



EAST OF ENGLAND

EUROPEAN STRATEGY

2003-04

Reviewed June 2003



Foreword by Chair of the East of England Regional Assembly

This document, which has been prepared by the East of England European Partnership, updates the East of England European Strategy approved by the Partnership in November 2001. At that time it was agreed that the Strategy would be subject to annual review. The past 18 months have been a period of considerable change within the region and this provides us with an opportunity to assess what we have achieved to date and to agree how we will take the European agenda forward in the remainder of the first phase of the Strategy, to September 2004. A key element of the current document is, therefore, an Action Plan for the period to September 2004.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Kent', written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**John Kent
Chair
East of England Regional Assembly
June 2003**

1. Why have a European Strategy for the East of England?

- To create a forward-looking framework for the European activities of a wide range of stakeholders and partners in the Region
- To highlight development needs
- To inform and support other Regional Strategies

This Strategy focuses on our activity with the European Union of 15 Member States, and the Accession States¹.

2. The Vision

'A new region playing a full part in Europe for all its citizens'

3. Context

3.1 Regional Context

This strategy naturally operates within a regional framework. Key partners for the region are described below:

The East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) is the designated voluntary regional chamber established under the Regional Development Agencies Act 1998. Part of the Assembly's role is to promote the social, economic and environmental interests of the region through a partnership of indirectly elected representatives from local government and community stakeholders representing a wide range of social, economic and environmental interests. This particular strategy is overseen by the Europe & International Affairs Panel of the Regional Assembly.

The East of England Development Agency (EEDA) has a remit to support economic growth and prosperity and to improve the quality of life for those who live and work in the region. The promotion of economic development is underpinned by principles of sustainable development and good business practice in EEDA's Regional Economic Strategy. These principles include economic growth, social inclusion and access to opportunities, safeguarding and enhancing the region's natural and built environment, using resources sustainably, learning from best practice and corporate social responsibility.

The Government Office for the East of England (GO-East) is now part of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, which also covers regional and urban policy, local government, planning, housing and regeneration. Other Departments with a stake in GO-East are the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the Department of

¹ The accession states for the enlargement of the EU planned for 2004 are: Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia. Bulgaria and Romania are expected to join the EU in 2007. Turkey has also applied for membership. The current Member States of the EU are: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the UK.

Trade and Industry (DTI), the Department for Transport (DfT), the Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Home Office (HO), and the Department for Culture Media & Sport (DCMS). GO-East also works closely with the public health teams from the Department of Health (DOH). Government Office is responsible for the administration of the European Structural Funds within the region.

Within the region, the concept is promoted of an “integrated regional strategy”. It is intended that this document will form part of this integrated approach, which also includes the following:

- Regional Economic Strategy
- Regional Environment Strategy
- Sustainable Development Framework
- Regional Planning Guidance (Regional Spatial Strategy)
- Regional Social Strategy
- Regional Cultural Strategy
- Regional Housing Strategy
- Regional Waste Management Strategy
- Regional International Trade Strategy
- The Framework for Regional Employment and Skills Action (FRESA)

3.2 EU Context

The strategy also operates against a developing European background. Key elements of this are summarised below:

Enlargement – The current enlargement of the European Union is the most significant issue on the European agenda because of the impact it has in its own right and also because of its impact on other issues. This is not the first enlargement of the EU but it is the most ambitious to date - towards the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Up to 13 new countries will join the Union, the earliest from 2004. Enlargement to 25 Member States will mean:

- An unprecedented widening of economic disparities within the Union (the gap in per capita GDP between the 10% of the population living in the most prosperous and the 10% living in the least prosperous regions will more than double)
- 25% of the total population will live in regions with a per capita GDP below 75% of the EU average (as against 18% currently)

It will therefore have a big impact on prosperity. However, enlargement will also bring a whole range of opportunities for UK companies in doing business in these new parts of the Union.

Future of the European Union - there is a debate on the future of the Union with a Convention looking at 4 key questions:

- What the responsibilities of the various European institutions, of national parliaments and of local and regional government should be
- How the Union's activities can be simplified

- How the European Union can become more democratic, open and efficient
- Whether there should be a constitution for the European Union and what it should include

The Convention has consulted widely and its findings are being published.

Structural Fund reform - Agenda 2000, the previous review of the Structural Funds, set out the system until 2006. Debate is now focusing on how the Structural Funds should operate after this period. The enlargement of the EU is an important factor which will need to be taken into account. The proposals so far suggest that Objective 1 (to help the most needy areas in the EU, with a GDP of less than 75% of the EU average) will continue. The most heated discussions are around what might replace Objective 2 (should there be funding for areas in difficulty outside Objective 1 areas? should this be geographically or thematically designated? should there be transitional funding for those areas no longer eligible for funding?). In addition, there are discussions on the future of the European Social Fund and of the Community Initiatives. Particular discussion is taking place on how the implementation of the Structural Funds might be simplified after 2006.

CAP reform – The European Commission has put forward proposals to review the Common Agricultural Policy and cut the link between production and support, thereby encouraging farmers to focus on the needs of the market. The reforms would also increase the emphasis on sustainable farming and good practices as well as rural development measures.

