



# SERN

**Italy and Sweden building  
Europe together**

# About the NETWORK

SERN is one of the main transnational networks in Europe fostering relations between Northern and Southern Europe and in particular between Sweden and Italy. A non-profit transnational association, SERN has three characteristics that makes it unique:

- It is the only bilateral network in the European Union that brings together actors from the Northern and Southern states.
- It is a multilevel network where different levels of government interact and collaborate.
- It is open to civil society and to private actors.

## History

SERN is the result of a long-term process of cooperation and exchange between Italian and Swedish actors. The idea of strengthening the relations between the two areas was launched by AICCRE Emilia-Romagna and group of Italian municipalities in the summer of 2003. The constitutive phase of the SERN network ended in January 2005 with the formal beginning of the activities of the Network.

## VISION

SERN is one of the leading transnational networks of local and regional actors fostering North-South cooperation in the European Union.



## MISSION

The network through its activities contributes to building a European Union driven by North-South collaboration where Italian and Swedish communities and their citizens are key drivers of change towards a more inclusive, sustainable, and digitalized society.



## Awards

**2009**

The European Commission identified SERN as best practice in the field of thematic networking and showcased at the General Assembly of CEMR.

**2010**

The Swedish Embassy in Rome and the Italian Swedish Chamber of Commerce awarded the prize as Promoter of the year of Sweden in Italy to SERN as a result of the work carried out by the network in fostering the relations and links between the two countries.

**2012**

The European Commission identified two projects MANTT and QLSE as two of the 25 cases of high quality projects implemented in the context of the Europe for Citizens Programme 2007-2013.

**2013**

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 has invited SERN to address Comenius project coordinators on issues pertaining project management.

**2018**

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

**2018**

SERN was been invited by the Italian Erasmus+ national agency INDIRE to present the KA2 project EQUAP as an example of best practice during the project coordinators meeting.

**2019**

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

**2021**

The project Equap has been included in the publication "Toolkit for inclusive early childhood education and care" published by the DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture.

# Activities in SERN

## 1. Project-based cooperation

The Network plays an important role as an accelerator of project-based cooperation among its members. The Secretariat has a central role in matching the interests of the members across the priority areas .

In the course of its activities, SERN submitted more than 170 projects at EU level. Among them, 130 were approved and implemented, with an approval rate of 73%.

**178** PROJECTS SUBMITTED AT EU LEVEL

**130** PROJECTS APPROVED AND IMPLEMENTED

**73%** APPROVAL RATE

**20k** PARTICIPANTS

**13M€** EU GRANTS AWARDED

## 2. Information and showcasing

The Network is a valuable source of information for its member. The Secretariat through the Members Area provide information about major policy developments at EU level and relevant calls in the priority areas. At the same time, the Network works actively to disseminate and transfer project results among the members.

## 3. Pooling of expertise

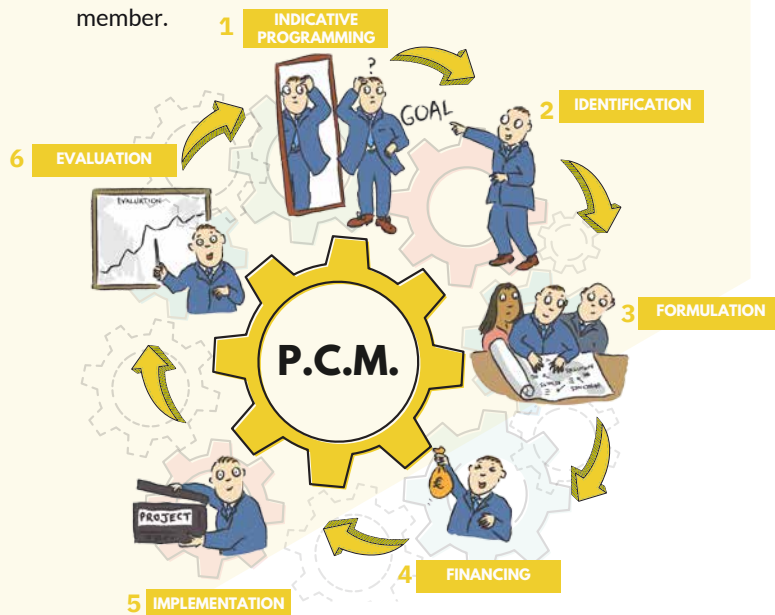
It is a new area of activity for the Network. In the two countries, the expertise that could be pooled together will be identified. The process aims to valorise the high level of competence present among the staff of the member organisations and support the transfer of innovation/best practices inside the network across the members.

## 4. Learning and training

Since 2006 SERN has been working to improve the capacity of its members to tackle effectively the challenges posed by the participation in transnational processes of cooperation in the context of the European Union. The Network provides opportunities to activate bilateral or multilateral peer review activities among the members as well as training activities aimed at strengthening the organisational capacity of the members and increasing the knowledge of the staff of the members in a limited number of thematic areas.

## The working method

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. The development of new projects within the network is a strategic a process of collaboration between a number of members on a specific theme. The project cycle management model (P.C.M.) consists of several phases in a specific order. SERN members can act as Project Promoter or can participate in a process initiated by another member.



# Members of SERN

SERN counts 59 members.

**37** Members from Italy

**22** Members from Sweden

**30** Municipalities

**6** Unions of Municipalities

**45** Public Authorities

**14** No Public Authorities

## Membership

**Sweden:** Regions, county councils, municipalities, associations of local and regional authorities.

**Italy:** The regional governments, the provinces, the municipalities, the local authorities in their associated forms in Emilia-Romagna, as well as the same institutions of other Italian regions.

