



**ACTE 2007-2013
A strategic proposal**

*Reflection document for the Extraordinary Assembly
in Guimaraes*

December 2006



ACTE 2007- 2013: A STRATEGIC PROPOSAL

Reflection Document for the Extraordinary Assembly in Guimarães

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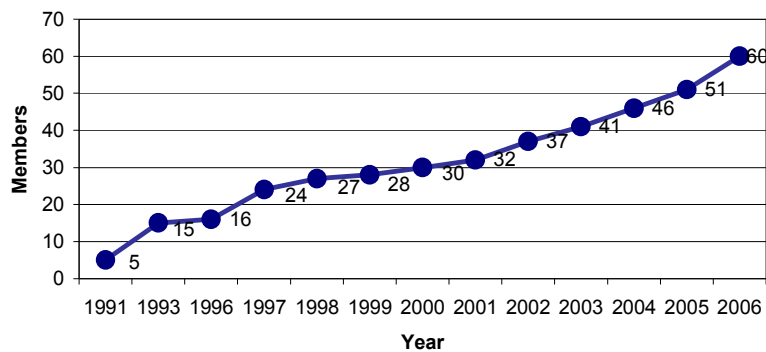
1. Background

On 13 April 1991, four territorial collectivities with a strong presence of the textile and clothing sector laid the foundations for establishing the European Textile Collectivities Association (ACTE) when they signed the Guimarães Protocol. These four, the Associação de Municípios do Vale do Ave (Portugal), the Communauté Urbaine de Lille (France), the Intercommunale d'Étude et de Gestion of Hainaut Occidental (Belgium) and the Municipio de Terrassa (Spain), were soon joined by Diputació de Barcelona (Spain) and the IDETA of Tournai (Belgium).

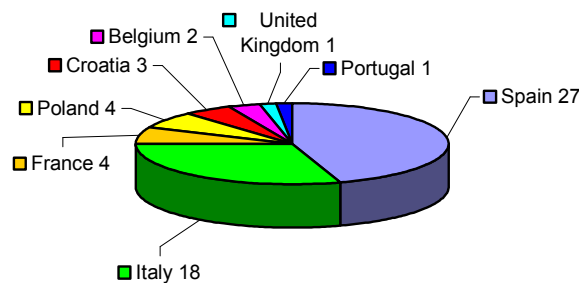
At European level, ACTE is one of the first thematic networks that emerged in the early-1990s. The first great European-wide networks of local and regional authorities were the European Council of Municipalities and Regions (1951) and Eurocities (1986). These two organisations were crucial to achieving recognition for territorial collectives in Europe, a process which culminated in 1994 with the establishment of the Committee of the Regions.

With a view to increasing its potential for action and its representativeness, ACTE has gradually increased its membership and the geographic area it represents, to the point where the association now has 60 effective members from seven European Union Member States and Croatia, and several adherent members.

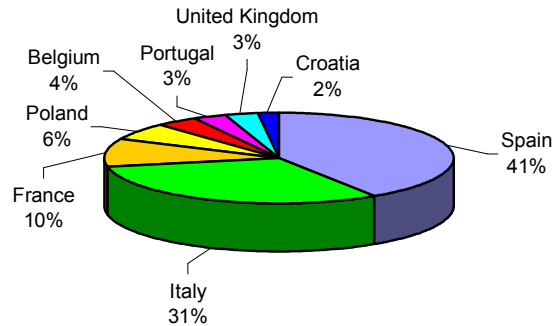
EVOLUTION OF ACTE MEMBERS



ACTE members per country



Contribution to the ACTE budget per country



In 2001, this steadily increasing membership made it necessary to undertake a wide-ranging process of reflection and exchange of ideas with a view to adapting the association's statutes to the new circumstances and to ensure ACTE's continuing existence. To this end, a Reform Commission was set up to draft a Reflection Document, which served as the basis for discussions amongst members.

The principal action resulting from this consultation process included extending the mandates of social bodies to three years, redefining the association's objectives, setting up several ad hoc committees and working groups, establishing representation in Brussels, appointing national coordinators and earmarking part of the ACTE budget for activities launched by the vice-presidencies.

Since its establishment, the Association's activities have centred, mainly, on: lobbying actions, achieving the establishment of the RETEX initiative and the green paper on Community Initiatives, gathering signatures on international trade and the recent participation in the High-Level Group on the Textile and Clothing Industry; actions aimed at awareness-raising and reflection, the organisation of international conferences and seminars and the preparation and management of projects with Community cofinancing, such as RETEX, ADAPT, Article 6 of the ESF, etc.

