

Gronau, 30 June 1999

Working document “Interreg IIIA - Programme Management Models” (AEBR/LACE draft of 21.06.1999 and statement by Mrs. Hernandez of 24.06.1999).

According to the agreement, AEBR/LACE must offer technical aid to border regions and advise the EU Commission based on its experience gained in over 28 years. In the last meeting of the Steering Committee it was agreed that AEBR/LACE will develop two models:

- one in accordance with the bottom -up approach proposed by the EU (model “Euregio or similar structures”)
- and an alternative for cases where cross-border structures have not developed that far.

The AEBR/LACE assessment of INTERREG IIA (institutional aspects of cross-border cooperation and cross-border finance management, both were submitted to the Commission) clarified that INTERREG IIA programmes functioned best where Model A was applied (in another form also in most INTERREG IIA programmes).

The Commission’s document on the community initiative for the European Council on 17 March 1999 in Berlin clearly stipulated a bottom-up approach by using the examples of Euregios. This means Model A. Euroregions based on example B do not function under INTERREG IIA.

Our work paper of 21.06.1999 on INTERREG IIIA therefore incorporates clear recommendations for Model A (priority 1) and B (priority II).

Model A clearly guarantees the stronger role played by regional/local cross-border structures under participation of social partners desired by the EU Commission and the European Presidency as well as a partnership with the national levels on both sides of the border and a considerable simplification of work with and within the European Commission.

Model B describes more a top-down approach with sub-programmes.

Model A obviously found the Commission’s agreement because the statement of 24.06. only deals with details of Model B. If DG XVI along borders prefers one programme with sub-programmes it must be

clarified which reasons speak for this preference: are benefits for border regions of importance or for the work within the Commission ?

The following statement **only concerns Model B**:

1. **A programme** along a border with sub-programmes, even if they are autonomous, inevitably incorporates a stronger influence of the national level because an authority must coordinate it. However, Model B was used for cases in which cross-border structures are still not developed sufficiently. In those cases, they cannot be defended against a strong influence of the government which will influence the programme and its implementation.

2. **One single community grant** for the whole programme and distribution to individual sub-programmes:

The distribution of funds to sub-programmes must be clarified beforehand and be approved by the Commission. If the distribution is to be left to the managing authority the great danger of governmental influence arises. A sub-programme without priorly fixed funds is like a “tiger without teeth”.

3. **One single bank account** for the whole programme: at the same time, sub-accounts must be opened for sub-programmes.

4. **One Monitoring Committee** after structural funds regulation: here there are no differences with regard to our description for Model B.

5. **One management authority**

Here **Structural Funds regulations for national programmes** apply. **INTERREG IIIA**, however, incorporates **cross-border programmes** which, as proven with INTERREG I and IIA, must be **handled in a much more flexible manner** to be successful. The **management authority** is therefore much more complicated with regard to an actual cross-border partnership, i.e. subsidiarity and equality, which may have a standardised name for a management system hidden behind this name. We cannot recommend to equate the term cross-border management authority with secretariat (see the example Euregios or similar structures). A secretariat is a technical instrument used for the preparation or the support of joint cross-border decisions made by representatives of regional/local authorities in partnership with the participating countries.

With cross-border programmes implemented in accordance with Model B, a joint (however, only formal) management authority must be formed for several sub-programmes in:

- a cross-border Euregio or similar structure;
- or (almost automatically) in a ministry of the participating two or three countries.

In the practice, this incorporates great problems. In both cases, additional staff are needed and the danger of national influence increases almost automatically.

If the Commission demands one contact person for each model programme it is, as already proven in successful programmes along a border, possible without any problems that the partners agree on one “speaker” (as with Model A).

The management authority may carry out the programme and finance management (as with various Euroregions and in Scandinavia). Even if structural funds regulations do not state this word it is not forbidden or ruled out. A financial authority or payment authority must never act without a management authority.

6. One payment authority

For Model B, similar procedures apply as with a management authority. Partners can agree without problems for Model B programmes with sub-programmes to appoint one “contact person” for the Commission (see the example as in Model A).

7. Several Steering Committees

A differentiation between a management authority and several Steering Committees seems to be sensible with Model B. In Model A, the steering Committees are already part of the management authority.

8. Trilateral programmes

There are no problems in implementing trilateral programmes with Model A. Trilateral programmes by using Model B would only be valid for a trilateral border region which, seen geographically, would be rather small.

How would it be if trilateral programmes would like or must cooperate with bilateral programmes? For example, in mountain regions such as the Alps (due to geographical reasons), the cooperation between a trilateral programme concerning more than one border and a bilateral programme along one border is possible or may be necessary.

9. With Model B the general question arises as to what the Commission sees as part of the community programme and what as part of the sub-programme. Does one agree in a Model B programme along a border to implement certain minimum standards or does it already incorporate activity standards?

10. Connection with Phare

The statements on Phare are explicitly supported. However, in practice some problems will occur:

- What happens if one partner says: «I will implement this simply in accordance with Interreg or Phare regulations» disregarding what the other partner desires or demands (what remains as being possible!)?
- What happens if a jointly approved project is threatened because Interreg must, due to the implementation duration of several years and the permanent opportunity to make decisions, implement a section of the project and Phare CBC provides funds only one or two years later (as happens with the current Phare CBC programme) or cancels with a letter to national governments funds and therefore terminates the project section funded by Interreg ?

From the viewpoint of AEBR/LACE, many in-depth discussions are still needed.

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