

Meeting the Challenges of Small Islands

European Small Islands Network (ESIN)

Meeting the Challenges of Small Islands

Inter Island Exchange Project

European Small Islands Network (ESIN)

2007

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Front cover photo: Ferry arriving at island Ven, Sweden

Printed by Norrköpings Tryckeri AB, Sweden, August 2007

Printed on ecologically sustainable paper



ESIN annual meeting 2006, on the schooner Linnea and island of Idö, Sweden

Acknowledgements

The partners are extremely grateful to INTERREG IIIC and to all those who supported the project to date. Thanks also to all of the individual islanders and other representatives who participated in the various networking project visits and events hosted by the project.

Many thanks also to all those who have contributed photographs and to Anna-Karin Almkvist Utbult who made the island maps.

Sincere thanks to the Project Manager and all the Project Officers from the six participant countries:

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Special thanks to those who were active in the final stages of the production of the booklet: Stefan Andtbacka for layout, Ciara Cullen, Máire Uí Mhaoláin, Mairéad O'Reilly, for editing and proofreading, Mary Louise MacQuarrie for final proofreading, Claus Jensen, Máire Uí Mhaoláin, Stefan Andtbacka and Bengt Almkvist for their contribution to the booklet group.

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Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann (Irish Islands Federation), Ireland

Udarás na Gaeltachta (The Development Authority for the Gaeltacht), Ireland

Argyll & Bute Council, Scotland

The Highland Council, Scotland

North Ayrshire Council, Scotland

Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scotland

Association Les Iles du Ponant (Association of the Ponant Islands), France

Sammenslutningen af Danske Småøer (The Association of Danish Small Islands), Denmark

Skov- og Naturstyrelsen (Danish Forest and Nature Agency), Denmark

Skärgårdarnas Riksförbund (The National Association for the Swedish Archipelagos), Sweden

Varsinais Soumen Liitto (Regional Council of Southwest Finland), Finland

Pro Åbolands utskär R.f. (Pro Turunmaan Outermost Islands Registered Association), Finland

Photo right: Crab fishing on the island of Strynø, Denmark



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Foreword

Many of Europe's small and often remote island communities are threatened. With populations in their tens, hundreds and sometimes thousands, islanders are struggling to build a future for themselves and for the next generation of island children.

Islands are homes to communities. They are also valuable assets for mainlanders and tourists who visit the islands for their unique natural habitats and local cultures. The challenges facing islanders are many: houses are expensive due to high market prices, young people and families with children move to the mainland and schools and shops close as populations decline, the provision of health & social care becomes difficult if not impossible, island businesses relocate and transportation to and from the islands reduces. Luckily this is not the case on all small islands. It is important to take a closer look at those islands which have succeeded in maintaining viable populations with sustainable practices. This is exactly what this booklet is about.

Meeting the Challenges of Small Islands presents to the reader the preliminary results of the Inter Island Exchange Project, co-funded by INTERREG IIIC. ESIN was set up as a network in 2001 by six island organisations from France, Ireland, Scotland, Denmark, Sweden and Finland. In 2005 the founding members of ESIN decided to formalise the structure. Status were adopted and the European Small Islands Federation was constituted. But the name ESIN has been retained. Three new members joined in 2006. The INTERREG IIIC Inter Island Exchange project began in 2004 in cooperation between the six original founding members.

This booklet brings together examples of good practice as well as feedback from many hundreds of islanders, civil servants, experts and politicians who participated in 13 inter-regional networking project visits. They discussed and shared ideas, focusing on possibilities rather than on problems. 18 themes have been explored and examples of good practice have been identified which offer possible models for the future. The implementation of these ideas will, to a large extent, depend on the islanders' efforts themselves - but such a process cannot occur in isolation from mainland based authorities upon which so many aspects of island life depend.

ESIN has, with the help of the Inter Island Exchange Project, begun to create a development platform for small islands throughout Europe. ESIN aims to become an influential voice for island matters amongst EU institutions as well as to offer support to national institutions in countries which have small islands.

In this booklet, ESIN highlights possible models for the future sustainable development of Europe's small islands, for both decision makers and islanders.



Bengt Almkvist,
Chairperson,
European Small
Islands Network,
November 2006



GUNILLA
SANKT ANNA

Introduction

European Small Islands Network (ESIN)

The European Small Islands Network (ESIN) was set up in 2001 by island organisations in France, Ireland, Scotland, Denmark, Sweden and Finland. ESIN works to raise awareness of the challenges experienced by Europe's smallest inhabited islands and to promote inter-island co-operation on the subject of sustainable island development.

ESIN was designed to be a strong strategic forum representing a body of small European islands. ESIN is now constituted as a federation and has grown to nine members: the original six founding members as well as three new members: Estonia, Italy and Greece. ESIN aims to be an influential voice for small island matters across Europe - a voice which can be listened to at both EU and national levels.

ESIN's definition of small islands

Although there is no official definition of a 'small island' as such, ESIN identifies a small island by the following criteria:

- A small island has an all-year round population. It may have only a few inhabitants, hundreds or number in the thousands.
- A small island generally does not have a permanent connection to the mainland.
- A small island has no regional administrative authority. Unlike larger islands which do have their own regional administrative bodies, small islands often rely on voluntary associations to spearhead island developments and to represent their interests at regional, national and EU level.



Island of Cape Clear, Ireland

All islands struggle to overcome endogenous constraints on their development such as limited natural and human resources, limited production possibilities, difficult access to markets, transport problems, hyper-specialisation of economic activity and heavy reliance on the primary and tertiary sectors, seasonality, relatively low access to public services and facilities and environmental problems. However, these handicaps are particularly acute on small islands.

Note: when the word "islanders" is mentioned in this booklet it refers to all-year round, or permanent residents.



Dr Rachel Weldon on the way to Scottish isle of Rum for her monthly visit

ESIN and its INTERREG IIIC project

There are presently numerous challenges facing European small islands:

- Populations are declining
- Demographics are often skewed by age and gender
- Large numbers of seasonal holiday makers put pressure on both local cultures and environments
- European and national policies often do not support small scale development, especially in terms of fishing and farming

The list goes on. However, while raising awareness of the myriad challenges is important, ESIN felt the need to focus on the positive aspects of small islands. The network wanted to explore possible solutions. In order to do this, ESIN decided to approach the INTERREG IIIC programme for funding to carry out research as well as establish the foundation for useful exchange between the six island regions.

Since its beginning in 2004, the aim of the Inter Island Exchange Project has mirrored that of ESIN's: to promote greater co-operation between small islands, to influence national and EU regional development policies in favour of small island communities. It has also been able to collate a considerable amount of information concerning numerous small islands' direct experiences of sustainable development. A total of 18 island related themes have been analysed during 2005 and 2006, through a process of networking and exchange.

Within the project, the islands and their corresponding structures of governance vary widely. Nevertheless, many of the problems are the same. Some of the examples of good practice which have emerged from the work of the project have the potential of being transferred to other island regions, if not entirely, then with minor adaptations. The Inter Island Exchange Project has been a positive experience for the regions involved, creating a database of information and knowledge. It is hoped that the project can serve as a catalyst for change and progress as well as providing an important forum for all permanent residents of small islands.

Networking Project Visit on Housing on the island of Gullholmen, Sweden



ESIN partners in the project

Ireland

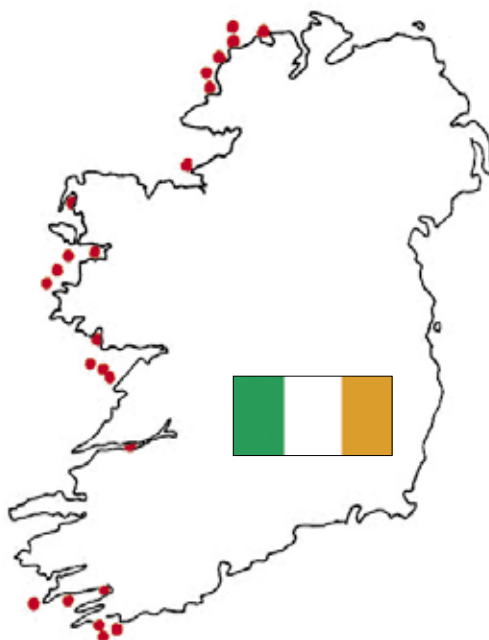
Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann, Irish Islands Federation



Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann is the representative body of the inhabited offshore islands of Ireland. At present there are 33 island members representing approximately 3000 persons. Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann was registered as a co-operative society in 1994.

Principal aims of Comhdháil

- Promoting social, economic and cultural development of island communities thus fostering the full development of the individual in the island community.
- Representing the member island communities at local, national and European levels.
- Providing a forum for representatives of islands who are democratically elected.
- Promoting contacts between the member islands and also with other similar European island groups.
- Delivering programmes (e.g. LEADER, NOW, INTERREG) on the islands in an effective manner with the full participation and co-operation of the islanders.



Structure of the Comhdháil

The affairs of the Comhdháil are managed by an Executive Committee consisting of representatives of State Bodies and elected representatives of the islands.

Funding for the Comhdháil's work

Since 1995, the secretariat has been funded by a variety of means. Comhdháil was recognised as a European Programmes Leader company, and was successful in implementing the Employment Initiative NOW and various other EU Programmes.

The secretariat is now supported with core funding from the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs which has an Islands Division.



An Islander tends to his Lobster pots

European programmes remain a crucial element in the development process on the islands. Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann is a founder member of the European Small Islands Network.

