

STRATEGIC PLAN

2019-2021



SERN

SERN STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2021

BACKGROUND

“ The future comes from the progress made in the past ”

1. Introduction

This strategy for the future comes from the steps and progress the members of **SERN** have taken and made in the past. The document builds on the former strategies and on the members' joint backgrounds - where we come from, our identity, our values, our mission, our experiences and our role in Europe.

This strategy has been created in a participatory way, through workshops within the Executive Board and through an online questionnaire - where all members could comment and come with suggestions.

Producing the **SERN** strategy has been a useful learning process and it can be seen as an example of a political laboratory of a Europe built from below, where internal democracy and creative and innovative relationships within the network are important.

The **SERN** network and its strategy can also play an important part for global peace and understanding, and contribute to the objectives of Agenda 2030.

2. Identity and values

We are a network that links Northern and Southern Europe. Our members are mainly public bodies and private nonprofit organizations. We are a multilevel network where different levels of government interact and collaborate. We share interest in many sectors, and a willingness of working for an inclusive society and innovative models of growth. As a result of the commitment and work of so many people, we share a successful story.

OUR BACKGROUND

SERN is the result of a long-term process of cooperation and exchange between Italian and Swedish actors. The activities of the Network began in January 2005 as a result of a process that started in 2003.

The 28 founding members are now more than 58. Over the years SERN has been supporting its members in the development of the large number of activities and projects co-funded by the European Union. In its first 14 years of activity SERN has contributed to develop more than 110 EU projects for a total of more than 9 Mill. Euros of EU grants.

The network and some of its projects have been identified as best practices at EU level in the framework of the Europe for Citizens Programme and in the Erasmus+ Programme. In the framework of the bilateral relations between Italy and Sweden SERN has been awarded in 2010 the prize as Promoter of Sweden in Italy of the year.

**SERN**



SERN represents a unique example of North-South cooperation in the European Union.

We operate following our long-term values:

- cooperation
- common belonging to the EU
- democracy and equal opportunities
- responsibility
- trust
- social inclusion

Furthermore, the network enables its members to dialogue with the political bodies of the EU.

3. Vision

SERN contributes to building a European Union where the citizens are at the center and to making the EU 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.

4. Mission of the network

Our mission is the development of international ties and partnerships among our members and at large between Italy and Sweden.

These activities aim to increase the quality of life and the opportunities for our citizens.

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STRATEGIC THEMES

5. Objectives

The positive results achieved in terms of number of projects developed by SERN (26 EU funded projects) between 2015 and 2018 indicate the necessity to keep on developing the network along the lines of the previous strategy. In this light, the objectives of the strategy should be the following:

- 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 projects and provide opportunities for the engagement of members in small-size projects.

6. The driving themes of the network

The driving themes constitute the framework of reference for the members and the Secretariat in the definition of the activities that will be carried out in the context of the network. They are intended to implement at local level the Europe 2020 strategy themes such as employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy according to our values and mission. The driving themes for the period 2019-2021 are:

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

In the framework of the above-mentioned areas the themes of digitalization and active citizenship, when relevant, should be given particular attention in the implementation of network's activities.

7. Development of the network

For the future development of the network four priorities are identified, according to the following order:

- increase the level of commitment and participation of the members;

OUR BACKGROUND

The members of the Network will continue to be fully engaged in implementing the EU 2020 strategy. The European context remains in fact fundamental for both the identification of the Network's driving themes and the creation of new priority areas of cooperation.

The Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth was launched by the European Commission in March 2010 and approved by the Heads of States and Governments of EU countries in June 2010. The document sets out concrete targets to be achieved within the next decade in areas such as employment, education, energy use and innovation in order to overcome the impact of the financial crisis and put Europe back on track for economic growth. The EU has set five ambitious objectives - on employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy - to be reached by 2020.



- increase the number of members;
- increase the number of the projects
- increase the cooperation with other networks that share our values.

Any actions need to be sustainable in the short as well as in the long-term. An enlargement should increase our ability to produce benefits for our members.

8. Relations with other subjects

The relationship between Italy and Sweden will remain the core of the network in the future. **SERN** and its members have connections and relations with other public and private organizations in several countries and regions in Europe. This will be preserved and further developed. Priority should be given to public bodies. However, **SERN** could work with private actors too. In that case the objectives of the private subject should be clarified.

