

EDITORIAL

In the first quarter of the year 2007, the RFO "Change on Borders" mainly focused its attention on the 4th Annual Conference as well as on the support of the sub-projects' activities of which some are already finishing and organising their final events.

The 9th RFO-Newsletter will provide an insight into the background of the elaboration of the Best Practice Manual for cross-border cooperation in the framework of the RFO "Change on Borders". Furthermore, this issue will outline the most important results of the 4th Annual Conference and the different Thematic Forum events releasing important impulses for cooperation in a cross-border context.

Besides, a rough overview on the INTERREG congress in Eindhoven will be given which, amongst others, drew the visitors' attention on possibilities of the new structural funds programming period 2007-2013. Finally, the results and outputs of the SWG "Labour Market" will be coarsely portrayed and a short outlook on the Final Conferences of the sub-projects "River-Cross" and "Youth for Innovation" will be given.

Ilka Meisel
RFO-Coordinator

Best Practice Manual for cross-border co- operation

The 25 partner regions of the RFO "Change on Borders" commonly decided to elaborate a 'Best Practice Manual' in order to better utilise the acquired and valuable know-how of the RFO and disseminate it to a wider audience, but also to improve future cross-border approaches. The manual will be based on the main objective of the RFO "Change on Borders" which is to help further dismantling borders and border-related barriers in Europe through a stimulation of new cooperation opportunities in all aspects of daily life. It should be a user friendly and concise guide for cross-border co-operation which will be worked out based on the experiences and outcomes gained in the course of the implementation of this RFO.

Considering the above, the manual of cross-border cooperation should provide a strategic approach and focus primarily on the criteria and conditions for good cross-border cooperation. The manual should serve as a book of reference and as a useful guide for all who are involved in cross-border cooperation or are interested in this kind of cooperation.

The company 'Rupprecht Consult' (Cologne, DE) has been consigned to elaborate this manual which will be presented during the Final Conference of "Change on Borders" on 23rd October 2007. The first joint workshop with the RFO partners took place on 1st February in Värmland (SE) where a proposal for a draft structure was presented and commonly discussed.



Participants during the workshop in Värmland

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4th Annual Conference in Krems

The last Annual Conference in the framework of the RFO "Change on Borders" was celebrated on 23rd March 2007 in Krems being organised in close cooperation with the Main Partner region of Lower Austria. This conference was attended by approx. 50 participants from all over Europe and provided a good opportunity to bring together different stakeholders involved in the RFO.



Inge Rinke opening the Annual Conference

After a warm welcome by Ms Inge Rinke (Member of the Regional Parliament of Lower Austria), and a brief introduction by Ms Birgitt Kocks (North Rhine-Westphalia), the achievements and highlights of the RFO so far and the last years' activities were presented by Mr Poutiainen (North Karelia/ East Finland) on behalf of the three Lead Regions.

This conference served in particular to outline and discuss the impressive sub-project results in the respective Main Partner regions. Most of the sub-projects took

the opportunity to present their activities by means of project exhibition stands.

Furthermore, three sub-projects with a different thematic focus (River-Cross, Labour Market, e-health) were presented more detailed which gave a good insight into the sub-projects' work and its effects for cross-border cooperation. The sub-project partnerships underlined the fact that the interregional exchange helped a lot to learn from each other and gain useful contacts in other border regions facing similar challenges.

The afternoon of the conference was dedicated to discuss challenges and strategies for border regions in light of territorial integration and the Lisbon agenda. After an introductory speech of Mr Martín Guillermo-Ramírez (Association of European Border Regions) focusing on key aspects of the Territorial Agenda, regional governance and strategy examples of Partner regions were presented. Mr Karl Becker (Association Regional Management Austria) and Mr Robert Schrötter (Upper Austria) gave an overview on the new developing regional management structures in Austria which play an important role in bundling regional resources and supporting the imple-

mentation of structural funds programmes. Mr Doede Sijtsma (Province of Gelderland) presented Gelderland's strategy of European cooperation and gave some advice for successful cooperation based on his own experience.

