



27/06/2006

**A discussion paper on Societally Motivated Research
Platforms (SMRPs)**

Suggesting criterias for European SMRPs

Positions Paper II

Content

Part 1

Introduction

Steps taken and steps which will be taken in South Sweden

What makes SMRPs unique and societally innovative?

Criteria for establishment of SMRPs

Ways of working

Support from the Commission

Part 2

Four concrete examples

Organisations

Part 1

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to outline how and why Societally Motivated Research Platforms (SMRPs) are a way to support the Lisbon Agenda and to invite to a discussion regarding the SMRPs at a European level. At the SMRP seminar held on 21st February 2006 in Brussels, there was a request that the notion of SMRPs be made more concrete. This discussion paper is a response to this request. The general characteristics of SMRPs have already been defined (see South Sweden's Position Paper 1¹). The focus here will be on the unique features of SMRPs. The paper is a proposal suggesting the distinctive criteria that are required to be a SMRP. The proposal also presents four concrete examples of small-scale SMRPs. Firstly; however, it outlines the steps taken in South Sweden since the seminar in Brussels, and the steps, which will be taken in the future.

South Sweden offers this paper as a substantial contribution to research policy in Europe and to the Commission. South Sweden hopes the proposal will contribute to the work programmes for relevant themes in "Cooperation" and especially for "Socio-Economic Sciences and the Humanities", but also other themes are relevant such as Energy, Environment (including Climate Change). The proposal is also addressing the cross cutting issues in FP7. South Sweden believes that SMRPs fit well into several of the defined cross cutting issues such as "Cross cutting policy research", "Dissemination and knowledge transfer" and "Science in society".

Steps taken and steps which will be taken in South Sweden

After the seminar in February 2006 in Brussels some steps have been taken in South Sweden in order to disseminate the idea of SMRPs and to make them more concrete. The different research issues related to SMRPs in South Sweden are such as: elderly, migration/integration. Two themes which can be referred to the demographic development in Europe. There are also some ideas around sustainable development in South Sweden. However other issues and societal challenges may be of interest for SMRPs, for example the issues mentioned in the Specific Programme for Cooperation.

The steps taken include various meetings in South Sweden, in which public stakeholders and researchers have participated. Contact has also been made with The National Board of Health and Welfare and with key players in research funding at national level. An SMRP-seminar has been arranged in Växjö (a university town in South Sweden). The seminar involved public stakeholders, politicians and researchers. The focus was on the elderly. It is important to stress that politicians in South Sweden, including Region Skåne, have received regular information updates about the SMRPs steps being taken forward.

Steps which are in process and which will be taken in autumn 2006 are a SMRP seminar at Kristianstad University, in which researchers, professionals and policy-makers will discuss how to act together in the context of an SMRP. The focus is

¹ www.sydsam.se

likely to be on the two issues mentioned earlier, the elderly and migration. In the autumn the ambition is to set up a pilot SMRP in South Sweden.

South Sweden intends to arrange another SMRP seminar in Brussels in autumn 2006. The ambition is to invite public stakeholders and researchers from other regions and EU Member States to the seminar. One aim for the seminar is to discuss the criteria which are described in this paper and to set up a pilot SMRP in which more than one region or Member State is involved.

What makes SMRPs unique and societally innovative?

SMRPs have features that make them unique, and societally innovative. There are three main features.

SMRPs are citizen-driven and policy-driven

- A fundamental feature of SMRPs is that research is grounded in the real world, by being citizen-driven. We use the term “citizens” here from an ideological democratic view. The term citizen is used to define a range of people – not only ordinary people, but also public stakeholders and public servants, such as policy makers, politicians, and other decision-makers, who represent the citizens at all levels of society, as well as professionals and front line workers. Also included are representatives of NGOs and voluntary organisations. SMRPs conduct policy-relevant research, and through the activities connected to SMRPs, the citizens involved will gain a sense of democratic ownership of the research. In some cases people from industry/SME may have a strong involvement. (see example three)

Ways of working: the research process

- SMRPs represent a progressive way of viewing research. Research takes off from lived experience. The process by which new knowledge is generated, utilised and transferred is integrated, involving all actors in an active collaboration between public stakeholders, citizens and researchers. This addresses one of the key challenges of the utilisation of research knowledge and the process of getting it into the public domain. It also ensures that lay people are actively involved in the governance of a knowledge-based society.