9. Giving value to results

The remarkable number of projects and results achieved by the network represents a great value. The evaluation of the results is of great importance and it represents an opportunity of growth and development for the network. Increased attention should be paid to the dissemination and to valorization of results inside the network and towards stakeholders and/or other networks.

SERN STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2021: GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

10. Actors and responsibilities

THE MEMBERS

The active participation of the members is essential for a successful network. The members have the main responsibility to initiate, develop, implement and evaluate projects and activities within the network.

The members should be active in engaging and stimulating the participation of new members. The members are encouraged to suggest new areas of collaboration to the Executive Board.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly is composed of all the members. Being the fundamental body of the organization it approves the main documents such as: the balance sheet, the annual report, the statute, the strategic plan and guidelines. Furthermore, the Assembly elects the Executive Board and the Board of Auditors. In this way the General Assembly has the responsibility for the future development of the network.

THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

The members of the Board have the duty to attend the meetings.

The Executive Board has the responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the strategy approved by the General Assembly within the network. The Board shall:

1. promote new work in the existing areas;
2. approve the creation of new priority areas;
3. abandon areas that do not contribute to the achievement of the objectives set out in the strategy.

To ensure the implementation of the network's strategy the Board shall identify the priority areas and support the creation of meeting places.

The Executive Board proposes the general organizational framework of the network. The Board appoints the Network Coordinator and, upon his/her proposal, the staff of the Secretariat.

The Board shall regularly follow the work carried out by the members and actively engage and stimulate the participation of new members.

THE SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat shall assist the members in the development of cooperation processes stemming from the elements outlined above. The Secretariat shall *coordinate* and support the various activities developed by its members in Sweden and Italy, particularly in the first phases of the project cycle. The Network Coordinator is in charge of the overall coordination of the Network activities and leads the activities of the Secretariat and its staff.

The Secretariat is based in the same country of the registered seat of the organization (Italy). However, the Network might also hire staff in the other country (Sweden) in order to promote its development, compatibly with the financial resources at disposal of the organization.

The role of the Secretariat is to: 1) gather proposals for the development of new project groups and support the creation of these groups in the phases pointed out below; 2) support the members in the initial phases of collaboration (see project development); 3) provide initial contacts between Swedish and Italian members; 4) support the members by providing information on funding opportunities at EU level, 5) offer training opportunities for the members, 6) support the Board and its members in preparation of the meetings 7) support, and liaise with, the host of the annual General Assembly of the network.

11. Working methods

The collaboration processes within the network can be of different types:

- Exchanges of information, experience, knowledge, best practices, staff exchanges, learning partnerships.
- Development of projects financed by its members
- Development of projects financed by external funds such as national and/or EU funding
- Peer reviews

The development of new projects within the network is a strategic process of collaboration between a number of members on a specific theme. The project cycle management model consists of several phases in a specific order.

PHASE 1 INDICATIVE PROGRAMMING

A project proposal is submitted by one or more members through the e-platform or through the Secretariat. The Secretariat can provide support in structuring the initial project idea.

PHASE 2 IDENTIFICATION

If the proposal collects the interest of at least another member, it is subsequently discussed in the context of an identification meeting which can take place at the General Assembly of the network or, alternatively, in the context of a project event or a dedicated meeting. The proposal is finalized at least in terms of common problems/needs addressed, project objective(s) and target groups. If the project partners are identified, they could be also invited to the meeting. Once established, each project group shall identify a contact person both in Sweden and Italy. The contact persons plan and lead the activities.

One of the organizations to which the coordinators belong shall be appointed as the lead partner in case of an application at EU level. Where translation support is needed for the work, it should be provided by the participants own organizations (e.g. by international relations officers, **SERN** contact persons).