The euro – The euro has been in existence for some time now and is in use in 12 of the Member States of the EU. The debate in the UK on the single currency has been given new impetus by the Chancellor's announcement that only one of his five economic tests for entry has been met and the launch of an information campaign by the Cabinet.

4. Regional Analysis - strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member commitment to the European agenda • Dedicated staff in the region and in Brussels • Sponsorship base of the Brussels Office • Size of the region (5.5m population > 4 current Member States) • Existing links between parts of the region and other parts of the EU / CEEC • World-renowned universities / research facilities • Diversity and strength of the regional economy • Social and environmental policy experience • Existing experience of EU working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear strategic steer • Level of “mainstreaming” within the region • European resource within the region • Links to CoR members / MEPs • Too much focus on funding rather than policy development / legislation • Europe is “kept in a box”
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlargement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Trading opportunities for the region’s businesses – Opportunities to work with a broader range of partners • Influence the future development of the EU <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Governance – Structural Fund reform – CAP reform – Legislation/policy • Develop a strong regional identity together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlargement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Decreasing Structural Fund support – Competition from goods and agricultural produce • CAP reform • The urban agenda

5. Strategic Objectives 2001-2010

On the basis of the above, the following strategic objectives for the East of England European Strategy were agreed:

- ◆ ***To promote the region's interests and influence future EU policy and strategy***
- ◆ ***To optimise the benefits of membership of the EU for all stakeholders in the region***
- ◆ ***To create new opportunities for the region's businesses in an enlarged Europe***

There will be an element of overlap in implementing the above objectives. However, an indication of the actions through which these strategic objectives will be delivered is given below:

To promote the region's interests and influence future EU policy and strategy

- ◆ To contribute to the development of EU policy and strategy through lobbying and consultation responses
- ◆ Create a well-informed corps of regional stakeholders
- ◆ Work more effectively with MEPs and Committee of the Regions representatives
- ◆ Mainstream European work with other aspects of regional policy

To optimise the benefits of membership of the EU for all stakeholders in the region

- ◆ Improve information for key regional partners and stakeholders
- ◆ Build capacity for European programme engagement
- ◆ Region to region partnership alliances/regional accords
- ◆ Promotion of the region in Brussels and other EU regions
- ◆ Join effective regional networks

To create new opportunities for the region's businesses in an enlarged Europe

- ◆ Survey companies to establish how they could be helped to make more of Europe, and how regional partners can help
- ◆ Promotion of existing EU/UK support networks
- ◆ Support for trade with existing and applicant Member States

6. Priorities For Phase I, October 2001 To September 2004

It has been agreed that the Strategy will be delivered in three phases (2001-2004, 2004-2007, 2007-2010).

The priorities for phase I are:

- **Introduce 'mainstreaming' and 'de-jargonise' Europe**
- **Build capacity to influence and to deliver**
- **Establish a Regional Alliance with other appropriate regions**
- **Provide support for trade development**

7. What has been achieved so far?

The current phase of the Strategy runs from October 2001-September 2004. To date the following has been achieved:

Promoting the region's interests and influencing future EU policy and strategy

- ◆ Regional views have been fed into consultations on:
 - ◆ European Governance and European consultation processes
 - ◆ the Cohesion Debate (the future and management of the Structural Funds)
 - ◆ the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and
 - ◆ the Future of Europe
- ◆ Regional views have been included in national and European level debates on the above issues
- ◆ Regional stakeholders are kept up to date with key issues at member level through the Regional Assembly and its Europe & International Affairs Panel and at officer level through the European Officer Group and specialist contact lists
- ◆ A network of specialists has been established to provide support for MEPs and Committee of the Regions members

Optimising the benefits of membership of the EU for all stakeholders in the region

- ◆ Regional partners manage the delivery of approximately £300m through the current Structural Funds programmes (Objectives 2 and 3, plus Community Initiatives).
- ◆ Regular information is provided to members and officers through the Regional Assembly and its Europe & International Affairs Panel, EEDA Board, the European Officer network, specialist contact lists and the involvement of staff from the East of England Brussels Office in specialist networks within the region
- ◆ Short-term secondments are offered by the East of England Brussels Office to contributing organisations
- ◆ Initial contacts have been made with potential partners for a regional alliance including in the Czech Republic and Poland
- ◆ The region has committed to the PRAXIS network set up by Essex County Council
- ◆ Events promoting the region in Brussels were held in November 2002 and March 2003
- ◆ The region has joined European networks such as the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions and the North Sea Commission, EURADA and the European Rural Exchange

