

## **The Association of European Border Regions honours Mr Elmar Brok for his outstanding services rendered to cross-border co-operation**

Elmar Brok has been member of the European Parliament since 1980. In the run-up to the elections to the European Parliament then he got in touch with EUREGIO in order to get some information on current European and in particular cross-border issues and to get an idea of them preferably from the practical side.

While dealing intensively with the regional policy in the aftermath Mr Elmar Brok paid particular attention to cross-border co-operation, e.g. especially along the German-Dutch border area as regards drug policy. But also in the following years in the course of the EU accession of the new border areas in Spain, Portugal and Greece and later on in Austria and Scandinavia he was particularly committed to this subject.

In the last decades Elmar Brok has done his utmost for the benefit of cross-border co-operation not only of Westphalia with the Netherlands but throughout all Europe. This is true not only as regards the launching of INTERREG-programmes but also the PHARE-CBC-programme in Central and Eastern Europe. It certainly was not easy to launch an initiative of the European Parliament in order to reserve some part of the total PHARE-volume for the special purpose of cross-border co-operation. This had a substantial influence on the decision-making in the accession countries as regards the allocation of funds.

Today, Mr Elmar Brok is the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and spokesman of the European Parliament for the conferences of the European Heads of State or of Government.

For that reason, it's not surprisingly that he pays particular attention to the role of the new external borders. The New Neighbourhood Programme (our President Lambert van Nistelrooij is co-rapporteur in the Committee on Regional Development) will be more region-friendly, will include an own section dealing with cross-border co-operation and in this way will contribute to a flexible and practical implementation of cross-border co-operation at the new external borders of the EU.

In spite of being involved in "big" European policy and global politics Mr Elmar Brok has always stayed in contact with the basis and supported the cross-border co-operation as factor promoting European integration and a contribution to territorial cohesion. He always accompanied the postulates of AEBR in a positive way, albeit critically questioning them. His intuition as regards political developments or as he always says: "the political little nose" has certainly helped him and us in this case. Last but not least: the support of the AEBR proposal to nominate a delegate of the European Parliament for border issues.

The participation of Mr Elmar Brok in the AEBR Annual Conference 2004 in Szczecin, shortly after the accession of 10 new member states to the EU as well as his coming to our Annual Conference to Pamplona this year underlines his commitment to cross-border co-operation.

Press release:

**Elmar Brok, Member of the European Parliament is awarded a particular European prize**

As first European personality Mr Elmar Brok, member of the European Parliament, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and spokesman of the European Parliament in the European Council of Heads of State or of Government has been awarded a prize for rendering outstanding services to cross-border co-operation. The award "Sail of Papenburg" of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) is the sole European prize honouring particular efforts for the benefit of cross-border co-operation and the European integration.

Mr Elmar Brok has received the prize on 24 November 2006 in Pamplona, Spain, on the occasion of the AEBR Annual Conference for his decades-long work for the benefit of cross-border co-operation. He has always paid particular attention to the European regional policy and the co-operation across national borders that previously separated people. He has learnt from the own experience at the German-Dutch border that despite the European Single Market cross-border problems still exist throughout all Europe. Even today they affect the daily live of citizens. Accordingly, political support at the European level is needed in order to find solutions. Cross-border co-operation has seldom been a national priority, therefore considering the European integration it is primarily a European task and a political priority of the EU.

The inclusion of cross-border co-operation in the draft Treaty for a European Constitution in July 2004 is an achievement of the European Parliament and in particular of Mr Elmar Brok.

This year the prize for particularly successful cross-border regions has been awarded to the region Friuli Venezia Giulia for its co-operation with Carinthia (Austria), Slovenia and Istria (Croatia).