Knowledge transfer and research utilisation

- The traditional way to look at “the path of knowledge” is that the research community identifies the research problems, sets up the hypothesis, chooses methods, collects data, analyzes data and presents results. The next step to transform the results into either technological or social innovations and changes is often overlooked or seen merely as a simple process of dissemination

SMRPs path of knowledge is not linear. It is more like a set of loops, which interact with each other. Not only the researchers are active parties on the path of knowledge. The public stakeholders (as defined above) are also

given a prominent role, especially in defining the need for new knowledge and the need to transform the research results into societal innovations and changes. In this way the new knowledge is created in a more heterogeneous context than is often the case with research relying on one discipline. The SMRP path of scientific knowledge promotes knowledge that is grounded in the real social world. The perspective is bottom-up and not the opposite, thus making it much more likely that the grounded research results are relevant and therefore used in a societal context.

Criteria for establishment of SMRPs

At this stage, South Sweden wishes to outline seven criteria that we *suggest* would be useful for developing or participating in an SMRP. We also hope to get the opportunity to discuss the criteria with the Commission and other regions and Member States.

1. SMRPs should clarify and illustrate that they can play an active role in identifying and handling major societal challenges in Europe.

Europe has to handle major societal challenges such as an ageing population and the implications and consequences of this; migration and its impact; integration; and sustainable development as well as sustainable management of the environment in relation to societal problems. SMRPs relate specifically to these issues and to the European Social Model, as they invest more effectively in human capital.² Again, we wish to stress that other major societal issues can also be relevant for SMRPs.

SMRPs are a new and creative complement to implementing the goals of the Lisbon Strategy. Citizens of Europe need a good society in order to be able to learn, work, be creative and generate future wealth. SMRPs should clarify and illustrate the process by which the work of SMRPs will contribute to these goals and how the research process itself will contribute to the overall goals. SMRPs are a way of generating improved knowledge and information, providing a basis for policy-making in the fields concerned.

2. SMRPs should clarify and illustrate a strong commitment to openness and transparency.

It is important to ensure openness and transparency in SMRPs for all relevant stakeholders and researchers, as is the case for the European Technology Platforms (SEC (2005) 800). Openness and transparency are criteria that are directly connected to the three key features of SMRPs, because such openness enhances the citizens' influence. It should be central to the way of working and it will ensure

² COM(2005) 33 final Communication from the Commission on the Social Agenda.

research utilisation. Fundamental to this openness are processes and structures that ensure continuous feedback and communication during the research process, encouraging interaction between different types of knowledge (see below) and groups of stakeholders.

Openness also means that the SMRP is open to communicate with, and inform, all possible stakeholders, also if these are not actively involved in the SMRP-work.

3. SMRPs involve more than one Member State or region and networking is prominent.

As SMRPs focus on the major societal challenges in Europe, it is important to understand that building an SMRP involves more than one Member State or region of Europe. Networking is central to SMRPs and all kinds of stakeholders take part in this networking. This guarantees that new knowledge is created in a broader social and economic context and that local knowledge is therefore linked interactively across Europe, enabling strategic issues to be identified that can feed into the policy process. At the same time, such interactions will allow general knowledge to be built from the bottom up, thus maintaining its relevance to ordinary people's lives.

4. SMRPs require long-term relationships, contributions and commitment from all stakeholders, particular from public stakeholders.

