg where some Italian companies could expose and sell some of their products such as Parma ham, Parmigiano Reggiano cheese, Balsamic vinegar, piadina and tigelle. The market had a great success and numerous products finished long before the end of the market time. From the cultural point of view, Italian music and cinema were present in Norrköping with two young bands called KhoraKhanè and YCN Orkestra and movie show with the screening of the film "Cinema Paradiso".

During 2008 five new EU funded projects kicked-off.



- 2 GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Norrköping (SE), May
- 0 EXECUTIVE BOARDS
Forlì (IT), February
- 8 Norrköping (SE), May
Traversetolo (IT), November

The year 2009 began with an important recognition for SERN.

Roberta Mori, chairwoman of the Sweden Emilia Romagna Network, and Nicola Catellani, the coordinator of the Network, took part at a lunch on March 26th organized in the framework of the state visit of the King of Sweden Carl Gustav XVI and Queen Silvia. The royals, after having met the highest authorities in Rome, stopped in Bologna with their delegation in order to learn more about the links established between Italy, and in particular the Emilia Romagna area, and Sweden through the SERN. At the lunch participated also the Foreign Minister Carl Bildt and the Swedish Ambassador Anders Bjurner.

The meeting constituted an important recognition of the work carried out by the Network and its potential in the context of the bilateral relations between the two countries. Nicola Catellani and Roberta Mori showed the majesties and the other participants the activities and the dynamics of cooperation that characterize the Network.



2009 GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Rimini (IT), April

00 EXECUTIVE BOARDS
Mölnadal (SE), February
Rimini (IT), April
Arvidsjaur (SE), November

During the 2009 General Assembly approved the proposal made by the Board to nominate Roberta Mori, Associazione Intercomunale “Il Tricolore” as chairwomen and Li Teske, Norrköping Municipality, as vice-chairwomen of the SERN network.



The network achieved important results in terms of dynamics of cooperation in 2010. On the one hand the enlarging network of contacts established throughout Europe has led to creation of strategic projects (e.g. CREANET), while on the other hand, the creation of thematic networks led to a strengthening of the development strategy.

An important project developed in 2010 that is worth mentioning is NTT+ project "Improving the planning and management of networks of twinned towns". The project started off from the need of municipalities - small and medium-sized in particular - to gear up their town twinning relations to the challenges posed by an active participation of their communities in the European integration process.

2010 GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Piteå (SE), May

10 EXECUTIVE BOARDS
Scandiano (IT), February
Piteå (SE), May
Brussels (BE), November

In the same year, a new strategy for the period 2010-2012 was adopted. Indeed, the background had been changed with the impacts of the financial crisis and the project priorities within SERN were influenced by these changes. The two priorities for the next two years were: local and regional growth and competitiveness and social inclusion.

The SERN Strategy 2010-2012, approved during the 2010 General Assembly, set out the following objectives: - to identify the driving themes for the Network ; - to define the general criteria of the working methods aiming at improving the bilateral dimension and opening up for collaboration with other EU partners; - to frame the action of SERN according to most relevant EU strategies/strategic documents.



SERN underwent important changes during 2011. The strategy identified in 2009 related to the creation of thematic networking processes within the network had been proved successful and it was showing important results. The dynamics of cooperation set in motion through the training projects (e.g. NTT+, MaNTT and PlaNet), the establishment of long-term links with other countries and actors within the EU and the coordination of large processes of cooperation (such as CREANET and EUnet) led to an unprecedented number of projects and cooperation processes led by Swedish-Italian partnerships.

The members of SERN have increasingly worked along the lines indicated by the EU 2020 Strategy. In particular the activities of the Network and its members have been unfolding along the two main driving themes identified by the strategy:

- sustainable local/regional growth and competitiveness - It was aimed mainly at improving innovation and transfer of knowledge and at increasing the quality and innovation in public services;
- social inclusion - a strong emphasis was put on the challenges that local public authorities were facing in providing services to citizens, mainly for children, young people and elderly.