More information
www.oileain.ie

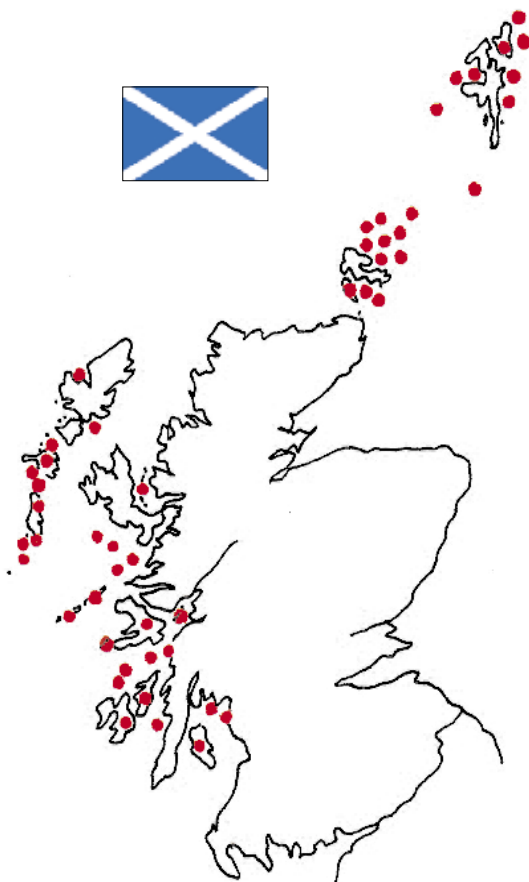
Scotland

The Scottish Islands Network

There are 95 inhabited islands in Scotland with a total population of just under 100000. These islands fall into six different local authority areas - Shetland, Orkney, Western Isles, all of which are island regions with their own autonomous councils, Highland, Argyll & Bute and North Ayrshire, which are mainland councils with island communities.

There are four Scottish project partners in the ESIN Inter Island Exchange Project. Three of these are local authorities:

- Argyll & Bute Council (Lead Partner) www.argyll-bute.gov.uk
- Highland Council www.highland.gov.uk
- North Ayrshire Council www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk



The fourth project partner is Highlands and Islands Enterprise (www.hie.co.uk) – a government sponsored development agency which provides business support services, delivery of training and learning programmes, assistance for community and cultural projects and measures for environmental renewal through a network of locally-led organisations.



In 2001, The Scottish Islands Network was set up to promote, publicise and advance the interests of all Scotland's islands by bringing together public, private and community sectors responsible for their well-being. The network received core funding from various sources – including the Scottish Executive and Leader+ which was used to undertake a number of networking tasks, including the

creation of an extensive database of island community contacts and the production of a monthly island e-newsletter. This Network has operated in an informal manner to date without core funding or permanent staff since 2004. But following the success of the ESIN Inter-Island Exchange Project there is renewed interest in reviving the Scottish Islands Network as a grassroots-led organisation to represent the interests of Scotland's island communities. A meeting of interested parties is due to take place in 2007 at which the structure of the Scottish Islands Network will be formalised.

More information

www.scottishislands.org.uk

Island of Tiree, Argyll & Bute Council



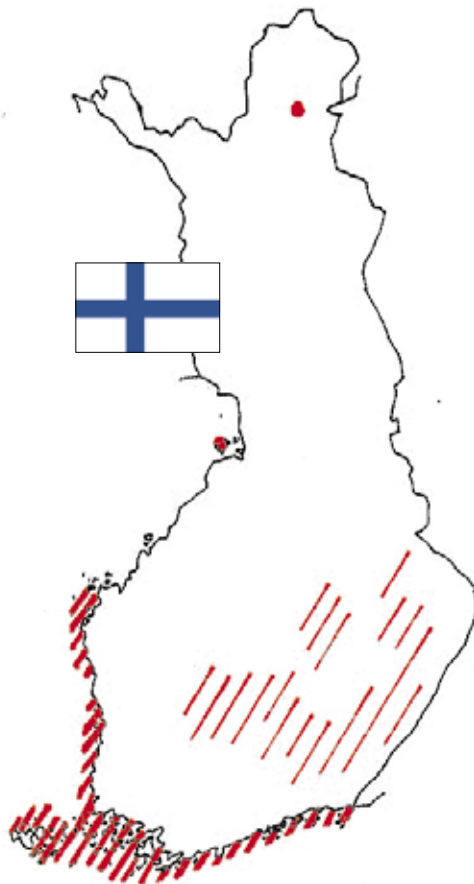
Finland

Pro Åbolands utskär, The Association for the Outermost Islands

The association for the Outermost Islands in the south west of Finland was founded in 1999 with the purpose of promoting year round populations on the islands as well as maintaining and nourishing the cultural heritage of the archipelago.

The work of the association is carried out by a board and active members who are all islanders and island entrepreneurs working together to protect the interests of the islands.

The Association worked to create a national island organisation in Finland. There are 431 small islands in Finland. 279 of these are sea islands with a total population of 7697 inhabitants, and 152 are lake islands with a total population of 1072 inhabitants. In addition, there are 25 islands in the island region Åland with a total population of 26000.



Due to the lack of a national island organisation, only the islands in Southwest Finland (archipelago sea area) have been involved in the INTERREG IIIC Inter Island Exchange Project.

Inspired by the work in the ESIN project a national association for the small islands in Finland was formed 2007. The association is called “Finnish Islands”.

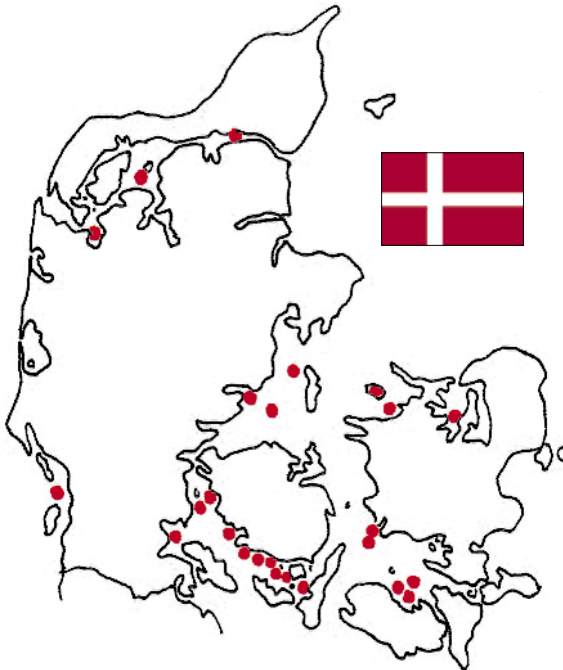
More information

www.foss.fi



Island of Vänö, outermost archipelago, south west Finland

Denmark Sammenslutningen af Danske Småøer, The Association of Danish Small Islands



The Association of Danish Small Islands (Sammenslutningen af Danske Småøer) was founded by islanders in 1974 and has been run democratically from its inception. The Danish association represents 27 small islands with permanent populations ranging from 10 to 937 inhabitants. In total, these islands represent a population of 5284 inhabitants in 2006. The islands have no local authority, but are parts of larger municipalities. Criteria for membership are: an island must have no bridge nor any other permanent connection to the mainland; the island is not an independent local authority, such as a municipality; and lastly

that the island has between 20 and 1200 residents. Exemptions can be made regarding the last criterion. The main aim of the organisation is to maintain and develop the communities of the small islands as places for full-time residents.

Structure of the organisation

The Association of Danish Small Islands is run by a board of eight members. The chairman and deputy chairman are elected for a two-year period at annual general meetings and the last six seats on the board rotate between the 27 islands. Each island selects one representative who participates in the annual general meeting. The island representatives are important contactpersons between the islands and the organisation and the 27 representatives are the highest authority in the organisation.

The association has a secretariat which is situated on the island of Strynø. The secretariat has two staff members, a manager of the secretariat (full time) and an assistant (part time).

More information

www.danske-smaaer.dk

Sandy beach on the island of Anholt



Sweden

Skärgårdarnas Riksförbund The National Association for the Swedish Archipelago



Skärgårdarnas Riksförbund, SRF, was founded in 1982. The association has 14 regional archipelago organisations as members which work for the permanent residents of the archipelagos. Approximately 32000 persons live on 500 small islands with populations ranging from one to 5000.

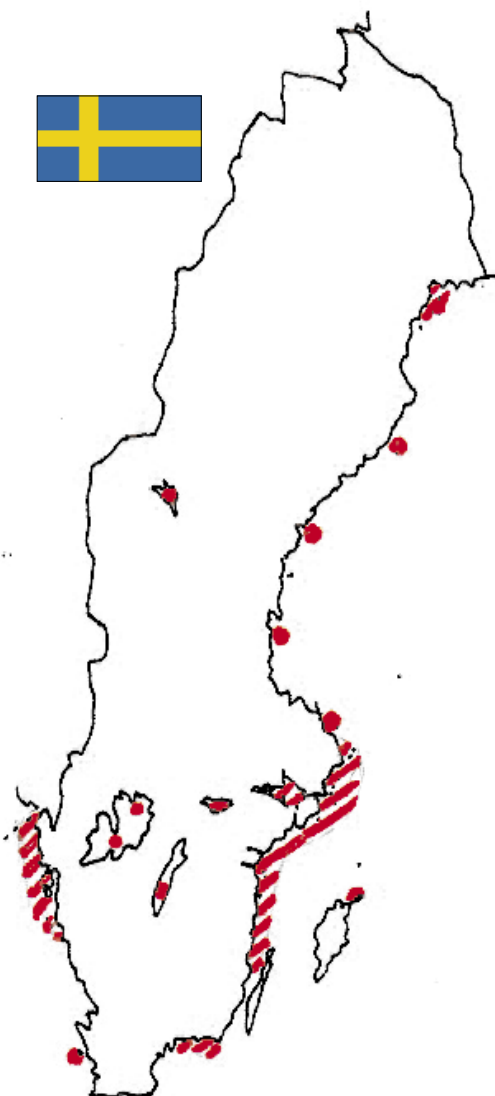
The main task for SRF is to influence the national government and agencies on improving conditions for living, working and service in the archipelago areas.

