

ANNUAL REPORT

2005



SERN

Sweden Emilia Romagna Network

ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT

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Since its creation in January 2005 the Sweden Emilia Romagna Network has grown considerably and has produced significant results as this first Annual Report testifies.

The political commitment resulting from the Lulea Conference and the decisions made at following meetings in late 2004 which lead to the establishment of SERN as an organization have proven to be right. In fact the positive dynamics of collaboration among the members set in motion by the creation of a standing set of rules and instruments are now producing the first tangible results. Indeed much work remains to be done both in terms of strengthening the internal mechanisms of the Network and when it comes to creating the conditions for a deeper involvement of those actors in our territories which can bring added value to the collaboration among the local and regional authorities.

The report does provide an overview of the work carried out within SERN during this first year of activity and we believe it does represent a useful element at disposal of the members (but also non-members) for acquiring a deeper understanding of the activities, of the strategies as well as the underlying principles resting at the very heart of our Network.

Kent Ögren

Chairman of the SERN Executive Board

SERN GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2005

The first SERN General Assembly took place in Imola on 4th March 2005 and was attended by 77 representatives of the member organizations. The Assembly was opened and declared valid with the presence of delegates expressing 101 votes out of a total of 116 votes. The Assembly approved the budget proposal and the system of fees for 2005. The Assembly elected the SERN Executive Board. The Chairman of the Ad Interim Executive Board (in power between January and March 2005) Kent Ögren was proposed and elected Chairman of the SERN Executive Board, Silvia Bartolini was proposed and elected as Vice-Chairmen of the Executive Board. The Assembly elected also the Board of Auditors formed by 4 representatives of member organizations which are not members of the Executive Board.

ACTIVITIES OF THE WORKING GROUPS

The reports about the activities of the Working Groups have been elaborated on the basis of the contributions of the Coordinators.

WORKING GROUP WELFARE POLICIES

The “Welfare Policies” working group met the very first time on the 4th March 2005 during the Sern General Assembly in Imola (3-5 March 2005). The participants agreed on the opportunity to gradually start the comparison and the common work , in order to guarantee a mutual knowledge, which was considered the basis of a profitable work.

To this purpose in the first step the group decided to focus the attention only on a single theme, namely gender violence, as previously proposed by the Municipality of Falköping.

At the end of the meeting the group agreed on the following points:

- To deepen the mutual knowledge with regard to the actions carried out by the partners to fight gender violence both in Italy and in Sweden;
- To present a joint project within the SERN network, in the framework of the European Daphne Programme.

Consequently both the Municipalities of Forlì and Falköping separately applied for grants to the European Commission (under the Town Twinning Programme) in order to arrange two linked meetings (one in Italy

and the second in Sweden) aimed at exchanging detailed information about the actions implemented to fight gender violence on both the territories and at setting the prior themes to put in the Daphne project.

Unfortunately, only the Forlì project was approved; therefore a busier three-day programme was planned in Forlì from the 1st to the 3rd of December to allow the information exchange foreseen for the two meetings to be carried out in only one. The conference entitled “I... look for me and find me: towards a common approach to fight violence against women” was attended by more than 70 operators representing the Municipalities of Falköping, Norrköping, Piteå, Stockholm, Trollhättan, Vänersborg, Forlì, Imola, Ravenna, Reggio Emilia, Rimini, Russi, Parma Province and the Emilia-Romagna Region. The contributions offered by the speakers confirmed the richness and high quality of the work in the countries and how interesting and fruitful the exchange of the mutual knowledge. During the conference two workshops were organized; prevention of gender violence by working with children and youths was selected as prior theme for further discussion and development, accordingly to what was previously agreed upon in Imola.

Therefore, the theme has been further developed in a joint project entitled “You. S.A.V.E - Youths' Struggle Against Exertion of Violence” presented by The Municipality of Forlì to the European Commission under the Daphne Programme last February. The project will involve 17 partners from 6 different countries and foresees the realization of educational and self-educational actions about the sexual identity, the relation between man and woman, various activities defined and arranged by the youths themselves.

