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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)
Europæiske grænseregioners Arbejdsfællesskab (AGEG)
Werkgemeinschaft van Europese grensgebieden (WVEG)
Associação das Regiões Fronteiriças Europeias (ARFE)
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"PARTNERSHIP IN A EUROPE WITHOUT BORDERS"

Electronic Newsletter of AEBR – September 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.

AEBR Executive Committee meeting held on 29 June 2007 in Vilnius, Lithuania

At the opening of the meeting the President of AEBR, Mr Lambert van Nistelrooij, MEP (NL) welcomes the participants of the Executive Committee meeting in Vilnius, especially the representative of the Assembly of European Regions (AER), Mr Martin Mühleck, and Mr Urpo Moisio from South Karelia, the host region of the AEBR Annual Conference 2007. The President gives the floor to the Deputy Chairman of the Seimas (the Parliament of Lithuania), Mr Gintaras Steponavicius who points out Lithuania's achievements in the field of territorial development during the last years and presents the country as a place for the exchange of ideas.

He welcomes the involvement of the Lithuanian border regions within the AEBR and encourages to further intensify the cooperation in fields such as labour market, tourism, environment protection etc. and to use the experiences of other European border regions to a greater degree. Besides, at the beginning of the meeting the President of AEBR informs the Executive Committee about the about the important French decoration (l'Ordre national du Mérite) to the former Secretary General of AEBR Jens Gabbe for his service to cross-border cooperation.



G. Steponavicius und L. van Nistelrooij

The following issues have been mainly discussed in Vilnius:

- Ongoing implementation of the new strategic approach in order to improve the work of AEBR 2007;
- Cooperation between AEBR and European Institutions;
- Cooperation with regional organisations at European level;
- AEBR General Assembly and Annual Conference in Lappeenranta.

For more information: www.aebr.eu



AEBR Executive Committee meeting in Vilnius

Considerations on the improvement of the functioning of AEBR

During the Executive Committee meeting in Vilnius the President and the Secretary General of AEBR point out the need to create improved working structures. Planned are:

- the streamlining of the work of the Executive Committee,
- the constitution of ad hoc task forces for several subject areas, e.g. "external borders", "health care" and "cooperation between universities";
- Activation of AEBR forums in certain fields of action.

For more information: www.aebr.eu

Cooperation between AEBR and the European Parliament

The President of AEBR, Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP, reports on tasks and working system of the Committee of Regional Policy in the European Parliament. It provides rapporteurs on different topics and regularly includes cross-border cooperation in its agenda. AEBR supports the Committee with opinions and comments. Moreover, one member of the European Parliament will be appointed to organise a debate in the European Parliament on cross-border issues and to prepare a report in the Committee of Regional Policy, followed by a communication to the Parliament.

On 8 November 2007 there will be a hearing for the new regional policy concentrating on the 4th Cohesion Report and longer-term considerations. However, there is not much

information on progress in the field of cross-border issues. It might be important to use this debate to bring cross-border cooperation more in connection with the cohesion objectives. This is especially important as tendencies of re-nationalisation can be noticed increasingly.



European Parliament, Source: German Federal Government

The President informs the Executive Committee about the current issue of roaming. The decrease of prices for roaming is of special importance for the inhabitants of border areas. Despite the EU regulation, in his opinion there are still many problems left: the control of operators competing across the border or the necessity to press for technical solutions in border areas in order to avoid the roaming effect. According to

the Commission, Member States should report twice a year on the progress of the national implementation of roaming. He encourages that AEBR together with other regional organisations should follow and discuss the process of the implementation of the regulation.

For more information: www.aebr.eu

Cohesion Forum on 27-28 September 2007 in Brussels

Adaptation is the key to the success of cohesion policy. The cohesion policy has already proven its ability to support regional development and convergence in the EU. However, in the following years new challenges are awaiting, requiring a debate about its future course. The new challenges are the declining population - expected for 2010, but in many regions already a reality - , increasing economic pressure on the part of global competitors, increasing energy prices, scarcity of land, climate change and social polarisation.

