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Interview

Jeremy Smith,
Secretary-General
of the Council of
European
Municipalities and
Regions

In focus

Regional
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Malta

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South Sweden



Innovative regions



In May, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) held its General Assembly in Poznan, Poland.

To what extent did this serve to strengthen links between local and regional authorities in the present and future Member States of the European Union?

It was the first time the CEMR held its General Assembly in a central European country, and the city of Poznan did a great job in organising the meeting. Bringing more than 700 representatives of cities and regions of Europe together in a future Member State to exchange information and experiences and discuss their concerns is of incalculable value.

That said, the CEMR did not wait for enlargement to include members from countries such as Poland and the Czech Republic, as well as Iceland, Switzerland and Ukraine. We also welcomed two new members in Poznan: Macedonia and Serbia. What is more, we are already thinking of the

future candidate countries in the next wave of enlargement.

At your Assembly, representatives from Objective 1 regions expressed concern at the consequences of enlargement. Due purely to a technical effect, some of these regions will no longer receive Community aid after enlargement, despite the fact that they will remain less favoured. What message does the CEMR have for the European Commission on this subject in relation to the future of cohesion policy?

The CEMR and the Commission are on the same wavelength in many respects. We want to keep 75 % of the European GDP as the rule for Objective I regions while allowing regions which no longer fall within Objective 1 — for purely statistical reasons — to benefit from a temporary programme. We also believe that a new Objective 2 should be accessible to all regions and that in future the Structural Funds budget should be allocated as follows: two-thirds for Objective 1 and one-third for the new Objective 2. This new Objective 2 would for example include inter-regional cooperation, dis-

industrialisation and regions with a low population density.

It is not only a financial question. Above all, we must retain the spirit of cohesion policy, and that means the concept of European solidarity and the principle that the Union as a whole cannot develop if regional disparities are too great.

The accession negotiations were particularly tough on the subject of finance. But will the arrival of the cities and regions of the new Member States not be of great benefit to all of Europe, in terms of new experiences and ideas?

The situation must be faced: enlargement to include 10 new Member States represents both a formidable opportunity and a challenge. Most of the future EU countries have experienced a form of centralism that has left its mark. It is for us to help their regional and local authorities by enabling them to benefit from the experience of their colleagues in the Union. The matter of the Structural Funds is another difficulty. At the same time, local and regional authorities in the future Member States have much to contribute to the EU, if only by virtue of their youth

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Editor: Thierry Daman, European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional Policy

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Photos (pages): Mike St Maur Sheil (1, 4, 12), CCRE (2), AEIDL (8), Government of Malta (9), SydSam (10, 11), Lisa Clement (13), Parco Nazionale dello Stelvio/Stilfserjoch (14, 15). Cover: Urban pilot project financed by the ERDF — restoration of a windmill in Skerries (Ireland).

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and dynamism. Let me give you just one of many possible examples: the city of Prague has an ultra-modern and computerised public transport system which could be a model for many towns and cities in the EU. I am convinced that contacts and exchanges of experience between the cities and regions of 25 countries will always be richer than between just 15 countries. All the cities and all the regions are in fact facing the same problems, albeit to varying degrees. These include employment, the environment, transport, and education. By bringing together the representatives of the cities and regions of 25 Member States there will be a greater chance of finding solutions to these problems.

The CEMR has made a number of calls for the Structural Funds to have a greater urban dimension. Could you explain your stance on this?

A large part of the Structural Funds is spent in cities, but not in a coherent and integrated manner. Moreover, some 80 % of the European population are urban dwellers. Yet the Structural Funds fail to give the urban dimension the recognition it deserves. This urban dimension can be divided into two: large towns and cities, some of which are regions in their own right; and small towns which play a vital role in integrated urban and rural development. Many aspects of regional policy are very much a part of urban policy, such as transport, employment, migration. Those are the undeniable facts. It therefore seems logical to me that the Structural Funds should be more explicitly open to the urban dimension. In Poznan, one of the participants at the session on cohesion policy made the comment that:

‘Notwithstanding its name, the EU’s Committee of the Regions represents the regions and the cities of the Union. We could therefore deduce from this that regional policy must have a regional and an urban dimension.’

In the Poznan declaration, the CEMR calls on the European Union to give greater recognition to the role of local and regional authorities. What concrete proposals do you have in mind?

Above all else, we want a better definition of the principle of subsidiarity, one which makes explicit mention of local and regional authorities. We want the future constitution to include the principles of local and regional autonomy, as laid down in the European charter on local autonomy, and for local and regional authorities to be involved systematically in arriving at and implementing the decisions which affect them. We also want the Committee of the Regions to have more powers.

In short, the CEMR wants to see a Europe of 25 which is genuinely close to its citizens and the only way to achieve this is by strengthening the local and regional levels within the EU.

The good news is that since we made this call in Poznan, most of these points have been included in the new draft constitution.