20 GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Bertinoro (IT), May

11 EXECUTIVE BOARDS
Norrköping (SE), February
Bertinoro (IT), May
Collecchio (IT), November



In the year 2012 three elements were identified as key to the development of the network: thematic networks building, capacity building processes and valorisation of the results.

These processes did not pertain only to 2012 as they were part of a long-term development of SERN as one of the successful examples of bilateral networks in Europe.

The first two elements were strictly linked to each another as the Network identified and developed a process of capacity building through the PLANET project which eventually led to the development of new thematic networks projects, acting as an activation of a substantial number of members through a single project and the development of new projects.

- 2 GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Vänersborg (SE), April
- 0 EXECUTIVE BOARDS
- 1 Ravenna (IT), February
- 2 Vänersborg (SE), April
Boden (SE), November

The project activities held during 2012 followed the priorities stated in the SERN Strategy 2010-2012: sustainable local and regional growth and competition and social inclusion.



The year 2013 was a crucial year in the framework of European Programming process due to the transition towards a new 7 year-programming period, which presented new challenges and new opportunities for SERN which entered this new demanding stage with an important tool approved during the 2013 General Assembly: the Strategic Plan 2013-2015.

- 2** GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Scandiano (IT), April
- 0** EXECUTIVE BOARDS
- 1** Forlì (IT), March
- 3** Scandiano (IT), April
Skovde (SE), November

The strategy reaffirmed that SERN specificity and unique trait stands in the links it aims to strengthen between Northern and Southern Europe across the different levels of government. While contributing to improving the quality of life and opportunities for the citizens of the participating areas, the key elements of SERN mission rested in the creation of mutual knowledge, the fostering of active citizenship and contributing to the achievement of economic and social development. The most important meaning of the new strategy was represented by the motto “the future comes from the progress made in the past”. Moreover, three objectives were set for the development of the Network: to increase the participation of members and their level of commitment, to increase the number of members and to increase the size and number of the projects.

STRATEGY 2013-2015

The future comes from the progress made in the past

VISION

SERN contributes to building a Europe of citizens and to make the European Union an area of peace, sustainable development, democracy and participation, solidarity and social inclusion. This contribution, however small, is furthermore important as Europe is one of the leading areas of the world. SERN wants to increase the quality of life and the opportunities for the citizens in the municipalities and regions belonging to the network.

MISSION

Our mission is to promote and support the network members in developing long term relations and partnerships. To create mutual knowledge, to foster active citizenship and cultural enrichment and to achieve economic and social development. These activities aim to increase the quality of life and the opportunities for the citizens

The driving themes of the network

EMPLOYMENT

ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

LEARNING AND EDUCATION

LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SOCIAL INCLUSION

SERN became support institution of the Covenant of Mayors, the European association engaged in the environment framework for local sustainable energy. To be support institution means to spread information about the Covenant and to promote practices and tools to help members to achieve their objectives set in the agreement.



In 2013 The General Assembly voted for the renewal of the Executive board: Eva Andersson, Mayor of Norrköping was appointed as new Chairwoman and Patrick Leech, from the Municipality of Forlì as Vice Chair.

During the year 2014, the new programming period 2014-2020 implemented by the European Commission opened new opportunities for the network but brought also new challenges.

The new challenges were caused by the increased competitiveness of the Programmes Europe for Citizens and Erasmus+: within these two programmes the Network was indeed very successful in the past years and SERN had the opportunity to create privileged arenas of discussion at EU level on important themes in priority areas for the Network such as preschool education, environment and welfare policies while developing solid partnerships and relations with more than 15 European countries.

It is worth mentioning the approval of project Enhancing Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care through Participation – Equap under the Strategic Partnership in School Education of the Erasmus+ programme. The project was selected as best practice by the Erasmus+ Italian National Agency Indire.

- 2 GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Motala (SE), May
- 0 EXECUTIVE BOARDS
- 1 Borgo Val di Taro (IT), March
- 4 Motala (SE), May
- Imola (IT), November

New tools were proposed to the members of network in order to facilitate the project planning with European partners along with a set of training seminars on Project Cycle Management.