As a European network, ACTE must ensure visibility before European institutions, discussing issues of relevance to members with them. On this point, ACTE's participation since 2004 in the High-Level Group at the invitation of the European Commission and the association's leadership of the working group on regional policy in 2004 provide clear evidence of the recognition ACTE has achieved as the representative of textile territories and as a valid interlocutor with the Commission.

Moreover, in 2005 the Secretariat launched two new communication instruments: the Newsletter and Infolash. The aim of these is to improve internal information and communication and to inform all ACTE members about the Secretariat's activities. Establishing these two information tools also represented an important step towards promoting and raising the profile of the network and its activities.

At the last ACTE General Assembly, which took place in Mouscron on 8 July 2006, it was agreed, at the proposal of the Executive Committee, to postpone discussion of new appointments and the mandate plan pending a period of reflection and a search for new objectives and broad consensus.

In order to stimulate and provide a lead for debate and reflection, we base our discussion here on the following SWOT analysis:

OPPORTUNITIES

<p>O1: Monitoring developments in international trade</p> <p>O2: High-Level Group and European industrial policy in general</p> <p>O3: Similar problems in other industries (potential synergies)</p> <p>O4: Growing awareness in Europe about such subjects as relocation, the relocation of workers (for example, the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund)</p> <p>O5: Recognition of the importance of the manufacturing industry for EU economic growth</p> <p>O6: Structural Funds linked to innovation and mature sectors at risk of relocation</p> <p>O7: Capacity for adaptation in the sector => commitment to new high value added products</p> <p>O8: Interest from possible new members</p> <p>O9: Active participation by adherent members may strengthen the Association</p> <p>O10: New members from candidate (Croatia) and new EU Member States (Poland) => availability of European funds</p>	<p>A1: Discredit of the textile and clothing industry's image</p> <p>A2: Drastic downsizing of the industry in European territories and consequent loss of <i>critical mass</i> of interest</p> <p>A3: Adjustment cycle not completed</p> <p>A4: Part of the industry unwilling to change business model</p>
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THREATS

<p>F1: 15 years' experience</p> <p>F2: Recognition of European institutions</p> <p>F3: Recognition and cooperation with EURATEX and ETUF:TCL</p> <p>F4: Existence of internal and external communication tools (website, Infoflash, Newsletter) and technical expertise</p> <p>F5: Existence of a common denominator amongst members: textile history</p> <p>F6: Great confidence amongst core membership</p> <p>F7: <i>Voluntarist</i> network model</p>	<p>D1: Withdrawal of members that have ceased to be "textile territories"</p> <p>D2: Imbalance amongst vice-presidencies: number of national members and degree of commitment to network activities</p> <p>D3: Lack of resource diversification (dependence on membership fees)</p> <p>D4: Insufficient distribution of tasks</p> <p>D5: Lack of participation / commitment by members</p> <p>D6: Negative aspects linked with the voluntarist network model¹</p> <p>D7: Little rotation of posts, generating certain image of <i>jobs for the boys</i></p>
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STRENGTHS

WEAKNESSES

¹ An association which, like ACTE, follows a voluntarist network model has low membership fees and depends mainly on the human resources of its members. Unlike this model, the association Eurocities has high fees which allow having an own and professional organisational structure.

2. Objectives of the Reflection Document

Over the 15 years since it was first established, ACTE has ceased to be a “strengthened cooperation” amongst six textile collectives to become a powerful, recognised European association.

It is clear that both the internal functioning of the network and the economic, industrial and social situation of members have changed in recent years. For this reason, it is considered necessary to open a broad-ranging process of reflection and exchange of ideas to detect and define new internal and external needs as precisely as possible in order to optimise ACTE’s work in the future.

Here we should remember the June 2001 document “*Review of the ACTE Statutes and Internal Rules and Regulations*”, whose main objective was to provide ideas and possible models for reform of the statutes. This document played an important role in guiding the debate at that time.

Taking its lead from that positive experience, this Reflection Document is intended to provide the basis for exchanges of ideas and dialogue amongst all members of the network. Any results this process generates should enjoy the greatest possible legitimacy, and we shall therefore attempt to ensure the fullest, most active participation possible.

The objective of this document is to serve as a basis for discussion at the Extraordinary Assembly in Guimarães, both as regards the association itself and its organisational model and possible changes.

