

SRN WORKSHOP – THE QUALITY DIMENSION

ALBA, ITALY 23 NOVEMBER 2006

Achieving high quality projects in line with EU Lisbon and Gothenburg strategies

In this workshop SRN partners explored the contribution of sub-regional organisations to the achievement of EU objectives for innovation and competitiveness, growth and jobs, environmental protection and sustainable development using Structural Funds. Municipalities and other sub-regional bodies have the capacity to broker and deliver multi-purpose (win-win) projects which help to meet these priorities in an integrated way, achieving measurable outputs 'on the ground'. The development of detailed selection criteria for projects and ways of monitoring project outcomes against Lisbon and Gothenburg objectives were also considered. The partners identified some good practices, illustrative projects and transferable elements. The workshop was hosted by Marta Ferraro from the Langhe Monferrato Roero consortium of south Piedmont and chaired by Ian Hill. Liz Mills was rapporteur.

Overview of the Lisbon and Gothenburg agendas

Laura Carletti from **SVIM** outlined the development of the Lisbon and Gothenburg policy agendas since 2000. She reviewed the adoption and mid term review of the Lisbon strategy and its re-launch with a focus on growth and jobs in 2005. Member States have since established National Reform Programmes in line with the 24 integrated guidelines for growth and jobs adopted by the European Council. The Commission's first review of progress suggests that the re-launched strategy is starting to deliver results. The initial Gothenburg agenda, which provided an environmental dimension to the Lisbon process, has also been reviewed since 2001, especially to take account of EU enlargement. The Gothenburg agenda has now been superseded by the broader EU Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) adopted by the Council in June 2006.

For 2007-2013 the Structural Funds will represent the main EU financial resource to deliver the Lisbon strategy and SDS objectives, as the Community Strategic Guidelines confirm. In the current funding period these priorities were determined after preparation of the programming documents. These policy priorities now need to be taken into account before Operational Programmes are drafted and projects prepared. The local level has a significant opportunity to demonstrate what Lisbon and Gothenburg priorities mean in practice.

Evaluation of the achievement of Lisbon and Gothenburg strategy objectives through INTERREG : the ALSO project.

Ida Proserpi from **SVIM** presented the ALSO project, led by Marche Region and funded by the INTERACT programme. The project has 15 partners drawn from Strands A, B and C of INTERREG, plus scientific partners EIPA (NL) and ULB (Belgium). It runs from June 2005 to June 2007 and has a budget of about 1.2m EURO.

The partners in ALSO have developed and tested a common methodology and set of indicators (based on the 24 EU guidelines for growth and jobs) to be used especially by programme managers in evaluating the impact of projects from all three strands of INTERREG. A key aim has been to demonstrate that INTERREG can make an effective contribution to delivery of Lisbon and Gothenburg goals within a region. Software based on the evaluation model will be made available to other project managers and evaluators. Other outputs include a Good Practice Manual scheduled for February 2007. The new INTERACT JTS and Managing Authorities will be trained in the use of the model as a way of analysing future INTERREG experiences.

Implementation of the Lisbon and Gothenburg strategies through Structural Funds

Ian Hill outlined the experience of **Cumbria** in the INTERREG IIIC RFO TOWER which focuses on the sustainable economic development of regions. Some of the 12 selected sub-projects directly address Lisbon and Gothenburg goals. All of the sub-projects are being delivered in interregional partnerships, with demonstrable 'added value'.

Paola Bellabona from **Marche Region** presented work with SMEs and innovation, focusing on long-standing support for clusters of SMEs in different sectors, such as mechanical engineering, yacht construction, textiles, shoes and wood products. Several different funding programmes have been used to support this activity.

In the Objective 2 programme for Marche Region 2000-06 SMEs are considered the key factor for economic development. Their difficulties are addressed through the provision of common support services like those delivered by Meccano SpA, a non-profit high technology innovation centre which provides strategic services to SMEs on, for example, R&D, technology transfer, collaboration with universities, and the improvement of standards, for example in energy consumption. Services in Computer Aided Engineering allow the rapid and economic creation of prototypes. Meccano is active in Quality Certification and Voluntary Marks. On the human resources side, Meccano in partnership with a range of stakeholders has an ESF grant to train specialists in Mechanical industrial Design.

