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Asociación de Regiones Fronterizas Europeas (ARFE)  
Association des régions frontalières européennes (ARFE)  
Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)  
Comunità di lavoro delle regioni europee di confine (AGEG)  
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## **"PARTNERSHIP IN A EUROPE WITHOUT BORDERS"**

*Electronic newsletter of AEBR – March/April 2007*

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

*It is edited in English, French and German.*

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### **AEBR's General Assembly held on 23 November 2006 in Pamplona (ES) – Opening, Annual Report and inspirations for the future**



The General Assembly 2006 was opened by AEBR's President Lambert van Nistelrooij, Member of the European Parliament (NL) who thanked the Region of Navarra and the city of Pamplona for the warm welcome and the excellent hospitality. Also Mayor Jolanda Barcina cordially welcomed AEBR's General Assembly with more than 300 participants from

29 European countries on behalf of the city of Pamplona. She explained the significance of the city for the Region of Navarra from a geographic, historical and economic point of view and underlined the important cooperation with the French partners.

More: [www.aebr.eu](http://www.aebr.eu)

The resigning Secretary General of AEBR, Jens Gabbe outlined with the Annual Report 2005 the manifold achievements of AEBR and particularly pointed out to important thematic fields addressed by AEBR:

- European Cohesion and Regional Policy,
- Future of Territorial Cooperation,
- EU's Legal Instrument on Territorial Cooperation,

- European Neighbourhood and Partnership as well as Pre-Accession Instrument,  
- Committee on Regional Development in the European Parliament and  
many other topics. More: [www.aebr.eu](http://www.aebr.eu)

For the future, Mr Gabbe elucidated some important basic principles and experiences of AEBR:

- AEBR would have to continue its activities for all border regions in Europe. Despite different interests to be taken into account individually, an overall strategy at a European level would remain indispensable in order to have success. This overall strategy would have to be represented by all those speaking on behalf of AEBR and should be based on AEBR's statutes, the Charter and the Action Programme for border regions. Anybody speaking for AEBR should not prioritise regional interests.
- In spite of an overall strategy of AEBR and the representation of all border regions, geographic and region-specific particularities (mountainous areas, maritime areas, regions at external borders) would have to be taken into account. With due respect for the necessary priority of EU policy for the poorest border regions (above all in Central and Eastern Europe and in the Mediterranean area), one must not forget that the border regions at the old internal borders would still be facing problems and therefore be in need of EU-assistance. It would be important that AEBR kept a balance and offered services for all border regions (in line with the particular interests).
- AEBR's lobby at European level in the name of all border and cross-border regions was up to now very successful (see new EU regulations on European Cohesion and Regional Policy, on Territorial Cooperation with a special chapter on border regions, on the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Programme each with a special chapter on border regions, on the legal instrument and many more). This policy should be continued at European level (European Commission, European Parliament, Committee of the Regions, European Economic and Social Committee as well as other large European regional organisations) with the support of many partners.  
More: [www.aebr.eu](http://www.aebr.eu)

### **Elections of AEBR's Executive Committee 2007/2008**

After the presentation of the annual accounts 2005 and the approval of the supplementary budget 2006 the current Executive Committee was relieved during the meeting in Pamplona and a new Executive Committee elected for the period 2007-2008.

Mr Lambert van Nistelrooij, MEP (NL), was unanimously elected as President of AEBR for a period of two years and Mr Heider, Region Alsace (FR) was again unanimously re-elected as First Vice-President. In addition the election of the eight Vice-Presidents, of the Treasurer,

the 29 members of the Executive Committee, the auditor and the Chairman of the Advisory Council took place. All accepted the election.

More: [www.aebr.eu](http://www.aebr.eu)

### **Presentation and Approval of the Budget 2007 by the Treasurer F. Willeme**

The treasurer Franz Willeme presented the budget for 2007. On the basis of many tables and overviews he elucidated the structural deficit as well as possibilities of reducing it. He pointed out that it would be necessary to increase the membership fee rate by approx. 15% (in line with special rules for members in the new Member States of the EU and in Eastern Europe) as of 1 January 2008 in order to fulfill the enlarged tasks of the Secretariat General. Afterwards, the fee rate should not change for a period of 5 years. This increase should be decided by the General Assembly 2007. Given that the budgets for 2008 will already be drafted in 2007, this information should give the members the possibility to take this into account in due time. The budget 2007 was approved.

### **AEBR General Assembly "Territorial Agenda – A view at the future of our EU" in Pamplona (ES) on 24-26 November 2007**



The Annual Conference was opened by Lambert van Nistelrooij, MEP (President of AEBR), Miguel Sanz Sesma (President of the Region of Navarra), Gerhard Stahl (Secretary General of the Committee of the Region), Yavuz Mildon (President of the Chamber of the Regions, Council of Europe) and Göke Frerichs (Member of the European Economic and Social Committee).