3. Why think about ACTE now?

Until now, ACTE has provided an excellent platform for cooperation and for defending the interests of European territories, achieving outstanding results. Our Association’s organisation has also shown its capacity to adapt to circumstances, but these have changed, and it is therefore believed that it is convenient to make this reflection at the present time.

We consider that several reasons exist that make it necessary to launch wide-ranging debate amongst members about the role our network should play in the future and how it should be organised. After textile quotas ended and international markets were liberalised on 1 January 2005, the economic, industrial and social situation in ACTE member territories has taken substantial change almost to culmination. Moreover, constantly growing membership and the network model adopted requires us to improve mechanisms for participation and to enhance the transparency of ACTE’s activities. Finally, we need to optimise the organisational structure, adapting it not only to the increasing number of members and activities, but also to possible new priorities and spheres of action.

The reasons behind these needs are as follows:

- New circumstances in member territories
- Increasing participation and exchanges amongst members
- Optimising and strengthening the organisational structure
- Enhancing our lobbying action

3.1. The new situation in ACTE member territories

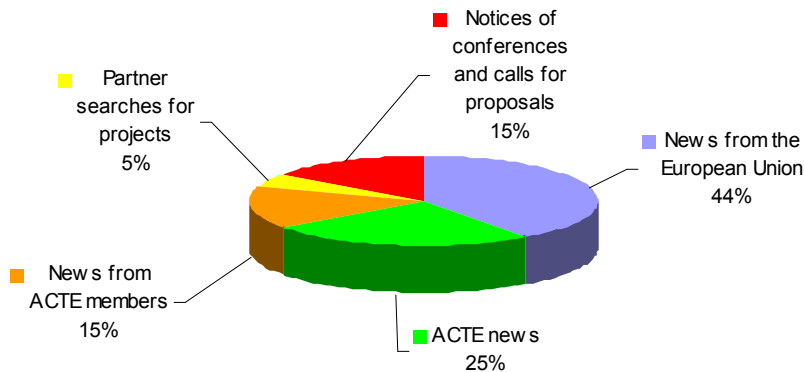
- The final liberalisation of the textile trade beginning 1 January 2005 has exacerbated the crisis suffered by part of the European textile production: accelerating relocation processes, job losses and subcontracting outside the EU.
- The impact of globalisation on the textile industry has forced local and regional authorities to launch industrial restructuring plans to promote alternative sectors and provide specific tools for relocating workers laid off by the industry. In many ACTE territories, the textile industry has lost its leading position to other industrial sectors. Most are no longer “textile territories” in the strictest sense.
- Regarding the textile industry, ACTE member territories (both public authorities, business agents and other players) respond to the new challenges in different ways: in some, the industry has completely disappeared, whilst others seek to conserve their textile industrial base by adapting it to the new circumstances (products with high value added, R+D+i, business downsizing, internationalisation, etc.).
- Nowadays, the most accurate definition of ACTE would be a network of territories, whose common denominator is the *production know-how* of the textile industry, independent of the relative importance the sector might currently have for the economic activity in each territory.
- There is, then, a greater degree of diversity amongst member territories than 15 years ago, and as a result members’ objectives may be more contradictory than complementary.

3.2. Achieving greater participation and communication from and amongst members

- An association that currently has 60 members and growth potential needs the appropriate mechanisms to enable all members to be active and constantly informed about its activities.
- By launching two ACTE communication channels, Infolash and the Newsletter, the Secretariat took an important step towards improving internal communication and enhancing the transparency of the network’s activities. These two instruments, along with the ACTE website, have also helped to raise the profile and the external visibility of the network and its activities.
- The Secretariat has constantly added to the list of non-ACTE members who receive these publications, and this now stands at more than 200, including representatives from European institutions, the members of the High-Level Group, national, regional and local authorities, chambers of commerce, technology centres, etc.
- The Secretariat uses Infolash and the Newsletter to inform members about the main results from Executive Committee meetings, lobbying actions, etc., and to provide them with the minutes of meetings, activities reports, etc. Besides, the two tools are used to disseminate European Union news, to announce public events at European level and to inform about open calls for proposals.