Public stakeholders have an important role to play in SMRPs. Public stakeholders, such as politicians and other decision-makers, are responsible for the welfare state and ensuring that society is built on ethical and democratic principles. Public stakeholders are the voice of the citizens. Public stakeholders will define the overall areas where there is need for new knowledge on how to handle major societal challenges.

A fundamental difference between societal applied research and technology science are the fields of practice and the stakeholders' areas of interest. In technological science the industry stakeholders are interested in developing some material or physical aspect of importance to new technology. Citizens and public stakeholders in SMRPs are often interested in other issues. Public stakeholders have to represent the social, human and existential interests of specific groups of citizens, and represent them in a way that the results of societal research really change their condition of human life according to *their* interest. European Technology Platforms have the promotion of economic competitiveness and growth as a primary driving force. By comparison, the driving force of SMRPs is to promote the development of a better society for its citizens, and to enhance the European Social Model, such as growth and employment.

Given that the focus of SMRPs is how to handle major societal challenges then long-term commitment for all involved stakeholders are required to develop the necessary relationships and integrative work. Collaboration requires the building of

trust and this takes time and requires investment. Once trust is built and the working relationships and processes are developed, the research process becomes a set of continuous cycles between research and action for social change. This type of research is not a “one-stop-job”. It requires long-term development, endurance and flexibility, especially in order to enhance the utilisation of research results.

5. SMRPs promote interdisciplinary research.

SMRPs should be underpinned by interdisciplinary research. People are complex, so is everyday life, and so is society. As a result, societal problems and issues are complex. The EU and its Member States are characterised by diversity. Therefore, one single scientific discipline is not enough to describe, interpret and analyse the major societal challenges in Europe. But the notion of interdisciplinarity goes beyond the traditional interpretation of disciplines. It is about involving public stakeholders and citizens as science could no longer be regarded as an autonomous space³. Interdisciplinary promotes heterogeneity and dynamic ways of looking at problems and challenges.

6. SMRPs integrate research utilisation in the research process by including citizens and policy-makers.

SMRPs have a specific focus on transfer of knowledge as a key added value of European research actions and we agree with the Commission that specific measures could be taken to increase the use of research results. We stated earlier that SMRPs are unique because they strive to use research results as new forms of integrated research utilization in relation to various stakeholder groups. We also stated that SMRPs are citizen- and policy-driven. A citizen-driven social research activity is not just an ideological democratic matter, but also a prerequisite for social research to function in practice.

Utilisation of results from societal related science is a complex process which requires different approaches⁴. There is a need to pay attention to the complexity and uncertainty of society. Fewer truths can be taken for granted in social research, and the research must take into account all the irrational and unpredictable factors that seem to characterise human life and behaviour. If societal related research in this context is to be of practical use in a concrete reality, this may happen via a fusion of the formal knowledge of the researcher and the non-formal and informal knowledge of the citizens.

SMRPs require the researchers and other stakeholders to work in a human-centred way, respecting each other and what they bring to the table. Openness and transparency are pivotal. A mutual “give-and-take” attitude should be characteristic for the meeting. Humbleness and respect are key words, which encourage utilisation and relevance.

³ Nowotny, H., Scott, H. & Gibbons, M. *Re-thinking Science. Knowledge and the public in an age of uncertainty*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004.

⁴ Nutley, S, Walter, I & Davies HTO. From knowing to doing, understanding the evidence to practice agenda. *Evaluation*, 9(2) 125-148, 2003.

It is important to develop a greater flexibility and acceptance in understanding the inner dimensions of how practitioners/professionals/citizens/policy-makers and researchers think, respectively. Researchers and other stakeholders in SMRPs should openly reflect upon the knowledge produced, the language used, the perspectives chosen and the methods selected.

The idea for SMRPs that citizens/public stakeholders/politicians take part in defining societal challenges and are involved in transforming them into research, will promote a broad public and citizen-driven commitment to using the research results. The researchers and the citizen representatives may together explore and try out practical initiatives, which are possible in real social life. What you feel is yours, you take care of.