Creating new opportunities for the region's businesses in an enlarged Europe

- ◆ Communication and information of business opportunities for businesses with regards to EU funds, joint partnerships and networking opportunities
- ◆ Established a point of contact for the business community in the East of England
- ◆ Regular business updates on policy developments to help the business community participate and influence EU policy-making
- ◆ Seminar on 6th Framework Programme for Research and Development (6FP) opportunities for SMEs organised in Brussels
- ◆ Proposal for regional participation in 6FP to facilitate business access to R&D information, support structures and best practice (Being prepared)
- ◆ Organisation of several fact finding visits to Brussels for business community and wider sponsorship
- ◆ A series of meetings with Member States and Candidate Country regions were held and representatives brought to various visits from the East of England to speak about regional co-operation and business opportunities.
- ◆ A guide on EU funds for businesses was published in September 2002
- ◆ A guide to EU Research & Development funds for businesses
- ◆ Participation of several representatives from Brussels-based organisations at various East of England events

- ◆ Regular assistance to sponsors on funding opportunities, programmes and projects at a European level
- ◆ Developed East of England Brussels Office website to provide better and quicker access to EU policy that affects businesses in the East of England and funding opportunities. Also used to help the marketing of the East of England as a region and a brand
- ◆ Co-ordinated fact-finding visit from North Milan/Lombardy Development Agency to the East of England in order to try and develop permanent relations with this high-tech, high-growth region.

8. Realising the Strategy: Priorities for 2001 – 2004

A number of activities have been identified which are either new or take further the developments set out above. The action plan which follows suggests how these might be achieved in the period to September 2004.

Action Plan for the period to September 2004

Introduce mainstreaming and 'de-jargonise' Europe		
4 seminars on key European issues and funding opportunities	By September 2004	European Partnership
10 meetings with (non-European specialist) expert groups or Panels to raise awareness of European issues for their area of work	By September 2004	Brussels Office and EERA
10 specialist newsletters raising awareness of European issues in specific policy areas	By September 2004	Brussels Office
5 non-European specialist secondments to the East of England Brussels Office	By September 2004	Brussels Office
Build capacity to influence and to deliver		
4 meetings of the East of England Europe & International Affairs Panel with agendas dealing with key European issues	By September 2004	Organised by EERA
4 meetings of the East of England European Officer Group	By September 2004	Organised by EERA
Develop regional responses to consultations on European issues of importance to the region	As they arise	Co-ordinated by EERA
Involve specialists in consultations on Committee of the Regions papers	Up to 10 times a year	Co-ordinated by EERA
Identify regional contacts for CPMR/NSC technical groups	By December 2003	EERA
2 promotional events for the region in Brussels	By September 2004	European Partnership
Set up a group to develop a regional case for Structural Funds post 2006	January 2004	Co-ordinated by EERA

Establish a Regional Alliance with other appropriate regions		
Organise a visit to potential Polish contacts	By December 2003	Co-ordinated by EERA
Identify additional partners for the Alliance from existing links & potential leads	By December 2003	European Partnership
Identify regional contacts for PRAXIS Network working groups	By December 2003	EERA
2 meetings with regional colleagues to develop proposals for the regional alliance	By December 2003	Co-ordinated by EERA
2 meetings with potential partners for the regional alliance to develop proposals	By June 2004	Co-ordinated by EERA
Provide support for trade development		
The International Trade Strategy is being updated	By October 2003	TPUK/ EEDA
2 trade missions particularly within the development of the regional alliance	By September 2004	TPUK/ EEDA/ Invest East
Enhance communication and information of business opportunities amongst the partnership	Daily	Brussels Office/ EEDA/ SBS/ BL/ CoC & wider partnership
Encourage further business visits to Brussels	1 per quarter	European Partnership/ Business reps
Organise visits to the region for European Regions	2 per year	Brussels Office /EEDA /EERA
Launch Proposal for 6FP R&D support structure for SMEs	September 2003	BO/ Piemonte/ S. Denmark/ EEDA
Encourage more Business Stakeholders in Partnership	End 2003	EERA

9. How will the Strategy be delivered?

- 9.1 Resourcing for the Strategy will be based on a combination of existing resources and assets, mainstreaming and new financial resources as required.
- 9.2 The structures which are in place to ensure that the Strategy is delivered are as follows:

East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) Europe & International Affairs Panel

The Panel, which is jointly chaired by the Assembly and EEDA, is made up of representatives of local government and community stakeholders and involves both the region's MEPs and its Committee of the Regions members, will oversee the implementation of the Strategy. It will receive reports at its quarterly meetings related to the actions proposed therein.

East of England European Officers' Group

This group brings together European specialists from across the region's local authorities and other partners. The group supports EERA's Europe & International Affairs Panel and is a key network for regional co-operation.

East of England European Partnership Brussels Office

The Brussels Office represents the interests of a broad range of partners from across the region and is the region's key route into the European institutions and an invaluable source of information and advice.

Specialist Networks

These networks of specialist officers from across the East of England partnership are available to provide support to members, MEPs and Committee of the Regions members as required. They also provide input into consultations on their areas of expertise.

Structural Funds groups

A range of groups has been established by the regional partnership to help with the implementation and management of the Structural Funds within the region.

10. Conclusion

As part of the Regional Assembly's family of regional strategies, this Regional European Strategy explains the context for greater European engagement, evaluates the Region's current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, determines a vision and strategic objectives and then outlines a delivery framework for the period to September 2004. The active participation of all regional stakeholders will be required to ensure that the Strategy is delivered.