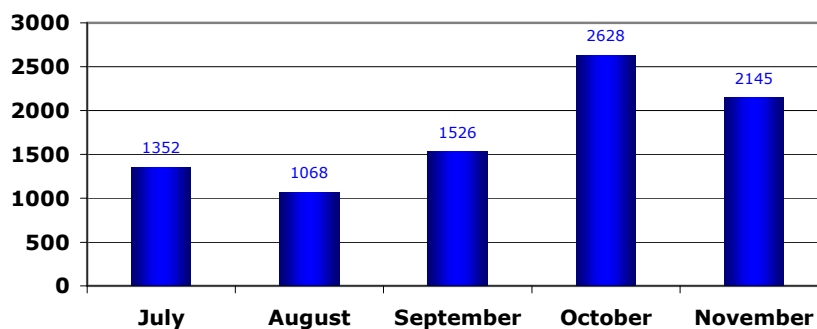
- Infolash and the Newsletter are not communication instruments exclusive to the Secretariat: they belong to all members. In fact, the Newsletter contains a section specifically entitled “Members’ News”.
- Infolash is designed as an interactive, reactive communication tool, that is to say, a real-time tool, aimed at strengthening the network’s internal activities. Nonetheless, we note that few ACTE members consider it as a means of sharing their ideas, policies and regional and local initiatives with others. Infolash is, therefore, not used as a working tool.

Type of information disseminated by infolash in 2006

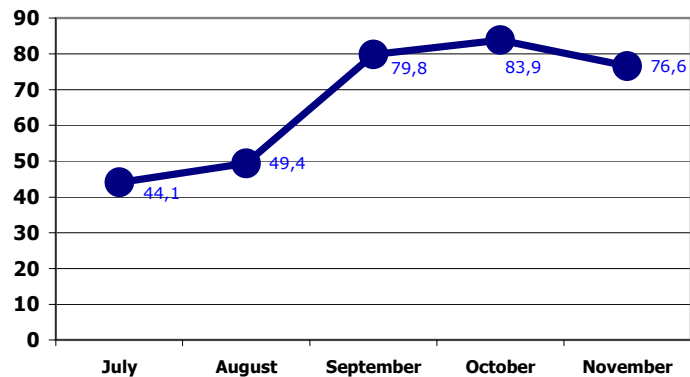


- Before the publication of each Newsletter, the Secretariat sends an Infolash to all members, inviting them to contribute their news. Unfortunately, the response from members generally tends to be rather poor.
- The ACTE website (<http://www.acte.net/>) is the association’s basic external presentation tool. All ACTE activities are announced on the site, with links to them from the homepage, constantly updated by the Secretariat. Users have the possibility to access agendas and programmes for meetings and conferences, as well as other useful documents. All ACTE declarations have also been posted on the site, as well as summaries of the transnational projects that ACTE or its members have submitted in recent years.

Visits to www.acte.net
Period July-November 2006



Daily average of visits to www.acte.net
Period July-November 2006



- ACTE has currently two working groups: the working group on development cooperation and the working group on textile museums. Up to now, these working groups had difficulties to advance in their activities.
- ACTE currently has 14 adherent members. We note that to date, these non-territorial organisations have played a secondary role in the network's activities.

3.3. Optimising and strengthening the organisational structure

It is important to optimise the ACTE organisational structure, adapting it to the needs generated by increasing membership, activities and services.

- There is a great imbalance amongst the vice-presidencies as regards both number of national members and their degree of commitment to the network's activities. There would appear to be a certain relation between ACTE's "success" in some countries and the proactive participation of the respective vice-presidency. This is also true with regard to national coordinators, whose technical support work is essential for furthering the network's activities at national level.
- We can therefore say that the decentralised model that was originally designed for ACTE has not, generally speaking, worked as well as was hoped.
- The ACTE Executive Committee, which meets three times a year, undisputedly plays an important role within the organisation. However, it sometimes seems to be a "closed club", as its discussions and activities are not always fully transparent to "ordinary" members of our association. Furthermore, the limited time of these meetings impede to have a profound debate of the strategic lines of the association.
- The ACTE General Assembly, which takes place once a year, should provide an arena for all members to meet and discuss different issues. However, the number of participants has been disappointing in recent years. These meetings are not very interactive and serve, above all, to inform about Executive Committee decisions and proposals. The participants at the international conferences that are

generally organised parallel to the General Assembly are, for the most part, ACTE members.