Working with SMRPs means that you have to pay attention to learning and training needs⁵. There is a need for a specific type of research learning seminars which focus on participatory and collaborative research, on how to involve citizens and policy-makers, on partnership between public stakeholders and researchers, on transforming research results into impact on society, and so on. SMRPs may therefore be a creative arena for European research and for the Commission for development of methods for increasing utilisation of research results.

7. SMRPs require a facilitative and collaborative leadership, ensuring the voices from all stakeholders are heard.

It is important that the structure and leadership mirror the values and the uniqueness of SMRPs. Work in partnerships, organisational structures and the way the research and the SMRPs are managed should reflect the citizen-driven and policy-driven nature of the research. Facilitation, openness, transparency, and flexibility are key concepts. SMRPs take the concept of involvement seriously and ensure this is reflected in the organisation and the governance of research with the use of reflection groups, such as mirror groups. Flexibility is reflected in that every SMRP has its own specific characteristics within a framework driven by shared principles.

In managing SMRP research there also is a need for flexibility in establishing a research strategy. SMRPs state that research planning must be evolutionary. The direction of the research will evolve via the process of continuous feedback and communication between research and practice. Here the leadership has a prominent role such as ensuring the voices from all stakeholders are heard.

The structure and the governance will also be guided by the Commission's proposal for the Seventh Framework Programme.

⁵ Education and training needs are also stressed in Technology Platforms SEC (2005) 800.

Ways of working

In a similar way to European Technology Platforms (ETP), SMRPs can develop a *Strategic Research Agenda* (SRA), and the criteria should be reflected in this SRA. The criteria also function as a springboard, providing the vision needed in every SMRP.

An important working method is to plan to use the research results from the beginning, as a part of the SRA. Regular meetings are needed to give specific attention to utilisation of the research results. Mirror groups in which researchers, public stakeholders, citizens, NGOs, represents from industry and SMEs and others participate are a vital way of working in SMRPs. Communication-sharing events is held regularly as a way to demonstrate openness and transparency. Networking is therefore also crucial.

The criteria are a way to demonstrate openness and transparency. The criteria may be discussed continuously in different constellations.

Support from the Commission

SMRPs fulfil many of the Commission's views on transfer of knowledge, and working in SMRPs may therefore hopefully involve support from the Commission, such as funding of networks, knowledge brokerage initiatives, seminars, events and IT and communications support for the establishment of websites and other communications tools.

Taking the SMRPs forward in Europe : Points for discussion

The criterias set out in this document are based on experience in South Sweden. Our aim however is to take these criterias forward at a European level and as soon as possible start discussions with regions and Member States on how this might be achieved most effectively. How can the bottom up process so integral to the concept be maintained but at the same time inform policy and practice within each country and at a European level? Are there initiatives already existing in other European countries which reflect the core values of SMRPs? How can we and others learn from those experiences?

South Sweden in collaboration with other interested parts in Europe look forward to have further discussions with the Commission regarding the question on how support can be operationalised at a European level to enable for those member states and region that wish to take the idea of SMRPs forward?

We also hope that the European Commission find the criterias presented in the discussion paper useful for the creation of work programmes and calls under the Seventh Framework Programme.

Part 2

Four examples

On the following pages four existing small-scale SMRPs are described. They do not currently fulfil all the criteria. However the researchers and public stakeholders connected to the four potential SMRPs would like to build on their existing work and hope that these SMRPs may become prototypes for others regions and Member States in Europe. We present them here as concrete examples of what an SMRP might look like, but are conscious that they are not complete SMRP-examples.

Two examples represent topics such as the demographic development including the ageing population and migration/integration. Another SMRP-example illustrates that stakeholders from industry, SMEs and NGOs can be involved. The last example illustrates a topic of sustainable development; “climate changes”. In South Sweden we also have stakeholders, who have expressed an interest in setting up a SMRP with the topic of “water” and how public stakeholders can manage the European Water Framework Directive in order to reach the aim to have water with “good status” until December 2015.