Keynote speakers of the Annual Conference were EU Commissioner Danuta Hübner and Ulrich Kasparick, Member of the German Bundestag as well as Parliamentary Secretary of State in the Ministry of Transport, Construction and Housing who presented the difficult theme of "Territorial Agenda" brilliantly with many examples. More: [www.aebr.eu](http://www.aebr.eu)

**Member of the Commission Danuta Hübner: "Territorial Cooperation is improvable"**



At the Annual Conference of the border regions in Pamplona (24 November 2006) Commission's Member in charge of Regional Policy, Danuta Hübner, strongly asked the Member States to strive more intensively for using the opportunities of Territorial Cooperation.

In view of the suggestions presented in the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) 2007-2013 Danuta Hübner said that "the territorial dimension was not fully integrated in many NSFPs and treated in a fairly superficial way".

In particular Member States and regions should think more thoroughly about how thematic priorities such as innovation or accessibility could be effectively connected with certain areas, such as rural and remote areas or those hit by geographical disadvantages.

She also questioned the decision of several Member States to deal with the territorial dimension only at the Operational Programme's level: "Without a full territorial coherence between programmes, things will not work", she stressed, and this should be made clear in the NSFP.

More: [www.aebr.eu](http://www.aebr.eu)

## **Award "Sail of Papenburg" – the itinerant award 2006 of AEBR went to the cross-border region Friuli Venezia Giulia**



The itinerant award 2006 for particular excellence in cross-border cooperation of a region was given to the region Friuli Venezia Giulia (IT) for its excellent cooperation with Carinthia (AT), Slovenia (SI) and Istria (Croatia). The prize was presented by AEBR's Vice-President Reinhold Kolck at the Annual Conference of AEBR in Pamplona.

AEBR's itinerant prize "Sail of Papenburg" 2007 will be awarded at AEBR's General Assembly 2007 (13-14 September 2007) in Lappeenranta (FI). Theme: "Development of Rural Areas in Cross-Border Regions". Invitations will be sent out during the coming weeks.

## **Elmar Brok, Member of the European Parliament, receives a special European distinction by AEBR**



Elmar Brok, MEP, Chairman of the Committee for Foreign Affairs and Spokesman of the European Parliament at the European Council of Heads of State and Government, received as first European personality AEBR's award "Sail of Papenburg" for his special merits in the field of cross-border cooperation.

The distinction was presented by AEBR's Executive Committee on the occasion of its Annual Conference 2006.

More: [www.aebr.eu](http://www.aebr.eu)

## **Farewell of AEBR's long-standing Secretary General Jens Gabbe and the introduction of the new Secretary General Martín Guillermo Ramírez**

At AEBR's Annual Conference on the theme of "Territorial Agenda" in Pamplona (ES) on 24 - 26 November 2006 AEBR's Secretary General of long-standing Jens Gabbe was seen off. During almost 35 years he has rendered great service to the construction and the development of AEBR and cross-border cooperation in all parts of Europe. Jens Gabbe was honored with allocutions by the President and Treasurer of AEBR as well as many other personalities (amongst other Commissioner Hübner, President retd. J. Vallvé, Secretary of State Kasparick), became honorary member of AEBR, received international and regional distinctions (amongst others the medal of the Council of Europe) and many gifts, as well as, from the Presidents' hands, a collection of fare-well, thanks and greeting cards of the former presidents of AEBR, many European personalities and members of AEBR's Executive Committee.



*Jens Gabbe*



*Martín Guillermo Ramírez*

AEBR's new Secretary General Martín Guillermo Ramírez was also officially introduced. He had presented himself already personally to many border regions in Europe since mid-March 2006. His professional background is the provincial administration of the Spanish border region Extremadura where he had been dealing with international and cross-border issues for many years. For AEBR he translated years ago the "Practical Guide to Cross-Border Cooperation 2000" into Spanish and recruited new members for AEBR at the Portuguese-Spanish border! AEBR wishes its new Secretary General good luck and success!