These regional examples from the East and West were complemented by two presentations from the Northern Main Partner region Värmland by Mr Sture Hermansson and the Southern Main Partner region Navarra by José-Angel Zubiaur, who highlighted particular cross-border initiatives, future perspectives as well as challenges of cross-border cooperation in their regions. All speakers made clear that differences in decision-making competences of the neighbouring region is a crucial issue which each border region has to deal with when drafting strategies or projects for cross-border cooperation.



Participants of the Annual Conference

The conference was closed with an outlook on the future of interregional cooperation given

by Ms Ilka Meisel (RFO Coordinator) which concluded in a panel discussion. One aspect being raised in the context of future projects was the fact to focus even more on working groups bringing together experts who are already cooperating in cross-border initiatives and thus, tie cross-border stakeholders closer together. This conference was - as summarised by the AEBR - "a first final step towards a new beginning"; it was the last Annual Conference of the RFO and the first conference giving a clear outlook into the future.

Presentations of the Annual Conference can be found under the following link: www.change-on-borders.net

Cross-border university cooperation and labour mobility

This additional Thematic Forum 2 meeting held on 1st February 2007 in Karlstad (SE) was focused on the development of labour markets in border regions giving concrete examples of cross-border cooperation along the Swedish-Norwegian border. Host of the meeting was the County Administrative Board of Värmland (SE). One of the main targets of cross-border cooperation in this region is to improve the develop-

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

In this context, Mr. Alvar Löfskog (Karlstad University) presented the "University Alliance Inner Scandinavia" (UNISKA), a cross-border project in the framework of a formalised network of Swedish and Norwegian academic institutions. Due to globalisation processes leading to an increasing demand on the educational level, the UNISKA mainly focuses on networking and education in order to strengthen the position of individual members and to get a more distinct presence on a regional, national and international level.



Infocenter in Morokulien at the Swedish-Norwegian border

Further examples of cross-border university cooperation at the Swedish-Norwegian border were presented through the introduction of the

"Master of Public Administration" and an overview on the study programme "Master of Innovation Management". In the framework of this Thematic Forum, various examples of cross-border university cooperation and labour mobility were given which all try to help dismantling border-related barriers by establishing new networks and exchanging experiences between and within different sectors of society.

After having discussed various aspects of cross-border university cooperation and labour mobility within the scope of this Thematic Forum, the participants' particular interest was finally sparked in the related study visit showing concrete examples of cross-border labour mobility at the Swedish-Norwegian border, like e.g. the project "Grensetjänsten" located in Morokulien, a cross-border area. This project helps people who intend to move from one country to another to get along with the various problems occurring and provides support by giving advice to private persons and companies working and operating in a cross-border context.

For more detailed information, please have a look at the corresponding webpage under:

www.grensetjansten.no

Biotechnology and life science clusters in border regions

The region Upper Austria organised a Thematic Forum 1 meeting taking place on 21st March 2007 in Linz. This meeting was focused on biotechnology and life science clusters in border regions. Mr Robert Schrötter (Provincial Government of Upper Austria) opened the meeting and pointed out that the support of innovation and the development of a research facility network are two prime objectives of the Upper Austrian technology policy.



Visit to the Euregio Bayerischer Wald - Böhmerwald

An introduction into this topic was given by Mr Patrick Pammer (Upper Austrian Research GmbH) presenting biotechnology as part of our daily life, e.g. as regards food or textiles. He emphasized the importance for successful science to business to interlink public research and industry in order to create cutting-edge technologies.

