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Asociación de Regiones Fronterizas Europeas (ARFE)
Association des régions frontalières européennes (ARFE)
Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)
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„PARTNERSHIP IN A EUROPE WITHOUT BORDERS“

AEBR's electronic newsletter – March 2005

This Newsletter of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) will be published quarterly in order to inform the border regions and their friends about the latest news on AEBR, the cooperation in European border and cross-border regions and the collaboration with other European institutions and associations.

The Newsletter is published in English, French and German (average circulation: 1600 copies).

President Lambert van Nistelrooij: considerable progresses in 2004 – important tasks 2005 – AEBR 2005-2013 important partner in the political debate:

At the beginning of the year 2005, the President pointed out that considerable progresses in the field of cross-border cooperation could be achieved during the year 2004. First of all, cross-border cooperation was maintained as one of the 4 priorities in the third Cohesion Report of the European Commission. Even more appraisable is the fact that the territorial cooperation should be among the three explicitly stated political priorities in the future European Cohesion and Regional Policy as of the year 2007. On the occasion of the conference of Heads of States or of Governments taking place in summer 2004, it succeeded quasi "in the very last minute" to anchor cross-border cooperation in the European Constitutional Treaty. With this, the foundations for a successful work in the future are laid.

Therefore, the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) will during the year 2005 give special attention to the discussions on the proposals for European Cohesion Policy. For in these documents, the following is fixed for the period of 2007 until 2013:

- the general regional-political conditions,
- the allocation of funds for cross-border cooperation,
- the conditions for the elaboration and implementation of
 - o Programmes in favour of cross-border cooperation,

- Principles of partnership and subsidiarity, which are of fundamental importance for the success of cross-border programmes.

AEBR will emphasise especially an improvement of these cross-border programmes with regard to quality in order to ensure that:

- the programmes are really jointly elaborated and implemented,
- there are actual cross-border programmes with organisational, content-related, personnel and financial involvement of partners from both sides of the border.

Experiences with previous INTERREG – programmes clearly show that the small region-specific programmes are the most successful ones, above all, if they are implemented at the regional/local level by euroregions in partnership with the national governments.

For a decentralised implementation of the programmes with a concrete financial management, it is, however, essential that cross-border structures have a status of a legal entity and that they are also liable. Therefore, AEBR participates with special attention in the discussions concerning a future EU legal instrument for decentralised cross-border cooperation.

Further priorities of AEBR discussions in the year 2005 will be among others: the difficulties of border regions in Central and Eastern Europe, the trans-European networks, European Spatial Development, cross-border policies in the fields of innovation, technology, environment and tourism.



Dialogue of the European associations representing regional and local authorities with Mr. Barroso, President of the European Commission, under the chairmanship of the Committee of the Region's President Dr. Straub (24.02.2005):

AEBR President Lambert van Nistelrooij spoke about „Cohesion Policy and Finances“.

- The AEBR supports explicitly the Commission proposal:
 - For three political priorities, especially the territorial cooperation
 - For Financial framework.
- The third cohesion report from the Commission has also being supported by the European Council. The objectives have to be financed sufficiently (1 % will not be enough).
- In the financial framework the effects of the entrance of Romania and Bulgaria are also to be taken into consideration.

- The challenges for the years after 2007 are, to develop further improved flexible politics for Structural funds, Cohesion- and Community initiatives for an enlarged EU which should meet the requirements of the whole EU.
- Cohesion policy has added value, as it serves the interests of the whole Community and is applicable in the whole EU. It is not only about the shifting of resources resp. concentration in favour of the poorest regions.
- Measuring Economic development and growth only on the national level and not on the regional level does not meet with the diversity in Europe. Growth on the national level does not automatically bring growth to disadvantaged regions.
- The regional/local level should above all be involved with regard to the implementation of EU programmes.
- While defining the objectives, the management of the EU-program, the means and the monitoring of results, the regional / local authorities should be involved directly and take responsibility (one of the previous weaknesses during the implementation of the Partnership- and Subsidiarity principle)
- Regions with specific problems (e.g. maritime regions, mountains, border regions) need special consideration.
- We need a EU legal instrument for the decentralised cooperation between regional authorities.
- Cross-border cooperation means: European added value, political added value, institutional added value, economical and socio-cultural added value and a very special contribution to the Lisbon-agenda (additional growth an employment)
- Furthermore Cross-Border cooperation is first of all a European objective and a political task of the EU.
- There are clear EU-priorities for the implementation of the Lisbon-strategy and the Cohesion- and Regional policy, these are often not of national concern. In these cases by the implementation the EU must be able to set the focal points that cannot be changed from the national level (e.g. support for all border regions, support for all regions within the territorial cooperation).
- The European Union lives from the solidarity between the local, regional and national levels among each other. When financial transfers to the 'less developed' regions should take place, then the 'further developed' regions should get the opportunity to develop themselves. For the money for the financial transfer is earned there.
- Growth and employment are created, when Regions can develop themselves in line with their special and unique challenges and if they can overcome their problems. In the 'less developed' regions different measures are needed than in the 'developed' regions.