The Cohesion Forum, which will take place on 27 and 28 September, will provide a first opportunity to discuss these questions with relevant stakeholders. The border regions should take part in the discussion! The forum will, in particular, focus on a number of key questions, among other things on:

1. What lessons can be drawn from the experience of preparing the 2007-13 programmes?
2. In this context, how well is cohesion policy adapted to the new challenges European regions will face in the coming years?

3. How can cohesion policy further develop an integrated and more flexible approach to development/growth and jobs in this new context?
4. Following the appraisal of the previous questions, what is the assessment of the policy management system for the period 2007-13?

For more information:

http://www.ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/cohesion4/index_en.htm

Cooperation of AEBR with the "German Presidency of the European Council 2006/2007"

The President and the Secretary General of AEBR inform the Executive Committee on the results of the cooperation with the German Presidency of the European Council. It is important to emphasise that the debates and conclusions of the AEBR Annual Conference in Pamplona (ES) have been considered in the Leipzig document, which is a great success for AEBR. AEBR has aimed at including amendments in the drafts of the "Territorial Agenda" as regards objectives, concerns and strategies of cross-border cooperation. Many of the proposed amendments have been integrated into the final version of the "Territorial Agenda" and other declarations. The new edition of the map of AEBR "Crossborder Cooperation Areas 2007", which has been developed by the AEBR Advisory Committee, has been supported by the Leibniz-Institut für Regionale Geographie in Leipzig as regards the technical editing. It has been financed by the German Presidency of the European Council and published as annex to the Territorial Agenda. The Secretariat General of AEBR regards the results of the cooperation with the German Presidency as very positive. The map can be requested from the AEBR Secretariat General.

For more information: www.aebr.eu and AGEG-Newsletter June 2007.

General Assembly and Annual on 13-15 September 2007 in Lappeenranta (FI) - AGEG-Award "Sail of Papenburg" 2007

In the run-up of the AEBR General Assembly and Annual Conference the AEBR Advisory Committee developed several working documents, including two discussion papers on the topic "Rural Areas", and prepared the presentation of the Award. The next edition of the newsletter will report on the results of the Annual Conference. On occasion of the AEBR Annual Conference the AEBR Award has been presented for the sixth time. This year's topic was "Innovative concepts and projects for the development of



Award „Sail of Papenburg“

rural areas in Europe's border regions 2006 and 2007-2013"

Twelve qualified projects from cross-border regions applied for the Award, including the three projects of **"EUREGIO Rhine-Waal (DE/NL)"**, this year's winner.

Some of the submitted projects have been presented during the Annual Conference. Moreover, the winner will be presented to the public during a press conference in Brussels.

The Advisory Committee of AEBR – Recommendations for the Executive Committee

The statutes of AEBR of 1977 (amended 1994 and 1997) provides for an "Advisory Committee for Cross-border Co-operation" (§ 11.2). The chairman is elected every two years and is part of the Executive Committee with voting right. The Advisory Committee chaired by Dr. von Malchus has the task to advise AEBR professionally in all questions of cross border cooperation and to put forward solution proposals. On request it advises the Executive Committee, supports the Secretary General regarding upcoming issues and conducts special projects. For the executive committee it completed in 2007 the "White Paper on European Border Regions" (working title), which will be published under the title "Cooperation between European Border Regions – Balance and Perspectives" still in 2007, updated and edited the map "Crossborder Cooperation Areas 2007" and expects to publish four AEBR newsletters in 2007. Besides, the Secretary General has been advised in multifaceted matters (e.g. AEGR database, AEBR website, practical scientific analyses about the cooperation between universities, innovation in rural areas, health care and comments on current EU documents). Special projects have been the consulting as regards the Territorial Agenda and support with the consulting about studies/projects.