The ERDF Innovative Actions programme 2000-06 supported development of the 'silent kitchen', an innovation transfer programme focusing on the reduction of acoustic emissions from domestic appliances. The INTERREG IIIA project GALILEO ('Growing an Adriatic Laboratory for Locating Economic Organisations') co-financed development of a centre to support innovative and environmentally sound manufacturing enterprises in Croatia.

With regard to the EU SDS, Marche is using its international links to encourage businesses in non-EU countries to respect EU environmental standards. Measure 1.5 of the Objective 2 programme is part-funding collaborative work with Brazil, including transfer of the Italian 'Technological Centre System'. The sustainable use of Amazon forests is supported through action with woodwork enterprises in Marche.

Paul Owens explained how Lisbon and Gothenburg priorities are being addressed in **Bristol's** Objective 2 programme. The overall approach is set out in the Local Action Plan with its emphasis on 'investing in local neighbourhoods to build a sustainable future'. The detailed objectives are a good fit with the Lisbon and Gothenburg agendas. They include supporting 'the development of entrepreneurial and caring communities, fully engaged in the mainstream economic, community and cultural life of the city' and ensuring 'that environmental sustainability goes hand in hand with quality improvements to the social and economic wellbeing of the area'. Environment is a horizontal theme in the programme.

Bristol Objective 2 has indicative actions for ERDF and ESF spending targeted on environment and economic activities. Projects must demonstrate that they meet at least some Action Plan targets. They are also assessed for their contribution to environmental objectives, such as improved air quality, reduced energy use and waste minimisation. Practical implementation is supported through environmental workshops run in cooperation with the sustainable city team based in the City Council's environment centre.

The project appraisal process is applied across the whole of the South West Objective 2 programme. There are gateway criteria, including the requirement to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment on all project bids. Additionally, the programme has scoring criteria (a checklist). Any project which scores zero on any of the scoring criteria is refused funding.

Examples of 'win win' projects supported by Objective 2 include Children's Scrapstore (conversion of a factory building for recycling industrial and trade waste for children's educational activities), St Werburg's Gateway (a new access road enabling re-use of a difficult brownfield site and incorporating noise and pollution barriers which benefit local

residents), Babeco Back to Work (a community enterprise making and laundering washable nappies, significantly reducing waste), and the Arcocomedia project to construct a green media training centre and incubator business units on a social housing estate. This utilises straw bale construction techniques.

Ursula Pérez Pérez, Sociedad Desarrollo de Santa Cruz de Tenerife reminded partners that in Spain sub-regional bodies have no devolved competences in the main policy fields relating to Lisbon and Gothenburg and little involvement in the management of Structural Funds. However, in the current period the Sociedad de Desarrollo has been involved in several relevant EU-funded projects, such as the RFO MODELE, other INTERREG projects Tic-PYME and SMITA and some Leonardo training activities.

For the period 2007-2013 the Canaries will be an Objective 1 Phasing-out Region. The draft Operational Programme is being drawn up by the Autonomous Region. Despite its experience in project delivery the Sociedad de Desarrollo has not been consulted. The content of the new Programme is a close fit with Lisbon and Gothenburg priorities, stressing innovation and the knowledge-based economy, environment and risk prevention and access to transport and telecommunications outside large urban areas. Some adjustments have had to be made in the Canary Islands' approach to Lisbon to reflect, for example, the effects of unexpectedly high in-migration, pressures in the housing market, relatively low levels of educational attainment and lower than average spending on R&D.

Omission of the Canaries from the future Atlantic Area and SUDOE transnational programmes is seen as likely to perpetuate the 'outermost region' status of the islands.

Progress on the new Operational Programmes in SRN partners' regions.

The SRN partners gave a brief account of the state of play in each of their regions.