3.4. Strengthening our lobbying action

- We understand the ACTE members are interested in having an influential interlocutor to the European institutions to help achieve specific political results and access to Community funds by submitting specific transnational projects.
- It is indisputable that ACTE is recognised by European institutions, the main stakeholders at European level and, in certain cases, national and regional governments and agents. This recognition is an important achievement, the fruit of years of work.
- This influence probably reached its maximum level with our active participation in the High-Level Group and at the conference on “Managing Change in the Textile and Clothing Industry”, organised by the European Commission on April 25, sharing a table with EURATEX and ETUF: TCL.
- It is important, on the subject of this recognition, to later gauge how far our demands are met and whether we have made the most of these opportunities. We should make this evaluation with a view to improving our lobbying action where possible, in order to achieve the greatest possible impact.
- It is also considered that this important work should also be carried out at national level. Some vice-presidencies have achieved similar levels of recognition from their central and regional governments; we believe that there is still considerable room for improvement.

4. What role for ACTE?

4.1. The new situation in ACTE member territories

As we have noted, ACTE and its member territories have changed greatly over the fifteen years since the association was first established. We feel that the moment has now come to reflect on the place our network should occupy in the future, and what its main spheres of action should be.

According to the ACTE Statutes (Article 3), the association’s aim is to “represent and defend the interests of territorial collectives and adherent organisations that represent territories with a presence in the textile and clothing sector, including the leather and footwear sectors [...]”.

In recent years, many ACTE members have ceased to be “textile territories”. Even so, it is clear that the main element members had and still have in common is their textile history. Many ACTE member territories share the wish to transform this past in collective memory: textile museums and archives, conservation and/or reconversion of the textile industrial heritage etc.

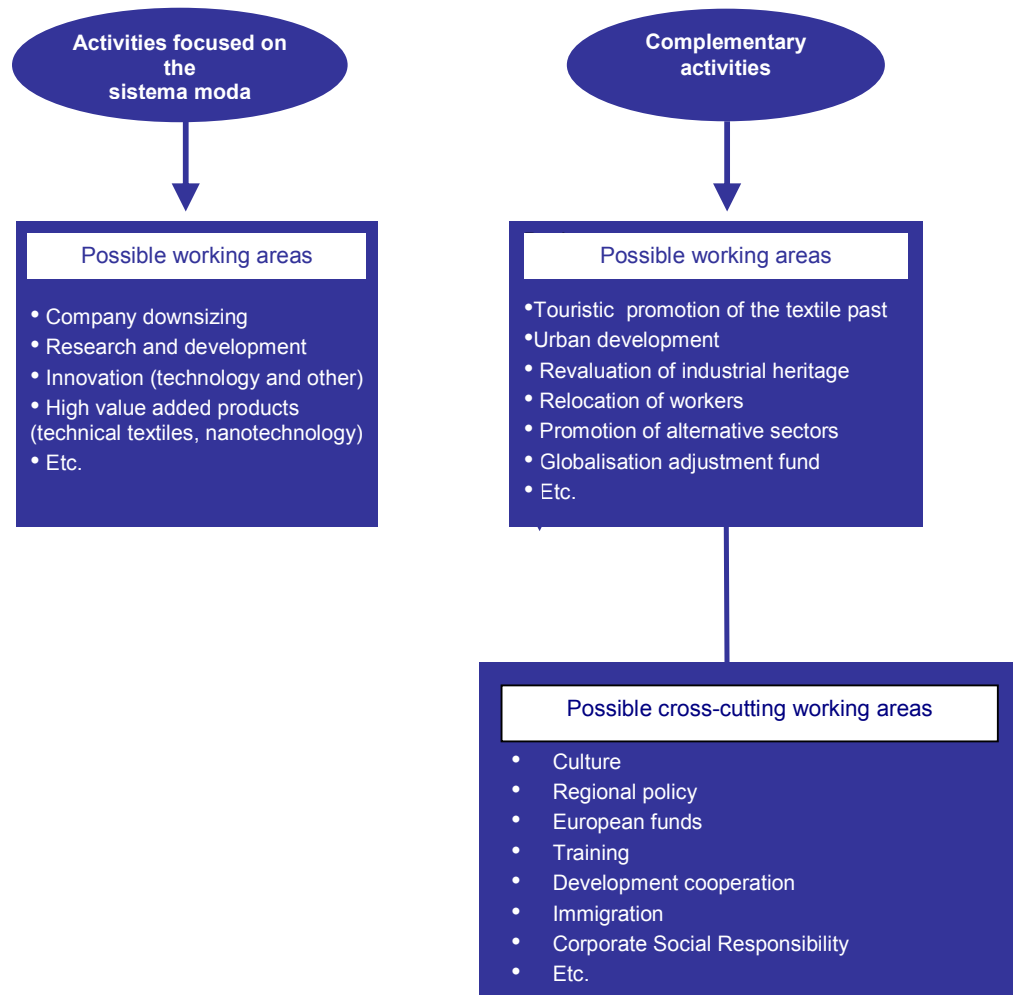
Thus, it is suggested that our association should continue focusing mainly on the textile orientation. In fact, it is necessary that ACTE has a perspective focused on territories with a textile present. Clearly, however, other areas of cooperation amongst all