The archipelago habitat is found along the whole Swedish coast from the northern part of the Baltic Sea to the Norwegian border on the west coast, as well as in the biggest lakes. The member associations are from regions with archipelago habitats. All members have seats on the board and pay an annual fee. The main funding for the association is an annual contribution from the government.

Main issues

The main issues are concentrated in three areas:

- Living conditions including access to houses, economic competition for houses and house taxation. The prices of houses or farms are usually far above what can be paid by a family who wants to earn its living in the archipelago.
- Working conditions including better possibilities for making a living on the islands. In archipelago areas close to major cities, the local economy is greatly influenced by its proximity to the urban area. Good transportation makes commuting possible. Further away, more



of the economy comes from professions connected to tourism and service provision for holiday houses. Farming and fishing are also still important.

- Service conditions include communication both by sea transport and by telecommunications. Cargo transportation is also an important issue. Commercial services include energy distribution, stores and postal service as well as public services with schools on the islands. care for children and elderly and health care. Access to most of these services is regulated by law.

More information

www.skargardarnasriksforbund.se

Gullholmen, Swedish west coast



France

L'Association des Îles du Ponant, The Association of the Islands of Ponant

The Association of the Islands of Ponant is the representative body of fifteen inhabited offshore islands of the Atlantic and Channel Sea coast, ranging in size from 60 to 8563 squarekilometre with populations from 186 to 4834 inhabitants.



Aims

The Association works towards alleviating the constraints and handicaps common or specific to the islands on the western seaboard and attempts to find solutions to counteract such limitations. It lays down the objective of promoting economic, social and cultural development for island inhabitants while safeguarding and protecting the environmental heritage of the islands. It provides technical and administrative support for the delivery of projects, promotes the islands in partnership with tourist offices and coordinates initiatives which find solutions to island specific issues.



Structure of the Association

The Association of the Islands of Ponant was officially registered in April 1971. It is composed of three levels:

- Elected officials and representatives of each island (mayors, department representatives)
- Representatives of the professional services and qualified personnel
- Local authorities in partnership with the Association (regions, departments)

The affairs of the association are managed by a board composed of 25, including 18 mayors. The current chairman M. J-Y Bannet, mayor of the commune of Locmaria and of the group of communes on Belle-île.



Sauzon harbour, Island of Belle île

Funding

The association is funded through grants from the islands' communes (20%), the departments concerned (13%), and from the Région of Brittany as well as from the FEDER (33% each).

More information

www.iles-du-ponant.com

The new ESIN members

In 2006 three new members joined ESIN: the Association of Estonian Islands, the Hellenic Small Island Network from Greece and the Associazione Nazionale Comuni Isole Minori, ANCIM, from Italy. All three organisations represent the small islands in their country.



The new members were not part of the Interreg project. However, on the small islands in their countries they also experience very much the same handicaps with limited resources, limited production possibilities, transportation problems, access to public service etc.

Below is a short presentation of the three new members.

Estonia

In Estonia there are 16 islands with a total of 47000 inhabitants. There are two big islands that are regional authorities. The remaining 14 are small islands with about 3000 inhabitants ranging from 1 to about 500. The main purpose of the Association of Estonian Islands, org.esk@lists.ut.ee, is to promote development and sustainable populations on the 16 islands.

Greece

Small islands, defined as having a population of less than 4000 inhabitants, have formed the Hellenic Small Island Network, apolpos@otenet.gr, which has 29 member islands and a total of about 65000 inhabitants. Most of the bigger islands in Greece are included in administrative island regions. The organisation works for the revival of insular economies based on the prospect of sustainable development.

Italy

There are 29 inhabited Italian small islands, all represented in Associazione Nazionale Comuni Isole Minori, ANCIM, www.ancim.it. Most of them are municipalities of their own. In total the islands have about 180000 inhabitants, ranging from 17 to 57000. ANCIM is a cooperation organisation for the island municipalities.

Inter Island Exchange Project

Background

ESIN's Inter Island Exchange Project has been funded by the INTERREG IIIC programme. The three year project began in July 2004 after the initial groundwork had been completed by ESIN's six island member organisations. It finishes in 2007. Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann, Irish Islands Federation, was the Lead Partner of the project and the project manager was based in Ireland. A Steering Group with representatives from each island member organisation worked with the project manager, and also six halftime project officers, one from each ESIN country. The project officers have carried out the work presented in this section of the booklet.

The results envisaged by ESIN at the beginning of the project included:

- Stronger contacts among decision makers and island organizations in all six island regions
- Improved access to information on sustainable approaches and solutions to the most pressing development problems facing small islands
- Greater co-operation between six island regions
- Identification at national and EU level of specific policy measures to support sustainable development on Europe's small islands
- Better understanding at EU level of the challenges facing micro-communities on small islands

Case studies on 18 themes

In 2004, at ESIN's annual meeting on the Scottish island of Eigg, members discussed a large number of island related topics which were of relevance to the Inter Island Exchange project. By the end of the meeting, 18 themes were agreed upon, and each ESIN member chose three of these for closer examination by their country's project officer. Each ESIN country organisation was responsible for identifying



Eigg harbour, Scotland

good practice examples amongst their own islands which then formed the basis of case studies undertaken by the project officers during 2005 and 2006. Strong community initiatives or high degrees of community involvement were important elements in most of the good practice case studies. Background information on each theme was

assembled by all project officers, so that a general context for the topic could be given for the ESIN region.

Networking project visits

For 13 of the themes, a two to three day long project visit was organised, taking place on different small islands within the six countries during 2005 and 2006. Islanders, experts, civil servants and politicians were selected to attend the meetings by the island representative organisations in each of the six countries. Criterion for selection of participants included that those attending have a direct involvement with small islands in relation to the particular theme. It was also hoped that the participant, upon returning home, would be in the position to raise awareness of the relevant issues and possibly even influence local practices.



Transportation network meeting

A total of 433 people have attended the project visits. Participants explored the themes, discussed common problems and came up with possible solutions, including additional examples of good practice. A number of informal and formal mini-networks have resulted. For example, a LEADER project on Renewable Energy involving Ireland, Denmark and Scotland resulted from the networking project visit on the Scottish island of Gigha, in August 2005.

18 themes

The themes examined by the project are shown in the table below along with the countries responsible for the research and project visits. Themes marked with an asterisk (*) had no project visits.

Ireland	Scotland	Denmark	Sweden	Finland	France
Island Environment Identity	Integrated Development Planning*	Inter-Island Exchange*	Housing	Marine Related Development	Health & Social Care
Infrastructural Governance*	Tourism	Agriculture and Nature Conservation	New Islanders*	Youth	Life Long Learning
Public Service and Community	Energy	Education	Transportation	Island Cultural Identity*	Information Technology

Common challenges facing small islands

The brief summaries in this booklet are designed to give the reader a taste of the more extensive reports which can be found at www.europeansmallislands.net. The summaries elucidate current challenges for each topic, a brief outline of good examples, including key factors contributing to their success, as well as contact details and web addresses.



Connemara mare and foal on Clare Island, Ireland

As the project progressed, it became obvious that the themes outlined above were not ‘stand alone’ topics. The complex interrelatedness of these essential topics highlight the challenges facing small islands. In addition, despite the fact that the islands involved in the INTER-REG project are a diverse group differing from each other in terms of geography, geology, remoteness from the mainland, population size, demographics, history, etc.; nevertheless, the commonality of small islands within ESIN was continually being confirmed.



Energy on the island of Gigha, Scotland



Windy conditions, Turku archipelago, Finland



Traditional house, Barsø, Denmark

Common challenges crosscut the work of the project. While not regarded as givens, as there are, of course, notable exceptions, a number of factors related to small islands can be presented here in a general way:

The problem of being small

Small islands face enormous challenges because of their size. Smallness, in terms of population size and sometimes geographical area, means that a reduced population base often cannot support key infrastructure and services. Local and regional authorities and national governments find it difficult to justify increased expenditure on public service provision for such small populations. Crucial services, such as schools, if left solely to population numbers, or shops, if left solely to market forces, would disappear from small islands.

Population change

Small island populations are decreasing. Continuing emigration amongst young islanders (particularly young women) and island families with young children, drains communities and can weaken their sense of identity as islanders. As populations decline, so do services, including transportation, making an island less attractive for potential 'new islanders' to settle on. Paradoxically, declining permanent populations often coincide with enormous increases in seasonal visitors, further straining services, local cultures as well as the physical environment.

Age and gender

Small island demographics are often skewed by age, sometimes by gender. Ageing populations require higher levels of public services, for example, health and social care. On many small islands, the oldest islanders are forced to relocate to the mainland for their last years. While some small islands have attracted ageing mainlanders to settle on islands, this phenomenon both seriously increases the need for public services and further imbalances island demographics. With the trend of young people leaving small islands, especially young women, the cohort of young couples rearing families continues to diminish.