## **Presentation and Approval of the "Action Programme European Border Regions" updated in 2006**

The retiring Secretary General Jens Gabbe presented the updated AEBR Action Programme at AEBR's Executive Committee meeting in Pamplona (ES) and stressed that the split into the "Charter of European Border Regions" and "Action Programme European Border Regions" had proved itself. The Charter as basic document would therefore be able to endure in the long-term. The Action Programme could be changed immediately due to a current occasion

and therefore be adjusted much quicker to actual facts. Reason for current changes done by him and V. v. Malchus, would in particular be the new "Guidelines of the EU-Commission for future Cohesion and Regional Policy" which addresses in one separate chapter Objective 3 "Territorial Cooperation", "EU Legal Instrument", "Trans-European Networks (TEN)" and new EU documents on Innovation and Research. Recently added chapters speak of cross-border healthcare, a topic AEBR deals with as intensively as with problems of border commuters and the situation on the external borders of the EU (Schengen). The updated draft version was approved with one suggestion for improvement. More: [www.aebr.eu](http://www.aebr.eu)

### **Finalisation of the "White Paper of European Border Regions" 2007**

The "White Paper of European Border Regions" 2007 offers an overview of AEBR's work during the past 40 years with a perspective on what AEBR and its members need to achieve in future. The authors (J. Gabbe, V. v. Malchus) pointed out at the last meetings of AEBR's Executive Committee in Plauen (DE) and Trujillo (ES) that especially those paragraphs describing the results of AEBRs' activities did not represent a personal view of things but were written after intensive studies of papers and material (see also Chapt. 7 with extensive literature and source references). Chapter 5 covers lessons and good practice examples of successful cooperation during the past 40 years. Chapter 6 (Future of Cross-Border Cooperation) offers then a perspective on future-oriented strategies for AEBRs' activities. In the annex AEBRs' members present themselves briefly and an extensive chronicle offers an insight into history and development of AEBR's cross-border cooperation. The content of the White Paper has been coordinated with large European Organisations and members of AEBR. Both text and annex with map will be finalised in May 2007 and available to the public in three languages (DE, FR, EN) via [www.aebr.eu](http://www.aebr.eu).

### **New edition and publication of the map "Regions of Cross-Border Cooperation 2007" in Europe**

The reissue of the map "Regions of Cross-Border Cooperation 2007" was finalised in April 2007 and can probably be printed in May 2007. The update of the map was done with the help of surveys, queries and hearings by the "Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)" during the years 2006 and 2007. AEBR continues to stress that the map is not an INTERREG map, a map of supraregional cooperation or cross-border city partnerships, but a map of AEBRs' "Border and Cross-Border Regions". The cartographic preparation was carried out in close cooperation with computer cartography by the "Leibniz-Institute for Regional Geography", Leipzig. The production of the lithographs was financed by the Federal Ministry of Transport, Construction and City Development, Berlin (DE.). The map will be published in

the framework of the "European Territorial Agenda" during the German Presidency of the Council in the first half of 2007. It will also figure on AEBR's website: [www.aebr.eu](http://www.aebr.eu)

### **Cross-Border Cooperation EU/Western Africa 2007**

The EU Commission is principally in favour of supporting cooperation with Western Africa, in the first place regarding a feasibility study on cross-border cooperation in Western Africa and then also regarding the organisation of a joint conference "Western Africa meets Europe" in Ghana in June 2007. The participants of a meeting in October 2006 (OECD, EC-Commission, EU-Parliament, Western Africa and AEBR) agreed that AEBR together with those border regions which are already in close contact to Western Africa (e.g. Alsace and Extremadura) should be actively involved in this process. AEBR will participate in the conference in Ghana in June 2007.

### **AEBR proposal: Embedding Cross-Border Cooperation in the Committee for Regional Affairs of the European Parliament**



AEBR claims for quite a time the reinforced treatment of problems related to "Cross-Border Cooperation" in the EU Parliament. AEBR's President, Lambert van Nistelrooij, MEP, asked in a letter of November 2006 the Committee on Regional Development of the EU Parliament, to take on the theme of "Cross-Border Cooperation" as special

task and appoint a permanent rapporteur for cross-border questions. The President of AEBR related on this question in the meetings of the Executive Committee on 8 December 06 in Plauen (DE) and on 30 March 07 in Trujillo (ES) and will pursue this matter of AEBR also in future.

**AEBR-Forum "Rural Development in Europe's Border Regions" 2007**

Within the frame of the German Presidency of the Council AEBR realised together with its partners in the Bavarian/Austrian border region on 12 March 2007 in Cloister Seeon near Salzburg a Forum on the theme of "Rural Development and Border Regions". On this occasion several discussion papers were presented and a final declaration approved.

More: [www.aebr.eu](http://www.aebr.eu)

The Forum had top-class skilled attendees. Representatives of several governments informed about the various funding instruments and their interaction. Representatives of four different border regions of Scandinavia, the German-Belgium-Dutch border region, Spain and the Carpathians brought a practical insight to "Rural Development" into the conference.