Yet the group agreed to go on with the comparison on the theme of gender violence even in case the project is not approved. During the above mentioned conference partners expressed the idea to create a permanent group within the Welfare Policies.

WORKING GROUP EDUCATION AND CULTURE

Three project proposals were presented and discussed at the General Assembly 2005. One proposal was on “childhood care” and initiated by the municipality of Parma. The project idea was developed further with Stockholm city. The other two proposals initiated by Parma and Scandiano were almost identical. As a result these proposals were modified and put into one. The project title is “Path of Integration in the Educational Context”.

In June five Italian and three Swedish municipalities met in Stockholm discussing how to proceed with the application. A second meeting was arranged later on in Italy. In October Stockholm City submitted an application to the EU programme Town Twinning. The main project is “Paths of integration in the educational contexts” and it deals with the issue of integration within the educational systems. Representatives of the municipalities of Parma, Reggio Emilia, Ravenna, Scandiano and Fontanellato and representatives of Stockholm, Skövde, Falköping and Trollhättan met both in Stockholm and in Parma to discuss and plan the

details of project. The project, co-financed by the European Commission, will be carried out between April 2006 and February 2007. The project will involve 60 among teachers, headmasters and representatives of the educational services and will be based upon two main events which will take place in Stockholm and in Emilia-Romagna (Parma, Reggio Emilia, Ravenna) in April and November respectively. The events will be an occasion for debates, discussions in working groups and study visits. Between the two events a set of good practices will be tested.

The municipality of Scandiano has arranged two twin town meetings for young people where the Swedish municipalities of Trollhättan and Skövde have been invited. The exchange has been very much appreciated among the participants and improved the cooperation within SERN.

The Province of Parma, the district of Spånga-Tensta in Stockholm and the Municipality of Norrköping have been developing a project proposal concerning the exchange of experiences and good practices on the management of nursery and pre-schools (0-6) both from a pedagogic and organizational point of view. The project has been submitted for co-financing at EU level.

In the framework of the town twinning relationship existing between Fontanellato and Falköping an exchange focused on educational themes has started on 2006. Both municipalities are responsible for local projects focused on the use of new communication and information technologies within primary education. Activities implemented have been the promotion of exchanges of local experiences of the teachers the contextualization of these experiences in the general framework set out by the European Commission strategies towards ICT and education.

A number of contacts and exchanges among primary and secondary schools have been activated on issues related to sport, tourism and music. Such activities have involved the municipalities of Scandiano, Skövde, Jokkmokk, Cervia, Trollhättan, Canossa, Fontanellato and Falköping.

WORKING GROUP ENVIRONMENT

At the end of 2005 there were 31 members in the group, 21 from Italy, 10 from Sweden.

The main areas of activity for the group have been:

- Alternative energy sources (bio-gas) in the context of local waste-management strategies
- Bio-food and exchange of experience in the field of food-certification (Slow cities)
- Nature Conservation
- Bio-Architecture and Bio-buildings

During the year two transnational meeting has been held; 7th February in the Biogas Project Group and 5th March 2005, during the General Assembly in Imola. Several sub-groups have as well formed around specific topics.

These are:

- Biogas Project Group; close to form a joint EU-funded project based on exchange of knowledge. Italian partners can provide knowledge on small-scale biogas production, often linked to agriculture and individual farmers. Swedish partners can provide knowledge on large-scale biogas production, often to provide fuel for public vehicles.
- Local Agenda 21; a forum to discuss experiences from working with implementing the Agenda 21 in local development.
- Sustainable Mobility; exchange of experiences on how to support and integrate “sustainable mobility” in cities and city planning.
- Sustainable Town planning and Building; this group focuses on four topics – Bio-architecture/Bio-building, Accessibility, Urban remediation and Executive tools.

No joint project has so far started from the discussions in Environment Group, although the Biogas Project Group has come far in forming one. It is likely this group will have an application ready in 2006.

WORKING GROUP ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The year 2005 is de facto to consider the first operational year for the SERN-network and of the Working Group on Entrepreneurship. The working group has began its work in March 2005 and several ideas has been put forward with the aim of developing them into individual projects.

Five projects, or proposed projects have been emerged from the working group.