Meeting with Commissioner Danuta Hübner, Introduction of Lambert van Nistelrooij, new President of AEBR (15.02.2005):



Main topics were:

- Lisbon-Strategy,
- Legal instrument of the EU,
- Regulations on Cohesion and Regional Policy,
- EU's neighbourhood and partnership instrument as well as the pre-accession programme.

Participation in the **AER-event on the EU's legal instrument** and presentation of AEBR documents (study for the Committee of the Regions, study for the European Commission). Discussion with Members of the European Parliament and representatives of the EU's legal department.

Meeting of President Lambert van Nistelrooij and Secretary General Jens Gabbe with Elmar Brok, Chairman of the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs (04.01.2005):



The most important topics of the discussion were:

- Cooperation of the Committee and AEBR in the next 2 years,
- AEBR's statement in the Committee on Constitutional Affairs,
- Idea of a Special Emissary for Border Issues of the EP,
- Possibility of receiving EU assistance for sending experts to Central and South America as well as Africa, given that requests for support of the cross-border cooperation are increasingly coming in from there,
- Collaboration of the rapporteurs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Regional Affairs with regard to the neighbourhood, partnership and pre-accession programmes as well as Cohesion and Regional Policy of the EU.

Discussion within the „Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament“ on invitation of Jo Leinen, chairman, about the European Constitutional Treaty, the future role of regional and local authorities in the framework of the Constitution as well as monitoring, ratification and implementation (December 2004).

Lambert van Nistelrooij, AEBR President and Member of the European Parliament, spoke about the following main points:

- The European Parliament is requested to take on a permanent controlling function during the implementation of the European Constitutional Treaty.
- This applies especially for:
 - the surveillance of the implementation of the subsidiarity and partnership principles,
 - clarifying the distribution of powers,
 - the democratic control of the EU,
 - strengthening the role of regional and local authorities.

These points are of fundamental importance for a successful cross-border cooperation, which is above all carried out by the regional/local level.
- The special problems of border regions have in the last moment been included in the European Constitutional Treaty during the conference of Heads of State or of Government in July 2004 (III-Art. 220). This fact has to be considered in the implementation of EU policies (e.g. in EU regulations dealing i. a. with „regions facing particular problems“).
- The European Parliament is requested to have a dialogue with the European associations representing regional and local authorities at regular intervals (in connection with the implementation of the European Constitutional Treaty, but also with regard to other region-specific issues and policies).
- It would be very helpful for the border regions if the European Parliament (following the Scandinavian model) appointed a high-ranking and pan-European known politician (active or inactive) as Special Emissary for Border Issues, who should take care of daily border problems, which in spite of the European Internal Market still exist everywhere in Europe or come into existence due to new national laws.

Reform of Cohesion Policy: positive effects expected

Two current EU studies deal with the prospective effects of the Cohesion Policy reform which has been suggested by the European Commission.

More info: ESRI-study:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/3cr/macro_impact.pdf

EPRC-study: http://www.eprc.strath.ac.uk/eprc/publications_downloads.htm

Territorial Cohesion and Urban Affairs: Ministerial Meeting in Rotterdam (30.11.2004)

Commissioner Danuta Hübner spoke on the occasion of the meeting of the ministers in charge of territorial cohesion and urban policy, which took place in Rotterdam (The Netherlands) on 29 - 30 November. She stressed: „..we cannot ignore territorial disparities. They affect seriously the overall competitiveness of our economy. In the context of the

Lisbon strategy, we need not only to reduce these imbalances but also to take advantage of the existing territorial diversities (i.e. island, mountain, border region....).” More info:

<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/04/1414&type=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Support of rural development in the EU from 2007 until 2013

On 20 September 2004, the Commission proposal on a re-structuring of the EU-support for rural development (COM (2004) 490) was introduced in more detail on the occasion of a meeting of the Committee of the Region’s Commission for sustainable development. In parallel to the Cohesion Policy Reform, also the Agricultural Policy and particularly the rural development is currently being restructured. A „European Agricultural Guarantee Fund“ and a „European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)“ will be used in future. An essential element of the European Agricultural Policy reform is the new alignment within EAFRD on three focal points for which every Member State should foresee the following minimum amounts:

- 15% to support the competitiveness of Agriculture and Forestry;
- 25% for environmental and spatial planning initiatives;
- 15% to improve life quality and diversity of rural economy;
- 7% for the so-called „Leader-Approach“.

