

## SEEDA's Achievements for: Europe 1999-2003



SEEDA, local authorities, the South East England Regional Assembly and other regional partners operate through a small team located in Brussels. The team is located in an office within South East England House, pictured here.

SEEDA's Brussels office monitors developments in the European Union, hosts fact-finding delegations, and generates intelligence on future policies and funding programmes that may affect the South East.

The office also plays an important role in establishing and facilitating links with other European regions. South East England House hosts regular European project partnership meetings which assist in the development of a range of funding bids. SEEDA has jointly led, with Small Business Service (SBS) South East, the development of a regional response to the European Union's Green Paper on entrepreneurship. This has been warmly welcomed and some of the initiatives suggested in the response are under discussion with the European Commission.

### Introduction

The European Union (EU) is of increasing importance to the South East, offering opportunities for trade, partnership and sharing of best practice. With the forthcoming expansion through the accession of 10 new countries, opportunities for trade and partnerships in joint ventures will increase. SEEDA has a strategic lead role in relation to European policy and funding in the region and in ensuring that partners' views are heard. The Agency plays a key role in ensuring that EU funded programmes fit with the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) and other regional strategies. SEEDA's representatives sit on the

various committees that direct EU funding in the region, ensuring effective spend through regular monitoring and evaluation.

The SEEDA and South East England Regional Assembly Joint Europe Committee monitors developments in the European Union which potentially impact on the South East, and meets regularly with the region's Members of the European Parliament and Committee of the Regions to ensure the South East view is understood in the European institutions and lobbies on behalf of the South East where necessary.



### Building A Bigger Europe

The region's European Strategy has seven priorities for action and recent outputs include:

- Publication of 'Building a Bigger Europe', a regional view on the future of cohesion policy;
- A survey of successful EU funded research and development projects has led to increased understanding of the barriers to business in applying for funds;
- A compendium of best practice in Social Enterprise has also been completed and is available.

SEEDA has been successful in securing €6 million funding under the new European funding programme – “Innovative Actions”. The projects funded under the South East Programme for Innovative Actions (SEPIA) are aimed at benefiting businesses in and around Thanet and Hastings.

SEEDA is working closely with local partners to deliver a range of projects addressing:

- How SMEs can play a full role in the region’s knowledge-based economy;
- The extension of access to electronic services and increased use of e-business practices;
- Sustainable business.



Project HST will look at improving urban design in and around Ashford International Station, one of the stops for Eurostar.



SEEDA’s project Finesse is looking at freight transport services from Dover to Calais.

## Finesse In Freight

SEEDA is leading a project which brings together ports, regional authorities and Chambers of Commerce to develop sustainable freight transport services between England, France and Belgium, including rail-ferry services and hinterland connections. The three-year project will explore how best to promote intermodal transport solutions and harmonise logistical operations, in particular, by transferring freight onto rail-ferrys between Dover and Calais. This innovative endeavour has potentially huge implications for transport across the European Union, Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean.

## High Speed Trains - A Project Bringing True Integration

SEEDA is also leading on a project involving 17 partners to enhance cohesion between High Speed Train (HST) station development and their surrounding areas. Meeting local transport and urban planning needs, the project will bolster growth and competitiveness across the South East and North West Europe.

HST aims to improve environmental and urban design in and around stations, upgrade public transport interchanges, create better business passenger facilities, and enhance the physical links with feeding stations. Through an array of international investments the project brings added value to the entire network by filling gaps in the network and forging stronger modal links.



Examining fruit trees at SEEDA's East Malling Enterprise Hub. The Hub offers particular expertise in the fields of Food, Health and Environmental Sectors.

## Transenterprise

Facilitated by SEEDA, East Malling Enterprise Hub has been successful in bidding for EU funds to support cross-border work with Northern France. The project aims to facilitate the creation of a collaborative cross-border network of Enterprise Hubs, Regional Incubators and Technopoles, focusing on life sciences, health and agro-industry. Providing a coherent strategic approach to innovation policy and high value cluster development in those particular sectors, the project will explore the different models and best practice in the creation of start-ups and support for entrepreneurs. Increasing awareness and promoting Enterprise Hubs, Regional Incubators and Technopoles within the respective sectors will improve technology transfer, encourage the integration of supply chains and Franco-British business opportunities.



In 2004, 10 member countries will be joining the European Union; Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Lithuania, Estonia, Malta, Cyprus and Latvia.

## Enlargement Research

In 2004, 10 more countries will be joining the European Union, and SEEDA has recently commissioned research to gauge the impact on the economy of the South East and establish the opportunities and challenges which the region will have to face. Four sectors have been identified as having particular opportunities in the forthcoming enlargement: Technology, ICT and Telecoms, Life Sciences and Healthcare, Environmental Technologies and Building and Construction. The full report can be found on the SEEDA website ([www.seeda.co.uk](http://www.seeda.co.uk)).