A grouping of 100 000 local and regional authorities

The Council of European Regions and Municipalities (CEMR) was set up in 1951, at the initiative of a group of European mayors. This was soon after the Second World War and at a time when the European Community was gradually taking shape. The CEMR was one of the pioneers of this process.

Today, more than 50 years later, the CEMR unites more than 100 000 local and regional authorities through 44 national member organisations in 31 European countries in what is an ever-growing federation.

The CEMR has two core beliefs:

- local democracy is the foundation of all public life;
- local and regional authorities have a key role to play in the construction of Europe.

In this regard, the CEMR has acted to ensure that this role of local and regional authorities is taken into account by the Convention on the Future of Europe and by the upcoming intergovernmental conference. The president of the CEMR is in fact none other than Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, who is also president of the Convention.

The CEMR seeks to influence Community decisions. It also seeks to facilitate the exchange of experiences and the dissemination of ideas and best practices between its members at European level. The CEMR has in fact instigated more than 26 000 town twinnings across Europe.

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Regional programmes of innovative actions Laboratories of quality

Although the ERDF has made it possible to reduce regional differences in the European Union, a gap has opened up in the areas of high technology and access to the information society: two key factors for the sustainable development of regions in difficulty. The 'Regional programmes of innovative actions' are now enabling these regions to experiment with innovative solutions that can produce a catalytic effect.

For the period 2000–06, the European Commission is allocating EUR 400 million to finance 'Regional programmes of innovative actions' in regions assisted by the ERDF (Objectives 1 and 2). This represents 0.4 % of the budget of the ERDF. A drop in the ocean? No, because this instrument has a very specific aim. The primary objective of the innovative actions is to act as a catalyst and contribute a decisive added value in areas which are particularly problematic for the regions. The ultimate result will be to increase and improve the quality of Structural Funds aid.

A deepening divide

Why the need for these programmes? The Commission's 2001 report on economic and social cohesion in the European Union highlights a positive development: thanks to the ERDF, regional differences have been reduced in terms of infrastructure and GDP. However, there is one cloud gathering on the horizon: the technological divide between these same regions is deepening. This is a worrying trend as all the evidence suggests that innovation and R & D are the basis for a region's sustainable economic development.

A number of indicators point to the problem. Jobs in high technology represent almost 15 % of total employment in the 25 most advanced regions, as compared with just 4 % in the least developed regions. In terms of R & D, the top 15 % spend as much as all the other regions put together. Finally, as Internet use is growing overall in the Union, the regional differences in access are widening (with three times as many households online in some regions as in others). A genuine 'digital divide' is also opening up between urban areas and certain rural areas in terms of rapid broadband Internet access.

Targeting the 'software'

To correct these weaknesses and create genuine economic and social cohesion, public aid must be increased by giving a greater role to the regions. This is why the innovative actions plan to concentrate on the 'software' — namely networks, partnerships and other intangible assets — rather than the 'hardware' — meaning infrastructure — by

encouraging new solutions in key areas for the development of less favoured regions.

The innovative actions have three priorities:

- to encourage regional economies based on knowledge and technological innovation;
- to stimulate the information society at the service of regional development;
- to strengthen regional identity and sustainable development.



Thanks to a regional programme of innovative actions, the Welsh mineral water producer Radnor Hills Water was able to modernise its facilities.

For the first two years (2001 and 2002), 126 regional programmes of innovative actions (out of 156 regions which were potentially eligible) were approved by the European Commission, receiving total funding of EUR 310 million, in addition to the contribution from the public or private sector in the regions themselves.

Two factors underlie this success. The first is the simplified procedures for submitting and selecting proposals. Every year, interested regions submit their applications to the Commission by 31 May. A programme of innovative actions extends over a maximum of two years and can be granted up to EUR 3 million. The second factor is decentralisation: the regions bear full responsibility for the programme's management and financial control.

Transferring innovative ideas

Innovative actions require a qualitative approach at every level. Regions are requested, for example, to set up very broad partnerships, including the private sector, SMEs and the voluntary sector.

Another guiding principle concerns the transfer of pilot experiences. The exchange of good practices is encouraged, firstly within the individual region as the innovative actions must benefit the region as a whole.

However, the Commission also wanted to go further and stimulate the exchange of ideas and the development of partnerships between regions. Hence its decision to co-finance, in cooperation with the innovative action programmes, thematic networks designed to improve the exchange of experiences. Three of these networks are currently up and running.

The first, IANIS, is managed by the Saxony Region and is a partnership of 28 regions on the theme of the information society. The second is coordinated by Wales and is a grouping of 12 regions on the theme of sustainable development. And finally, ERIK, a partnership of 13 regions led by Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany, is concerned with technological innovation.