A new project experience was launched by the SERN Secretariat as a support organization of the Covenant of Mayors. The project 50/50 saw the participation of 13 Municipalities in Sweden and Emilia-Romagna with the involvement of 13 schools.



- 2** GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Salsomaggiore Terme (IT), May
- 0** EXECUTIVE BOARDS
- 1** Luleå (SE), February
- 5** Salsomaggiore Terme (IT), May
Salsomaggiore Terme (IT), May
Linköping (SE), November



In the year 2015 the Sweden Emilia Romagna Network celebrated its 10th anniversary. The experience of SERN until then tells that networks constitute a powerful tool at disposal of local and regional authorities, as well as other actors interested in transnational cooperation, through which fostering organizational capacity and innovation in terms of processes and policies. Ultimately, networks, and SERN has shown this, can represent at local level an effective way through which giving ground to an image of international relations more linked to projects addressing key needs of the communities.

More than 100 projects and activities co-funded by the European Union for more than 5,5 million of € in the first 10 years of activity of the network constitute indeed an important result indicator. The projects were actively engaging a large number of representatives of the member organizations as well as a wide array of the stakeholders.



The driving elements that characterised the activities of the network in 2016 are related on the one hand to the work carried out by the Board in relation to the adoption of a new strategy for the period 2016-2018. On the other hand, there was instead a consolidation of the activities implemented in the field of education and social welfare policies through a new set of projects. The new strategy adopted at the SERN general Assembly 2016 in Trollhättan addressed five priority areas: learning and education; energy and environment; local and regional development; health and welfare; social inclusion and migration. While the first three policy areas were maintained, two new focus areas have been introduced: health and welfare and social inclusion and migration. The choice of addressing these issues was strictly connected to new priorities that local and regional authorities had to face in terms of policy responses to the migration waves that was affecting Europe. Locally municipalities were facing the challenges of welcoming and including migrants. Due to the long-term nature of the phenomenon of migration such challenges have an impact on the local communities in terms of welfare and inclusion policies (and actions) set up to deal successfully with the new local scenarios. As a result of this as of 2016, and even more clearly in 2017, SERN members have been redirecting their attention to project themes connected to social inclusion and migration.

2	GENERAL ASSEMBLY
0	Trollhättan (SE), May
1	EXECUTIVE BOARDS
6	Meldola (IT), March
	Trollhättan (SE), May
	Sala Baganza (IT), November



Strategy 2016-2018

THE OBJECTIVES:

- to increase cooperation among members of the network, between Italy and Sweden and, more in general, the North and South of the EU
- to strengthen SERN's capacity to engage in larger and/or more complex EU projects.

The driving themes for the period 2016-2018 are:

- learning and education
- energy and environment
- local and regional development
- health and welfare
- social inclusion and migration.



Based on the results achieved in 2017, the network showed an increased capacity to develop and implement processes of cooperation of high quality which gave ground for the creation of new links and opportunities of collaboration among the members.

The year 2017 was characterised by two elements. The first one concerns the opportunities of being active in the network through the participation in projects such as 50-50, study visits and other activities such as the peer review. EU funded projects are key tools for enhancing and developing transnational processes of cooperation. However, it was crucial that the participation was made possible through a range of other activities within SERN which offers various and differentiated opportunities for all members to establish links and take part in actions fostering links between Sweden and Italy.

2017
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
 Forlì (IT), May
EXECUTIVE BOARDS
 Falköping (SE), March
 Forlì (IT), May
 Boden (SE), November

The second element was about the focus on themes pertaining education and inclusion. The common thematic character of the projects required an increased attention dedicated to sharing results and finding synergies across projects which focus on similar themes.

The general Assembly voted for the renewal of the Executive Board. Lubiano Montaguti, from Forlì Municipality, was appointed as Chair of the Executive board while Patrik Karlsson from the Region Västra Götaland, as vice-chairperson.