Islands need special attention

Small islands are adversely affected by some European policies. While the intention is often to aid development or protect fragile habitats, some EU policies have disproportionate effects on small island communities. In general, policy tends to encourage large scale enterprises in a dynamic market place and is not cognisant of the needs of small islands which depend on small scale, sustainable initiatives. Furthermore, due to the additional constraints on small islands, be they economic, social, or geographic, there is a need for special recognition on national and EU level, so that policy is flexible enough to benefit small island communities.

Changes in employment

Small island traditional activities, fishing and farming, have declined. Traditional areas of employment are no longer attractive to younger islanders, often with only those in the older age cohorts still involved. Global, European and national policy favouring large scale production has contributed to the decline. There is a growing awareness of the need for diversification, possibly involving tourism and educational angles. New forms of employment, perhaps based on New Information Technology as well as innovative adaptations of traditional activities, are needed to reverse the trend and create much needed employment.

Competition for space

Small islands are increasingly attractive to mainland visitors and second home owners. Spiralling house prices result in islanders unable to purchase housing and green field sites on their own islands. Considerable environmental pressures coincide with the increase in tourists and seasonal, part-time islanders especially as regards water consumption and waste production. The annual trend of large summer populations can cause tensions amongst permanent residents.

Vulnerable environment

Small islands are finite and often fragile environments. Extremely vulnerable to possible consequences of global warming, small islands are also experiencing environmental change as a result of the improved living standards of their inhabitants. Given the financial support required, small islands could be ideal testing grounds for renewable energy sources and other innovative technologies, so as to encourage communities to live and prosper while at the same time respecting their unique island environments.

The island of Arz at dawn, France



Summaries of the 18 themes

The 18 themes have been organised according to focus and common elements under three categories:

1. Provision of essential public services and facilities on small islands
2. Devising an ecologically sustainable model for island development
3. Island identity, culture and language, islanders' sense of place and community

Essential public services and facilities

TRANSPORTATION

Most islanders will cite transportation as one of the most important elements of island life which needs to be regulated correctly. Ferry services are islands' lifelines. Inadequate or poorly run services have knock on effects across the entire community, perhaps even leading to population decline.

Current challenges

Small islands within the ESIN-regions vary considerably in terms of their transportation facilities and needs. Geographical location and proximity to the mainland, sea conditions and demand for passenger, car and cargo ferries all must be factored into a proper functioning transportation system. In addition, each national system of delivery and financing varies, there being different mixtures of public and private ownership of ferries. In most cases, income from ferry services does not cover running costs all year round. Thus in all countries, there is the need for consistent public funding. Apart from Sweden, Finland and Denmark where in most cases car ferries are free to islanders, in other countries, fares can be high, adding to the already high cost of island living.

It is important that ferry services should be provided in consultation with islanders and based, not on the lowest tender, but on the needs of islanders as well as accommodating the requirements of seasonal visitors. The socio-economic impacts should be evaluated on a regular basis in conjunction with the local community and with regular upgrading of services and vessels.

Establishing a ferry association between communities and ferry operator can improve the service. Continued consultation with the island community would seem to be crucial for services to meet the needs of the islanders.



Typical Swedish state owned car ferry

Examples of good practise

A case study was carried out on the Swedish state owned car ferries. Nearly all ferries carrying vehicles in Sweden are state owned by the Swedish Road Administration, Ferry Operations. The ferries run between public roads on the mainland and public roads on the islands. As the water stretch between these is regarded as an extension of the public roads, the ferries are free of charge. The running costs of the ferries are covered by the national taxation on cars. www.farjerederiet.se

Another example of good practise is the Danish Small Ferries Association. One of its aims is to help small ferry companies to function without requiring large operators and centralization. The association has enabled ferry companies to join together on a number of levels, for example, purchasing insurance. They lobby for policy matters and public funding. In this association, the voices of islanders are heard as well as those of municipalities and experts. www.smaa-faergerne.dk

French ferries collect a special eco-tax, amounting to 7% of the tourist fare, which is used towards environmental projects, often protecting against damage caused by the pressure of large numbers of visitors in summer time. The tax goes to the island communities to protect their valuable natural heritage.

Success factors

- Ferry contracts awarded with consideration to development needs of islands, rather than the lowest tender.
- Regarding ferry routes as extensions of public roads justify free car ferry services.
- Establishing a ferry association in partnership strengthens possibilities to improve matters of importance for small islands.
- Using ferry tickets to collect an eco-tax which goes to the island communities.

The networking project visit took place on the Island of Gräsö on the Swedish eastcoast in August, 2006.

INFRASTRUCTURAL GOVERNANCE

Current challenges

To greater or lesser degrees, European small islands are being governed and provided with infrastructure through various combinations of national, regional and local structures. In general, there is often fragmentation of responsibility resulting in considerable bureaucracy. The provision or upgrading of basic infrastructure and the provision of public services for small islands is often inadequate, either because of financial restrictions, the small numbers of people affected, or due to unsatisfactory mainland models imposed by mainland based authorities.

This theme can be regarded as a 'stand alone' good practice case study. It was felt that the Irish example of the Islands Section should be examined closely as a possible model for other countries

Example of good practice

The Islands Section of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in Ireland provides assistance for approximately 30 offshore islands, with a combined population of less than 3000. It is a small section of seven civil servants within the larger government department. Its mandate involves the implementation of a large number of capital works programmes, the provision of some services, the formulation of policy and the co-ordination of state services.

A separate entity within national government dedicated solely to islands allows for considerable co-ordination of state services, reducing the level of bureaucracy and bringing the responsibility for island matters under one roof. The Islands Section is also concerned with both the formulation of policy for islands at national cabinet level, as well as encouraging best practice models of island governance at local, island level. The minister and his civil servants actively lobby at EU level for an awareness of the unique role of small islands within Europe and the need for special cases and /or legislation to be created on behalf of small islands, especially as regards funding matters.

Success factors

- The Islands Section has arisen out of a real need from Irish island communities for improved infrastructure and support for decent living standards.
- The Irish national government acknowledges the importance of maintaining vibrant island communities.
- Islands, both Irish speaking and English speaking, have significantly benefited from the capital works programmes which the Islands Section has funded and overseen, especially in relation to infrastructure for access.
- The personal interest of the Minister in islands and his grass-roots approach has gained the trust and support of local island communities.
- The Island Section has enabled a number of islanders to become more active in decision making at various levels.
- The recognition of islands at national government level has positively influenced local authorities who have jurisdiction over individual islands.

For more information on the Department and the Islands Section see www.pobail.ie/en/Islands/

EDUCATION

On small islands, overall sustainability is dependant upon having access to schools in order to maintain populations as well as attract newcomers. In micro-communities such as islands, the school functions as one of the most important social, cultural and community institutions in addition to its educational role. Within the ESIN region, the number of schools on small islands has decreased during the last 20 years, as has the number of island children. The decrease in population, however, may correlate and even be the direct result of schools closing.



Painting on Inishbofin, Ireland

Current challenges

The professional qualifications of teachers working on small islands are the same as those of their mainland counterparts. Island pupils perform at or above national standards. IT facilities are generally good to excellent. Main-taining and developing this level of performance is an ongoing challenge. Some countries have difficulties in attracting new teachers, due to the isolated work conditions and the greater expectations from islanders that teachers need to be able to multi task. Education on small islands is vulnerable to government and municipal budget cuts. Another major challenge faced by islanders is the provision of second level education. Many young people must leave their islands once they have completed primary level. Innovative delivery of second level education need not be the major challenge it once was in the light of technological advances.

Examples of good practice

During the early 1990's, a Small Island Teachers Network was initiated by four teachers from the islands of Omø and Agersø in Denmark. Since then, seven island schools have joined the network. Its objective is to plan and develop standard educational practices, through the sharing of ideas and resources, through closed websites and debate forums. There is no formal leadership within the network and all activities are organised by small ad-hoc groups. The Network has an important role in the integration of newly employed teachers and it has raised awareness of educational planning and delivery on islands, benefiting not only children but parents, teachers and islanders in general. The Network has been responsible for much innovation in the educational field.

Second level education is being provided on some of the Irish islands, Inis Meáin, Inis Oírr and Tory despite there being small numbers of students. Scholarships are offered to mainland pupils who come to study on the island and live with island families. One of the schools is an outreach campus of a mainland school and island pupils can attend classes once a week off the island if it is not feasible to provide a particular course locally due to small numbers. The success of these two schools shows that the provision of second level education is possible when alternative approaches are explored. cimeain@indigo.ie

Success factors

- Small island schools are crucial for maintaining populations as well as attracting newcomers
- Island schools have significant, multi-faceted roles, and are more than just educational facilities
- Island pupils continue to attain high standards of achievement
- Networks enable teachers to develop pedagogical methods and tools, whilst providing support for existing members as well as new island teachers
- Provision of second level education on small islands is possible by using innovative models

The networking project visit took place on the island of Femø, Denmark in October 2005.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Access to decent health and social care services is necessary to maintain a permanent population on islands. This is particularly true within the current context of aging populations and the particular demographics of small islands which include high proportions of older people.

Current challenges

The availability of medical services is one of the deciding factors for new families wishing to settle on islands. Island based health and social care services can play a significant role in providing skilled employment. However, at present, the services on offer are often minimal. In order to cope with seasonal variations, additional services are sometimes provided on an ad-hoc basis during the tourist season, but these cannot be a substitute for year round needs.