The municipalities of Traversetolo and Jokkmokk have been awarded a grant from the European Commission on a project focusing on “Exchange of good practices on local development strategies centered on the valorization of high quality food products, and handicraft”. The project is a result of a preparatory meeting which took place in Traversetolo and Felino in September 2005 attended by representatives of the municipalities of Jokkmokk, Norra Bohuslän, Felino, Montechiarugolo, Canossa and Traversetolo.

The project will be implemented between June 2006 and February 2007 and will involve around 60 representatives of 12 participating municipalities (political representatives/civil servants, entrepreneurs, artisans, actors in the field of tourism). The short-term objective of the project is to establish links among entrepreneurs on the one hand and exchange views, good practices and knowledge about the respective

markets.

At the General Assembly in 2005 the group decided to carry out a fieldtrip involving Swedish cooperatives, businesses and individual entrepreneurs. One fieldtrip has been carried out in late 2005 and others are planned for 2006. The study visits have been an occasion not only for developing a deeper understanding of the cooperative system in Emilia Romagna but they want to be an occasion for the development of joint projects of cooperation.

At the meeting with the province of Parma in 2005. Discussions were made to create a contact net between Swedish and Italian businesses. A contact net where they could meet and discuss common interests and business opportunities. These discussions are ongoing, and it will result in a contact and trade fair 2006. The Italian participants in the Working Group have proposed to organize “national” days in which the members of the network can promote themselves and their areas also from the business perspective. It has been proposed to hold the “Swedish days” in Italy in 2006, and “Italian days” in Sweden during the following year.

WORKING GROUP TOURISM

The activities of the Working Group on Tourism have started in March 2005. The main activity of the Group has been the exchange of information about the participating municipalities. In particular the exchange of information has focused on the local policies on tourism, material on the facilities and on the different typologies of offers.

More recently the focus has moved towards other issues like

- Organization of reciprocal meetings and/or “educational” in order to prepare tourist packages;
- Joint Participation in major exhibitions and/or events;
- Encouragement to local operators to prepare holiday packages/offers tailored for Swedish tourists

Another issue which has been put on the agenda of the Working Group in late 2005 has been the exchange of information concerning the existing and planned links between the Swedish airports and those in Emilia-Romagna with particular attention to those airports served by low-cost companies.

The Province of Parma together with the Municipality of Forlì, the Municipality of Norrköping and the Region Västra Götaland submitted an application at EU level for the a project aiming at producing guidelines for promoting the short-term (3 months) transnational mobility and exchange of civil-servants from the local and regional administrations.

ACTIVITIES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

The SERN executive Board met twice in 2005. The first meeting took place on March 4th in Imola immediately after its election by the First General Assembly. The decisions taken in the meeting concerned the Appointment of the coordinators and vice-coordinators of the 5 Working Groups, the Appointment of the Secretariat. At the meeting it was confirmed the decision of holding the II SERN General Assembly in the Region Västra Götaland.

The second meeting of the Board took place in Norrköping on 14th October. The decision taken at the meeting concerned the submission of an application for co-financing at EU level for the implementation of Intensive Training programme for civil servants to be carried in the spring of 2006. The Board approved the structure of the budget proposal for 2006 and discussed the criteria for a new system of fees. The Board approved 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.

FINANCIAL OUTLOOK

SERN current financial position is healthy and balanced.

The total income for 2005 was **€ 74.887,56** while the total expenditure amounted to **€ 72.026,56**. The target originally set out of **€ 85.000,00** has not been achieved but it has been compensated by a rigid control over the expenditure which has led to a small cash surplus at the end of 2005.

The estimated income deriving from the fees from the founding members has been slightly lower than the estimated amount set out in January 2005. The difference between the estimated and actual income was due mainly to the withdrawal of 2 would-be members between late 2004 and the beginning of 2005. The estimate of the fees deriving from the new members in 2005 were set to € 15.000, while the actual fees totaled 11.700,00 €. Finally the Emilia-Romagna Region has not contributed € 5.000 as expected but this has not created problems to the budget on the expenditure side due to the fact that an equal sum destined to support the Working Groups activities was not spent.