The year 2018 was another year of growth for the network from several points of view. SERN in fact enlarged in terms of members and increased the number of projects under implementation. The increase in the number of members contributed to a stronger development and a more widespread participation of the members in projects. While the themes addressed by the projects ranged from social inclusion and elderly care to school and pre-school education, the programmes on which the attention has focused have been as in the past years Erasmus+ and Europe for Citizens.

The positive results achieved by the network have also created new challenges pertaining the need of stepping-up further the skills among the staff of the member organisations in relation to project management and planning in order to extend and reinforce further the potential of network when it comes to the number of projects generated (and funded) at EU level. Kerstin Brunnström substituted Patrik Karlsson as vice-Chairman of the SERN Executive Board.



2018
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
 Linköping (SE), May
EXECUTIVE BOARDS
 1 Caldaro (IT), February
 8 Linköping (SE), May
 Carpi (IT), November



In April 2018 the SERN Secretariat moved from Bologna to Parma, the new seat is located in the premises of the Province of Parma.

The new strategy introduced for period 2019-2021 was characterised by a substantial continuity with the previous one in terms of policy areas which are being prioritized (education, welfare, social inclusion, local and regional development). However, the introduction of two transversal themes such as digitalization and active citizenship has been an important element of innovation as they have anticipated the emerging interest among the members for bottom-up processes in the framework of policy making processes (for example in the field of culture) at local level but also in relation to organisational change and development (for example in the school sector). The decision of the board to start the work for a more long-term vision of the network linked to the new programming period of the EU is in line with the idea of developing SERN more and more not only as a context where to exchange information, personnel and practices but in perspective also as a framework of cooperation where members can work together on common challenges affecting their local communities.



2 GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Collecchio (IT), May
0 EXECUTIVE BOARDS
1 Trollhättan (SE), February
9 Collecchio (IT), May
Mjölby (SE), November





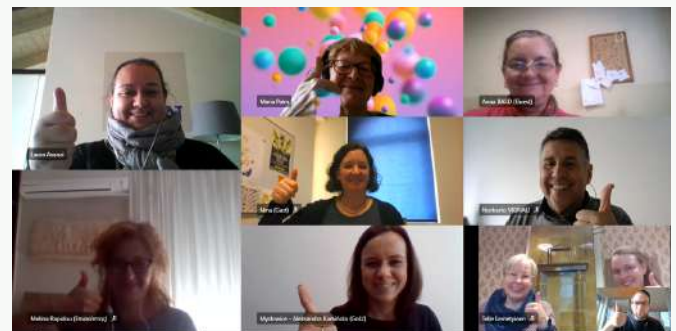
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
2 Online, June

EXECUTIVE BOARDS
2 Online, February
0 Online, May
0 Online, November

On its 15th year of activity, the network has been clearly affected by the pandemic. The restrictions imposed in many EU countries pertaining both travelling and the organisation of gatherings/ meetings have impacted SERN in different ways.

At network level the institutional activities and in particular the Executive Board meetings of February, May and November and most importantly the General Assembly have taken place online. This has not prevented important decisions pertaining the functioning of the network, such as for example the initiation of the process for a new long-term strategy, from being taken. At the same time, it is important to underline how essential face-to-face meetings are for the strengthening of personal relations and the links among the members and their representatives. In fact, while virtual meetings will continue to be an important tool to be used in the future to make intra-network contacts more frequent, the value of contacts and face-to-face socialization remains a crucial element of a transnational community that SERN stands for.

Despite the above difficulties, the year 2020 has seen also been characterised by a set of positive results. First the number of active projects has doubled compared to 2019 -29 in 2020 against 15 in the previous year. Secondly, the number of members active in the framework of projects has increased from 31 to 39 out of 54. Finally, the number of members involved in new partnerships have doubled from 12 to 24.





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AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS



2009

SERN identified as best practice in the field of thematic networking by the European Commission.

SERN invited to a working lunch with the Swedish Royal family and the Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs during a State Visit.



2010

SERN awarded the prize as promoter of Sweden in Italy by the Swedish Embassy in Rome and the Italian Swedish Chamber of Commerce.