The innovative actions operate as regional laboratories for experimenting with new solutions. These solutions are destined to have wider applications and implications,

From cultural heritage to satellites

Regions can choose one, two or three priority themes in their programme proposals. In 2001 and 2002, a quarter of the regions chose sustainable development as their main theme. Three-quarters chose technological innovation and the information society.

In mid-2003, it was still too soon to draw final conclusions on project implementation. Nevertheless, a number of trends already showed the depth and diversity of the programmes.

In the field of sustainable development, the regions focused on four main areas: sustainable tourism, highlighting cultural and natural heritage, new infrastructure and modes of transport, and the development of renewable energy sources.

The majority of the technological innovation actions concentrated on: strengthening clusters and business networks; cooperation between SMEs, universities and research centres; and promoting advanced consultancy and technological audits in companies.

Innovative actions in the area of access to the information society focused on a number of important sectors: putting administrative services online; electronics at the service of businesses; and experiments with high-speed Internet access by satellite for mountainous areas and remote rural areas.

particularly in the context of the review of economic and social cohesion policy for the period 2007-13.

To find out more:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/innovation/index_en.htm

To contact the thematic networks:

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Technological innovation: s.sorbi@regione.toscana.it

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Regional innovation prize

To facilitate the dissemination of best practices, the European Commission is encouraging regions responsible for managing an innovative actions programme to enter a regional innovation competition. These regions are invited to submit to the Commission, by 31 October 2003, any project which they believe is particularly innovative. Projects will be judged by a jury chaired by former Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Guterres. Three prizes, one per theme, will be awarded in April 2004 at a plenary session of the Committee of the Regions.



Regional innovation prize: Antonio Guterres (fifth from the left) with the full complement of jury members.

In support

A tool for Italian local authorities Formez spreads the message

The Italian agency Formez is enabling local and regional authorities to benefit from innovative services in the field of European information. It is also encouraging inter-regional cooperation.

‘All for one, one for all’. Could the motto of the Three Musketeers be adopted by Italian civil servants — at local and regional levels — charged with managing Structural Funds? Whatever the region, they are all trying to gain easy access to the same specialised information on Europe, its policies and its programmes. Many of them have questions to which colleagues no doubt have the answer. So if they share common needs, why not share the computing tools too, so they can all benefit? That, in a nutshell, is the thinking behind Formez.

Formez is a private Italian agency with public-sector partners and sponsors: the Civil Service Department (under the Prime Minister), the regional governments, the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI), the Union of Italian Provinces (UPI), the National Union of Mountain Communities (UNCCEM), etc.

Formez was originally founded to provide civil servants in southern Italy with training and consultancy to help them catch up with their colleagues in the north. It subsequently extended its services to civil servants throughout the country and also extended its range of services. In this context, one of the key needs of Italy’s local authorities was specialist information on the Structural Funds and European policy.

With this aim in mind, in 1997 Formez launched the ‘Europa’ project. Europa provides not just online access to information about the European Union, it also acts as a genuine electronic platform. Civil servants can place documents online which they

consider to be of interest, they can participate in discussion forums, put their questions to experts (both inside and outside the Formez network), share software programmes, etc. At the end of 2001, the agency opened a Europa page dedicated specifically to transnational cooperation.

On this page, Formez provide civil servants with practical advice on why and how to launch a transnational partnership. It also includes an English-Italian and Italian-English dictionary of Community technical terms. In essence, Formez offers an international partner search tool which operates in both directions: Italians who want to cooperate with an organisation abroad can post their notice on the site, and nationals of other European countries wishing to establish contacts with Italian local and regional authorities can do the same.

In addition to this virtual communication, Formez offers individual advice to those seeking to organise visits or exchanges of experience with other European regions. In October 2002, for example, the agency helped set up a study visit to Scotland for five local authorities from Italy’s centre-north region. The aim of this trip was to enable the officials to see for themselves how British public employment agencies operate, given their reputation for efficiency. Following the study visit, similar contacts were planned with employment agencies in Germany.

In Italy, Formez organises decentralised training for civil servants on ‘transnational cooperation within Community programmes’. Courses of this kind have been held in Sicily, Bari,



Livourne, the Province of Belluno and elsewhere.

Formez also supports cooperation beyond the Union’s borders and has enabled Italian public partners to share their know-how with local development agents in the Buenos-Aires area in Argentina. A twinning project has also been set up with Slovakia in the field of agriculture and partnerships have been formed with Romania and Slovenia to help them modernise their administration. On the eve of enlargement, there is more than ever a need to think big ...

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Discovering an accession country

Malta

A bridge in the Mediterranean

Bridging Europe and the Arab world, despite its small size and insularity, Malta enters the final stage of its preparations for EU membership with a sound economy and some valuable assets.

Malta is the smallest of the new accession countries, but is also Europe's most densely populated state with 1 234 inhabitants per km². It is an archipelago of three islands — Malta, Gozo and Comino — lying at the centre of the Mediterranean. Throughout its long history Malta has experienced a rich intermingling of cultures and civilisations, as Arabs, Phoenicians, Carthaginians and others landed on its shores.