Example I - R&D within Scania Association of Local Authorities, Sweden

Author: Karen Lagercrantz, R&D Manager, Scania Association of Local Authorities, R&D; karen.lagercrantz@kfsk.se

Background

Ten years ago the politicians at the Scania Association of Local Authorities, consisting of 33 communities in the South of Sweden, initiated a small-scale R&D unit within the field of Social Welfare. There had previously been some complaints from the local authorities that research results delivered after many years of research had no immediate value in practice and it was quite common that the very organisation that was exposed to critique from research had already reorganised or ceased to exist when the results were presented. It was confirmed that the aid that traditional academic research could offer was not quite enough, the process was at times considered slow. To meet the needs of a post-modern society in the midst of a process of rapid development, expansion and change something more dynamic was required. In particular, the need for knowledge based on actual events and experience from the working life of professionals and citizens was identified. The need to speed up the knowledge process in order to make it faster than that which the traditional research institutions could offer was an important challenge. Also there was a request from professionals and stakeholders to follow the research process more closely and to participate in the actual production of knowledge. There seemed to be a desire to achieve more openness and transparency throughout the entire research process – not just to be fed results when there was no longer any opportunity to influence the process, when the final product was presented.

Therefore a unique collaboration was formed between, on one hand the local authorities, Region Skåne, and on the other hand researchers from different disciplines, such as sociology, architecture, statistics, economy and medicine.

The R&D unit was built up like a loose network, with slimmed administration and proximity in real life to the local authorities - thus a unique partnership between stakeholders and researchers was created.

Several R&D units that work in a similar way has been created in South Sweden - therefore a foundation for further developments of SMRP's already exists.

Principles

So the underlying idea was that researchers and stake-holders should collaborate and reciprocally define important areas for research. The research process within this unit is carried out with researchers, professionals and stakeholders working together in collaboration and the results are implemented immediately in the organisations' every day reality. The idea is 1) to shorten the research process and 2) that collaborations of researchers working in a continuous dialogue with stake-

holders should promote utilisation and dissemination of results. Also the idea is that practical and theoretical knowledge should have equal value and no form of knowledge should be considered superior to the other. This model for developing knowledge also promotes the illumination of unexplored research areas - because the stakeholders and professionals often initiate new problematic and previously unknown fields. A ground for societal innovations is therefore opened up.

Methods

The methods used are: collaborative inquiry; research circles; dialogue seminars; reflection groups; mirror groups; open house tutoring; empowerment and conferences; and discussing and implementing results.

Values

One fundamental value is that the role of the researcher is the pathfinder, the guide to the discovery of non-formal and informal aspects of everyday life, which are displayed but also hidden in the societal context. The researcher is not meant to be a representative of a certain scientific school, theory, method or conceptualised result of research. The researcher has to step down to the basic meaning of science, a science that truly represents reality as a many-faceted, complex and self-contradicting affair. The perspective is bottom up and not the opposite. The researcher presents his/her scientific knowledge when it is specifically asked for. The researcher writes his/her discoveries in collaboration and dialogue with the participants in the research process. The ethics are therefore built in during the entire process – it is characterised by its transparency and openness. The above-mentioned approach is strengthened by the fact that the researchers in the R&D network come from various disciplines. The research carried out is both multi-professional and transdisciplinary.

Utilisation of the results in practice

In the sense stated above there is a rather special kind of dissemination of the research results within this SMRP constellation. The process of the research is at the same time the actual arena for dissemination. There is an instant utilisation of the results in practice as the practitioner is an active and engaged part in the research process. In the same moment the research is understood and rooted an instant dissemination can be said to take place.

