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## ***„Cross-border cooperation between universities and research centres”***

**- Report -**

### **AEBR-Study “Co-operation between Universities, Higher Education Institutions and Research Centres in Europe’s Border Regions 2006/2007”**

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**Summary results of several surveys carried out  
by the „Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)“  
as well as of website and literature analysis 2006/2007**

**by**

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## **1. Aim of the study and surveys in European border regions 2003-2007**

### ***1.1 Aim and key issues – analysis objectives***

Due to the fact that an important first step towards a competitive European Higher Education area in border regions is the knowledge of as well as the exchange of information and best practices on cooperation between different regional universities, higher education institutions and research centres at the end of the year 2002 the Executive Committee of AEHR took for the first time the decision to carry out a survey on „Cooperation between universities and higher education institutions in Europe's border regions“.

Major condition facilitating practical cross-border cooperation between universities and higher education institutions in border regions, both in terms of research, education and professional training and the cooperation with business and public administration, is the knowledge of existing cooperation potentials and the prospective need for cooperation in border regions.

**An overall question is therefore: How cross-border cooperation between universities / higher education institutions on the one hand and with business and public administration on the other hand can enhance the development of regions and the welfare of citizens living in these regions?**

### ***1.2 First survey 2003/2004 and its evaluation***

On 13 January 2003 the Secretary General of AEHR Jens Gabbe and the Chairman of the Advisory Committee of AEHR Dr. Viktor von Malchus addressed all border and cross-border regions in Europe with following lines:

„The cooperation between universities, higher education institutions etc. are gaining in importance. Obviously, there still is a lack of information of forms of cooperation between universities and polytechnic schools in border areas, i.e. structures of cooperation and contents as well as possible goals for the future (e.g. amalgamation of universities, coordination of study courses and so on).“

The responses were sparse, arrived quite slowly and required several reminders by phone and in written.

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With regard to contents the survey replies were highly different: short and long reports, not all were qualitatively sufficient, large annexes, hardly structured. It was a highly difficult task to bring them together in one overview! At the end of 2003 36 cross-border regions sent their answers to the questions of AEFR (see the series of tables of 2004). The results demonstrate that by the end of 2003 not all border and cross-border regions were sufficiently familiar with the issue of “cooperation between universities and higher education institutions in border areas”, but at least the subject aroused great interest. Moreover, the survey allowed first interesting statements on the forms and ways of cooperation between higher education institutions as well as with business and public administration.

The distribution of answers by European subspaces was highly different as well. The majority of answers arrived from Northern Europe. However, many comprehensive contributions came also from Southern Europe, in this case mainly from Spain.

The first results and the preliminary final report (translated into three languages and published on the AEFR-website [www.aebr.eu](http://www.aebr.eu)) were a highly interesting issue for border and cross-border regions and the Executive Committee of AEFR. Consequently, in summer 2005 the Executive Committee of AEFR decided to carry out once again a more structured survey addressing border regions and friends of AEFR.

### **1.3 Second survey of AEFR in border regions 2005/2006**

On 22 July 2005 the Secretary General of AEFR Jens Gabbe and the Chairman of the Advisory Committee sent following letter to members and friends of AEFR:

“Please find attached the report on „Cooperation between universities and higher education institutions in Europe’s border regions “, which was elaborated in the year 2004. We would like to update this report and bring it up to scratch and would therefore be grateful if you could answer the following questions:

- 1) Have new forms of cooperation between universities been established in your cross-border region since 2002/2003 or are there forms of cooperation, which have not yet been reported?
- 2) Number and name of the universities/higher education institutions cooperating on a cross-border level?
- 3) Contractual basis and structure of the cooperation?

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- 4) What are the most important contents of the cooperation?
- 5) What are the aims/measures planned for the future?
- 6) Have bigger research landscapes or cooperation scenes been developed in addition and what is their scientific emphasis?

The replies to the survey on cross-border cooperation between universities / higher education institutions were expected to be sent by 30 September 2005 at the latest to the Secretariat General of AEER. While reminding border and cross-border regions / Euroregions to send their missing answers and in a supplementary survey of February 2006 the additional question was asked, if border regions / Euroregions were involved in cross-border cooperation between universities / higher education institutions in the own region or would like to participate in such cooperation in the future? Moreover, it was asked, if the cross-border cooperation between universities / higher education institutions is hampered by legal problems. The replies came slowly and were in some cases incomplete. Last reports arrived in summer / autumn 2007 after several reminders by phone and in written. Some large and important border regions (e.g. Geneva, Vienna, Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia or Euroregion Strymon-Strouma) haven't replied up to now. Even inquiries by phone remained mostly without success.