The current decline in the provision of health and social care or even the absence of such services is often due to the reluctance of skilled professionals to work in isolated environments as well as the fact that provision of these services to small populations is not profitable. Thus, access to adequate social and medical services depends on ease of access to a particular island and on the size of its population.

This unevenness of the availability of health and social care and the increasing deregulation of the sector is threatening the future of small island communities which are most likely to be the victims of financial cutbacks and further (mainland) centralisation of services. In many cases, lobbying and public awareness campaigns are necessary in order to get local authorities and national governments to commit extra finances.

Example of good practices

The 'At Home Nursing Care Service' on Houat in France (SSIAD: Services de Soins Infirmiers A Domicile) was the subject of a case study. Houat is a small island with 300 inhabitants in South Brittany. The initiative consists of social and medical services providing nursing care and guaranteeing quality of life facilities to old people. The service provides supports for the elderly to remain at home, thus delaying their relocation to specialized units on the mainland. It also contributes to employment on the island through its creation of skilled jobs local people.



Outside Kummeli Center, Velkua, Finland...



...and inside, elderly care mixed with Kindergarten

Another examples is The Kummeli-project in Velkua, Finland. Velkua is a municipality in the archipelago of Turku. It consists of 300 small islands, seven of which are inhabited all year round, with 250 inhabitants. The project aims to provide a high level of services which would normally be the responsibility of different administrative

areas. The idea is to ensure the provision of health, social and cultural services under the same roof while keeping the value-added benefits on the islands through local job creation.

Success factors

- Innovative initiatives necessary for maintaining access to good quality health and social care services on small island
- Cooperation amongst professionals, politicians, and relevant administrative and local institutions and island communities
- Reliable long term financing
- Support and training for local medical and social care staff, allowing value-added benefits to remain on the island
- Awareness campaigns and lobbying for provision of essential health and social care services

The networking project visit was held on the islands of Belle-île and Houat on the west coast of Brittany in France in September 2005.

PUBLIC SERVICE AND COMMUNITY

The manner in which Public Services are delivered on islands, and the extent to which is-land communities have a significant say in the procedure varies from country to country. Generally, there is a combination of national, regional and local responsibility. National island associations have played crucial roles in establishing and/or maintaining vital public services on their member islands through persistent lobbying and by raising public awareness of specific issues.

Current Challenges

The delivery of public services on small is-lands is generally more expensive and more difficult due to small populations and geo-graphical remoteness. There is often a lack of understanding from mainland authorities as to the specific needs of island communities. In some cases, crucial public services such as firefighting are denied communities because authorities declare island populations to be too small to warrant the extra expense. Merely superimposing mainland models onto island problems is not the answer either.



Firetruck, island of Houat, France

Seasonal population differences create fluctuating demands, making it very difficult for service providers to implement plans which adequately meet summer and winter needs. This can be seen in the areas of water provision and waste management. On all islands, there is an increased demand for water amongst permanent and seasonal island residents. There is a need for the sharing of information amongst ESIN islands regarding innovative solutions (desalination techniques), and more efforts could be

placed on public awareness campaigns for the prudent use of water. Likewise, there is an increase in the production of all types of waste on small islands. As with water issues, islands often must lobby for effective solutions. Recycling of waste is necessary, but islands with small populations often do not have the critical mass for island based recycling plants. Raising awareness of the problem and offering ways of reducing the amount of waste produced should be a priority for community groups.

Examples of good practice

Ionad Athchursála Árann Recycling Plant on Inis Mór, Ireland, was set up in 2001 after five years of intensive lobbying by the local community. The island's landfill site had become a serious health hazard and closed down. Despite this, the mainland-based local authority was unable to come up with a solution. The island co-operative succeeded in spearheading and running the operation, with grant aid from various sources. Last year in 2005, 325 tonnes of recycled material were collected and sold on to the mainland for further processing. comharchumannarann@indigo.ie

In the Swedish speaking archipelago of Houtskär in Finland, a comprehensive waste recycling system is in place amongst the 20 islands with permanent residents. Due to the large seasonal fluctuations in the population, the production of waste has increased dramatically. A sliding scale of waste charges encourage composting, and differentiates between permanent and seasonal residents. Similar challenges are evident with water management with demand exceeding supply during the summer months. An innovative technology of reverse osmosis is being piloted. mikael.grannas@houtskar.fi

Success factors

- Communities are often able to deliver efficient local services if given the proper infrastructure and support.
- Structures which allow islanders to participate in decision making, on the local and/or regional level are to be encouraged.
- Projects which provide services that have developed as the result of extensive community lobbying are usually very successful.

The networking project visit took place on Inis Mór, Árann, in Ireland, in April 2006.

INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

The manner in which Integrated Development Planning is delivered on islands, and the extent to which island communities have a significant say in the procedure varies from country to country. Generally, there is a combination of national, regional and local responsibility for delivering integrated development planning, but the local involvement by small island communities varies within countries as well as across national boundaries



Settlement pattern on island of Tiree, Scotland

Current Challenges

Integrated Development Planning presents, in principle, an excellent opportunity for islanders to engage in the process of development and investment in their communities, thus contributing to their long term sustainability. However, as with many other aspects of service delivery, there is often a lack of understanding amongst urban-trained professionals of the specific issues facing island communities. The imposition of mainland approaches to island development issues rarely produces sustainable solutions. Delivered through the formal, statutory consultation process, the resultant documents or plans are then developed by a government agency, which is remote from the islands.

As integrated development planning influences all activities on island, from landscape to enterprise, from housing to transportation infrastructure, it is an essential tool in achieving long term sustainability for small islands. In order that this be achieved, it is essential that islanders are engaged at an early stage in the process, shaping the planning process and informing the plan-makers of their needs. Islanders have tremendous knowledge about local habitats, settlement patterns, transportation needs and business opportunities which, if utilized in the planning process, will lead to a more effective plan.

Many small islands have the potential to benefit from funding assistance, such as the European Structural funds or national development funds. The targeting of these funds is not always clearly aligned with the development planning process, but on islands where it is integrated, the benefits are much greater to both the island communities and the government agencies. The islanders see investment in appropriate areas, whilst the Government agencies recognize appropriate investment in essential and popular projects or activities.

Examples of good practice

An excellent example concerns the island of Tiree. Argyll and Bute Council has recently completed the Local Area Plan. This plan presents land use planning proposals for the Argyll and Bute Council area, which includes 25 inhabited islands, varying in size from 600 inhabitants to less than 10. The Council adopted a wide ranging

consultative approach to the plan preparation, holding community meetings in all areas, including the small islands, throughout the plan preparation process. The Island of Tiree (population 770) is very remote from the mainland (4 hours ferry journey from Oban) and exhibits some interesting development challenges. It is highly agricultural, has some outstanding protected natural heritage, a seasonal tourism industry and a fairly stable, but aging, population base. Tiree has a very individual built heritage, with traditional cottages in a vernacular style. In order to enable affordable housing to be built, without losing the character of the island's heritage, a community-based planning process has resulted in the development of a design guide specifically for the island. This will enable the planning process to focus investment in an integrated way, supporting islanders' needs, whilst preventing compromise of the heritage landscape.

LIFE LONG LEARNING

Providing access to training and education for islanders of any age is a major challenge for small islands. It is generally acknowledged that training courses available on islands are insufficient and costly, thus limiting opportunities for those who want to study on their islands, access to continuing education courses or develop new areas of interest, either as hobbies or with an eye towards professional qualifications.

Current challenges

Yet, training and education are essential in maintaining a young and active population on islands, and can act as a catalyst for further social, economical or demographical development.

Solutions must be relevant to the specific needs of islands and in this regard, e-learning is an interesting possibility for islands, as it bypasses the issues of remoteness and small population bases. However, there is still reluctance from mainland authorities to promote it, because of high set up costs, as well as from islanders who are often



apprehensive about this new form of training. Thus it is imperative that the early stages for life long learning initiatives must adequately inform locals and mainland based authorities of the positive benefits, in order to develop the structures needed for innovation as well as provide adequate support for them to succeed.

College des Îles du Ponant, France

Example of good practice

Some islands have set innovative initiatives to tackle those challenges. The Millenium Institute, of the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), Scotland, is an educational partnership of colleges, research institutions and a network of over fifty learning centres providing courses and research opportunities available on-line. It is

dedicated to widening access to high-quality education (PgCert / PgDip / MSc) to people geographically distant from a main campus or unable to travel. It then allows people to study from anywhere on Islands and to gain an up-to-date professional qualification at their desk with programmes designed to meet rural communities' needs. The course aims to provide an understanding of the theories for development processes in rural communities and to translate these into a pragmatic approach through practical applications. One of the important aspects is encouraging effective peer-to-peer learning and constructive working through online interaction.
www.uhi.ac.uk/rural

Success factors

- Adequate long term financing
- Preliminary survey of individual needs and expectations in order to closely match training to local conditions
- Basic training and long term support in information technology
- Good cooperation between all participants

The networking meeting took place on the islands of Ouessant and Molène, in Brittany, France in October 2006.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Information technology offers small islands interesting tools which can help in the provision of services in various fields. This is especially important as small island communities are becoming more vulnerable due to the increasing deregulation of a variety of services. In general, small islands are unattractive to service providers due to the constraints of small populations and geographical remoteness.