SERN invited by the Croatian Government to address a national conference on the Europe for Citizens programme

2012

The Project "Managing networks of twinned towns" coordinated by SERN selected as best capacity-building project of the Europe for Citizens Programme

The project "European Network on forward policies and actions for the seniors in Europe" has been included among the 25 good practices on the Europe for Citizens Programme and published in "The citizen's effect" by the EACEA.



SHARING FOR TOMORROW'S EUROPE:
Thematic networking
of Twinned Towns



2013

SERN invited to address the coordinators of all the LLP Comenius Projects at the annual coordinators' meeting by the Executive Agency for Audiovisual Education and Culture of the European Union (EACEA) on the basis of the outstanding results obtained as project coordinator of the Comenius Network CREANET



2018

SERN invited by the EACEA to present the Project BAGS4YOUTH, selected as best practice, at the European Week of Regions and Cities.



SERN invited to present the Project EQUAP at the meeting of the KA2 coordinators as a best practice for management.

2019

The projects Equap and Mobec selected as best practices by the Italian National Agency Indire.





PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES



SPOTLIGHT ON THE PROJECTS

169

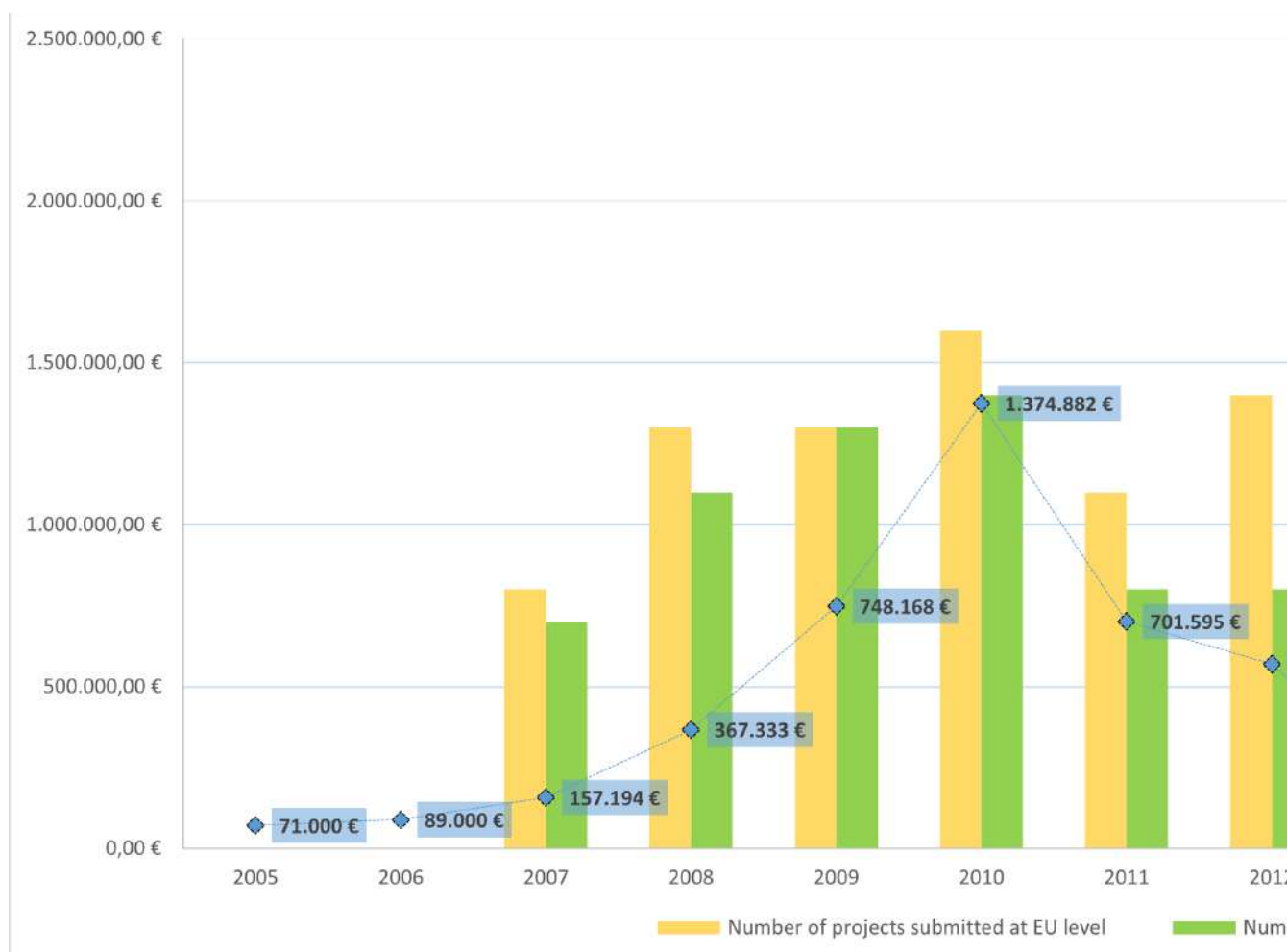
Projects submitted
at EU Level

125

Projects approved
at EU Level

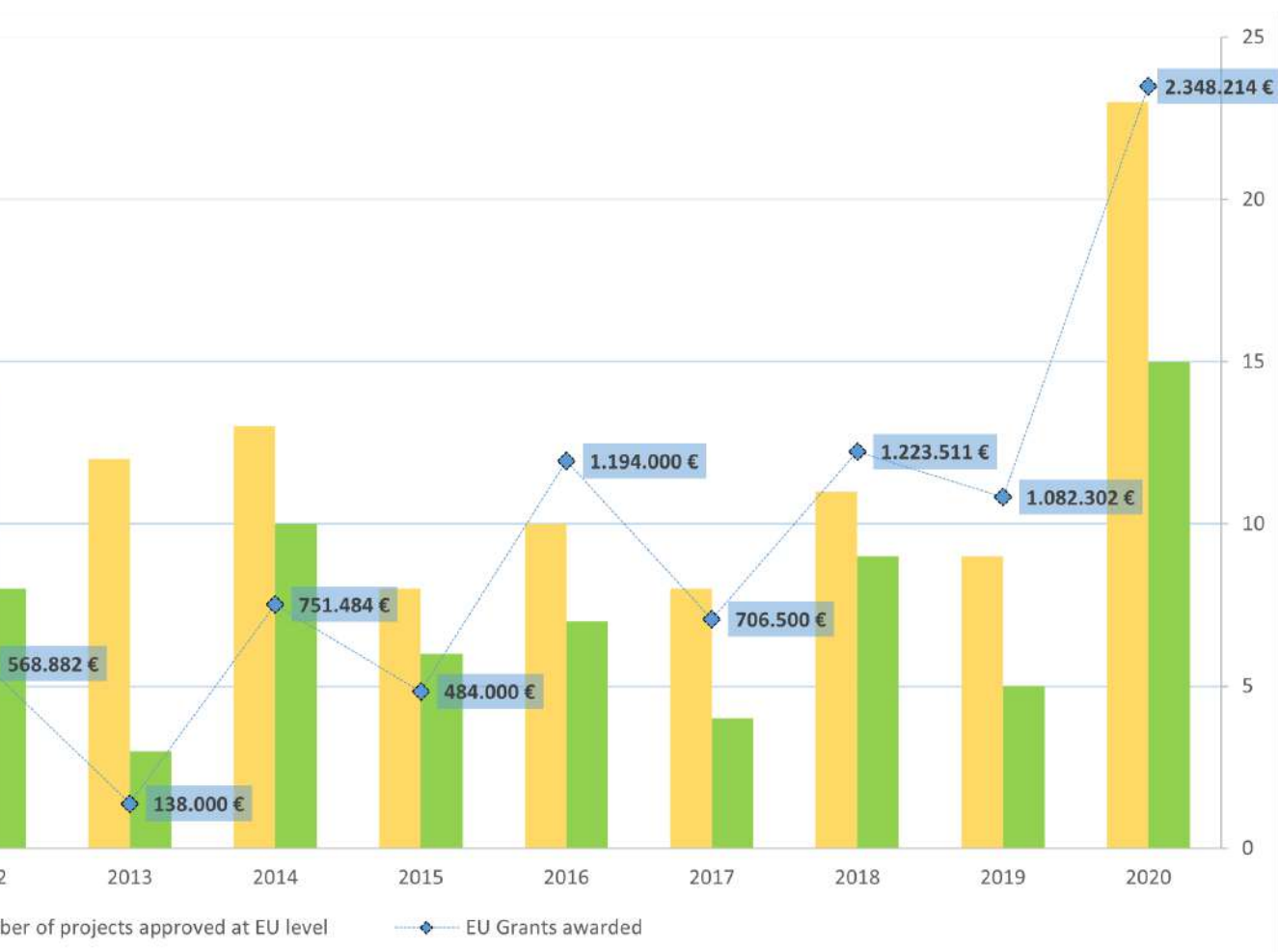
74%

Approval rate



12.006.065 €

EU grants awarded



2005-2007

Towards the definition of common strategies to contrast violence against women

Exchange of best practices on the local development strategies based on the valorisation of local craftsmanship and high quality food products