After 150 years of British rule, Malta became independent in 1964 and acquired the status of Republic on 13 December 1974. The country's official languages are Maltese and English.

Following sustained growth throughout the past decade, the Maltese economy is flourishing, with a per capita GDP similar to Portugal. Malta's unemployment rate is close to the current EU average, and inflation is also low: 2.2 % in 2002. The only real weakness is the high level of public debt: 60.6 % of GDP in 2000.

Despite its small size, Malta has substantial assets, including its tourism potential, a skilled and multilingual



workforce, and a well-developed electronics industry (semi-conductors). But it also has its weaknesses, including problems of waste management, poor water quality and a fragile agricultural sector. With the third largest merchant shipping fleet in the world, for many years Malta has also had the unfortunate reputation of being a haven for flags of convenience. The island is today trying to dispel this negative image by reforming its maritime code.

Two main political parties dominate the country's political life: the conservative Nationalist Party and the Labour Party. The former is pro-European and liberalised the country's economy while reducing import barriers. When the Labour Party came to power in 1996, Malta withdrew its application for EU membership. This was resubmitted two years later when power reverted to the Nationalist Party. On 8 March 2003, Malta was the first candidate country to hold a referendum on EU membership. The result — a 53.65 % yes vote — was a

clear victory for conservative Prime Minister Edward Fenech Adami.

Unlike the central and east European countries, Malta has not benefited from the Sapard (agriculture and rural development) and ISPA (transport and environment) pre-accession instruments. This does not mean the island has been forgotten however. During the period 2000-04 it will receive EUR 38 million from pre-accession instruments. This is in addition to support under the MEDA Programme, the instrument of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

At present, Malta is preparing its future policy to combat regional disparities and putting the finishing touches to its 2003-06 development plan. Between 2004 and 2006, Malta is set to receive some EUR 55.9 million under Objective 1.

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Surface area

316 km²

Population

393 000 inhabitants (2001)

Density: 1 234 inhabitants/km² (EU-15: 118 inhabitants/km²)

Economy and employment

Per capita GDP index at PPA (2000): 53 (EU-15: 100)

Unemployment rate (2002): 7.4 % (EU-15: 7.6 %)

An interview with Mr Edward Fenech Adami, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta



As we approach Malta's accession to the European Union, all the economic indicators are positive, except for one: the level of public debt. How can your government address this weakness?

Our plans are to achieve a gradual, but consistent reduction in the government budget deficit. My government has already reaffirmed its commitment to both review its expenditure programmes and to enhance the effectiveness of tax collection processes. We are determined to ensure that social services are targeted at those who truly deserve them, and to ensure that the tax burden is spread in an equitable fashion.

The past few years have shown that improvements can be delivered in the fiscal imbalance without creating unnecessary shocks to the workings of the economy. The creation of a more business-friendly economic environment has a central role in government's strategy to contain and gradually cut back the fiscal imbalance. This is why we remain determined to proceed along the direction we had set in the past few years, namely that of engaging in a more active way all the social partners in the decision-making process. This strategic choice of my government is not only strengthening the social fabric of our small country but it is also adding credibility and support to our programme for economic and financial restructuring.

Are there 'regional disparities' in an area as small as the archipelago of Malta? If there are, how do you propose to reduce them? What are your main economic and social priorities?

Governments in Malta have striven to ensure a geographically more equitable participation in the nation's economic and social developments. We collaborated with the European Union to ensure that our concerns regarding regional disparities would be more effectively dealt with following Malta's accession to the European Union. Malta negotiated a special concession under Chapter 21 of the *acquis* to have a special priority for the island of Gozo to address Gozo's special needs. It is both the Maltese Government's and the European Commission's conviction that the projects for the island of Gozo, which will be

financed through this specific priority, should address in a comprehensive and systematic manner the most critical shortcomings which have been hindering Gozo's development process. A study was commissioned, and concluded in May 2002, with the view of objectively determining and identifying the more significant stumbling blocks which the social and economic development process on the island of Gozo has and is still facing. The results of this study feed into the 'Gozo' priority of the single programming document (SPD). In addition, Gozo is eligible as a beneficiary of other projects which feature under all the other priorities of the SPD.

It is my government's priority to provide the necessary infrastructure for the development of the productive sector, transport, and environmental and human resources. Particular emphasis has been placed on the development of vocational training. These measures should ultimately ensure that similar disadvantaged regions are empowered to integrate fully into the development process that is under way in Malta. They should also ensure that the significant benefits that the country's accession to the European Union will generate will be more evenly distributed across different areas of Malta.

Malta participated actively in MEDA, the programme for Euro-Mediterranean partnership. What have been the benefits of this programme for Malta?