Current challenges

Information technology can be used to develop and diversify services offered on islands (for example with telemedicine) as well as to maintain or even create jobs locally (teleworking). However, some constraints must be taken into consideration and managed properly. Amongst these are the extra costs resulting from insularity (which private or public service providers are not always willing to bear), the difficulties for some people to adapt to a new tool (with the resulting need for training and support), and the technical limitations resulting from the island locations (setup and maintenance of infrastructures).

Initially, the establishment of necessary infrastructure and the identification of possible information technology projects needs to be considered within each island context. All initiatives, in order to meet the real demands of the community, and to be sustainable in the long run, need to be developed from the bottom up.

Examples of good practice

There are a number of innovative initiatives involving information technology on the small islands in the ESIN region. One of these, the “Archipelagonet Ltd” (Finland) is part of the Regional Network Strategy in the Åboland region, has been developing new means of communication in remote areas since 2001. Archipelagonet Ltd provides broadband and wireless network access as an alternative operator to local inhabitants, tourists and local businesses where there is no existing commercial provider. It also works with other partners on projects within various fields (education, health...). www.finlandarchipelago.org

Two other examples of good practice are La Brise and Altermed from France. These initiatives are located in South Brittany on Belle-Ile, an island with a population of around 5 000 inhabitants. La Brise is an island based association set up in 1996 which provides efficient social services and support including employment and further education to islanders and visitors. <http://labrise.free.fr> Altermed is a pilot project using telemedicine. It promotes cooperation between medical services on the mainland and those on Belle-Ile via video-links, thus enabling remote consultations and after care to take place on the island. www.portaittelesante.org

Success factors

- Preliminary survey and discussion with interested parties to assess potential take up
- Local topographical survey to decide on the most adequate technologies depending on local conditions
- Sourcing possible finance and drafting of a realistic project
- Sourcing local expertise to setup the project and maintain the infrastructures
- Sufficient interest on one or more islands (networking)

The networking meeting took place on the islands of Ouessant and Molène, in Brittany, France in October 2006.

Bringing broadband to the island of Vinön in lake Hjälmaren, Sweden



An ecologically sustainable model for island development

ENERGY

Current challenges

Some notable small island communities are actively deciding how their future energy needs can be met in a sustainable and cost effective way. This approach reflects a general resourcefulness of islanders both to look towards meeting their own requirements and harnessing economic opportunity. These examples are extremely important for other islands within the ESIN region who may not have the same levels of state and agency support for developing renewable energy. The challenges facing small islands in terms of energy are the same as those facing the world at large. If anything, small islands are more vulnerable to the effects of global warming, and can also be perfect testing grounds for new technology.

Examples of good practice

Amongst the ESIN partners, most energy projects on small island would appear to be community driven. These are usually underpinned with agency support. The community owned island of Gigha in Scotland, has the UK's first community-owned, grid-connected Windfarm. Currently, the project supplies electricity to the grid with the revenue paying for the turbines' upkeep and funding development projects on the island. www.gigha.org.uk

In Ireland, authorities are becoming increasingly aware of inadequacies of island infrastructure as well as the absence of state support for renewable energy on islands. On the island of Inis Meáin, a local wind turbine project came about in response to a need to provide clean water for the island, rather than a desire to introduce renewable energy. Wind energy is used to desalinate water from the Atlantic. In 2005, surplus power of 1.25 million units was generated by the turbines and sold to the national grid, a considerable income that can be used for bank loan repayments and ongoing maintenance costs.

On the Swedish island of Visingsö, with 800 inhabitants, there is a school wind-turbine, as well as one for local council buildings. A local working group has looked at windpower and assessed local interest in a new wind power station for the island, which resulted in a not-for-profit organisation in which people could purchase shares in a new windfarm. A new 600 kilowatt station was opened as a result.

Success factors

- Community owned energy creation assets, such as the wind turbines in Gigha, can be a way for islands to contribute towards renewable energy as well as providing an island income for community projects.
- Agency support is key to success of island energy projects which are community driven and owned. Projects operating without this support face significant barriers.

- The necessary infrastructure must be available if the project aims to supply energy to the national grid. This can be a barrier for many island projects where the lack of infrastructure can be an inhibiting cost.

The networking project visit took place on the island of Gigha, in Scotland in August, 2005.

AGRICULTURE AND NATURE PRESERVATION

On most small islands, agricultural practices are declining. The average age of farmers is 50 or older. The Common Agricultural Policy has helped to transform farming from a traditional form of island employment, one which reinforced identity and the farmer's relationship to nature, to a situation in which farmers are paid, in some cases, not to farm.

Current challenges

High prices of land or the lack of it makes it difficult for young farmers who wish to expand their enterprises or for those wishing to settle on islands. The transportation of stock, ani-mal feed and agricultural produce is expensive. The income which can be generated on most small island farms is not enough to live on, and supplementary incomes are necessary.



Taking care of nature, Mandø, Denmark

Farming land, hand in hand with nature preservation measures, can be one of the new ways of diversification. Added value to farm produce is another promising angle. This can be done by producing quality food, including organic production, involving tourism and education. Development of a small island quality branding system is seen as necessary by many producers. Island farmers also recognise the need for lobbying so that EU and national policies will recognise the specific handicaps facing island farmers.

Examples of good practice

The Small Island Food Network from Denmark was initiated in 2003 during a seminar for agricultural producers from the small islands. The aim is to sell quality agricultural produce with a specific island brand (Small Island Food Network) and to raise awareness amongst the general public of the small islands both as places of permanent habitation and places to visit. Two island food producers started the network, receiving professional and financial support from the European Leader+ Programme. The products have been presented at several food fairs and have received positive reactions – both from consumers and the press. On-going challenges for the network are how to define 'Quality', how to establish adequate monitoring systems and how to produce enough to sell on a larger scale. www.oespecialiteter.dk

Another good practice example is that of Klode farm, established in 1635, on the island of Fur in Denmark which produces Hereford cattle, sheep and goats. The meat is processed according to very high standards on the farm and is sold mainly through the farm shop and website. Klode farm is a member of the Small Island Food Network. It is also an active partner in nature preservation, utilising extensive forms of cattle rearing. Nature preservation is an important element in their brand of meat and wool production. The farm is developing forms of tourism and nature education for children. www.furhereford.dk

Success factors

- Diversification amongst island farmers is necessary
- Value-added activities on islands one way of maintaining agricultural practices
- Networks of island producers maintain quality and aid in marketing
- Establishing specific island 'brands' can strengthen demand for island products
- Combining farming, especially traditional forms, and nature preservation benefits farmer, local island environment and provides opportunities in tourism and education sectors

A networking project visit took place on the islands of Fejø and Agersø in Denmark in early June 2005.



Small island raspberries, Denmark

HOUSING

Current challenges

Small islands are experiencing a paradoxical situation: on most islands permanent populations are decreasing yet there is a serious shortage of permanent housing for new and/or returned islanders. The demand for holiday and second homes has created high inflation in the island housing market. Islanders, who on average earn less than mainlanders, increasingly cannot compete for houses on their own islands. This situation underlies many other island related issues. For example, employment initiatives which would otherwise encourage people from the mainland to settle on islands are blocked due to the lack of year-round housing.

Planning restrictions, by-laws, the extra cost of building on islands and the diminishing supply of building sites (sometimes due to environmental designations which prohibit building) all add to the burden of providing one of the most basic requirements for resident communities on the islands.



Former pilot buildings, today rental flats, Sandhamn, archipelago of Stockholm, Sweden

The most common forms of existing housing on islands are privately owner-occupied. Rented flats/houses, housing co-operatives and various forms of social housing are much less common.

A review of the different policies regarding property tax on islands revealed that Sweden has an exceptionally complicated and, for islanders, unfair taxation system based on the current property values for summer houses. This situation seriously threatens, in particular, the elderly on islands who are asked to pay inflationary rates of tax.

Examples of good practise

In Sweden, in the archipelago of Stockholm, a web-inventory for supply and demand for rental houses is carried out by the regional Stockholm Archipelago Association (SIKO). People interested in living permanently on an island can submit their details on a website www.sikostugan.se. They can indicate online which island they would like to live on, what type of housing they want, as well as providing information about themselves, such as age, number in the family, etc. The resulting database illustrates to politicians and civil servants the level of demand for island living as well as the significant need for additional rental accommodation. In 2005, more than a thousand submissions were recorded on the website, equivalent to roughly 2500 persons (including single people and families with children). Island house owners who wish to rent their own properties can make use of the website to find potential tenants. www.sikostugan.se

A study of migration patterns on Finnish islands in the region of Åboland, including the archipelago, was carried out by Turku University and Åbo Akademi, and was co-financed by the European Leader+ programme and local municipalities. The goal was to increase the attractiveness of relocation to rural areas including the islands. Results from the survey showed that among those who had moved away from the islands during the period 2000-2002, 40% intended to move back to islands in the future. www.tkk.utu.fi/onni.

Denmark has a favourable planning instrument, which offers the possibility of dedicating areas for permanent residents only, thus potentially keeping house prices low.

Another good practice example comes from Inis Mór, the largest of the Arann islands in Ireland, where a strong community based initiative resulted in the building of semi-independent housing for the elderly. Áras Rónáin: Nursing/Care Facility has enabled older people to remain on the island, whilst creating 21 island jobs.

Success factors

- Use of internet to illustrate the demand for island living and the need for more rental flats/houses
- Importance of studies which can identify target groups for relocation to islands
- Planning instruments used in ways which benefit permanent island residents
- Innovative forms of housing for the elderly which enable them to stay on the island, while also creating island employment

The networking project visit took place on the Island of Gullholmen on the Swedish westcoast in May 2005.