Emilia-Romagna Days in Sweden

Leonardo on vocational training exchanges in the field of tourism

Swedish Days in Emilia-Romagna

Integration paths in educational contexts

Emilia-Romagna Days in Sweden

Young Entrepreneurs

Comparing models of local authorities association

Exchange among the schools in the Horeca sector

Intensive training course

Quality of services for the elderly

Youth exchange against racism in sports

Education and innovation in primary school

Education and innovation in pre-school



2008-2009

Sustainable local tourism

PYST - Partnership for
Youth Sports Trainers

Policy towards disabled

Support to parenthood

Training programme
of networks of
twinning towns

QLSE - Quality of life
for seniors in Europe

Pre-school staff
exchange

Energy efficiency and
territorial planning

Quality cities

Education and
environment



2010-2011

NTT+ - Improving the planning and management of networks of twinned towns



GUT - Growing up together



ECO-FOOD - Thematic network for the promotion of organic food in school canteens



Inservice training 11

SEAL - Current and future skills in the health and welfare sectors



CREANET - Creativity in Pre-school Education



GO GREEN NOW



ELCANET - Networks on family support activities in the framework of policies for elderly people



REGUSTIBUS - Food education

MANTT - Guidelines for managing networks of twinned towns



VOLWE -European network on the role of volunteers in welfare policies



PIECES - Pathways into employment in the care and tourism sector

YPAD - Young people and development



TWINNOVATE

PEAC - Personnel exchange among cooperatives