On the side of the operating expenditure, while the costs related to the General Assembly 2005 as well as the IT equipment have exceeded the estimated amounts of €1.357,00 and € 659,00 respectively, the expenditure relative to the general administration and the publications have been 30% lower than expected. All the other expenditures were in line with the estimates.

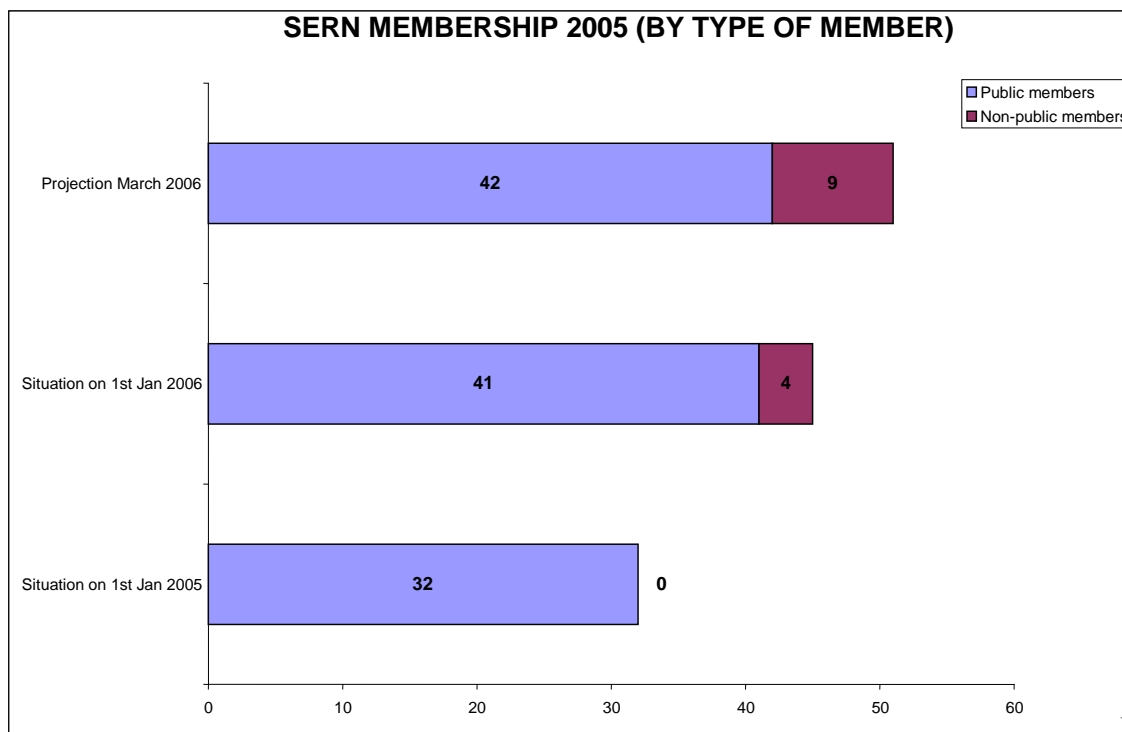
EVALUATION 2005

The formal creation of the Network in January 2005 can be considered as a crucial turning point in the process of cooperation launched in 2003. The actual establishment of a set of a shared rules and a framework of reference granting continuity to the actors involved in the Network has proved crucial for the growth of the collaboration among the members through EU projects and, more in general, for an intensification of the broader process of networking which constitutes the very essence of SERN.