Example II - Research Platform for Närsjukvård⁶

Author: Jane Springett, prof., Department of Health Sciences, Kristianstad University, Sweden, mail; jane.springett@hv.hkr.se

Background

One of the major societal challenges facing Europe is the provision of quality care for its citizens, particularly the elderly, those with multiple chronic diseases and migrants with different cultural backgrounds and illness histories. Integrating health and social care so that it is citizen-centred has been a key theme in recent health care system changes in Sweden, aiming⁷ for greater collaboration.

In North East Skåne, under the umbrella of the Research platform for Närsjukvård (“Close-to health care”) a unique collaboration between six local authorities, the regional government/Region Skåne and Kristianstad University has developed clusters of research projects focusing on research questions that have been generated in collaboration with wide range of care providers and citizens at the local level. Researchers come from a range of social science and health care disciplines.

Ways of Working: The Research Process

The approach to research draws on the international tradition of participatory action research⁸. It uses collaborative and participatory interactive research circles as an arena where professionals and researchers meet to use their respective knowledge and competence to tackle an issue that is important to them. Scientific knowledge is integrated with tacit and experiential knowledge through a dialogical process.

These stakeholders are involved in the entire research process not only deciding the purpose of the research, but also in identifying and choosing data methods, in the data collection process, in the process of analysis and summery of results and in documentation and presentation. *Dialogue* and *involvement* of various actors plays a decisive role in the type of research and research methods used. The *role of the researcher* is one of guide as well as an entrepreneur and a process leader. The aim is a *democratic* group learning culture, with emphasis being put on *variety* (diver-

⁶ “Närsjukvård” is the everyday care and health promotion that does not require the hospitals specialists and equipment. It is for the elderly, children and their families, the chronically ill and those with psychiatric needs. It is based on the collaboration and partnerships between a range of services and a new culture of care with focus on the client/patient and their families.

⁷ Socialstyrelsen/The National Board of Health and Welfare, Sweden, Handlingsplan för hälso- och sjukvården. Årsrapport 2004, (Swe), 2004.

⁸ E.g. Seifer, S. Shore, N. & Holmes, S. Developing and Sustaining Community-University Partnership for Health. Infrastructure requirements. Report to the NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences, Seattle, WA, 2003.

sity, pluralism) and on *openness* towards other perspectives. Through interactive processes and *democratic* forms of critical examination, the participants' *influence, design, learn and implement* change in praxis and policy.

Research governance/management

Each "layer" in society makes decisions regarding the focus of the research and who undertakes it and through an iterative process the research questions are decided, the research undertaken and the results are fed back locally, within the wider community and at policy level. These feedback cycles have been crucial for linking local concerns with those of policy makers.

The decision to focus on Närsjukvård was made by the politician. The strategic vision for the platform was developed by representatives from all the key public stakeholders and researchers (Coordinating Committee). This group established a set of principles to ensure that the way the research was undertaken was consistent with an inclusive partnership approach. Processes were put in place to ensure the way the research was undertaken involved the active participation of frontline workers and end users.

Ensuring research utilisation

Findings from each stage of the research are presented immediately back to participants for reflection and social action so that they can implement solutions in relation to the original issue. This ensures that the research is relevant to the local context but also ensures implementation into practice. These actions are then evaluated. At the macro level, generalised findings from data sets across individual projects and key themes are fed back to key stakeholders.

The Coordinating Committee consists of key people at a decision-making level within the partner organisations who take joint responsibility for dissemination and utilisation of research results more widely as well as within the policy agenda. Each individual interactive/action research project is connected to key organisational decision-makers. This not only ensures implementation but also ensure a sense of society-driven research governance being seen not only seen as relevant to policy makers but also to end users.

Flexible leadership

An appropriate flexible coordinated network support structure has been established which allows the research and development to be guided by local requirements. This facilitates existing networks but has left the potential to create new networks through the clustering of initiatives. The door has been left open for initiatives to leave or enter the platform as it moves forward.