FLOW4YU - Young Flow – Network on dialogue between young people and public institutions



7 Comenius partnerships schools

3x20 - A European approach towards CO2 emissions reduction through awareness raising actions



2012-2013

PLANET - Planning and managing Europe for Citizens projects



DIAMI - Active citizenship and intercultural dialogue with migrant people



EUNET - European network on international relations policies and town twinning



REN



ACT4T - Twinning coop as a tool for active citizenship



COBIOS - Comenius partnership

Inservice training 12

ECOWAS - Raising awareness for eco friendly behaviours in waste collection

EUC4BIZ - European Cities Network For Business Friendly Environment



AGE - Active engaged generation



SEAL REGIO - Sharing experiences acknowledging learning



KYTE

Employouth

Comenius partnership schools





50/50 - When energy counts



MOBEC - Mobility in Elderly Care



EVOLAQ - Enhancing Volunteering Actions and Quality in Europe



EQUAP - Enhancing quality in early childhood education and care through participation



Together for Europe 2020

7 strategic partnerships in the field of school education

BACK TO THE FUTURE - on the trail of our European history

Towards Europe 2020

LET THE CHILDREN CHANGE THE WORLD - teaching and learning tolerance and values from preschool on

2 School to school partnerships



INTED - Integration
through Education and
and Information



WHAT'S UP IN
EDUCATION - new
models for future pre-
school services



WIR- Welcome and
integration for refugees
in Europe



BAGS4YOUTH



BACKPACK ID - Bridging
languages and
memories to foster
multiple identities:
"Never leave your
backpack behind!"



