

NORWEGIAN EU COOPERATION

The European Office in Hordaland

The County of Hordaland is situated on the west coast of Norway with the City of Bergen as its centre. In January 1996 the County of Hordaland established the European Office to inform and advise companies, municipalities and private individuals about European matters. The European Office assembles different kinds of European services and project-administrations. The concept of the European Office is unique as it assembles all these services in one place.

Norway's membership in the European Economic Area (EEA) has given us access to various programmes in the European Union. The European Office informs about the different EU-programmes in its Newsletter, offers support in application-procedures, and is active in finding partners. This has resulted in several favourably evaluated EU-projects, like RITTS (regional technology transfer), THERMIE (energy control), TERRA (local and regional development) and student and youth exchanges. Many projects are

still in the preparation phase, such as Ecos/Ouverture and Interreg IIC.

The European Office is still enlarging its network of contacts and welcomes new partners of cooperation. Hordaland has opened its view to the east and is also interested in formal cooperation with Baltic regions.

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The Local Association of Greater Bergen Area and the TERRA Programme

In 1989 the City of Bergen, the second largest city in Norway, and its 10 neighbouring local authorities established a local association (RBO), with about 300.000 inhabitants. The vision of the RBO is to create a regional identity and make the inhabitants accept their responsibility for a sustainable

development in the region.

In the autumn 1996 the RBO was accepted in a partnership consisting of four regions from Finland, Sweden, Spain and England, who had applied for financial assistance from the EU's TERRA program to "forward strategies for the physical and economical development of the participating regions based on the criteria of sustainable development". The objectives of the project are to link spatial planning to economic development using sustainable criteria in each region, to use the experience of the partners to develop transferable procedures, to have economic development agencies taking part in the work and to create an organisational structure that will support the linkages even after the project has been closed.

The project is due to start in September 1997, given the Commissions final approval, and will last for two years.

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TARTU - WORKING WITH EU PROJECTS

Tartu, the second largest town in Estonia, is one of the newest UBC members and well on its way with the cooperation with the European Union. Tartu has experience in participation in different EU programs and today two of them are in progress

At the beginning of this year formally started a PHARE-ECOS/Ouverture energy saving project, where the aim is to raise consumers' awareness and to improve insulation of block buildings for rising heating efficiency. In this particular project the partners are Deventer, Zutphen, Uppsala and Tartu. At the same time it should be mentioned, that the money from PHARE has not yet arrived us,

although the ECOS/Ouverture has already stopped the financing for EU partners, because their 12 month of project duration is over.

The other EU project is DEMCON (Demilitarisation and Conversion) with the following partners: Athens (Greece), Liperi (Finland), Legnica (Poland), Arad (Romania) and Tartu. The goal of the project is to find civil use for the former Soviet military airfield in Tartu, which today is out of activities. Although the contract was signed a few months ago and the start-conference in Tartu was carried out successfully, the ECOS/Ouverture money has not yet arrived Tartu.

As can be seen from the above

named examples, often a very big problem for the partners is enormous bureaucracy in dealing with the EU. Confirmation of accepted projects and signing of contracts takes too much time and financing often comes too late. Of course, these failures decrease optimism of partners towards EU. Despite of these obstacles, the City of Tartu is always ready to share its experience with our friends and neighbours and this way contribute to the development of future Europe.

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