

SEEDA's Achievements for - Europe 1999 – 2002

Improvements made to Ramsgate Royal Harbour to boost tourist and mooring facilities were part-funded by the European Union Interreg IIA Programme.



South East England House was launched in September 2000 by Neil Kinnock, Vice President of the European Commission (centre), seen here with David Shakespeare OBE (left) then Chair of the South East England Regional Assembly and currently a Member of the Committee of the Regions, and Allan Willett CMG, SEEDA Chairman.



European Strategy Action Plan

SEEDA has played a leading role to identify with regional partners seven priority areas to increase the South East's influence in the European Union (EU) and maximise opportunities for exchange of technology through Research and Development tools. Plans include an improved web-based route map for all sources of European information and funding for the South East's small businesses. Regional partners are also working together to promote the interests of the South East by influencing forthcoming EU policies for future European Funds, the environment and sustainable development. Capacity building in the voluntary sector and exchange of best practice on finance and community developments are also prioritised.

South East England House

SEEDA and the South East England Regional Assembly have established a Brussels Office in partnership with key South East local authorities and other bodies to increase our influence in the European Union. Offices from Kent, Hampshire, West Sussex, Isle of Wight, East Sussex and Surrey and the Thames Valley together with SEEDA and the Regional Assembly are co-located in South East England House co-operating to wield more influence with the European Union's institutions.

Over the past 18 months there has been a wide range of events and seminars held in South East England House that have raised the profile of the important issues around the region, including the first public meeting of the EU's envoy for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs), and a number of events on the following themes: Regional Transport, Research and Innovation, Waste and Renewable Energy and The Year of Education Through Sport.

Enterprise Hubs in Europe

The Enterprise Hub concept, developed and pioneered by SEEDA, won European recognition in 2002 as a best practice example of support for new business in Europe through the EURADA (European Association of Development Agencies) Benchmarking project. This project is aimed at identifying good practice in the field of support for businesses and encouraging the uptake of these practices throughout Europe.

Virtual Institute

SEEDA has supported and assisted a European consortium led by the Isle of Wight Partnership to develop a successful proposal to establish a European Virtual Institute for Composites. The Institute will assist in identifying and transferring technologies to companies of all sizes (but particularly SMEs) in this key area of advanced materials. The project is due to start at the end of 2002 and will involve partners throughout the EU.

European Union Funds

SEEDA has carried out an assessment of European funding in the South East. Between 1997-9 the Structural Funds contributed £155 million to the South East economy with £307 million projected to be spent in 2002-7. The European Social Fund (ESF) helped 43,874 unemployed and 23,227 employed people during 1999. 1,038 jobs were created in Thanet between 1997 and 1999 and in Brighton 1,636 unemployed people were involved and 23 business start-ups assisted.

Partners of the Industrial Renovation Project in Margate's Victorian properties conservation area examine the floor plans of the newly converted industrial units behind them. The creation of a seed-bed industrial site in Margate is a prime example of the regeneration activities which Thanet has undertaken with the combined support of EU funds (Objective 2) and SEEDA funds (Single Regeneration Budget).



Milton Keynes' Women and Work Group obtained funding from the European Social Fund to encourage Asian women in 'non traditional' occupations. The Asian Women's Project has won three top national British Diversity Awards for boosting employment potential and raising equality awareness.



More Funds for Adaptability and Entrepreneurship

SEEDA was approved as a European Social Fund Co-Financing Organisation and successfully bid to the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) for £3.8 million to support initiatives that will address skills shortages and raise levels of adaptability and entrepreneurship in South East businesses.

The first round of funding has been directed at increasing productivity through Lean Enterprise initiatives, encouraging the development of business Clusters, researching web-based learning in a variety of sectors, developing the management skills in SMEs developing Centres of Excellence and tailoring skills training to meet the needs of priority sectors.

Seven projects are now underway, and are being delivered by partnerships involving private companies, training organisations, business support organisations and voluntary sector organisations.

SEEDA is in the process of approving a second set of projects and is currently developing a strategy for an increased use of ESF funding for the period 2004-2006.

Regional Development Plan for European Social Fund

SEEDA led on the rewriting of the South East's Regional Development Plan for spending of European funds on Human Resources in the region. In depth consultation with partners led to the re-direction of the Plan with the aim of targeting spending to link deprivation to areas of local economic success, create ladders of learning, grow businesses and accelerate the use of IT. £30 million per annum is spent in retraining and upskilling from this Fund which is administered by the Government Office for the South East.



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