SIA-PROD - An
Innovative Self-
Improvement Approach
for the Professional
Development of Early
Educators



SIDEIS: Developing
strategies for innovative
learning contexts
fostering integration in
schools



LIFE –Learning to
innovate with families

European students
climate report



DEKOLLA - Developing migrants' knowledge about the local labour market



DEHORS - Developing innovative learning context in pre-schools' outdoor spaces



DEMETER - DEveloping interdisciplinary Methodologies in Education Through Enhanced Relationships between schools and farms



PRO WELLBEING



TAKE CARE LEARNING



MORE - Motala and Reggio Emilia

DEMETERA - Enhancing formal caregivers skills in dementia care



PART-HER - European network for a participated valorisation of cultural heritage



VG+ - Västra Götaland's students on Erasmus+ for the competences of tomorrow

OLA - One library for all, all for one library

BRAND EU - Acquiring place BRANDing competences at work through continuing VET to increase the attractiveness of EUropean cities



SEBI - Securing the best interest of the child in educational school administration



SYAT - Synergy Audit



Pedagogical documentation in transitions within and between early childhood education and primary education

TALE - It takes a community to make a library, and a library to make Europe



IMPROVE - European mobility for the improvement of relational skills in the elderly care



BE+ - Building capacity for Erasmus+ in school education



SAYOUTH - Reaffirming the civic participation of young people for a sustainable democracy



NARRATE - Building a narrative approach fostering collaboration between preschools and libraries



UDLESIS - Universal design learning environments for all pupils in schools

PLAYING - Enhancing the quality of preschool services through innovative play-based learning methodologies



DEEDS - Modelling a European cross-curricular study programme for upper secondary schools



EUMOB 2020 - Improving professional skills of pre-school teachers through European mobility

PLANE - Developing
language in pre-schools

IN PINK - Work and
opportunities

GO GREEN - Using
Augmented Reality
Technology and
Simulation-Based
Training to Foster
Green Economy



Education about climate
change

Intelligent Cities
Challenge



COPE - Promoting
innovation through
Cooperative model in
entrepreneurship
education for adults



REME - Reggio method
from theory to practice



NETWORK OF EUROPEAN CONTACTS





Conclusions

This publication is not only about the first fifteen years of an organisation, but also about the creation and the development of a transnational community which is for a number of aspects a unique attempt in the framework of the European integration processes.

It has not been built either on strong historical links such as other bilateral relationships like for example the Franco-German one. Nor it does build on close cultural ties such as the one characterising the Nordic cooperation.

However, the creation and development of a North-South network in the EU has shown that cooperation between local and regional authorities and actors about themes of common interest can contribute successfully to create closer long-term ties between two countries and across the EU. In this respect, one can observe that the same dynamics of cooperation in a North-South dimension have not emerged as strong at national level.

One can see how the development of the network over the years has been possible thanks to two elements: the activities carried out and the people that have believed in the idea and in this cooperation.

Both political representatives and civil servants have actively contributed to the activities of the network.

The Executive Board and the Board of Auditors have played, together with the Secretariat, a pivotal role in shaping the network's strategic development and it has been especially thanks to the commitment of the members that the network has grown and progressed. In fact, the institutional activities of the network have brought together over the years more than 3.000 participants while activities related to the EU funded projects listed in the final part of this publication have provided opportunities for meetings, exchanges and learnings for more than 21.000 participants. These numbers have been to a great extent the result of the capacity of the network to develop a larger and more complex set of activities over the years which has resulted into 125 EU funded projects/initiatives in the various policy areas that have been in focus since its creation.

As the opening statement of the 2013-2015 strategy pointed out "the future comes from the progress made in the past", and it is on the basis of our results of today that, as SERN community, we can look ahead towards new achievements.

*Dr Nicola Catellani
Network Coordinator*

ORGANIZATION



MEMBERS



PROJECT GROUPS



GENERAL ASSEMBLY



SECRETARIAT



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