

### **EDITORIAL**

The 8<sup>th</sup> RFO-Newsletter focuses on the activities and seminars of running sub-projects which took place in the second half of the year 2006. In addition, short overviews on the next coming international conferences as well as on the outputs of several Thematic Forum meetings are given in this issue.

The RFO "Change on Borders" looks back on a successful year 2006 with numerous meetings, conferences and Thematic Forums releasing many essential, thought-provoking impulses for cross-border co-operation by exchanging know-how or transferring experiences among border regions. The experiences gained in many border areas show that considerable potentials still exist for improving the quality of cooperation.

I would like to thank you for the sustained engagement you dedicated to the project during the last year. On behalf of the Lead Partner, I am glad to wish all of you a

**Prosperous  
Happy New Year  
2007!**

We look forward to a continuously fruitful co-operation in the forthcoming year.

**Ilka Meisel  
RFO-Coordinator**

### **"INSPIRE" a "Cross-SIS" Conference**

The conference "Inside Inspire" of the sub-project "Cross-SIS" took place on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2006 in Brussels. The aim of this seminar was to inform about cross-border cooperation in consideration of the European Initiative "INSPIRE" which is a directive of the European Union to build up a European spatial data infrastructure.

Due to "INSPIRE", the citizens all over Europe will get access to harmonised geodata, new web technologies and open standards which could be used by everyone. Transparency of available geodata and access to data (e.g. find a plot of land to build a house) is one of the core issues of this initiative. In the field of geo-information people will find heterogeneous situations in all individual member states. This is of course not very obvious as long as people stay in the area of only one member state. But as soon as they deal with cross border issues – and this happens more and more often – problems might occur.

Within the CROSS-SIS conference about 75 participants caught up on the project's achievements so far. This progress also opens the door for further coopera-

tion of which the partners are willing to make use of.

A first step towards future cooperation was made by submitting an application for a six months project prolongation and the implementation of additional activities like e.g. case studies on river management.

An additional presentation focusing on the national level with respect to the national implementation of the EU initiative was given by Mr. Noud Hooyman, Ministry of Housing & Spatial Planning & Environment (NL).

For further information, please see [www.cross-sis.com](http://www.cross-sis.com)

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**"Risk management  
and prevention in  
cross-border areas"**

On 28<sup>th</sup> September 2006 a Thematic Forum 3 meeting hosted by the region North Rhine-Westphalia (DE) took place in Düsseldorf.

Ms Ingeborg Puschmann, from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy, North Rhine-Westphalia (DE) welcomed about 50 participants and stressed the importance of cross border risk management along the 500 km Dutch-German border. She pointed out that today's themes for cross-border cooperation are multi-sided but they all serve the economical and social development of the border area, the improvement of the infrastructure, cross-border healthcare and labour market provided that public safety in the cross-border context is guaranteed.



Participants of the Thematic Forum meeting in Düsseldorf

Dr. Hans-Georg Fey, head of department risk and hazard prevention within the Ministry of Internal Affairs North Rhine-Westphalia, presented some practical

experiences on cross-border cooperation in the field of natural/technological risks and disaster management. He explained that the region NRW uses of a standardised security system for all events of damage or loss which is characterised by the integration of all public authorities involved in the prevention of hazards. Another lecture concerning cross-border cooperation in the field of security and crime prevention was given by Mr Norbert Spinrath, department of international police cooperation also from the Ministry of Internal Affairs North Rhine-Westphalia.

The lately approved sub-project "Risk & Innovation" was presented by Mr. del Cura from the Chamber of Commerce of Seville (ES). He underlined the project's focus on cross border cooperation related to risks which are affiliated to globalisation and innovation processes.

A clear link between two running INTERREG IIIC projects which both cover the theme "risk prevention" was established by the presentation of Mr Albert Deistler, City of Cologne (DE). He provided information on local risk management and cross-border interdependencies in the framework of the INTERREG IIIC op-

eration SETRIC (Security and Trust in Cities).

In the afternoon session, mainly practical experiences were presented as e.g. by Mr Alois Niecholot from the Joint Centre for German-French Police cooperation. Partners from the cooperation between Dutch and German police authorities and prevention centres in the field of drugs abuse reported on their experiences during common border controls within the execution of the INTERREG IIIA project "Drug usage of teenagers within leisure time and traffic".

All in all, there was an intense discussion on how to reach a balance position between legislation, duties and rights on the one hand and the practical needs on the other.