According to the plans of the European Commission, the financial funds for these seven years should amount to EUR 95,75 billion.

More info: http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/capreform/rurdevprop_en.pdf

ARL-Study: What does structural promotion accomplish for Regional Development?

The ARL (Academy for Spatial Research and Planning, Hanover 2004) demands for „a new strategy mix for the Structural Policy“! „In the course of its enlargement, the EU does not only face organisational challenges but also the necessity to achieve its aims with increased cost effectiveness in view of stagnating resp. evanescent financial possibilities. The required proposals follow the main principle of subsidiary and allow for economical use of funds. By

- reducing the eligible complexity,
- estimating a lump sum of investments targeted at structure,
- decentralising programme management and administration as well as
- a regional networking of activities in the field of structural policy,

a stronger orientation with regard to regional development needs and development potentials could be linked with more economical efficiency. Interventions guiding in a narrower sense are to be limited to projects with verifiable European added value (cross-border economic externalities). This drafted strategy-mix would not only be reasonable from

a pan-European view. It would also help to ensure the advantage of EU - structural support promotion for countries and regions, which are no longer primarily favoured after the EU enlargement.“

INTERREG III in Switzerland in the past and in the future

What have been the results of INTERREG III in Switzerland since its start in spring 2000 and what will happen with the territorial cooperation in Europe after 2006? These two questions were the main topics of the National INTERREG Days in Lugano at the end of November 2004.

The current issue of the electronic INTERREG-newsletter contains a summary of the results of this meeting. Two articles deal with the prospects of transnational and regional cooperation as of 2007. Short reports about projects of the three INTERREG strands will soon inform about happenings on the basis.

More info: <http://interreg.ch/index.php>

European Economic and Social Committee: „Improving the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy“

In March 2004, the European Council invited the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), under article 262 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, to examine ways and means for "improving the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy". The Economic and Social Committee presented its opinion at the end of October 2004. The document contains the following proposals:

- Member States to take greater ownership of the Strategy;
- Reinforcing growth and cohesion;
- Implementing the internal market more efficiently;
- Promoting innovation and quality;
- Revamping social policy;
- Promoting private-public partnership for research;
- Protecting environment more actively;
- Gaining the support of the citizens.

Implementation of the Lisbon Strategy requires a clear policy coherence at both EU and national level. ECO/153, Brussels, 27 October 2004. More info: www.esc.eu.int

Programme of the Luxembourg Presidency

In contrary to the preceding Dutch Presidency, the current Luxembourg Presidency does not envisage a focus on Regional Policy. Also the urban dimension, which was forced by the

Netherlands, doesn't play a role. Focal points are the Lisbon Agenda as well as the promotion of global stability and growth.

Within the context of the Lisbon Agenda and the integrated competitiveness approach, the current Presidency aims at promoting innovation, enterprise, research and education. The European Charter for Small Enterprises should be developed further and an agreement on the programme "Lifelong Learning" (2007 - 2013) be achieved.

The entire programme of the Luxembourg Presidency can be downloaded in English:

http://www.eu2005.lu/en/presidence/priorites_et_pgm/programme_pres/Operational_programme_2005.pdf

Meeting with Jan Olbrycht, MEP, Rapporteur of the Regional Committee on the EU's legal instrument for cross-border cooperation (04.01.2005):

It was informed about the current status of the discussions with the Member States and necessary modification proposals with regard to the legal instrument were talked about.

First discussion of the draft reports on Cohesion and Regional Policy of the EU in the European Parliament's Committee on Regional Affairs (19.01.2005):

President and Secretary General met the individual rapporteurs and handed over the statements of AEBR. It was agreed to cooperate during the next weeks as closely as possible.

On the occasion of a further meeting with Jan Olbrycht, rapporteur of the European Parliament on the EU's legal instrument, it was spoken about the assignments of a cross-border grouping and the liability in particular. The role of the Member States was a further focal point of the discussions.

Meeting with Elisabeth Schroedter, Member of the European Parliament's Committee on Regional Affairs, concerning the draft regulations on Cohesion and Regional Policy as well as the legal instrument (19.01.2005):

Ms. Schroedter informed herself in detail about the particular requests of the border and border regions and promised to support the concerns, also with regard to the legal instrument, after examination of individual cases.

Meeting of the European associations representing regional and local authorities with the Committee of the Regions to arrange focal points as regards contents for the year 2005 (24.01.2005):

Main points were the meeting with Commission President Barroso on 24 February, the joint conference of the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions on cohesion

policy and financial aspects as well as the „European Summit of Regions & Cities“ in Wrocław/Poland in May 2005.