Malta is eligible to participate fully in all programmes and initiatives financed under the regional element of MEDA. Regional initiatives that are supported by MEDA include projects under Euromed Heritage, the Euromed Youth Action Programme and Euromed Information Society. A number of Maltese entities have been successful in obtaining MEDA regional funds for their projects over the past few years, and many Euromed meetings held in Malta are funded by MEDA.

Of particular importance is the twice-yearly information and training sessions for diplomats entrusted to the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies and the MA Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation run by the Foundation for International Studies at the University of Malta. These have become regular activities financed under the MEDA regional programme.

There has been a general improved absorption of the funds allocated under MEDA following the decentralisation of the Commission's activities within the Barcelona Process. There is a possibility that the accession of the new Member States will increase the demand on the regional component of the MEDA funds and therefore due consideration should be given to this aspect.

The value of a country doesn't necessarily depend on its size. What will be the main contribution of Malta, the smallest of the 25 Member States, to the European Union?

Malta's bid for European Union membership underlines our commitment to the ideals of human rights, democracy and rule of law. We have consistently sought to strengthen and uphold these ideals, upon which the European Union is built.

Malta has always striven to play an active role in various international fora, such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and the Commonwealth. Precisely because of their size, small countries can often contribute more effectively to the resolution of issues of a certain nature, which require a lateral pursuit of solutions, and we have always endeavoured to find a different path, or a third way.

In these fora we have always sought to further the common interests of the Mediterranean region through the active promotion of policies aimed at fostering peace, stability and prosperity in the region. Malta is totally committed to promoting stability in the Mediterranean at the bilateral, regional and international levels. We strongly feel that we can contribute towards a sense of shared prosperity and increased stability in the Mediterranean, both through our own individual efforts and by supporting those of the Union. One of the key elements that Malta can bring to the EU is precisely our experience and knowledge of the Mediterranean.

Therefore we bring to the Union, *inter alia*, an intimate knowledge of a region whose stability is clearly vital for Europe. By bringing the two together, we feel certain of the substantial contribution we will be able to make to further the European Union's Mediterranean policy from inside the Union.

Interview conducted in June 2003.

Discovering a region

South Sweden

A pivotal region in the Baltic

It is cooperation more than anything else that has enabled South Sweden to become one of northern Europe's most developed regions and of pivotal importance to the Baltic as a whole.



'Sydsverige' (South Sweden) includes the six provinces of Scania, Halland, Jönköping, Kronoberg, Blekinge and Kalmar. It covers an area of 51 000 km² and is home to 2.3 million people, a quarter of the Swedish population. Despite the absence of big cities — except for Malmö (pop. 250 000) — South Sweden is of major economic importance, ranking fourth nationally in terms of gross domestic product (GDP).

The regional economy is based on a strong secondary sector which includes such famous names as Ericsson, IKEA and Tetra Pak. With its rich natural and cultural heritage, tourism is another traditional source of wealth for the region. Today tourism is strengthened by what has become known as the 'events industry' (see following article). New research-based economic activities (telematics, medicine, environmental science, polymer technologies, etc.) have also provided new sources of employment and prosperity. Science parks, such as the 'Ideon' park, founded in Lund in 1983 and today Scandinavia's leading science park, have sprung up around

the region's three universities and seven colleges of technology.

One of the region's key strengths is the ability of its business community to work together in networks and clusters. Intra-regional cooperation adopts what is known as the 'triple helix' model, a partnership between the private, public and academic sectors. On the international stage, for example, south Sweden is a member of the 'Highest ++' project, a network of support structures for companies situated in five European zones, the others being: the Alpes-Maritimes (France), Helsinki (Finland), Turin (Italy) and Berlin (Germany). On two occasions — in 2001 and 2002 — south Sweden was awarded the European Commission's 'Award of excellence for innovative regions'.

Strategically located at the entrance to the Baltic Sea, South Sweden has maintained close relations with its neighbours Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Poland, Germany and Denmark since the days of the Hanseatic League. Today, the Interreg programme plays a very important

role in further strengthening cross-border exchanges.

The Swedish Government is currently seeking to include the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad in the Baltic cooperation area. In 2000 the SydSam, the managing body for the network of South Sweden's six provinces, signed a cooperation agreement with the Oblast region of Kaliningrad for exchanges in a variety of fields, including democracy, health and medical assistance, the environment and culture.

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Surface area

52 448 km²

Population (2003)

2 313 092 inhabitants

Density: 44 inhabitants/km² (EU-15:
118 inhabitants/km²)

Economy and employment

Per capita GDP Index at PPP (2000):
98 (EU-15: 100)

Unemployment rate (2001):
6.4 % (EU-15: 8.3 %)

Rock for local development

The 'events industry' is seen as an extremely promising source of new jobs, and in this respect south Sweden is particularly well placed, with such world-famous rock bands as Roxette, the Cardigans and The Ark all coming from the region. Rock music has now become a genuine regional speciality — thanks to help from the Structural Funds.