Since then the author and the AEER Secretariat General completed the results of the survey in detail work through reminders, interviews, translations and sources analysis (website analysis), structured them regionally (based on the map: „Cross-border cooperation areas 2007 - [www.aeer.eu](http://www.aeer.eu) - ) and with regard to contents (based on the list of questions of 2006/2007) and with all reserve towards the quality, the contents and the integrity presented the summary results in a series of tables.

### **1.4 *Third survey on cooperation between universities / higher education institutions in Europe's border regions***

In anticipation of the expected debate in the European Parliament and the European Commission the AEER had to anew update and refine the survey results. For that reason the Secretary General of AEER Martín Guillermo-Ramírez and the Chairman of the Advisory Committee of AEER Dr. Viktor Frhr. von Malchus asked border and

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cross-border regions (Euroregions or border regions) in Europe once again on 15 July 2007 to reply briefly and quickly to following ten questions:

1. Is there a name for cross-border co-operation between universities in your region? Examples for such names would be Øresund University, ALMA, EUCON or Lake Constance University. If you have not answered this question before, please let us know the name and the address of the secretariat, as well as the web address: www....;
2. Number and names of the universities/higher education institutions co-operating on cross-border level, in case not reported yet;
3. In case you have not answered this question already, has your border region/Euroregion been involved in the establishment and the ongoing activities of "Cross-border co-operation between universities"? If yes, when did this start and in which way has your region been involved?
4. Contractual basis and structure of the university cooperation in your region or cross-border region?
5. Important contents of the university cooperation and their funding, own funds (total amount and %), public funds (total amount and %), e.g. through national education policy, EU education policy, EU research policy, EU cohesion and regional policy (INTERREG III und IV)?
6. Promotion of the attractiveness of the university and its cross-border co-operation through publicity and public relations and other measures?
7. Aims/measures of the university co-operation planned for the future?
8. Have bigger research landscapes or cooperation scenes been developed in or beyond your cross-border region (see also question 1)? Do these areas have main scientific emphasis? We as AEBCR have identified 20 of such research landscapes (see enclosed outline of the book of texts). In case your region has already been recorded by us, an answer is only necessary with regard to changes/progress since 2005. Please state the web address!
9. In how far your border region/Euroregion has been involved in the University/higher education institutions/research centre co-operation and/or is planning to do so in the future? Have applications already been made in the context of the

EU education policy (2007-2013) or EU cohesion and regional policy (2007-2013)?

10. Are there any legal problems which hampered cross-border co-operation between universities in your cross-border region? If yes, and you have not answered this question already which ones?

This supplementary survey of July 2007 delivered new important information and demonstrated progress in cooperation between universities in border areas. The corresponding report tables are currently (2008) completed and up-dated.

## **2. Quantity, quality and geographical distribution of survey and analysis results in cross-border regions in Europe 2003-2007**

### ***2.1 Quantity and quality of survey results***

89 border and cross-border regions sent their reports by the end of 2007, while in the year 2003 only 36 regions replied. Many regions up-dated their reports in 2005/2007 and ca. 50 regions sent completely new reports. This means that the rate of return amounted to 80%. With regard to quantity and quality the survey results greatly improved since 2003/2004. In the meantime, many border regions have recognised the opportunities and advantages of cross-border cooperation between universities / higher education institutions for the own region, what means that the efforts pay off! The AEBR has gained much new information with benefit for European border regions! Nevertheless, it must be underlined that many reports didn't meet the expectations and some border and cross-border regions didn't reply to the surveys of AEBR, although important universities / higher education institutions are located in these border regions that most probably also cooperate across borders. Many universities in Europe don't mention cross-border co-operation on their websites. Unfortunately, the same is also true for many border regions! As consequence, the surveys and analysis deserved and still deserve many efforts from AEBR and correspond with many difficulties.