PHASE 3-4 FORMULATION AND FINANCING

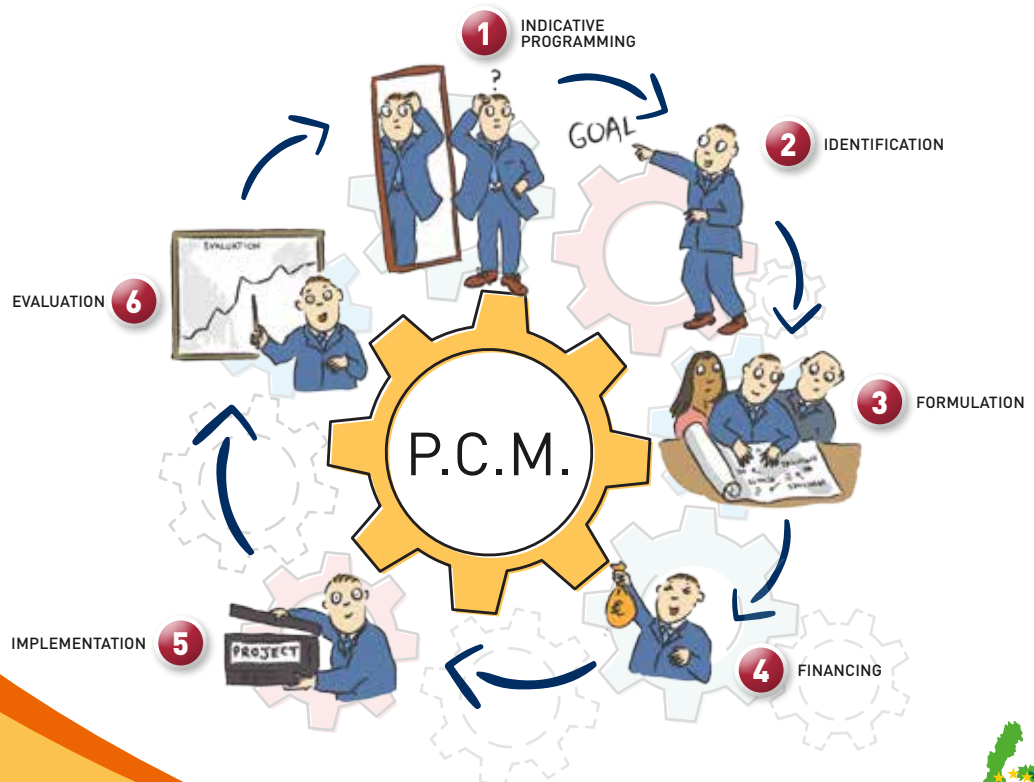
In these phases project partners from other countries are identified. The project budget and other aspects are then defined according to the specification of the EU programme it will be submitted to. The Secretariat will not be involved in the formulation unless there is a specific request from the members or the network it is among the partners.

PHASE 5 IMPLEMENTATION

The members are responsible for the implementation of the project. The Secretariat will monitor the implementation process but it will not take on the responsibility of any management task directly unless there are specific requests from the members. The Secretariat will contribute through its communication tools to the dissemination and valorization of the results of the projects. The content of the dissemination is provided by the members when SERN is not part of the project partnership.

PHASE 6 EVALUATION AND VALORIZATION

The members shall be evaluating the process throughout the implementation phase and take measures to adjust the process if needed. The activity of the network is generally inspired by the approach of quality management.



12. Reporting and follow-up

As stated above the project coordinators shall evaluate each project/activity and present the strengths, weaknesses and results of the project. The evaluation shall be forwarded to the secretariat. Project representatives shall brief the Executive Board on the overall achievements of their project. On a yearly basis, a number of quantitative and qualitative indicators should be produced.

QUANTITATIVE

In order to show the objectives achieved, the commitment of members, the efficiency and effectiveness of strategies the following indicators are identified:

- total number of projects/activities produced
- number of externally financed projects (including EU financed)
- number of members involved in activities (per nationality)
- number of people involved in exchange (per nationality)
- activity on the platform and social media pages
- number of members involved in the activities
- number of activities with other networks and their members

QUALITATIVE

Customer satisfaction questionnaire or other tools to investigate the perception of stakeholders on the following areas:

- expectations
- preferences
- satisfaction
- opinions on the quality changes introduced as a result of the project
- lessons learned

In order to describe the projects/activities within the areas of collaboration and the achieved results against the background of the overall objectives of the network.

By reporting the results of each project to the Secretariat it is possible to create a project database. It can be used for the development of new projects and as a framework for “benchmarking” and finding “best practices” within **SERN**. The database should enable the **SERN** network to develop high quality projects, and to strengthen contacts amongst its members and improve the circulation of information. The General Assembly as the largest event organized annually should be evaluated through a standardized procedure which takes into account the activities carried out during the event. The Secretariat sets out a set of evaluation indicators as well as a questionnaire to administer during the event.

13. Communication

SERN has a multilevel communication strategy addressed to different targets and with different aims. Members are responsible for communication towards citizens and local stakeholders. The Secretariat implements the communication strategy, acting directly towards the general public, the EU, and to national and international institutions. The Secretariat supports the members in evaluating and disseminating specific project results, when relevant for the network.