Situated at the centre of a forested area, every year the small town of Hultsfred (pop. 5 500) plays host to Sweden's biggest rock festival. First held in 1986, on the 12, 13 and 14 June this year 40 000 fans, over 100 artists, 1 200 journalists, and millions of TV viewers and internauts (there is a live webcast of the event) swayed to the rhythms of 'Rock City Hultsfred 2003'.

Surprisingly however, this small town does not suddenly go quiet again once the stages are taken down, the sleeping bags rolled up and the revellers departed. Hultsfred has become a permanent feature on Sweden's rock and pop music map. Throughout the year, everybody from obscure rock bands to highly renowned musicians comes to Hultsfred to make the most of the comprehensive infrastructures they need to rehearse, record and play live. They also have all access to the

services and atmosphere they need to fuel and sustain their inspiration.

Sweden's success on the music scene generates considerable revenue for the country. Music is currently Sweden's number three export. This is why the Swedish Government decided to make Hultsfred the country's music/events capital by supporting the creation of an enterprise centre specialising in music and events.

The local high school runs courses on various aspects of music and entertainment and, since the autumn of 2000, Kalmar High School has been running a special course on management in the entertainment industry. More than just a festival, 'Rock City Hultsfred' offers the music and entertainment sector a whole range of opportunities which music, telematics and cinematographic companies have been quick to seize.

The development project as a whole has received EUR 3.7 million under Objective 2, including EUR 1 million from the FEDER, EUR 1.6 million from Swedish public funds and EUR 1.1 million from private sources.

For more information on the project's background and beginnings:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/innovation/innovating/pacts/tp/lis/t/hul-en.html



Multiple cooperation

Medicon Valley Academy

Partly financed by the Interreg IIA programme (approximately EUR 700 000), this cooperation project has made it possible to initiate the exchange of knowledge, know-how and resources in the medical sector between Sweden and Denmark.
www.mva.org

SEBTrans

SEBTrans is an Interreg IIC project designed to assess future demand for sustainable transport systems between

regions on both sides of the southern Baltic. www.sebtrans.com

Culinary heritage

South Sweden is participating in 'Culinary heritage Europe 2003-05', an Interreg IIC cooperation project involving 19 regions from nine countries. The aim is to encourage regional development by supporting small producers of quality foods.
www.culinary-heritage.com

Swebaltcop

Launched in the framework of Article 10 of the FEDER, this cross-border

project resulted in 70 successful cooperation actions between the Baltic States. www.swebaltcop.org

Quality of life: 'Seagull'

The main aim of the Seagull project, currently being launched in the framework of the Baltic Euregion, is to draw up and implement a strategy and transnational development plan for the Euregion as a whole. The project has a budget of EUR 6 million.
www.eurobalt.org/english/projects/seagull/seagull.asp

Beyond Regulation (EC) No 1159/2000

Better communication on the Structural Funds

'Communicating about the Structural Funds' is now a priority for the management authorities, and the days of one-off actions is over. A global communications strategy must now be implemented to get the message across to potential beneficiaries, and to the general public. European Regulation (EC) No 1159/2000 sets the common framework and invites everybody to contribute to this activity.

In 2001, DATAR, the French agency for town and country planning, carried out a survey in the French regions. The aim was to find out exactly how they provided information on the Structural Funds. Analysed by the University of Paris IV (Sorbonne), the survey showed that 56 % of the regional authorities consulted considered that during the years 1994–99 the information they had provided about the Structural Funds was 'inappropriate'. An admission of failure ...

Of course this was just one poll in one country. It nevertheless highlighted an important issue: traditionally, the management authorities have not regarded providing information about the Structural Funds as a priority.

The present generation of Structural Funds (2000–06) marks a change of course. The Commission has adopted a new regulation ⁽¹⁾ on information and publicity measures to be carried out by the Member States. This regulation has acted as a catalyst for the introduction of a new principle. Effective communication about the Structural Funds, to participants and to the general public, is now seen as a core task, along with the efficient administration and financial management of the programmes.

⁽¹⁾ Commission Regulation (EC) No 1159/2000 of 30 May 2000 'on information and publicity measures to be carried out by the Member States concerning assistance from the Structural Funds.'

A triple effect

Effective communication has a triple effect. Firstly, by widely publicising details of procedures and opportunities, it ensures equal opportunity for all potential beneficiaries.

Secondly, in the interests of democracy, people must know how the money is spent. Europe's taxpayers are entitled to know where their money is going.

And thirdly, information is a necessary ingredient of effective action. By drawing attention to actions undertaken, even the most sceptical socioeconomic players can be induced to participate in their region's

development. Potential players are mobilised and lasting and deep-rooted effects are obtained.