In the three Italian regions represented the Region takes the lead on drafting the new Operational Programmes, but the provinces have been consulted, and stakeholder partnerships established, to support the drafting process. In **Marche** consultation is regarded as positive since actions will be implemented at local level. A good draft OP now exists, with innovation and knowledge, environment and accessibility, including transport and ICT diffusion inside the region, as the main themes, but stakeholders are still looking for more reflection of their own priorities. In **Emilia-Romagna** discussion has focused on places losing Objective 2, on ways to finance innovation so as to build on a previous domestic programme, and on how better to develop integrated projects involving more than one sector, such as retail and tourism. In **Piedmont** consultation has been mainly with public authorities. As a development agency LAMORO has had scarcely any involvement, despite the region's stated aim to encourage public-private partnership. The strategic lines will be very similar to the past programming period, though there will be more focus on Lisbon and Gothenburg, more encouragement to develop integrated projects, and efforts to improve cooperative efforts between groups of villages.

In the **South West of England**, Bristol is losing Objective 2. A Competitiveness and Employment programme is in draft by consultants, overseen by a steering group. Sub-regional bodies have had some opportunities to comment on the emerging programme, and a full consultation document has recently been launched. Management and delivery will be by the RDA. The sustainable communities theme will be the nearest thing to an urban priority. There may be some devolution to city councils but the amounts involved will be small. The draft OP for the **North West of England** is also out for consultation. A lobby for devolved funds for Cumbria was not successful. However, the programme will be 'Cumbria-proofed' so that it does not disadvantage the county. The biggest problem in the North West is the drop in resources.

In the Czech Republic – discussion has focused on overlaps between the two new OPs. Although representatives from cities and villages can lobby for the needs of their localities, municipalities cannot directly influence the programme.

In **South West Finland** there has been little change since the report by the Regional Council at SRN's last meeting in Turku. One of the four priorities in the programme is the development of major urban areas. Turku has been directly involved in drafting this priority which now contains the city's own objectives, but since only 5% of the funding is allocated for sustainable urban development the outcome is likely to be a series of projects rather than a programme.

Good practice exchange

SRN partners were asked to identify aspects of the presentations given in the workshop which they consider to be good practice and which might be transferred to their own situations.

The INTERACT project ALSO presented by SVIM was highlighted by Turku, Modena, Hranice and Cumbria as a useful tool which could be adapted to local circumstances, especially by incorporation of indicators relating to specific local strategies, by strengthening the environmental dimension and by enabling links to be made between particular processes and project outcomes. In Turku and Modena existing tools could be adapted to bring them more into line with Lisbon and Gothenburg objectives.

Langhe Monferrato Roero found Bristol's project appraisal arrangements combining Lisbon and Gothenburg objectives of interest.

Supporting sector clusters in Marche Region by providing shared facilities, for example for the mechanical engineering sector, was selected by Bristol and Tenerife. Transfer might be possible for the media sector in Bristol, for example. There are already similarities between the approach provided by the Meccano centre in Marche region and the mechanical engineering centre visited in Turku.

The example from Marche also illustrates the use of different funds to support a particular strategy, comparable with the case of Lille presented in Tampere, and confirms that the development of a strategy for a region can be a very long term process. An integrated system is needed – not one action at a time.

Concluding points

SRN partners share a clear understanding of the Lisbon and Gothenburg agendas and of how the balance between these has changed over time. Consideration of these policy themes demonstrates that the regional dimension is essential and that the sub-region is where EU policy is delivered on the ground. SRN partners have demonstrated some good examples of INTERREG and Structural Funds projects. Several partners – such as Bristol, Turku and Cumbria (in the RFO TOWER) - have experience in assessing bids for projects relating to these key policy themes.

One of the main challenges remains the assessment of the 'added value' of territorial cooperation in meeting EU and more local policy goals.

The involvement of sub-regional organisations in programming for the new Structural Funds period remains variable. In future, the main contribution of sub-regional bodies may be in project delivery rather than in programme management.