member will also continue to exist that are not exclusively related to the textile question (culture, development cooperation, training, etc.) but which help to valorise (even with different disciplinary approaches) the important role of the know-how of the textile production for the general culture of the territory.

At European level, ACTE is recognised by European institutions as the representative of the textile territories. Our network can continue to play this role if it maintains its focus on the textile industry. The existence of a common denominator – textile history – ensures a greater degree of agreement and shared interests amongst members. Moreover, ACTE can also continue to establish and extend contacts with other organisations (employer's associations, unions, chambers of commerce, research centres, etc.) which principally represent the textile and clothing industry.

The work of the High-Level Group on the textile and clothing industry, one of the main centres of ACTE's lobbying activities in recent times, is now coming to a close. We therefore need to find new spaces in which to continue representing our interests at European level.

However, it seems appropriate to extend the the sphere of activity within the textile sector. The sector includes subsectors, stipulated in the ACTE statutes, which have been rather neglected until now but which represent a great opportunity for further action of the association. The different sectors involved correspond to the model known as *fashion system*, or **sistema moda**, which includes everything that people wear: textiles, clothing, footwear, leather goods, jewellery, fur, glasses and watches, according to the statistical classification elaborated at European level by EUROSTAT. Within the *sistema moda*, **technical textiles** are of special interest. The entire *background* of reflection actions, analysis and activities accumulated by ACTE since its foundation could and should be transferred to these other sectors and subsectors, and also in particular to the representatives of territories which have recently joined the association.



Future trends

In its communication COM(2005) 474 *“Implementing the Community Lisbon Programme: A policy framework to strengthen EU manufacturing - towards a more integrated approach for industrial policy”*, the European Commission stresses that “the health of manufacturing industry is essential for Europe’s ability to grow.”

In this communication, the Commission groups 27 manufacturing sectors into four broad categories: the food and life sciences industries; the machine and systems industries; the fashion and design industries; and the basic and intermediate industries. Community industrial policy will be based on this analysis in the future, centring much of the Community’s efforts and receiving a large proportion of the Structural Funds.

The future of several of these sectors is marked particularly by the following challenges:

- Guaranteeing structural adjustment;
- Improving access to markets;
- Investing in knowledge (research, innovation, and skills);
- Generating synergies between competitiveness, energy and environmental policies – see, for example, the case of REACH legislation.

The European Commission's studies are based on very interesting analyses for ACTE territories carried out by *Myro and Gandoy* as regards the mature manufacturing industry, which is characterised, generally speaking, by weak demand and low technological intensity and which accounts for a large percentage of European industry overall.

It still needs to be reflected on the role of ACTE, remembering that the sectors which are exposed to international competition, are included in the **COM(2005) 661 final proposal** for a Council Regulation on the indication of the country of origin of certain products imported from third countries.

We therefore feel that it would be interesting if the sphere of activity of ACTE members during the next mandate would be the sectors and subsectors related to **the sistema moda** being industries formed, for the most part, by **SMEs, production specialisation and territorial concentration being their most outstanding characteristics**. Also, we should take into account all relevant economic activities, that is to say, both manufacturing production sectors and company services.

Needless to say, all industrial sectors are faced by their own challenges and shortcomings. However, the fact that these sectors or subsectors share some characteristics would ensure that the territories where such industries are located would have certain interests in common. This would maintain the peculiarity of the association ACTE which needs to continue representing territories with a tradition of an importante presence of the textile sector. Such horizontal characteristics, potential synergies, are the starting point for cooperation amongst network members. These are areas of activity in which networking, sharing experiences and good practices all helps to generate high value added for territories.

This dynamic would allow us to extend the association's membership base considerably, as not only textile territories in the strict sense would be eligible to join ACTE. At the same time, the risk of present members that have ceased to be textile territories leaving the association would be reduced if we consider in a positive sense how much textile (codified or not) remains in the knowledge heritage of the territory. Enlarging the network would not only increase ACTE's financial income, but would also enhance our possibilities of influencing the European institutions. More value added would be generated by the possibility of establishing new partnerships and alliances with European associations (employers, unions, etc.) representing the different sectors.