Another key principle at the heart of the new regulation is that the management authorities with responsibility for communications should not act alone. A genuine information chain must be activated. It can be very useful, for example, for projects benefiting from the Structural Funds to contribute to this collective communication effort. In this way they can provide tangible proof of what structural assistance can achieve, serving as 'ambassadors' of the European Union.

The regulation also stresses another fundamental point: the need to draw



attention to the fact that structural assistance is a joint effort, involving the European Union and Member States. Attention often focuses exclusively on the financial aspect, which fails to do the Structural Funds justice. There is more to the Union's structural policy than the redistribution of money, it also has its own methods and objectives. Structural aid is only granted to projects which are in keeping with a European approach. It is therefore important to highlight this approach.

Another important aspect is the fact that the Union's structural policy contributes to peace and stability in Europe, and thus to the very essence of European integration. It tackles socioeconomic differences between citizens which are very often the main cause of social tension and unrest.

Creativity

This leaves the question of how to communicate these messages to the general public. One thing is certain: the language of officialdom must be avoided along with all its administrative jargon, superfluous details and propaganda. Information benefits from being based on facts and concrete cases, which explain how projects supported by the Structural Funds make an effective contribution to improving living conditions for everyone.

Traditionally, two means are used to reach a wide audience: advertising and publicity. The new regulation places special emphasis on relationships with the media. Newspapers, radio and television are in direct contact with the public. They know their needs and excel in translating technical information into reports which grab attention. Working with the media in this way must be a long-term commitment.

Communication is too important a mission to be left to chance. Clear

objectives must be formulated following a careful analysis of the problems posed. This is why the regulation sets two new obligations for the management authorities.

Firstly, a global and multiannual communication plan must be prepared, and secondly, as part of the same approach, the management authorities must evaluate the communications initiatives.

The Commission regulation lays down the minimum rules. It defines principles. It sets a direction. But it is most certainly not a communications manual. This regulation is designed to



encourage the management authorities to be creative. It is an effort worth making because when it comes to public money, all the parties — administrations, project promoters, economic and social players, and the general public — stand to gain from good communication.

Some slogans

Several management authorities have adopted a slogan to communicate about the Structural Funds.

The ingredients of an effective message? Positive, simple and evocative; focusing on the objectives; a direct appeal to the reader; the idea of a Europe close to the people. And a great deal of imagination. Here are some examples:

'Mijn idee' (*My idea*)
Flevoland Region (The Netherlands)

'Personne ne reste sur la touche' (*Nobody is left on the sidelines*)
Walloon Region (Belgium)

'You are now sitting on a whole load of European money'
Tyneside (United Kingdom)

'L'Europe avec nous' (*Europe with us*)
Languedoc-Roussillon Region (France)

'Your plan, your future'
Ireland

'L'Europe de vos projets' (*The Europe of your projects*)
Centre Region (France)

'Europe and Scotland, making it work together'
Scotland (United Kingdom)

Stelvio/Stilfserjoch National Park (Italy) Structural Funds for a natural park

In the interests of sustainable regional development, the Structural Funds finance many environmental projects. The autonomous Province of Bolzano coordinates several such projects in the Stelvio/Stilfserjoch National Park.

The Stelvio/Stilfserjoch National Park covers an area of 1 350 km² on the borders of Trentin Haut-Adige (autonomous Provinces of Bolzano and Trento) and Lombardy. It also shares a border with the Swiss National Park, which effectively extends a further 169 km² into the canton of Grisons, making this one of Europe's biggest protected areas. For several years now, a consortium of committees and representatives from various areas of the park have been responsible for its management and coordination. In addition to environmental protection, the park offers opportunities for recreational activities, environmental education and ecological research. These activities have led Stelvio/Stilfserjoch National Park to implement a number of projects in recent years which are designed to make the public more aware of issues relating to the protection of flora, fauna and natural habitats. The Interreg and LEADER+ Objective 2 projects, coordinated by the autonomous Province of Bolzano, have contributed to this effort.



The Naturatrafoi ecology centre.

Habit alp

Since November 2002, the Stelvio/Stilfserjoch National Park and the autonomous Province of Bolzano have participated in the 'Diversity of the Alpine habitat (Habit alp)' project, in the framework of the network of protected areas of the Alpine Arc. Nine national parks in Italy, Switzerland, Austria, France and Germany are partners in this Interreg IIIB action, which is headed by the Berchtesgaden National Park in Bavaria. The mission — in line with the principles set out in the Habitat Community directive and the Natura 2000 environmental network — is to

harmonise data on the long-term observation of endangered animal species. Infrared aerial photographs, which enable animals to be located by the heat they produce, are an essential tool in this work. Habit alp involves the production of these photographs, and their subsequent analysis and interpretation using a common interpretation key so as to be able to identify all the zones which should be covered by the Habitat directive. The information is then entered into a multilingual database. Habit alp has a budget of EUR 1.5 million over a three-year period, including EUR 700 000 from the European Union.