Solidarity for Development: More Cohesion, More Cross-Border Co-operation and Neighbourhood Policy in the Mediterranean“ (26.01.2005):

AEBR participated in this event on invitation of President Cuffaro, Region of Sicily, and explained in detail the manifold chances which will open up for the Mediterranean as of the year 2007 for a maritime cross-border, interregional and transnational cooperation. Decisive improvements are to be expected.

First presentation of the statement concerning the EU's legal instrument through rapporteur Jan Olbrycht within the Committee on Regional Affairs of the European Parliament (31.01./01.02.2005):

Meeting between AEBR Secretary General Jens Gabbe and rapporteur Jan Olbrycht in order to clarify open questions.

Meeting of the Secretary General and Francesco Attagui, Head of the Representation of the Region of Sicily in Brussels, in order to discuss maritime cooperation in mutual agreement (14.02.2005).

Event „Tourism needs Culture! ...does Culture need Tourism?“ in the Emden Hall of Arts (17.02.2005):

This event focused on a „cheerful disputation“ with regard to culture as economic factor in the cross-border Ems Dollart Region and a guided tour through the new exhibition „**Gerhard Richter: Printed!**“ and was organised on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of Dr. Reinhold Kolck, AEBR Vice-President.

Invitation by Commissioner Danuta Hübner to the EU-Conference on „Cohesion und the Lisbon Agenda: The role of the regions“ (03.03.2005):

President Lambert van Nistelrooij makes a statement during this conference.

AEBR Executive Committee Meeting in Gorizia/Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, Italy (4 – 5 March 2005)

Important topics:

- Cohesion- and Regional Policy 2007 – 2013,
- EU's legal instrument for cross-border cooperation,
- Neighbourhood and Partnership programme of the EU,
- Maritime Cooperation – especially Mediterranean and Baltic Sea,
- Promotion of rural development 2007 – 2013 in border regions,
- White Paper on European Border Regions.

Unique project in Europe: A national motorway financed with cross-border funds

The “A31-Emslandlinie” motorway runs on German ground parallel to the Dutch border from the Ruhr Basin through the “Münsterland” in North Rhine-Westphalia and the “Emsland” in Lower Saxony to the North Sea coast. The construction of the motorway from the Ruhr Basin to the North could be realised step by step since the 70ies. However, there still remained a gap of 42 kilometres, which could not be financed at short term. This led to an exemplary regional cross-border initiative and the financing of a German motorway. In addition to federal funds from Germany, the bordering Dutch provinces have contributed EUR 12 million. The remaining money gap was closed by the Dutch/German members of EUREGIO and Ems Dollart Region as well as districts, municipalities and Dutch provinces and the Dutch and German economy: A unique cross-border financing model, which shortened the completion of this motorway at the end of 2004 by 10 years.

More info: www.aebr.net/news

New director and a new logo for the Nordic Centre for Spatial Development Nordregio in Stockholm (01.02.2005)

On 1 February 2005, **Ole Damsgaard** became new director of Nordregio. He has led the Danish Urban Planning Institute for 10 years. Before that, he had been involved in the Regional Planning Strategy of the Province of Roskilde and of Greater Copenhagen. At the same time, Nordregio obtains a new logo, the ‘Nordic Star’.

Nordic Council of Minister: Report on the regional cross-border cooperation with the Baltic States

At the end of the year 2004, the Nordic Council of Ministers published a report on the cross-border cooperation of Scandinavian countries with the Baltic States and Northwest Russia.

More info: <http://www.norden.org/topofeurope/>

Cross-Border Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) in the German Oder Estuary Region (May 2004 – April 2007)

In the context of the EU recommendation for the implementation of an integrated management for European coastal areas (2002/413/GG), the Leibniz Institute of Ecological and Regional Development e.V. Dresden (IOER) aims at demonstrating on the basis of the German/Polish Oder Estuary in the Oder lagoon how the ICZM could be implemented practically and how it could contribute to a joint bi-national ICZM strategy.

More info: <http://www.ikzm-oder.de>

Joint conference of the EP and the CoR: „The future of cohesion policy and its financing“, Brussels, 6 April 2005

The European associations representing regional and local authorities (AEBR included) will play an active role on the occasion of this conference of the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions.

More info: www.aebr.net

Political Forum of AEBR and the Region of Extremadura: “The EU’s new legal instrument for cross-border cooperation”, Mérida/Extremadura (Spain), 28 - 29 April 2005

In cooperation with the Region of Extremadura, AEBR organises a political forum with regard to the EU’s new legal instrument. On that occasion, politicians and officials from all parts of Europe will exchange their practical experiences with new legal instruments. The situation of the Region of Extremadura at the Spanish/Portuguese border will be taken into special consideration.

More info: www.aebr.net

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