**"Environment, gov-  
ernance and flood  
prevention in border  
regions"**

The Province of Limburg (NL) organised a Thematic Forum 1 meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2006 in Maastricht. Right at the beginning of the meeting the study visit to the village of Meers at the Border Meuse project between the Netherlands and Belgium gave an interesting insight in the cross border cooperation, the related obstacles and the ecological

solutions like river widening and soil storage found.



Participants of the study visit to the village of Meers

At the Government of Maastricht, the forum was officially opened by the deputy Governor of the Province of Limburg.

Mr. Hans Mooren (Policy advisor Benelux, Brussels) explained in his presentation the new legal instrument "European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation" (EGTC) which could be useful for future cooperation in the field of flood prevention. He referred e.g. to the following advantages:

- no dependence on personal sympathies
- management of own funds and staff
- structured and transparent organisation
- appropriate form of cooperation for public authorities.

The INTERREG IIIC network "FLAPP" (Flood Awareness & Prevention Policy in border areas) is led by the Province of Limburg and deals e.g. with questions of ecologically sustainable water management.

Flood prevention is also an important issue in the Evros Basin in the Greek-Turkish-Bulgarian border region on which Mr. Panagiotis Koudoumakis from the Managing Authority of the Regional Operational Programme gave a short overview.

At the end of the meeting, Mr. Aad Blokland from the Province of Limburg introduced "some thoughts about usefulness of cross-border cooperation" in the German-Dutch-Belgian region by outlining some main issues like transport and mobility or water quality.



Participants of the Thematic Forum 1 meeting at the nature park "Maas-Schwalm-Nette"

### **International Conference "RiverCross"**

From 28<sup>th</sup> November until 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2006, the third "RiverCross" project conference took place in Lublin (PL). The meeting focused on the experiences in cross-border cooperation in the partner regions, the contents and aims of e-learning courses as well as on the proceedings and results of the sub-

project in Poland, Germany and Greece. The conference also gave the opportunity to discuss the project's progress more detailed by elaborating the summary reports, an important part of the Final Report which is expected to be published in spring 2007.

### **Handbook "REGBOUR"**

The handbook "Putting new neighbourhood into practice" has now been published by the SWG "REGBOUR". It has been elaborated in order to provide basic knowledge to actors involved in cross-border cooperation at the external EU borders and furthermore to give concrete and practical recommendations for future programmes and project implementations.

The theoretical part of this handbook briefly summarises the legal framework as well as the Community programmes and instruments whereas the practical part describes the implementation of cross-border cooperation in the participating regions addressing definite recommendations for regional authorities and project leaders.

The handbook is available for download under the following link:

<http://www.change-on-borders.net/activities/pdf/handbook.pdf>

**"Education & Training  
in border regions"  
Thematic Forum 3 in  
Strasbourg and Basel**

The RFO "Change on Borders" closed the year with a joint Thematic Forum meeting hosted by the regions of Alsace (FR) and Basel (CH).

On 29<sup>th</sup> November the region Alsace organised a meeting focusing on Education and Training across borders. This Thematic Forum clearly put across the necessity and importance with regard to learn foreign languages in the context of cross-border cooperation.

In the framework of the sub-project "Language Bridges" the Marc Bloch-University conducted a survey proving that the fact that pupils live in a border region does not influence the way how they use and further develop their language skills in their daily life, although they recognise the importance of learning other languages. Thus, the insufficient knowledge of languages of the neighbouring countries often turns out to be a major obstacle.



Lecturers of the meeting in  
Strasbourg

The European Confederation of Upper Rhine Universities (EUCOR) aims at promoting the cross-border cooperation in research and studies in order to intensify the exchange of students and lecturers, in order to implement joint research projects and to facilitate the mutual acknowledgement of diplomas.

One of the first organisations offering such facilities is the cross-border confederation of teacher training institutions in the Upper Rhine region, called "COLINGUA".

A tri-national Master Course in Multilingualism was introduced by "COLINGUA" which officially started in autumn 2006. This study course gives the opportunity to obtain a diploma which is acknowledged in the three participating cross-border states of the Upper Rhine region.

The REGIO BASILIENSIS (Northwest Switzerland), a regional association which supports cross-border cooperation in the Upper Rhine region hosted the Thematic Forum meeting on the 1<sup>st</sup> December in Basel.

One of the main targets with regard to cooperation across borders in this region is to improve the chances for economic development of the border regions as well as the development

of a better integrated cross-border labour market by dismantling border-related barriers.

Dr. Guy Morin, member of the government of the canton Basel-City, opened the Thematic Forum and welcomed the participants. He referred to the fact that the Upper Rhine region (Germany-France-Swiss) is seen as a model region for cooperation across borders as the REGIO BASILIENSIS has been Europe-wide one of the first organisations which got professionally involved in overcoming system frontiers.