The Alpine Golden Eagle

The Golden Eagle used to be widespread across the whole of central Europe. Unfortunately, it was hunted almost to extinction at the turn of the 19th century as a 'harmful predator'. Other large predators of the Alps such as the bearded vulture, the wolf and the bear suffered the same fate.

Golden Eagle populations now seem to be stable but our knowledge of their habits and breeding behaviour remain insufficient. Participants at a meeting of the network of protected Alpine areas held in Rauris (Austria) in October 1999 agreed that there was a need for coordinated action to observe and study their populations. The Stelvio/Stilfserjoch, Dolomites (Italy) and Hautes Tauern (Germany) national parks decided to form a partnership to pool their know-how, knowledge and data on the Alpine Golden Eagle, while also coordinating their protective measures. Operational

The 'Habit alp'

- Nationalpark Berchtesgaden (Germany), project leader
- Parc national suisse (Switzerland)
- Parco Nazionale dello Stelvio (Italy)
- Parco Nazionale Dolomiti Bellunesi (Italy)
- Parco Nazionale del Gran Paradiso (Italy)
- Parco Naturale del Mont Avic (Italy)
- Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano / Autonome Provinz Bozen – Südtirol (Italy)
- Nationalpark Hohe Tauern (Austria)
- Parc national de la Vanoise (France)
- Parc national des Ecrins (France)
- ASTERS (France)



since 2002, this network covers an area of 3 200 km². It receives total funding of EUR 400 000, including EUR 200 000 from the Community, under the Interreg IIIA Italy/Austria programme.

The 'Naturatrafoi' centre

'Naturatrafoi' is one of the three visitor centres in the Stelvio/Stilfserjoch National Park. The other two are 'Aquaprad' in Prad, which is based on the theme of water, and 'Culturamartell' in Trattla, based on the mountain way of life. 'Naturatrafoi' was built by the Stelvio/Stilfserjoch local authorities between 2001 and 2002 with assistance from the LEADER II and Interreg II Community initiative programmes.

Opened in 2002, the centre includes a reception area for visitors to the park, a vast hall for conferences, seminars and training, a library and a permanent exhibition covering 400 m² on the theme of 'frontier life'.

Objective 2 aid of EUR 765 000 (including EUR 612 000 from the autonomous province of Bolzano and the European Union, each contributing 50 %) has now made it possible to open this nature house. A new research centre on the park's Alpine ecology will also be opening shortly in the complex.

Combining tourism, research, culture and ecology, Naturatrafoi is set to become an important resource in terms of jobs, services and intellectual exchanges, for both the local population and for the Stelvio/Stilfserjoch national park as a whole.

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Regions in action, a country on the move — A selection of successful projects financed by the Structural Funds in Greece

26 examples of successful projects in Greece.



Available in Greek, English and French.

Regional revival — Successful projects financed by the Structural Funds in Austria

A selection of 21 projects co-financed by the EU in Austria.



Available in German and English.

Partnership with the cities — The URBAN Community Initiative

The 'URBAN method' illustrated by a selection of projects.



Available in all 11 languages of the European Union.

Online



<http://www.eprc.strath.ac.uk/iqnet/iq-net>

IQ-Net is a European network of regional and national partners from Structural Fund programming across the European Union. The aim of the network is to improve the quality of Structural Fund management through the exchange of experience. The network implements a structured programme of applied research and debate, centred on a biannual conference of all the partners. The IQ-Net site is accessible in eight languages: English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Danish, Finnish and Swedish.

<http://www.ploteus.net>

The Directorate-General for Education and Culture has launched a new Internet portal in 14 languages: 'Ploteus'. The names of the various sections which make up this 'Portal of learning opportunities throughout Europe' — hence the acronym — give a good idea of the tool's utility: 'Learning opportunities', 'Education systems', 'Exchanges', 'Contact', 'Moving to a country'. Ploteus is particularly useful for providing links with national educational sites, schools and educational establishments of all kinds and at all levels.



<http://www.isc-europe.com/epoline/>

For the past 30 years, the European Patent Office (EPO) has been protecting inventions and intellectual property rights in the 24 member countries. Processing around 150 000 patent applications a year, in 2001 the EPO launched an Internet site making it possible to consult online the database of patents registered with the Office, totalling 3 million documentary sources. 'Epoline' also allows inventors and creators to submit their patent applications online.

<http://www.interregnorthsea.org>

The site of Interreg IIIB North Sea Programme, which covers regions in the seven countries (Denmark, Flemish Region, Germany, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom) around the North Sea has been redesigned. It now gives better and more information to those involved in the programme at all levels and to the wider public. Try the interactive map under 'Projects' — 'Projects in your area', where you will find information about and links to projects in the individual regions. The site also gives helpful information about the 'project cycle', guiding projects through the stages from idea to submitting the final report.



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