**Sweden and Italy:** Subjects from the civil society who agree to the aims and purpose of the Network, including educational institutions at all levels.

## Membership benefits

SERN is a membership-based association and, as such, aims to provide the best value to its members. Our members are the backbone of the Network, as their experience and knowledge are at the center of the mutual learning processes that SERN promotes. Our members enjoy unique benefits:

- » they are part of a wide network of public authorities;
- » they can share and exchange ideas, best practices and expertise with other actors in Italy/Sweden;
- » they can become part of consortia of EU-funded projects;
- » they are kept informed about major policy developments at EU level and relevant calls in the priority areas;
- » they can improve their organisational capacity thanks to transnational cooperation.

## Partners

Organisations from other countries in the European Union which want to establish more structured relations with the network and its members can become partners of the Network.



# Areas of collaboration 2021 - 2027

The new long-term strategy of SERN has set ambitious objectives for the next seven years. The Network aims to fulfil its mission through by supporting its members with a common work towards the achievement of more:

## Inclusive communities



Reducing inequalities and social exclusion in local communities are crucial challenges for the future of Europe. At the same time, there is great potential for Europe through opportunities provided, for example, by new forms of innovation and by the engagement of citizens.

Supporting inclusive, innovative and reflective communities is a prerequisite for a sustainable European integration. By helping individuals and groups, to get a proper education, to find a job, to be actively involved in local decision and to have access to services designed to help them cope with their vulnerabilities, Communities part of SERN, ensure an inclusive and egalitarian way growth. In the thematic area of Inclusive Communities SERN will focus on three priorities: **Services for Vulnerable groups**, **Active Citizenship** and **Quality Education**.

## Digitalized communities



The digital transformation brings benefits and opportunities for all citizens in the communities belonging to SERN. With the aim of leaving no one behind, digitization is one of the six priorities of the European Commission, that aims at empowering and including citizens.

In this context, the strategy “Shaping Europe’s Digital Future” is the roadmap that for the next five years will be driving the efforts of the EU towards three key objectives: a technology that works for people, a fair and competitive digital economy and an open, democratic and sustainable society. As digitization pervades every aspect of daily life, EU-level actions for a digitalized Europe encompass different fields: from education through the Digital Education Action Plan, calling for a high-quality, inclusive and digital education, to the Digital EU Programme, that will invest in advanced digital skills and technology. Within Digitalized Communities, SERN will focus on two main thematic areas: **e-Government** and **Digital Skills**. These themes are deeply connected to each other, as on the one hand there is the need of developing a continuous work towards open and efficient public administrations, and on the other, digital skills education for all is a key to both implementing and taking advantage of digital innovation.

## Green and sustainable communities

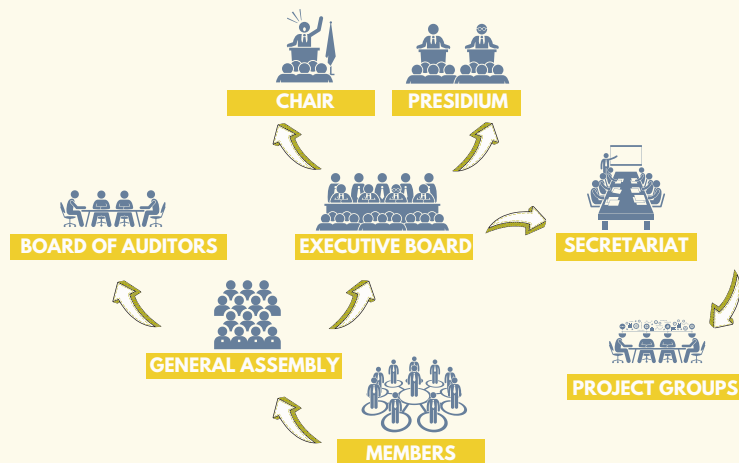


In order to fight climate change worldwide, initiatives have been contemplated by the international and European institutions. Above all, the Paris Agreement, the first binding international climate change pact, aiming at limiting the global warming to 1.5 °C by reducing the GHG emissions on one hand, and strengthen societies ability to deal with the impacts of climate change, on the other. In particular, it is crucial for local, regional and national authorities to become more resilient, by decreasing their vulnerability to the effects of climate change and cooperate together at regional and international levels to achieve their climate action goals. In the thematic area of Green and Sustainable Communities, SERN will focus on **Climate Action**, **Smart Mobility** and **Sustainable Tourism**.

# Organisation of the Network

The Network is a **transnational association** and consists of the following bodies. The **General Assembly** meets every year and elects for a two-year-period the **Executive Board** which has the task to take the main strategic decisions about the Network. The Board elects a **Chair** and **Vice Chair**. The Board appoints the staff of the Network's Secretariat located in Parma.

The SERN **Secretariat** has the task to ensure the effectiveness of the work carried out in the priority areas, to foster the development of the network and to assist the members in establishing intra-network contacts. The Secretariat also supports the statutory bodies (Assembly, Executive Board, Chairperson, Presidium and Board of Auditors) in order to ensure an effective functioning of the association.



## How to JOIN

### 1 Fill in the application form

Download and fill in the membership application form. The form has to be signed by the legal representative of the organization. The form is available on [SERN website](#).

### 2 Send the form

Send the form together with a letter of presentation addressed to the Chair of the Executive Board.

### 3 Executive Board approval

The SERN executive Board normally meets three times a year, in February, May, and November. When in session the Board will discuss the membership application.

### \* Membership fees

The annual membership fees depend on the type of organisation and on the number of inhabitants (or number of employees and financial capacity for other organisation). For more information please visit our website.







# SERN

[www.sern.eu](http://www.sern.eu)



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