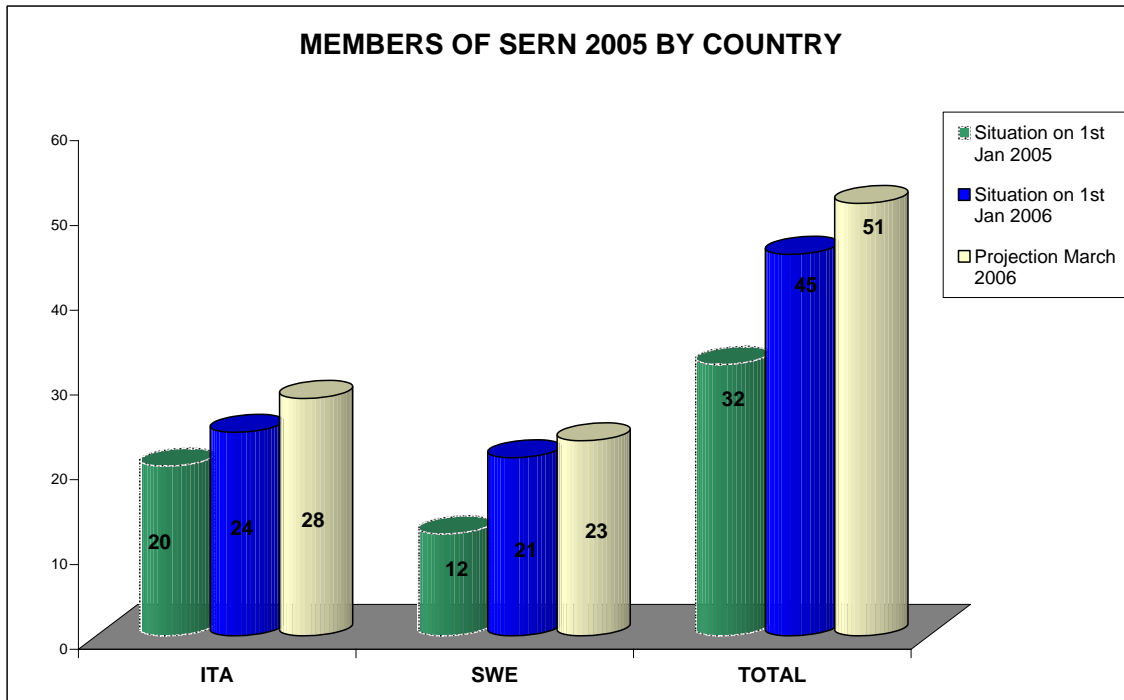
The establishment of the Network has created the conditions for a remarkable increase in the number of contacts, exchanges and projects in comparison with the year 2004 when the organization was not yet in place.

As shown in the previous sections a majority of the members have been involved in the activities and this trend was strengthened in the last part of the year.

The process of consolidation of the working methods (i.e. the emergence of patterns of cooperation in the context of the groups) has been coupled with an expansion of the Network both qualitatively quantitatively as indicated by the graph below.

