
Expert Academies in the field of cross border labour market policy

Definition: What are EAs?

- EAs are bilateral programmes to encourage and stabilize cross border cooperation in different areas of labour market policy
- Strategic partners: regional public employment services in the border regions, the Austrian ministry of economics and labour as co-financing institution
- Operational partners in Austria: main partner is the Viennese Institute L&R Social Research; in some cases supported by other companies: in the case of the Austrian-Czech EA for example ÖSB consulting.
- Dependent on the respective activities there is a series of involved institutional partners. These are mainly: social partners, NGOs, research companies and universities

Implementation scope:

- Oldest EA with Hungary: since around 6 years
- Austrian-Czech Expert Academy since 4 years, since 2 years also a mirror project on the Czech side
- New for Austrian border regions: EAs with the Slovak Republic and Slovenia
- EA without official Austrian participation: Czech/Slovak, Hungary/Croatia, Hungary/Ukraine

Overall objective:

- Developing sustainable networks in the labour market policy on both sides of the border to build a cooperation capacity that includes all relevant partners
- Information about successful instruments for the active labour market policy on both sides of the border
- Preparation for the future labour market challenges of an integrated region

Background expectations:

- In the near future the borders will lose its relevance and in the process of the recovery of the new member states new centres of economic activities will emerge (sometimes these can also be former centres like Znojmo)
- A very good example is the development of the automotive cluster in Western Slovakia with 5000 to 10000 new jobs in the next 10 years
- As a consequence new employment chances also for Austrians and migrant movements not only to Austria but also from Austria to the neighbouring countries
- Good connections between Austrian labour market institutions and the same institutions in our neighbouring countries will make it easier to cope with the coming challenges

Programme activities:

- Systematic information and discussion,
- development of practical measures,
- capacity building, both in a short term and a long term perspective (long term: building the basis for common regional public employment institutions like the OECD suggested for the Viennese-Bratislava region)
- research on topics of common interest
- cross border pilot projects as practical steps in the cooperation

Instruments (number concerning Czech Republic and Hungary):

- seminars and workshops (80-90)
- labour market conferences (12)
- excursions and study visits
- expert meetings
- pilot projects (2)
- studies on topics with cross border relevance (6)
- Networking procedures

Activities 2006 / 2007 (planned):

- Labour Market Conferences:
 - Equal opportunities for handicapped people
 - Vocational training and European policy framework

- Seminars and workshops:
 - Commuter Agreement between the Czech Republic and Austria
 - Management structures in the Austrian Public Employment Service
 - Presentation of the results concerning the qualification profiles of the border regions
 - Implementation of the results of the qualification research
 - Perspectives of the expert academy in the new period of the structural funds

➤ Study Visits and excursions:

- Czech EURES experts visit their counterparts in Vienna and Lower Austria (and vice versa in 2007)
- Labour market experts visit implementing agencies for measures for handicapped people in lower Austria
- Visits of Austrian companies in the border region needing personnel that cannot be provided by the Lower Austrian PES (and vice versa)

➤ Research projects:

- “Qualification profiles: demand and supply in the border regions”
- Expectations of employers concerning the services of the Public Employment Service

➤ Public Relations:

- Expert Newsletter (4) about news in the field of labour market policy and regional policy with special relevance for the border regions
- Brochure concerning the challenges of the Austrian labour market policy in an integrated Central Europe

Main problems of cross border labour market policy

- At the beginning of the cooperation not enough understanding of certain definitions or meanings: e.g. evaluation or atypical work
- Different appreciation of certain policy fields: e.g. gender mainstreaming
- Financing sources Interreg/Phare: no possibility to spread the available money amongst all partners
- Instability of institutional structures: after elections change of representatives, e.g. one month ago from 46 regional offices in the Slovak republic 41 of them got a new director

Perspectives in 2008 and following years:

- Support of the integration processes concerning labour market policy in centropo
- more multilateral networking that includes all relevant regions
- More pilot projects with practical relevance