Likewise, we propose to explore during the next mandate the possibility of extending the future activities of ACTE towards **traditional and mature industries, sectors in "crisis" or affected by proven structural adjustment** which in many cases bear similarities to the sectors of the sistema moda.

In brief, we believe that we could extend our areas of action and cooperation. Namely, by going beyond the economic development as permitted by the Statutes at present, and by considering the possibility of representing the other industries of the **sistema moda** (clothing, leather goods, footwear, jewellery and glasses) (like the textile industry. Within the sistema moda special attention should be paid to **technical textiles** which represent promising prospects for traditional textile companies and an opportunity for diversification of their current products towards technically more advanced and value added products.

The extension of the sphere of activity should promote mainly and necessarily innovation, research, knowledge based economy, technology and sustainability.

Thus, in the field of **technical textiles**, in which European enterprises have competitive advantages compared to third countries, the introduction of the mentioned concepts is a key element for their development. In this sense, the technology centres, some of which are already adherent members of ACTE, should play a fundamental role given their capacity of contributing their knowledge in the mentioned areas.

Growing spheres of action and activities:

<i>Textile-clothing</i>					
	<i>Economic promotion</i>	<i>Culture</i>	<i>Environment</i>	<i>Strategic planning</i>	<i>Others</i>

4.2. Achieving greater participation and communication from and amongst members

- In order to **increase ACTE’s representativeness** it is essential to make a mayor effort in incorporating new members:
 - In the countries which already have ACTE members, especially in those with a limited number of members
 - In other European countries and countries of the Mediterranean basin
 - New adherent members such as competitiveness poles, clusters, technology centres, etc.

- Both internal and external communication of results and proposals resulting from periodic Executive Committee meetings is crucial. We propose that, following each meeting, the vice-presidencies should draw up a report or call a meeting to inform national members. Continuous contact with the appropriate media in each country is important in order to enhance the external visibility of our association’s activities and concerns.
The vice-presidencies should also be obliged to translate all documents discussed and approved by ACTE executive bodies for publication in both the Newsletter and Infolash.

- The significant number of registered visits to the ACTE website (see graphics under point 3.2) shows that it is an essential communication tool for our association. However, it is necessary to further develop this instrument in order to make it a real source of information at the disposal of current and possible future members of ACTE. In this sense, besides the information currently available, the website should also include the following information:

Internal information

- In-depth information about the current members: short description, contact person and links to the official websites of the member bodies (the latter are already set up)
- A section dedicated to possible future members: information about the rights and obligations of a member of ACTE, types of membership (effective member ↔ adherent member), membership fees etc.
- A calendar of events organised by ACTE or by its member territories

External information

- Calendar of public events at European level which might be in members' interest
 - Information about open EU calls for proposals
 - Links to useful websites
 - New documents published by the EU institutions in strategic/priority areas of ACTE
- As regards the 14 adherent members of ACTE, greater use should be made of the knowledge and know-how of these institutions (research and development, innovation etc.), when drafting and submitting transnational projects.

4.3. Optimising and strengthening the organisational structure

- We note that the growing centralisation of tasks and responsibilities has led to a considerable increase in the Executive Secretariat's workload. In order to improve efficiency, there needs to be a better distribution of tasks between the Secretariat and national vice-presidencies. Areas such as the drafting and submission of European projects, the enlargement of ACTE towards the new EU Member States (territorial opening), the communication etc., could be divided between the Secretariat and those vice-presidencies that have both the human resources (technical staff) and the necessary know-how and experience. This would also entail increasing the responsibilities of ACTE vice-presidencies by assigning thematic responsibilities according to their fields of interest, coordinating, for instance, working groups.
- In all spheres of activity, preliminary technical work is essential to our success, and should be strengthened in future. A good example is the European Commission's recent approval of the Inclua and Twintex Museum projects, made possible thanks to the intense work of a technical team from the Executive Secretariat and some of the vice-presidencies.
- Annual General Assemblies should be turned into real spaces for discussion and exchanges of experiences and good practices. The limited duration of these meetings (three hours on average) has made it impossible to open lively, interactive debate amongst participating members until now. We propose that General Assemblies should now last a full day, turning them into true "conferences". We should also encourage the active participation of ACTE members by using different vehicles for exchanging opinions: working groups, round tables, debates, workshops, exhibition spaces, etc. Moreover, the organising

member should undertake to publicise, disseminate and follow up the work of the General Assembly.