Key social issues grounded in reality of everyday issues

Current research studies which were decided on by local people focus on user perspectives regarding a range of issues including, for example the involvement of chronically sick elderly people in their care and immigrants' experiences and needs and the role of culture brokers.

While individual clusters focus on research questions relating to specific issues of local concern, cross-cutting research questions link the research to the wider concerns of local policy-makers. These issues are collaboration, person centeredness and the promotion of quality of life. In this way research is grounded in the concerns of citizens both from their perspective and those of policy-makers.

This has been achieved through paying attention to ensuring the processes that have underpinned the development of the platform are participatory and democratic both in terms of developing the research questions and implementing the research.

An example of a collaborative project, within the platform for Närsjukvård

Immigrant women were going to the local primary care centre with a range of issues that local health care providers were unable to help with. They got together with researchers and decided to find out what the real problem was. In collaboration with local culture brokers they collected qualitative and quantitative data defining the problem and possible solutions. The results were fed back to the Primary Health Care Centre that is currently using the research to bring changes in practice locally. The results have also been given to decision makers in all relevant local agencies and a new policy is currently being developed around community development and training for cultural competency amongst staff.



Example III - “Health Care Technology Alliance” a SMRP with stakeholders from industry

Author: Sten Liljedahl, Director of Business Development, Halland Regional Development Council email: sten.liljedahl@regionhalland.se

Background

No one can avoid the fact that the amount of aging people is getting larger every year in Europe – a challenge for the Member States. One challenge is to offer reasonably good service to the elderly people. To meet these common European challenges much more cooperation between researchers, policy makers, local authorities and end users has to be created, and here the public stakeholders have a specific responsibility, such as to take initiatives to long-term collaborations. This third example will illustrate how a municipality (Halmstad⁹), take initiatives to start, a research platform, called “Health Care Technology Alliance “ and how stakeholders from industry can be involved. The identified problems and challenges were in this case from the public stakeholders since they already stressed from the start both the social aspect as the commercial aspects and identified the possibility to combine them.

The Alliance has defined that the goal is to find solutions that, at least partly, could solve problems concerning the needs of the elderly in their preferred environments, whether those are the homes they have lived in for many years or homes that are purpose built to suit the needs of elderly people.

A SMRP with stakeholders from industry and NGOs

The Health Care Technology Alliance is a forum for the development of new products and services in healthcare technology which is jointly directed by public sector and politicians, researchers and industries. The Alliance is a regional development network including more than 60 organisations including companies within the health care sector, six municipalities, the Halland Regional Development Council, two hospitals, Halmstad University and the Swedish Rheumatism Association. The last one – a NGO for people with rheumatism. This enhances the citizens-driven aspect in the Alliance, so that the research can and will take off from the citizens’ lived experience.

Ways of working

The specific infrastructure of the Alliance has created a long-term relationship between researchers, producers, policy-makers and end-users. Concrete, strategic projects are being carried out in the alliance developing the activities to create an environment where elderly people can live independently on their own terms.

⁹ A town in SOUTH Sweden with 90 000 inhabitants. The “Health Care Technology Alliance” started in 2000.

The most important research and development areas within the Alliance is daily living and emergency care needs of the elderly in their preferred environments, whether those are the homes they have lived in for many years or homes that are purpose-built to suit the needs of elderly people. The research also takes into account the need to support elderly people, when they are outside their home environment (e.g. shopping). By working in alliances and meeting with public stakeholders it is much easier to work with openness and transparency. One example is meetings to discuss problems and needs in the public sector. These meetings is open for everybody interested.