Another example of a successfully implemented education & training concept was presented by Ms Margaret Oertig-Davidson from the "Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz". She presented the "International Business Management" study which is a cooperation between the bordering regions of Alsace, Basel and Baden-Württemberg, in each of which all students spend parts of their studies. Ms Oertig-Davidson very concretely explained the importance of intercultural communication in this context and put emphasis on the main challenges of this study course which are closely linked to the differences in the three education systems, like e.g. teacher's authority,

learning attitudes or administrative matters.

Another interesting presentation was held by Martha Schwarze (REGIO BASILIENSIS). She gave a short introduction in the Upper Rhine School and Teacher cooperation. The superior aim of this cooperation is to overcome language barriers by developing the regions' potential for multilingualism. She gave examples of such cross-border educational projects like e.g. the Bilingual Upper Rhine School Manual, a manual aiming at enabling pupils and teachers to use a common pedagogical tool.

The participants' interest was particularly aroused by the visit to the ExpoTriRhena, an exposition on the history of the Upper Rhine border region. In this permanent exhibition, the life of the population of all three states is compared with each other, national differences are analysed and the impact of borders on the life of the people in these regions is vividly illustrated.



Participants of the Thematic Forum meeting in Basel

### **"Efficiency Assessment of Cross-Border Transport Infrastructure"**

On 12<sup>th</sup> October 2006 the sub-project "Efficiency Assessment of Cross-Border Transport Infrastructure" (TRANS-EA) organized an open conference to present its intermediate results.

The conference took place in the Saxony Liaison Office in Brussels with participants from regional authorities, members of the European Parliament as well as from companies involved in cross-border transport.



Mrs. Wunderlich opening the conference

The presentations of the participants were embedded in keynote speeches of Mr. Francois Begeot (DG TREN) and Dr. Bernd Rohde (Saxon Ministry of Economic Affairs and Labour, DE).

The SWG "TRANS-EA" mainly focuses on developing a common model for efficiency assessment of cross-border transport infrastructure.

This conference gave the opportunity to discuss more detailed the objectives and the recent

status of the Trans-EA activities with representatives of other European regions and EU institutions dealing with regional development and transport infrastructure.

This conference clearly put across the importance and relevance of the assessment model, not only for the participating regions, but also in view to similar conditions and problems which may occur in many European border regions and beyond.

This model will enable decision makers not only to evaluate the effects related to infrastructure investments, but also the efficiency of operational border processes in one integrated assessment scheme.

Therefore, the Trans-EA model will contribute to increase the efficiency of cross-border transport system within Europe by improving the interoperability and cross-border compatibility of management processes.



Lead Participant and participants of the sub-project "TRANS-EA"

### **Dates & Events**

The first **Thematic Forum 2** meeting in 2007 as well as the next **Steering Committee** meeting will take place in Karlstad/ Värmland (SE) organised by the County Administrative Board of Värmland on:

**1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> February 2007.**

The Thematic Forum meeting will focus on "Labour mobility" and "Cross-border University Cooperation".

Within the framework of this meeting, experiences and examples of various cross-border projects along the Swedish-Norwegian border will be presented. Moreover, a visit to the Freemasons' building is planned where the dissolution of the Swedish-Norwegian union was negotiated in 1905.

For further information, registration and agenda, please see [www.change-on-borders.net](http://www.change-on-borders.net)

Another **Thematic Forum 3** meeting will be organised in the region of East Macedonia Thrace (GR) in May 2007. This Thematic Forum will mainly deal with the Cold-War heritage on European borders. In this context, the conversion of military camps and other facilities in the new programming period and the role of local and regional authorities will be outlined.

### **"Annual Conference"**

**20<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> March 2007**

The RFO "Change on Borders" will celebrate its 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference which will be jointly hosted by the Offices of the Provincial Governments of Upper and Lower Austria.

A combined **Thematic Forum 1 & 2** meeting will take place in combination with the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference.

In the context of the Thematic Forum 2, the main issues will be "Labour market and qualification in border regions". The related study visit will be made from Krems, the cultural centre of Lower Austria, to the border regions (Slovakia, Hungary, Czech Republic) to introduce some cross-border cooperation examples. As regards the meeting of the Thematic Forum 1 taking place in Linz, it is supposed to have its focus on biotechnology and life science

Interested experts and all Main Partners are kindly invited to contribute with their knowledge to these meetings.

For further information, registration and agenda, please contact:

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### **IMPRESSUM**

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