## European Social Fund

SEEDA approved 13 projects in the past year, delivering a range of activities with nearly £4 million of funds. By completion of the programme in December 2003, these projects will have upgraded the skills of thousands of employed people in the South East in a variety of sectors, and hundreds of small businesses will have benefited from mentoring, support and guidance.



In March 2003, SEEDA was delighted to celebrate its status as a co-financing organisation by hosting an unveiling ceremony of the European Social Fund Co-financing plaque, attended by Caroline Lucas, MEP (right) Professor Sir Clive Booth, SEEDA Deputy Chairman and Board Member (left) and David Steed, Head of the ESF Team at Government Office for the South East (not pictured). They were joined by a number of ESF Co-financing Project providers and members of staff from SEEDA including Sebastian Johnson (centre left) of Business Boffins (provider) and Dave Ward (centre right) of Brand Blue (beneficiary).



Leisure and Tourism supervisors celebrate their success on an open-top bus at the National Motor Museum, Beaulieu in Hampshire after being awarded their Institute of Management (ILM) Certificates by Bob Collier, Tourism South East Managing Director. This was the culmination of an intensive five-day Introduction to Management course.



Chailey Heritage Enterprise Centre (CHEC) was established in 1995 to provide work experience and career opportunities for physically disabled young people, producing promotional products and gift items for the Chailey Heritage School. In September 2002, with the help of Social Firms South East Network, CHEC became an independent charitable company, trading in their own right.

One example is the Oxford-based Business Management Consultancy, Business Boffins who employ and train newly-accredited MBA graduates to mentor small businesses. The project has helped a number of entrepreneurs to transform their ideas into successful business ventures, harnessing their own vision with the expertise of the mentor. In addition, the MBA Graduates themselves are given the opportunity to put their learning and skills into practice.

SEEDA European Social Fund (ESF) funding has also helped businesses and their employees to increase their basic and key skills, offering different methods of learning to fit in with their work commitments and schedules, particularly in industries where it is notoriously difficult for employers to spare staff the time away to study. Centres of Excellence will have been created or consolidated in key areas and many jobs will have been safeguarded or created. Many SMEs have been assisted on programmes to create world class managers and principles of lean manufacturing are being taught and implemented to improve competitiveness and productivity. One project to promote cluster development is working with supply chain companies to 'future-proof' the marine sector and another is working to

transform the social enterprise sector by delivering a Management Development strategy, focusing on improving the engagement of SMEs in that sector.

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SEEDA's ESF programme has also resulted in a significant 'pulling together' of the business community with Higher Education (HE) and Further Education (FE) sectors. Two projects, Thames Valley University (HE sector) and ERA (private sector), are carrying out research into e-learning, both in the tourism and leisure industries and creative and media industries, and have been in a position to provide information to inform and support the specifications for the next funding round, thereby ensuring that some outcomes are taken forward and consolidated.



The Atomium, Brussels



SEEDA has secured a further £12.6 million in ESF funding for 2004-2006. Details of future activities can be found on [http://www.seeda.co.uk/europe/european\\_social\\_fund/index.htm](http://www.seeda.co.uk/europe/european_social_fund/index.htm) and SEEDA is looking to contract in December 2003, with projects commencing in January 2004. There will be an additional call for tenders in early 2005, to build on the outcomes and recommendations of the research projects being carried out earlier in the programme. The range of specifications reflect objectives aimed at:

- Upskilling older workers, particularly from disabled/Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups;
- Promoting diversity in the workforce by engagement and upskilling of BME/disabled and older workers in deprived wards;
- Addressing skills shortages in Advanced Manufacturing;
- Implementing lean manufacturing to improve productivity;
- Leadership and management development for women, BME and disabled in key sectors within deprived wards;
- e-learning/blended learning to address skills needs in the tourism and creative and media industries;
- Mentoring for new entrepreneurs;
- Training for community social entrepreneurs to start social enterprises in deprived wards and rural areas.

Research projects will reflect the need identified for research into:

- Discrimination, age and gender stereotyping with a focus on key sectors in deprived wards;
- Skills needed to support the knowledge economy which could take the form of an international benchmarking study;
- Sector Skills investment in Construction, Pharma Bio and Manufacturing;
- Healthy working practices, i.e. work-life balance and remote working with some focus on rural areas.



Brussels - Downtown food district (left), Capet of Flowers (centre) and Grand Place (right).

### **What regional policy for prosperous regions -**

Regional Policy event in South East England House, Brussels, 16 October 2003

### **The role of transport in delivering the Lisbon Agenda**

SEEDA/ South East England Regional Assembly Transport event in November 2003

**Cultural Consortium delegation to the South East England House** in early 2004

**Year of Education through Sport in 2004** – programme of activities in the South East

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