Public stakeholders, who represent the citizens, researchers and stakeholders from industry get together in order to develop new research-based knowledge, which may meet the very diverse needs of the elderly and enhance their daily living. This example of a SMRP illustrates that stakeholders from industry and SMEs can participate in SMRPs. When stakeholders from industry/SMEs take part in SMRPs they have a twofold engagement; the societal aspect and the commercial aspect. SMRPs of this type have therefore a specific type of interdisciplinarity. The challenges, which have to be solved, require more than one single scientific discipline, but also practical technology experiences and experience from citizens' everyday life. So here the heterogeneity is improved. This is also one of the features, which differs this type of SMRPs from Technology Platforms.

The societal aspects

The Alliance works actively to create the best conditions for the citizens to grow old, an ambition that is anchored in the regional development programme. The City Council and their politicians work to guarantee a safe geriatric care for the elderly and to create conditions for an independent life where the elderly persons will dare, want and be able to remain in their ordinary housing as long as possible.

Example IV -Climate Change – a societal challenge for Europe

Author: Lennart Werner, The Regional Council in Kalmar County
lennart.werner@kalmar.regionforbund.se

Background

Who does not remember the heat-waves in the southern part of Europe in 2005? And who does not remember the serious forest fires in Portugal, which caused the death of several people? Another year many elderly people died of high heat during the summer and there were huge flooded areas in Central Europe.

All these events are probably results of climate change; events, which affect people's every-day life and probably will do so in the future. This short description gives signals about that something has to be done to handle these, in many ways societal challenges, for Europe and for the rest of the world.

There is a need of SMRPs concerning sustainable environmental issues. One topic is climate change and its impacts on people, society, economy, living etc. Topics, such as climate change, need several different stakeholders (citizens, policy-makers, researchers, etc) in order to identify relevant research areas and in the longer perspective utilize the research results. Here SMRPs may be an answer. The example here illustrates also that SMRPs is an option for several of the themes in the Cooperation part of the Seventh framework Programme.

Climate change and three areas; vulnerability, adaptation and innovations

In South Sweden an initiative to set up a regional SMRP related to climate change is taking form. Especially involved are Kalmar University and The Regional Council in Kalmar County. This small SMRP-group has chosen to work on vulnerability, adaptation and innovation; below some short highlights of the identified areas. The group means that the chosen areas must be citizen-driven and policy-driven, which will enhance the possibilities for societal innovations based on future research results. The idea is that sustainable engagement, which grows from the people, will give effects in the future. A criteria for SMRPs is interdisciplinary, which includes the experience and knowledge of the citizens. Research about climate change have to be interdisciplinary since climate change affects people and their everyday life.

The small SMRP-group will in September 2006 arrange a SMRP-seminar around the identified areas in order to engage more stakeholders in the region of South Sweden. The next step is to contact other regions or Member States.

Climate change – vulnerability

This area – vulnerability – includes risk-analyses of important societal functions that are most vulnerable in different scenarios related to climate change. What will happen if the average water level rises in rivers and lakes? Which consequence will it have on infrastructure etc?

Climate change – adaptation

Within the concept of adaptation we will discuss how we best can adapt our society to the threat of possible climate change. For example, how can elderly people be protected from extreme heat? How can policy-makers at regional level act to predict risks? How can we adapt our society on a long term to the climate change that is foreseen?

Climate change – innovations

The small SMRP-group has the intention to involve stakeholders from industry and SMEs. We will stress that areas like “climate change” can be an example of SMRPs where public stakeholders and researchers work in collaboration with SMEs. What innovations, connected to climate change, will be needed? Innovations in this field could be big major systematic changes as well as small, simple, innovative services.

Organisations

The following organisations have participated in writing this paper; Kristianstad University¹⁰, Sweden, Region Skåne¹¹, Sweden, Scania Association of Local Authorities¹² Sweden and South Sweden¹³.

¹⁰ For contact: jane.springett@hv.hkr.se

¹¹ Member of South Sweden, for contact: liselotte.rooke@skane.se

¹² Member of South Sweden, for contact: Karen.lagercrantz@kfsk.se

¹³ For contact: frida.bergman@sydsam.be maria.lindbom@sydsam.se