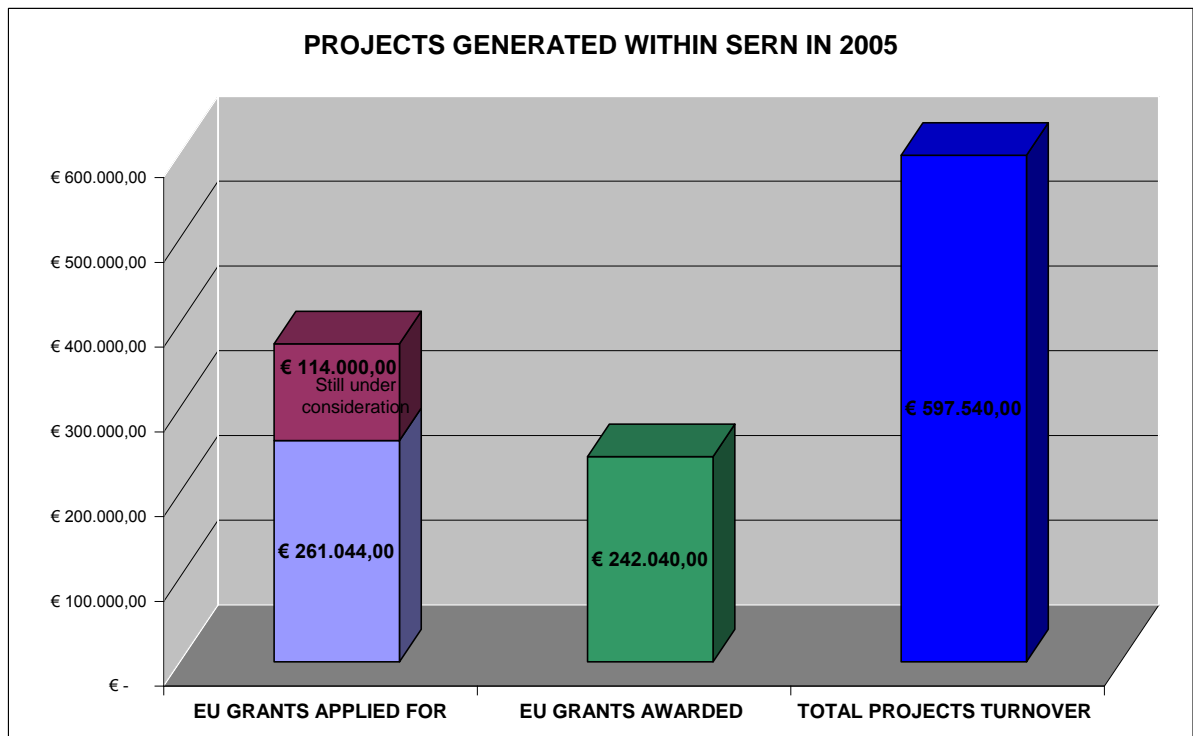


In January 2005 the Network counted 32 (founding) members and all of them were local and regional authorities. During 2005 SERN acquired 13 new members of which 4 were non-public bodies and therefore in December 2005 the members of the Network were 45. The first indications emerging from 2006 in terms of membership show a further increase in the number of actors entering the Network and a proportionally stronger presence of non-public bodies.



The same figures approached from a country perspective indicate that in 2005 the majority of new members has been from Sweden (9 out of 13). In 2006 the trend appears to be more balanced with similar figures for both Swedish and Italian newcomers.

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. The grants requested by the members in the year 2005 totaled 375.044,00 €. Such an amount includes both the grants evaluated and those still under consideration. The grants awarded to the members and to the Network equaled € 242.040,00, this is to say success rate at around 90% of the evaluated projects. The total turnover that the projects approved have generated in 2005 (and in 2006) reaches approximately € 600.000,00.



The figures underline first of all a very good quality level in the project proposals and indicate that within SERN the members possess or can avail themselves of skills and competence in project-drafting and project-development. This should be considered as a crucial asset in future activities and in particular in the context of the Working Groups.

The Network's structure based on Working Groups (WG) has produced positive results as outlined above. However, the Working Group as an instrument has shown also weaknesses and has proven to be substantially rigid when interests and proposals focusing on horizontal themes covering more than one WG have emerged from the members. Furthermore, from the organizational point of view the role of the coordinators/contact persons has been weak due in part to the lack of sufficiently well-defined tasks assigned to them and in part to the scarce and often ineffective direct communication between themselves and vis-à-vis the members. In the future a more active participation of the coordinators in support of the members both in Sweden and Italy is desirable. This will be an significant element for a more effective development of the WGs and the Network as a whole.

In general, it can be argued that the activities carried out within the SERN network in 2005, despite some weaknesses deriving from the recent creation of the Network, can be evaluated as very positive in terms of quality and quantity. The activities carried out so far have set a solid basis upon which expanding and deepening the cooperation among the members.

OBJECTIVES 2006

The year 2006 will be devoted to strengthening further the internal dynamics of cooperation among the member institutions but also to strengthen the visibility of the Network and the relations with external actors and the development of internal actions with added value. A general objective for 2006 will be to have at least one project involving several members being implemented in each of the Working Group.

The work of the Secretariat will therefore be carried out along three main lines of action:

1. INTERNAL STRENGTHENING OF THE NETWORK

The efforts should be aimed at addressing some weaknesses which have emerged in 2005. First of all there is a need of improving member-to member contact. So far most of the requests and communications are made through the Secretariat even when they could be addressed directly by the members. This issue is linked to the need of a more effective use of the electronic platform. Meetings among the members should be coupled, when possible, with training sessions for the platform.

Another element which needs to be strengthened is the circulation of information within the member institutions. Often there is a lack of information in the departments of the same administration. The Secretariat has been developing instruments (for example the Newsletter) to tackle this problem but more efforts are required also by the SERN technical and political referents of the member institutions.

