

Executive Summary of 2003 Annual Report

The Interreg IIB Northern Periphery Programme 2001 - 2006

Promoting regional development through transnational cooperation in Northern Europe and the north Atlantic area.

Strong interest in economic development!

When the Interreg IIB Northern Periphery Programme prepared its annual report of activities for 2003, after three years of implementation and programme activities, the results showed that the priority **“Strengthening of sustainable economic development”** has attracted the most project applicants and committed funding by the Programme Steering Committee.

In total, the programme has committed 15,1 Million Euro or 52 % of programme funds of which 9,8 Million Euro is European Regional Development Funds and 5,3 Million Euro is from non EU-member States. The transnational cooperation of States includes the EU-member States of Finland, Scotland and Sweden in the programme together with the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and Norway who are participating as Non EU Member States. The programme has over 170 partners from 10 different nation States with lead partners in Finland, Sweden, Scotland, Norway and Iceland. The programme period is 2001-2006 and the results so far in terms of commitments are on target.

The programme has received 44 applications since the beginning of which 23 have been approved. The programme has additionally received 47 preparatory and micro applications and has supported 27 preparatory and 2 micro projects. The purpose of micro and preparatory projects is to mobilise partnerships with “seed money” to facilitate joint project plans and to reduce risks connected with developing large projects involving complex partnerships.

The awareness of preparatory projects indicates that there is great interest in the programme. New funding has been allocated for preparatory and micro projects to allow more projects to be implemented with evidence sharing that they lead to higher quality main projects.

Preparatory projects mobilise broader partnerships and facilitate the drawing up of joint project plans and for reducing risks connected with developing large projects involving complex partnerships.

During 2003, 10 new main projects were approved by the Programme Steering Committee. The following are examples of those projects:

Rural business information exchange system

This project is split into four overlapping phases and seeks to address the problems faced by rural entrepreneurs. Problem such as sourcing, processing and using pertinent and timely business support information to make efficient and effective entrepreneurial decisions will be addressed. It is lead from Scotland with partners in Finland, Sweden and on Iceland.

Youth entrepreneur factory

The project aim is to design and pilot a programme of activities to develop entrepreneurial thinking within groups of young people from 16 to 25 years to foster their business attitudes, ideas and skills, and to create viable and sustainable businesses in the northern periphery. It is lead from Scotland with partners in Norway, on Iceland, Greenland and in Russia.

Development by branding the trade mark

The project involves four participating municipalities in developing a modern orientation and aims to focus the image of their communities to meet the challenges of the future through developing a stronger identity by branding and profiling their municipalities. The lead partner is Swedish with partners in Norway and on Iceland.

During 2003, the programme was evaluated by an independent assessor (Nordlandsforskning, Bodø). The Mid Term evaluator noted the current success of the implementation of the programme at 117% of the mid-term target and a 1/3 of the eligible budget for the entire programme period has been committed.

The evaluators further noted that process of marketing the programme should be directed at priorities that appear to be falling behind. The evaluators recommended 16 pro-active recommendations for the strategic success of the programme. To address the recommendations made by the Mid Term Evaluators, an “MTE Action Plan” has been developed and is currently being implemented.

In 2004, the total funding for the programme will be increased with additional funding through indexation money received from the EU member States. The additional 1,3 million Euro will be distributed mainly to priority 2, which has shown the greatest demand and to measure 3.2 Public Management and Spatial Planning, which is a fairly small measure but has shown great demand.

The full 2003 annual report for the Northern Periphery Programme is available on the programme's web-site <http://www.northernperiphery.net/>