### ***2.2 Geographical distribution of survey results in Europe***

The geographical distribution of reports delivered by border regions in the course of the surveys 2003-2007 and of findings based on literature and website analysis is as follows:

**Geographical distribution of reports delivered by „Europe’s border regions“ and of literature and website analysis 2003-2007 on universities / higher education institutions cooperating across borders (as of 2007)**

<b>Europe’s subspaces</b>	<b>Replies from border regions 2003-2007 and reports based on literature and website analysis 2007</b>		
	<b>2003</b>	<b>2006/2007</b>	<b>Participating universities</b>
<b>Northern Europe and Baltic Sea</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>ca. 140</b>
<b>Central and Eastern Europe</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>ca. 120</b>
<b>North-West Europe</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>ca. 160</b>
<b>Alps and Danube area</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>ca. 90</b>
<b>South-West Europe</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>ca. 80</b>
<b>South-East Europe</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>ca. 40</b>
<b>Total border regions / univ.</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>ca. 630</b>

The overview shows that the results have totally changed since 2003. The amount of reports corresponds with the geographical dispersion of border regions in Europe’s subspaces and the survey results more than doubled since 2003. Many new findings have been brought together!

With regard to the reports’ quality there are no differences related to the geographical location. However, as regards the amount of answers in Europe a clear North-South divide has been observed.

### **2.3 Universities / higher education institutions covered by the surveys**

According to first rough estimations in total 600-700 universities / higher education institutions / research centres are involved in cross-border cooperation in Europe’s border regions. The most important findings have been summarised in a series of tables. They will be completed in German by summer 2008.

The analysis of the reports’ contents shall be carried out in the text volume of the study „Cooperation between universities and higher education institutions in Europe’s border regions.“ However, this is a work-intensive task requiring a lot of translations, which the

AEBR alone is not able to fulfil. For that reason, the AEBR is aiming at signing a research contract in cooperation with DG Research of the EU Commission that would facilitate the evaluation of survey results with benefit for the EU Commission and border regions and in this way would contribute to the utilisation of the research results.

### **3. First preliminary survey results**

- 3.1** Generally, the surveys were very successful. Including friends of AEBR and higher education institutions more than 80% of border regions have replied to our survey. More than 700 higher education institutions and research centres work together across borders.
- 3.2** In many border regions the cross-border cooperation between universities has even a name: e.g. Öresund University (DK/SE), UNISKA (NO/SE), ALMA (BE/DE/NL), EUCOR (CH/DE/FR) or Bodensee University (AT/CH/DE/LI). In these cases higher education institutions on both sides of the border are part of a higher education landscape / cluster. According to first findings there are ca. 30 such cross-border cooperation structures in Europe.
- 3.3** Up to now, only in single cases border regions are involved in the initiation of cross-border cooperation between universities or are involved in already established cooperation structures.
- 3.4** Nearly all forms of cross-border cooperation between universities are based on a legal foundation, i.e. both the cooperation between universities and between faculties or research centres.
- 3.5** The cooperation structures are highly different. They are run usually by a Rectors' Conference with rotating chairmanship. Structures with a "Joint Secretariat" achieve usually best cooperation results.
- 3.6** Important contents of cross-border cooperation between universities are:
  - Implementation of the Bologna Process in its entirety,
  - Improved competence in foreign languages,
  - Creation of joint curricula and academic degrees as well as their cross-border acknowledgement,

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- Exchange of students and teachers as well as provision of services and financial support,
- Cooperation in and joint research with the aim to exploit potential synergies,
- Exploitation of EU financial support within the EU regional policy (e.g. INTERREG III/IV) or the EU research policy including the 6th and 7th Research Framework Programme,
- Joint research for business and public administration in a cross-border region.

**3.7** With targeted marketing and public relations strategies many cooperations aim at improving the universities' attractiveness in Europe offering 30 different higher education and research landscapes.

**3.8** In the first years of the new century the cooperation between universities and research centres in Europe's border regions has been intensively fostered. The common policy promoting "the creation of a European Higher Education Area" and the EU research policy contributed remarkably to this development. Accordingly, we highly support the idea to disseminate the steadily growing knowledge on the exploitation of cooperation opportunities between universities in Europe in a positive way and to apply this knowledge for the benefit of border and cross-border regions. In this context, the study of AEBC would like to contribute to the achievement of these goals.