MARINE RELATED DEVELOPMENT

Current challenges

Small island fishing communities are facing enormous challenges as marine related activities become increasingly difficult to engage in. For many islands, marine activity is characterised by small scale coastal fishing in vessels of less than twelve metres, and fishing within twelve nautical miles of the coast. The average age of island fishermen is between 45 and 50 years. For many, it is no longer a full time profession. Fishermen struggle with low incomes and inadequate infrastructure and many are forced to diversify into fish farming, fishing tourism and small-scale processing etc. On those islands which can still support a strong fishing industry, with larger boats and crews, population figures are relatively healthy and the average age of fishermen is lower than the average for the region.



Harbour of St Gildas, island of Houat, France

Fishing and marine activity in general is heavily regulated, not only by the fisheries secretariats and authorities, both national and European, but also by many other regulations, including environmental, coastal zone management and a number of large scale fishing interest groups. The one-rule-for-all nature of EU regulations is threatening the survival of small scale operators on the islands. There is a need for a united voice in the form of a network combined with a strategic approach at EU policy level in raising the issues which are working against the small scale operator.

At present in peripheral areas and on small islands, where few choices exist, fishing as a vital component of the local economy is being severely diminished.

Examples of good practice

The Finnish Institute of Fishery and Environment, located in Parainen in the south west of Finland, aims to provide education in all aspects of marine related activities with a strong environmental focus. It offers an outreach facility which gives on the job training to fishermen. kala@kalakoulu.fi

In Ireland, on Cape Clear Island off the southwest coast, the local co-op has been at the forefront of shorebased aquaculture since 1990. Various projects involving the farming of turbot, halibut and ragworm have been spearheaded and run by the island co-operative. At present the co-op is farming abalone. The success of the Cape Clear experience seems to be very much rooted in the strength of the co-op which was begun in 1970. Its focus from the start has been the sustainable development of the island's natural resources and its ability to make use of the particular talents on the island as well as supporting co-operation from the island population in general. At present, the co-op has possibly the most advanced knowledge base of land-based or 'pump ashore' fish farming techniques as well as the cultivation of abalone. ccte@iol.ie

Fejøl fish harbour, Denmark



On the Danish small islands of Sejerø and Omø, fishermen have come together to provide and manage their own fishpacking facility, giving them more control over their enterprise.

Success factors

- Actively engaged marine communities on islands help maintain population levels
- Community initiatives developed from identified needs of the maritime community can aid diversification initiatives, and ensure participation from local island fishermen
- Innovation based on local natural resources and traditional activities
- Networks of small island fishermen are needed to lobby for recognition of unique position of small islands and need for policy changes

The networking project visit took place in Parainen and on the Island of Utö, Finland, in April 2005.

ISLAND ENVIRONMENT IDENTITY

Current challenges

As European small islands have become more modernised, and indeed, globalised, many aspects of the island environment have lost their determining force. Island life has become less coloured by local environmental conditions, and instead is more influenced by social and economic trends of the mainland. Island landscapes in particular are increasingly showing the effects of the decline in farming and large areas on some islands are now overgrown and inaccessible.

High levels of self-sufficiency in the past have been replaced with high degrees of dependency on the mainland for food, fuel, etc. Dependency upon the carbon economy on islands will become an issue of greater importance as with the mainland. Finite land resources on islands are threatened through the second home phenomenon and other forms of ad-hoc development. Yet, islanders' relationship with their local environment is probably stronger than that of their counterparts on the mainland.

Examples of good practice

The Bere Island Conservation Plan is a blueprint for sustainable development on Bere Island off the southwest coast of Ireland. The idea originated within the island community from those who wished to avoid ad hoc and unrestrained development. Carried out in conjunction with the Heritage Council, a non-governmental agency, along with the local authority, the inclusive process involved many island meetings over a period of three years. The plan identifies a number of key issues regarding the island's cultural and natural heritage, the maintenance of the extensive nature of agricultural land practices on the island as well as the development of the island's inshore fisheries. The conservation plan also encourages the development of new skills which would complement traditional skills, and island-based tourism which would utilise the island's natural and cultural heritage, as well as a co-operative approach amongst both farmers and fishermen. The Heritage Council has used the results of the plan in their formulation of a national policy for inhabited islands.

Iomairt aig an Oir/Initiative at the Edge, Scotland, has encouraged and supported a community-led, multi-agency approach to achieving a sustainable future for selected areas designated as the most economically and socially fragile in the Highlands and Islands. A key element of the Initiative is that Communities themselves set the development agenda, led by a local community development group; and projects on these community-led agendas often relate to the theme of island environment and identity. www.initiative-at-the-edge.org.uk

Success factors

- Community led with sustained involvement from outside agencies
- The level of community involvement remains high
- Development of an island community's awareness of its relationship with its environment
- Formation of general policy for islands generated from the Bere Island experience.
- Islanders have been encouraged to develop a sense of 'pride of place' and personal responsibility with regard to caring for the island environment.

The networking project visit took place on Bere Island, Co. Cork, Ireland in November, 2005.

La Pointe des Poulains on Belle-île-en-Mer, France



Island identity, culture and language

ISLAND CULTURAL IDENTITY

Current Challenges

To many, islands are synonymous with strong notions of cultural identity. The body of songs, music, stories, myths, folklore and folkways, crafts, and sometimes visual art, which are at the heart of the small island communities of Europe, are often represented within the more general notions of national identities. National tourist campaigns often use iconographic images of island life to temporarily 'sell' a way of life that has all but disappeared, except for the islands. Most islanders feel uncomfortable with such representations, knowing that their own island culture is alive and thus is not static.



Traditional Irish dancing enjoyed by islanders

However island communities are facing real internal pressures such as decreasing populations, influxes of large numbers of seasonal visitors and the decline of traditional livelihoods. External pressures such as the globalisation of culture and language through mass culture, rising living standards which often brings conspicuous consumption to communities which only recently lived in close symbiotic relationship with their environments, also challenge island communities. The recognition of the cultural capital of island life which is so intrinsic to notions of island identity, may be the most important element of this theme. With the increasing globalisation of culture, small island communities need to value what is intrinsically theirs. Whether it is recognising the strong maritime traditions of the Baltic Islands or the importance of indigenous languages on the Scottish and Irish islands, communities must find ways to create modern initiatives which build upon the wealth of their own cultural resources.

Example of good practice

On the Irish speaking Gaeltacht islands, summer colleges have been in existence for many years. They have contributed considerably to the local island economies whilst building upon the Irish language and other cultural resources. This is an excellent example of how an economic activity can arise out of cultural and traditional resources. Students stay on an island for a three week period, live in local homes and immerse themselves in the language, attending classes and social activities through the medium of Irish. Approximately 2700 teenagers participate in Irish colleges each year on the six Irish speaking islands. As an example of cultural tourism, the Irish colleges create major and widespread benefits both economically, bringing an important source of income to local families, as well as placing a social value on an intrinsic element of the local culture. www.concos.ie

In the Archipelago Sea in the South West of Finland, the two islands of Hitis and Velkua have given a community focus to an eldercare facility thereby creating opportunities for different age-groups to congregate, strengthening the feeling of community and boosting their common identity. www.velkua.fi

Success factors

- Action arising out of an identified need e.g Irish is mandatory in Irish schools, the residents of Hitis & Velkua's need for a community centre
- Economic benefits are widely dispersed throughout the community creating employment
- Places an economic value on a cultural resource, thereby promoting its preservation and usage
- Supported by grant-aid by the state
- Promotes culture and language in a fun, relaxed and easy environment

YOUTH

Current challenges

While small islands can offer its youth a rich cultural heritage and positive upbringing in a natural environment, catering to their needs can be challenging for the strongest of communities. Nowadays, island youth demand the same services and resources as their counterparts on the mainland. A group of young islanders from the six different ESIN countries met at the networking project visit in Finland on the subject of 'youth'. They were able to identify a number of essential issues vital to their needs, including: the provision of up-to-date information technology infrastructure on small islands, networking opportunities, entrepreneurial encouragement, and the need to be included and consulted in community development processes. The full set of recommendations from the young participants in the networking meeting can be found on ESIN's website.

Young islanders usually leave their island homes for the first time to access education, either at second level (because it does not exist on their particular island) or third level. Many never return to live full-time on their islands. The reasons for this include lack of suitable employment, difficulties in acquiring accommodation or limited social opportunities. For small island communities it is crucial to attract some of these young islanders to move back at some point after they have finished their education, otherwise an entire generation of islanders is lost. Few small communities can continue to survive such hemorrhaging. The challenge for island communities is to be able to offer a rich and varied social life, economic opportunities, affordable housing options and a quality of life that is attractive to its younger citizens. It would seem that by giving young islanders a greater voice in island matters, some of these conditions could be attained.

Examples of good practice

In the South West of Finland a youth council facilitates young islanders to participate in planning their living environment. For instance, they discuss recreational activities and other factors that may help in creating an environment in which young people can thrive. www.auf.fi

In Sweden there is a newly created network for young islanders and it is encouraged by the National Island Organisation in the country. They organise events and publish a newsletter for island youth. www.surf.maris.se

The increasing availability of distance learning courses is making it possible for more and more young people to stay on their islands and study, with the possibility of finding employment there as well. Young people on the larger Scottish islands like Skye now have teacher training online and can do their placements in local schools, rather than having to move away to the city universities to study. www.byc.org.uk

Success Factors

- Community's willingness to incorporate the opinions and ideas of its youth
- Provision of a youth forum
- Innovative educational opportunities
- Use of modern technology in projects which can involve youth in island affairs

The networking project visit took place on the island of Vänö in the south west archipelago of Finland in June 2006.