In 2007 the Advisory Committee has given the following recommendations:

- Project proposal ESPON;
- The white paper (authors: J. Gabbe, V.v. Malchus) shall be published as a book with the title "Cooperation between European Border Regions – Balance and Perspectives" and a foreword by Prof. Dr. Pöttering MEP, the President of the European Parliament;
- The topic of the AEBR Award "Sail of Papenburg" together with the topic of the Annual Conference should be agreed on as early as possible, latest at the beginning of the new year. The topic for 2008 is "Cooperation between Universities/Higher Education Institutions in Border Areas";
- The Advisory Committee recommends to follow the topic "EU Neighbourhood and Partnership Programme" and if required make suggestions for improvement in the debate on the EU policy, which starts in autumn 2007;

- The Advisory Committee welcomes the position paper "Cross-Border Health Care". It supports the plan of the Secretary General to constitute an ad hoc task force for the continuation of the project. A second forum on "Cross-Border Health Care" should take place in 2008 in Basel. The Secretary General is asked to check if and how AEBR can part in a project dealing with this subject area;
- The Advisory Committee welcomes the innovative and comprehensive work of Dr. von Malchus on the topic "Cooperation of Universities in Border Areas", especially his border region survey. It requests the Secretary General to consider a project application of AEBR can be made to the EU on basis of this promising work. The proposal would be submitted shortly to the DG Regio respectively the DG responsible for research policy and innovation. In spring or early summer a forum on this topic could take place. The Regione Friuli-Venezia Giulia (IT) would like to be the host region;
- AEBR should follow the implementation and application of the EU regulation on the EGCC by means of a border region survey in October 2007;
- The Advisory Committee advises to put the reform of the EU regional policy on the AEBR agenda and prepare a position paper, why **all border regions** should be supported in the future. AEBR should use the instrument of the forums in a greater degree also for this topic.

Use of the AEBR Newsletter – positive and negative experiences

AEBR has wondered if the publication of the AEBR Newsletter is useful for the organisation. Therefore the Advisory Committee has checked the use of the AEBR website and found out that the website is visited monthly by about 5000-7000 users. In July and August 2007 the June Newsletter 2007 had 117 hits (i.e. had been clicked on 117 times). The English version had 99 hits (84.6 %), the German one 16 (13.7 %) and the French only 2 hits (1.7 %). Former issues of the newsletters have a comparable number of hits. This is first of all a positive result. The number of hits is more or less equivalent to the number of members of AEBR. Therefore the publication of the newsletter is useful, but the low demand of the French edition, even though there are about 20 French-speaking border or cross-border regions, raises several questions which are to be clarified by the Secretariat General as soon as possible. The Advisory Committee recommends publishing shorter newsletters every two months (6 times per year).

New Members 2007:

According to the decision the Executive Committee the AEBR General Assembly confirmed on 13 September 2007 following border and cross-border regions as new members: :

- **Euroregion Danubius (BG/RO);**
- **Euroregion Nishava (BG/SRB);**
- **Euroregion Stara Plania (BG/SRB);**
- **Região Alentejo (PT);**
- **Região Centro (PT);**
- **Regionalverband Südlicher Oberrhein (DE)**
- **Euroregion Yaroslavna (RUS/ UA).**

Important dates:

- 27-28 Sept. 2007** EU Cohesion Forum in Brussels (BE);
- 08-11 Oct. 2007** CoR Open Days 2007 in Brussels (BE);
- 23 Oct. 2007** Final Conference RFO "Change on Borders" in Düsseldorf (DE);
- 30 Nov. 2007** Executive Committee meeting in Nyiegyháza, Hungarian part of the Carpathian Euroregion (HU);
- 08-09 Nov. 2007** CB Conference "Day-to-day Europe", MOT, Lille (FR);
- 16-17 Oct. 2008** AEBR General Assembly and Annual Conference in Plauen (DE), EUREGIO EGRENSIS (CZ/DE).