A concrete example of a co-operation between business and research

was explained by Rupert Körber (Ecoplus) presenting the Technopol-program Lower Austria. This programme oversees projects which help building bridges between businesses and scientific research. In this context, the BioTec Area Krems - a life science cluster - was introduced which provides a unique mix of practical academic training, advanced research and innovative applied science by interlinking the fields of education, economy and research and development. This co-operation enables fast-track approval procedures, provides practice oriented scientific training and above all, profits from a strong political support making this scientific cluster become one of the strongest players in the Vienna Region.

Another interesting example of a cluster co-operation in this field was given by Dr. Beat Glatthaar (BioValley Basel) presenting "BioValley", the tri-national life science cluster (D/ F/ CH). This cluster offers an advanced cross-border network consisting amongst others of pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, universities and research centres, technology parks and economic promotion agencies.

A cluster needs a clear strategy and measurable

targets which for BioValley are the transfer of technology, the promotion of start-up companies as well as the enhancement of new alliances with (inter-) national partners, thus aiming at becoming the most successful cross-border biotechnology region in Europe.



Visit of the University of Applied Sciences in Linz

After having discussed various aspects of biotechnology and life science clusters in border regions within the scope of this Thematic Forum, the afternoon was finally dedicated to a related study visit to the University of Applied Sciences in Linz, specialised on medical technology, as well as to the Upper Austrian Research GmbH (UAR), centre for biotechnical nanotechnology. It has become clear that the UAR's main target is to positively affect innovation in Upper Austria by enhancing the creation of new technologies, products and services and consequently, contributes towards raising the competitiveness of the entire region.

Labour market and qualification in border regions

The Thematic Forum 2 meeting held on 22nd March 2007 in Gmünd, located at the Austrian-Czech border, was focused on labour market and qualification in border regions. Host of the meeting was the Provincial Government of Lower Austria represented by Dr. Bernhard Köhle.



Participants of the Thematic Forum in Gmünd

He opened the meeting by shortly characterising the current situation of the Lower Austrian labour market. While facing three different labour markets (CZ/ SK/ HU), Lower Austria is challenged to find a joint and mutually supported approach which satisfies different interests and needs. This, in turn, requires adequate strategies as well as economic understanding which should be illustrated in the framework of this Thematic Forum.

The first insight into the Lower Austrian labour market situation was given by Mr Mario Danler (Lower Austrian Labour

Market Service) by presenting the labour market policy in this border region. He pointed out that one of the remedies found to the high unemployment rate is the co-foundation of various socio-economic enterprises or the creation of the qualification network "cross-border employees". The major aim of this network is to support companies doing business with neighbouring countries, like e.g. the Czech Republic, by offering joint vocational training, personal development and language courses in English and Czech. This prospering project underlines the significance and importance of the life-long learning process, not only as regards the personal level, but also the economic one.

Another interesting topic was introduced by Mr Walter Reiter (L&R Social Research) presenting Expert Academies (EA) in the field of cross-border labour market policy. EA are bilateral programmes to encourage and stabilize cross-border cooperation in different areas of labour market policy. These programmes are not only targeted to the development of sustainable networks on both sides of the border, but also the preparation for the future labour market challenges of an integrated region.

In this context, Ms Vera Vyskovsky (ecoplus) presented CENTROPE, a cooperation between four EU member states (Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia). This project tries to gain attractiveness and visibility of the Central European Region on an international scale and to achieve sustainable integration on the basis of diversity. Thus, one picture of the labour market situation of this region should be portrayed.

This focus was again picked up during the study visit to the cross-border industrial park Gmünd/České Velenice located on the Austrian-Czech border, a concrete example of cross-border labour mobility across the border. Although this Thematic Forum showed that already a lot of projects supporting cross-border labour market and qualification have been realised so far, still a lot of services and institutions on both sides of the border need to be coordinated and socio-economic disparities need to be overcome.



Cross-border industrial park on the Austrian/Czech border

INTERREG Congress Eindhoven

The INTERREG Congress "Explore your boundaries" was held on 14th February 2007 at the Evoluon in Eindhoven (NL). The congress was organised by the Ministries of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment (VROM) and Economic Affairs (EZ). The RFO "Change on Borders" was represented at this congress with a stand.