The working documents and the final declaration of the Forum can be downloaded from: [www.euregio.sbg.at/euregio.asp?D=245](http://www.euregio.sbg.at/euregio.asp?D=245)

**Utilisation of interregional cooperation possibilities 2007-2013 for cross-border cooperation**

AEBR discussed intensively about the utilisation of interregional cooperation possibilities 2007-2013 at its last meetings of the Executive Committee. According to a report by Sture Hermansson at the Executive Committee meeting in Plauen there would be from 2007 to 2013 possibilities to allocate 10-20% of national programmes to interregional cooperation. It would be important to concentrate on C-Programmes, since they offered most possibilities to be involved. Main actions are URB-ACT, INTERACT and ESPON. The Commission promotes particularly the creation of networks for economic development in specific thematic fields.

AEBR recommends its members and friends to use this possibility. Border regions are asked to apply jointly for bi- or trilateral cooperation within the frame of the national mainstream programme in case these offer funding actions for interregional cooperation. Further possibilities existing through INTERREG IV-C are checked. According to a decision of the Executive Committee dated 30 March 2007 AEBR intends to realise an ESPON seminar and to cooperate with INTERACT.

## **AEBR's Executive Committee decided in Trujillo on the creation of a "BIG ALLIANCE" for the promotion of cross-border healthcare**



AEBR has founded at its Executive Committee meeting on 30 March 2007 in Trujillo a "Big Alliance" for cooperation and promotion of cross-border healthcare, since in this area many initiatives had been set up across European borders during the past years and there would be a necessity.

In his introductory speech on this item of the agenda of the Executive Committee's meeting the Regional Minister for Health of the Province Extremadura called for a legal frame for bilateral cross-border agreements between health institutions at either side of the border against the background of many negative examples of existing obstacles. The consequence of his speech and the subsequent discussion was: The existing differences in competence between border regions and EU Member States with regard to healthcare or foreign affairs imperatively require an EU regulation for a "European Cross-Border Cooperation Framework". AEBR will champion this issue within the frame of the "Big Alliance".

More: [www.aebr.eu](http://www.aebr.eu)

### **Focal points of the AEBR's technical work 2007**

At its Executive Committee meeting in Trujillo (ES) on 30 March 2007 and after longer discussion AEBR set the following focus on its work:

- Cross-border development of rural areas,
- Possibilities of the new EU Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument,
- Implementation/application of the EU regulation on EGTC,
- Cross-border healthcare,
- Cross-border cooperation of universities and colleges.

More: [www.aebr.eu](http://www.aebr.eu)

### **AEBR's cooperation with European Regional Organisations**

As a rule the CoR holds every three months meetings in which AEBR, AEM, CALRE, CEMR, CPMR, CLRAE and REGLEG participate. Main point of discussion of these meetings are also in 2007 the preparation of a structured dialogue with the EU Commission, the follow-up of the European Commission's legislative and working programme, priorities of the Committee of the Regions, Territorial Agenda as well as information exchange on activities carried out by

different European Regional Organisations. This cooperation is reported regularly at AEBR's Executive Committee level.

**Announcement: European Conference "From periphery to the centre – universities as engines for European border regions"**

The German rectors' conference (GRC), the University of Flensburg, the University of Southern Denmark, the College of Flensburg and the European University Association (EUA) organise European Conference on 14 – 16 June 2007 in Sønderborg (DK) and in Flensburg (DE). Thematically the conference shall cover the whole panoply of the "knowledge triangle" education – research - innovation in the context of cross-border cooperation between European universities. Each of these three thematic fields should examine the aspects of "reduction of mobility obstacles" and "contribution to social and economic development of border regions". More: [www.trans-uni.de](http://www.trans-uni.de)

AEBR was not involved in the preparation of the conference. Nevertheless Secretary General of AEBR Martín Guillermo Ramírez managed to present a greeting word on 14 June 2007 and will relate on objectives and tasks of AEBR and AEBR's research work conducted by Dr von Malchus in the field of "Cross-border cooperation between universities and colleges in Europe".

*Due to a lack of participants the conference was canceled and has been postponed to 2008.*

As you know, AEBR deals regularly with cross-border cooperation between universities and colleges in Europe. The first report which V. v. Malchus edited and presented in 2004 ([www.aebr.eu](http://www.aebr.eu)) is currently being reworked on the basis of further surveys carried out in 2006. Furthermore it is planned to declare cross-border cooperation between universities and colleges as main theme of AEBR's Annual Conference 2008.

**AEBR General Assembly and Annual Conference 2007**

Dates: 13-15 September 2007

Venue: Lappeenranta, Regional Council of South Karelia, Finland