- The ACTE Executive Committees should increase the time dedicated to debate, exchange of ideas and discussion of concrete proposals in order to impel a real strategic reflection amongst members of the Committee.

4.4. Optimising and strengthening the organisational structure

Proposals:

- A successful lobbying campaign is the result of a long-term process agreed amongst all members. It is important to identify and define specific priorities. We therefore propose that the lobbying objectives for the following year should be agreed at ACTE General Assemblies. This could lead to the designation of “**Thematic Years**” by our network, following the example of the European Union’s thematic years². Declaring “thematic years” would enable us to focus action and exchanges of experience on one specific area for a full year. Events of all kinds (talks, debates, exhibitions, press conferences, etc.) could be organised around a thematic year, both at local and regional level by members and at European level by the Secretariat. Thematic years would be closed at local level as part of the ACTE General Assembly and at European level by the organisation in Brussels of an annual conference.

Possible topics for a **Thematic Year** (some examples):

- Touristic promotion of the European textile past (“Textile tourism”)
- Worker’s mobility/relocation
- Innovative measures for the textile industry
- The role of high value added products in the European textile industry
- The promotion of fair trade

It might also be appropriate to define the topic in accordance with the annual priorities of the EU institutions or even to adjust the thematic year of ACTE to the European thematic year.

- Amongst our activities, establishing and maintaining stable dialogue with the European institutions is, without doubt, one of the greatest challenges. The current recognition of ACTE at European level is due, above all, to our contacts with the European Commission, particularly with the Directorates-General for Enterprise and Industry and Trade in the course of the work of the High-Level Group. Nonetheless, it is important to optimise ACTE’s profile and visibility before the other two main targets of our European lobbying: the **European Parliament** and the **Committee of the Regions**. As to the *European Parliament*, our lobbying activities should focus on the textile-clothing working group set up by MEPs Tokia Saïfi (France) and Joan Calabuig (Spain). There are also several parliamentary committees which deal with strategic topics for ACTE and its members: Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE), the Committee on International Trade (INTA), the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) and the Committee on Regional Development (REGI).

The direct and personal contact with MEPs is important in order to accede to (privileged) information or to submit amendments. Many ACTE members maintain

² For instance, 2006 was declared “European Year of Workers’ Mobility”.

important contacts with representatives of the European Parliament, especially with the representatives of their respective territories. However, until now there has been little transparency as to these contacts and therefore they couldn't be used in the interest of ACTE. An important first step would be to draw up a list of the contacts ACTE members have at European level.

Once the interlocutors have been identified, contact must be made. The main objective is to familiarise European representatives with our network and to make them aware of the problems and needs of ACTE member territories.

- The *Committee of the Regions*, advisory body of the European Union and representative of the European cities and regions is made up by 6 Committee being the most relevant for ACTE the Committee on Economic and Social Policy (ECOS), the Committee on Culture, Education and Research (EDUC) and the Committee on Territorial Cohesion Policy (COTER)³. It would also be convenient to participate in the next editions of the so-called structured dialogues. The dialogues, launched in 2004 and hosted by the Committee of the Regions are a new form of contact between the European Commission and the associations of local and regional authorities. The aim is to improve legislation by ensuring the integration of local and regional associations' viewpoints before the formal decision-making processes start.
- As a forum for debate and exchanges of opinion, we could think of setting up an **Honour Committee**, formed by representatives of the European institutions, namely the Members of the European Parliament, etc.
- It would be convenient to organise every year one or several study and/or debate days with the operational and political bodies of the European Parliament and the European Commission to take place in Brussels or Strasbourg as appropriate. The organisation of public events at European level is an efficient tool to raise the European institutions' awareness on concrete topics which affect the member territories of ACTE. Furthermore, it should also be a key instrument in our strategy of enhancing the network's external visibility.
- Over the last two years, the High-Level Group has been the main focus of our lobbying actions. We consider it essential to diversify our lobbying and to **address other Community instruments of participation**: submission of amendments to the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions, participation at public hearings, drafting of position documents, participation in the Committee of the Regions' Structured Dialogues, etc.

³ The Vice-president of ACTE Poland, Mr. Jerzy Kropiwnicki, is member of the COTER and DEVE Committees.