

EUROPEAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Date	17th October 2001
Time	9.00am
Venue	Committee room 3
Title	Tele Regions Network

The European Commission's proposals for a long-term sustainable development strategy emphasise links between sustainable development and the information society. Given the importance of ICT for regional development, the Teleregions network intends to strengthen its links with the European Commission

The TeleRegions Network is a European wide initiative which was started in response to a general view that regions were not adequately represented at the European Commission by their national governments. By acting as an institutional interface this network enables member regions to ensure that their technical needs are not only expressed to their national government but also the institutions of the European Commission.

The first meeting of the TeleRegions Network (TRN) took place in September 1996 with the aim of establishing a group of active European regions to investigate the possible use of Telematics applications and services to develop their own regions. At present, TRN includes regions from Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Finland, Spain, Sweden and the UK. From outside the Union, regions in Hungary and Poland are also members. TRN from its inception has wanted to work with industry and welcomes the involvement of companies like Ericsson.

TRN will stimulate and support regional activities on a European level to promote the development of information technology in European regions with the aim of strengthening competitiveness and job creation. The network also provides a forum to encourage the sharing of knowledge and experience between regions in order to establish best practise.

The principal objective of the TRN is to support the identification of regional problems and interests in order to integrate them in an inter-regional context to define specific activities; these activities can then be focused in project proposals.

Identification of cross regional projects will facilitate investigation by Regions to develop knowledge of

viable applications in a broad range of commercial, educational and administrative sectors. The subsequent exchange of results will lead to a better understanding of service and user attributes to ensure early exploitation by industrial and regional partners.

The approach adopted by TRN towards projects recognises that the development and application of services must be undertaken in an environment which reflects the economic, cultural and social contexts of the individual region. The European dimension and the objectives of the generic applications and services will transfer this to a common platform of methods, tools and standards.

Since the creation of the TeleRegions Network, it has undertaken a variety of activities including the creation of four working groups covering services to the citizen, health care, networking for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and education & training. A further three working groups covering transport, environment and new methods of work are planned.

These groups aim to identify inter-regional commonalities, standards, technology and mechanisms enabling the building of common standards and approaches for the support of regional development strategies and flagship projects. They also produce common background papers covering technology methods and approaches and establish European expert groups focusing on identified regional issues.

The TeleRegions Network works along side other initiatives such as the European Regional Information Society Association (Eris@)². Eris@ was created in 1998 as an initiative by regional authorities within the European Union based on the results of the Inter-Regional Information Society (IRISI) and Regional Information Society Initiative (IRSI) launched by the European Commission in 1995 and 1997 respectively.

TRN's Annual Conference was held on October 4th and 5th in Valencia under the title "Implementing Information Society for Regional Development". This conference encompassed services, technologies and infrastructures and presented the results and socio-economic impact of successful projects that have been implemented either trans-nationally or regionally, which are of interest to other regions.

There were four main themes running through this conference ranging from trans-European networks and regional infrastructures through to knowledge society and the social and economic impact of the Information Society.