In the framework of this event, an overview on the results of the INTERREG programmes IIIA, IIIB and IIIC were given within panel discussions as well as on 52 different stands within a project market where each stand exhibited the achievements of each project so far.

Furthermore, future prospects of exploring the possibilities of the new objective "European Territorial Cooperation" (INTERREG IV) were portrayed. This congress was not only open to people with INTERREG background, but also to visitors outside this programme who are interested in getting to know more about cross-border cooperation. During conversations with Dutch visitors, it became clear that the need to commonly tackle transboundary problems is constantly increasing.

Termination of SWG "Labour Market"

The SWG "Labour Market move possibilities across border in Europe" finalised its activities in December 2006 and presented its activities and results during the Annual Conference in Krems. The major focus of this sub-project was to disseminate information on cross-border labour market possibilities among inhabitants of border regions, i.e. information on employment, legal environment, recruitment and restrictions for foreign employees in cross-border regions.



Representatives of the SWG
"Labour Market"

Due to this cooperation, possibilities emerged for initiating the establishment of a specialised employment centre to increase the awareness of the population for jobs across the border, e.g. through information bulletins or descriptions of job vacancies that could be freely accessed by the citizens of the border region. Thus, a cooperation network has been developed and finally stimulated cross-border cooperation positively.

Final Conferences of "RiverCross" & "Youth 4 Innovation"

The SWG "RiverCross" will organise its Final Conference taking place from 18th-20th April 2007 in the Dutch-German border region "Euregio Rhein-Waal" in Kleve. In the scope of this conference, several case studies on Water Quality Management and Flood Management of different rivers will be presented, cross-border cooperation, policies and results of the sub-project will be outlined and the Portal Water Management as a platform for extending and sharing information on cross-border water management will be portrayed and commonly discussed.

Besides, the sub-project "Youth for Innovation" will have its Closing Conference from 13th-16th June 2007 in Oldenburg. Within this conference, the participating regions will share their experiences with the implementation of the innovation curriculum and the elaboration of the cross-border mini innovation projects. Pupils, students and teachers will also be invited to present the results of their mini innovation projects which represent a core element of this project. All members of the project teams will receive certificates and the best projects will be awarded with a price.

Dates & Events

The Union of border and cross border regions of the region of East Macedonia-Thrace (GR) is organising a **Thematic Forum 3** meeting which will take place from **14th – 15th May 2007** in Xanthi. The Thematic Forum will mainly deal with "European border-related heritage". 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.

For more information, the agenda or a registration form, please contact:

change-on-borders@mwme.nrw.de.

The last **Thematic Forum** meeting in the framework of the RFO "Change on Borders" will be organised by the region of Lublin (PL) from **21st – 22nd June 2007** focusing on administrative and programme structures along internal and external borders, i.e. cooperation between institutions on the external borders of the EU and administrative structures which – although they are constantly developing – are an every day topic for this region.

More detailed information will follow as soon as possible.

"Final Conference" of the RFO "Change on Borders"

The RFO "Change on Borders" will celebrate its Final Conference on **23rd October 2007** which will be hosted by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy of North Rhine-Westphalia (DE) taking place in Düsseldorf.

In the framework of this conference, the results generated within the Thematic Forum meetings and the sub-project activities should be consolidated on an interdisciplinary level. It further helps to spread the achievements of the RFO in general throughout the European regions. Moreover, the elaborated 'Best Practice Manual for cross-border cooperation' will be presented within this Final Conference.

The RFO expects about 250 participants from European border regions. All project partners and interested experts are kindly invited to this meeting. You are welcome to contribute to this meeting with your knowledge and experiences.

For more information, the agenda or a registration form, please contact:

change-on-borders@mwme.nrw.de

IMPRESSUM

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