In 2006 more efforts will be devoted to promote the participation of the members to calls also in the framework of EU programmes. Attention will also be devoted to providing information regarding the new EU programmes which will be at work in the EU financial perspective 2007-2013.

2. VISIBILITY OF THE NETWORK AND RELATIONS WITH THIRD ACTORS

An element that needs to be strengthened is the external visibility of SERN. The work will be focused on two objectives. The first one is the promotion of SERN among the municipalities in Sweden and Italy. Furthermore, as a medium-term objective, the information about the Network and its activities should be targeted to relevant stakeholders in national capitals (ministries, institutes of cultures, relevant economic and social actors).

The increased visibility on the one hand and the promotion of projects on the other will be coupled with the establishment of links with other Networks like SERN operating in Europe and improve the dissemination of information about the Network in the relevant EU institutions namely with the European Commission and the European Parliament. The links with other existing networks should serve primarily the purpose of finding partner municipalities from third countries for projects developed within SERN and offer partnership opportunities for projects originated from other non-SERN actors.

3. ACTIONS CREATING ADDED VALUE FOR THE NETWORK

The third core aspect of the activities for 2006 will be the development of a limited number of actions differing from the projects carried out by the members which have an innovative content and can produce added value for the members but also for the organisation.

In 2006 the attention will be devoted to the realisation of a intensive training programme in May 2006 for all the SERN referents and to the development of a framework for the short-term mobility of personnel working in the administrations.

The intensive training programme is aimed at giving the SERN referents the opportunity to get to know each other better and acquire skills which are relevant to their activities of the Network. This is needed in order to strengthen and make more effective the internal dynamics within the Working Groups discussed above.

MEMBERS 2005

AICCRE EMILIA-ROMAGNA
ASSOCIAZIONE DEI COMUNI DEL NORRBOTTEN
ASSOCIAZIONE INTERCOMUNALE "BASSA ROMAGNA"
ASSOCIAZIONE INTERCOMUNALE "IL TRICOLORE"
REGIONAL GROWTH IN THE NORTH OF BOHUSLÄN
ASSOCIAZIONE INTERCOMUNALE "TERRE VERDIANE"
CITY DI STOCCOLMA
CITY OF MOLNDAL
CITY OF TROLLHÄTTAN
COMUNITÀ MONTANA VALLI DEL TARO E DEL CENO
COUNTY COUNCIL OF NORRBOTTEN
INNOVATUM AB
INTUR FIPE RIMINI
KOOPERATIV UTVÄKLING VASTRA GOTALAND
MUNICIPALITY OF ALE
MUNICIPALITY OF ÄLVSBYN
MUNICIPALITY OF ARJEPLOG
MUNICIPALITY OF ARVIDSJÄUR
MUNICIPALITY OF BERTINORO
MUNICIPALITY OF BODEN
MUNICIPALITY OF BORGO VAL DI TARO
MUNICIPALITY OF BRISIGHELLA
MUNICIPALITY OF CANOSSA
MUNICIPALITY OF CERVIA
MUNICIPALITY OF FALKÖPING
MUNICIPALITY OF FELINO
MUNICIPALITY OF FORLÍ
MUNICIPALITY OF IMOLA
MUNICIPALITY OF JOKKMOKK
MUNICIPALITY OF MONTECCHIO EMILIA
MUNICIPALITY OF MONTECHIARUGOLO
MUNICIPALITY OF NORRKÖPING
MUNICIPALITY OF PARMA
MUNICIPALITY OF PITEA
MUNICIPALITY OF RAVENNA
MUNICIPALITY OF RIMINI
MUNICIPALITY OF SAN POLO D'ENZA
MUNICIPALITY OF SCANDIANO
MUNICIPALITY OF SKÖVDE
MUNICIPALITY OF SÖDERKÖPING
MUNICIPALITY OF TRAVERSETOLO
MUNICIPALITY OF VÄNESBORG
PROVINCE OF PARMA
UNIONCAMERE EMILIA-ROMAGNA
VÄSTRA GÖTALAND REGION