TOURISM

Current challenges

There is a wide spectrum in terms of what Europe's small islands have to offer the tourist market but common to them all is the unique small island experience, encompassing things such as biodiversity, culture, heritage and landscapes. The tourist season on islands tends to operate within a fairly short summer season. Low pay typifies the tourism sector and many employed in this sector supplement their income with a second job. The proliferation of holiday homes is proving problematic on many islands. House prices have increased disproportionately to income, outpricing local people or those wanting permanent residences. In addition, the value of holiday homes



Ardbeg Distillery, Islay, Scotland

to the local economy is often very low. An extended tourist season is something that many island tourism stakeholders are seeking in order to stabilise tourist income over a longer period. At the same time, increasing attention is being paid to sustainable tourism both in terms of ensuring that the island facilities can cope with any increase in visitor numbers, and in terms of minimising any environmental impact of the increased visitor traffic.

Examples of good practice

The island of Arran, which lies off the West Coast of Scotland has been identified as a good practice case study with a focus on a quality destination project, 'Destination Arran'. Its aim is to promote all quality produce and activities from the island as part of the Arran experience. It was initiated by the public sector but is managed locally through a steering group comprising the public and private sector. The tourism sector is encouraged to invest in the project, thus promoting community ownership. The Arran experience is then marketed as one entity which creates more choices for the consumer and more opportunities for businesses on Arran. It also works closely with an existing local branding project called 'A Taste of Arran' which has been successful in getting the backing and involvement of local businesses. www.taste-of-arran.co.uk

Other examples include Ireland where public support is strong for community led cultural events for example, music festivals on four of the Irish islands, which take place outside the peak tourist season. In Sweden, extending the season is being explored through development of the islands' natural and cultural assets and the establishment of an organisation called 'Island Hosts on the Westcoast'. The Association of Danish Small Islands organised a project which provided a network for islanders involved in tourism. Its activities involve marketing the media promotion of the islands. Entrepreneurship has been the key to a successful joint working project in Finland. Six entrepreneurs are working together in order to share the costs and benefits that arise from activities such as marketing.

Hill walking on Irish islands



Success factors

- Successful tourism initiatives must have involvement from the local business sector even if these are agency initiated.
- Forward planning, co-operation and local investment is a key to success
- The creation of a recognisable Umbrella brand, minimising costs and offering choice and diversity.
- The willingness of the stakeholders to invest makes it easier to gain public sector support and true partnership.
- Economic and environmental sustainability consideration should be encompassed within any strategy and development approach, taking into consideration the fragility of smaller islands.

The networking project visit took place on the Isle of Arran, Scotland in March 2006.

INTER-ISLAND EXCHANGE

Current challenges

Due to geographical constraints and historical links, small island communities often have more interaction and exchange with mainland communities than they do with neighbouring islands. Inter-island exchange reinforces shared experiences of 'islandness' as well as cultural legacies. Some of the most successful exchanges occur through the medium of sport as well as those involving cultural events, including traditional music, drama, and other forms of community arts. Some exchanges take place over specific topics, ie, organic gardening, or as a means of solving a particular problem which may involve regional and/or national lobbying.

Inter-island exchange projects are mostly run on a volunteer basis, and there is a tendency for the same people to be active in a number of exchange activities over many years. It can be difficult to involve new and younger islanders in such projects. It is essential that long lasting exchanges are run locally. Structural and financial support from outside agencies, including national island associations, is often essential, but control of the projects should remain with the grass roots – the local islanders.

Examples of good practice

An annual summer sports event, the Ølympiaden, or Island Olympics, involves almost 200 young islanders from six of the twenty-seven small Danish Islands. It was started in 1984 with the initiative of one of the islands. For more than twenty years it has continued to be run by islanders themselves, making use of the Association of Danish Small Islands for support. The participating islands regard the event very positively and islanders participate year after year. Funding is found through voluntary efforts – no outside project funds are involved. Ølympiaden is a complete event in itself. Other good examples can be found in the national small island associations themselves. Most of these have been initiated and developed by islanders – and continue to be run through their voluntary efforts. Such associations can provide continuity and stability in their promotion of various activities and initiatives amongst their member islands, as well as being uniquely positioned to promote ideas and lobby for specific causes.

A successful exchange project in Ireland promotes organic horticulture on offshore islands. Believing that islanders can build upon an already significant horticultural skills base, the group promotes training courses and seminars on a number of topics related to high quality organic production, as well as providing a forum for islanders to explore ways in which to market their produce.

Success factors

- Formal and informal networks are created, facilitating social, cultural exchange.
- A substantial part of the activities are carried out voluntarily.
- A bottom-up approach based on felt needs is essential.
- Newcomers should be actively welcomed into the activity – age is a cross cutting issue.
- Exchanges can be externally funded, but not to the extent where hired staff take over
- Single issues or groups of enthusiasts lead towards successful exchanges

NEW ISLANDERS

Current challenges

The term ‘new islanders’ refers to people who, having no filial connections to an island, move there with the intention of settling permanently. Many small islands are experiencing population decline, and most welcome the phenomenon of new islanders. Indeed, for some islands, their future depends on them. With island demographics showing a much higher proportion of older people than on the mainland, as well as a much smaller cohort of young people from 18 – 25 due to falling birth rates and continued emigration, immigration to islands is considered to be a matter of necessity.

In general, the most attractive islands for new islanders to settle on are those which are located close to urban centres, and not too far from the mainland; as well as those which have good levels of public services and infrastructure, including well-run ferries, schools and broadband facilities. However, a number of remote islands have attracted new members to their communities who don’t mind the isolation. Availability of permanent housing is one of the most crucial prerequisites for new islanders to settle on an island.

New islanders can make many positive contributions to an island community.



Swedish westcoast

One survey undertaken on two Scottish islands showed that around 50% of new islanders are economically active, bringing new knowledge, professions, experiences, and sometimes companies to islands. Of those who are not economically active, more than half of those are retired. New islanders can also bring difficult challenges to a community. This can happen if: the number of newcomers is out of proportion to the size of the local population; new islanders do not respect the local culture and practices of the community; the ‘vision’ of new islanders varies considerably from that of the rest of the population.

Examples of good practice

In 2004, the Association of Danish Small Islands conducted an “Open Island Day”. Members of the public had free passage to the islands, many of which had also organised guided tours. The Association uses the media on a regular basis, as well as a dedicated website www.oeliv.dk, to bring public attention to positive life-style-stories from the islands. The islands of Eigg and Canna in the Scottish Inner Hebrides, have also advertised directly for new islanders through various media and on websites.

On the island of Klädesholmen, off the Swedish west coast, the local community group interviewed summer guests/part time residents to discover what would make them consider staying all year round, resulting in a number of people moving to the island permanently.

A population analysis and new islander survey for the islands of Arran and Great Cumbrae was undertaken by North Ayrshire Council in 2006. The main reason for the increase in population on both islands was the positive effect of inward migration.

Success Factors

- New Islanders can bring many positive benefits, including economic and social enhancement, to small islands
- Island communities with declining populations can actively encourage new islanders to settle on their islands through media campaigns and direct contact with seasonal visitors
- Available permanent housing is crucial for immigration to islands
- Research and studies into the phenomenon of New Islanders are helpful



Not a warm summer's day, Oileán Chléire, Ireland

Conclusions

- The project has shown that islanders have the will, expertise and vision to sustain and develop island communities. Islanders are confident that with appropriate acknowledgement and support, sustainable communities will thrive on the small islands into the future.
- Small islands suffer from multiple disadvantages. Lack of access to opportunities is a crucial factor in the decline of populations in the islands. Indices of poverty and disadvantage need to include a new category of disadvantage describing the small island situation to provide insights into the underlying structural dimensions of affluence and deprivation. This would facilitate government departments and agencies in providing the funds needed to address the infrastructural deficits and lack of service provision experienced by small islands.
- Restrictions regarding the use of environmental resources need to be examined to ensure that they achieve their aims of conservation in a balanced way. Islanders are central to the sustainability of their environment and to the guardianship of their islands. Environmental policies should be formed in a way that creates opportunities for islanders and does not threaten their survival.
- Specific policy tools are needed in certain areas, e.g. housing and planning, to protect indigenous populations from development driven by forces outside their control.
- National island representative organisations and ESIN should be recognised by E.U. and National institutions as natural partners in the development process relating to small islands. Development plans need to be based on island specific values of heritage, identity and culture and have a socio-economic approach.
- Directives and policies at national and European level should be cognisant of the fact that small islands are micro communities with valuable cultural and social capital. Regulations should be subject to a proofing procedure to ensure that they do not impact adversely on the sustainability of these extremely fragile communities.

It is anticipated that more specific policy recommendations under each of the theme headings will be produced. These will be presented at regional, national and European level and a partnership approach will be adopted to ensure their acceptance and implementation.

The ESIN organisation will need continuing support to drive forward the policy recommendations of the project. Funding opportunities offered at national and European level must be followed up to ensure that the valuable work carried out by the Interreg project is further developed in the years ahead.





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Page 62-63: Ferry Hakefjord and island Åstol, Sweden in the background.

Back cover photo: Island of Yeu with Pointe des Corbeaux lighthouse in background, France



European Small Islands Network (ESIN)
www.europeansmallislands.net