

ACTIVITY REPORT OF THE AEBR TASK FORCE "CROSS-BORDER CULTURE" (T4CBC)

2012 -2014

Two important dates concerning the implementation of the T4CBC:

A) Istanbul 18 May 2012

At the initiative of the Euregio Meuse-Rhine (EMR) and the German speaking Community of Belgium (GC), the possibilities of cultural cooperation between AEBR member regions were discussed during the AEBR Executive Committee meeting which was held on May 18, 2012 in Istanbul.

This discussion took place against the background of the application of three cities from three different AEBR member regions which, together with the border region in which they are situated, had submitted an application to become European Capital of Culture (ECOC): Donostia 2016 and the Basque region (ES/FR), Sønderborg 2017 and Sønderjylland-Schleswig (DK/DE) and Maastricht 2018 and the Euregio Meuse-Rhine (NL/DE/BE).

The general consensus that was reached during this discussion was that the AEBR should also contribute to European cohesion in the field of culture.

The aim is to bring, in and between the border regions, creative artists and cultural audiences together, thereby unlocking the border regions' multicultural potential, enhancing it and making it available to the border region. However, the AEBR should not be solely responsible for the cross-border cultural exchange, but it should cooperate with other partners such as the European Capitals of Culture or other European culture networks.

It was proposed to establish an AEBR Task Force Cross-Border Culture and to organize the inaugural meeting during the annual General Assembly in November in Berlin the same year.

B) Berlin 8 and 9 November 2012

An open workshop took place on November 8, 2012. Cultural operators from non-member regions and other networks also participated in this workshop and the following expectations towards the AEBR and its future task force were agreed upon:

1. The AEBR's goal is to bring together cultural operators and networks from European border regions;
2. Therefore, and to speak up for the cultural sector on a European level, the AEBR should aim to establish contacts with other cultural organizations and cultural networks of political representatives and decision-makers and allow the creation of concrete European projects;
3. The need to establish contacts with other cultural operators and networks was also mentioned in the light of calls for proposals on the European level;
4. In order to keep the cooperation with other networks as open and flexible as possible, an overly bureaucratic structure is to be avoided;
5. Many cultural operators are often unable to attend meetings or workshops due to the cost of mobility and accommodation. In this context, the possibility of applying for European funding is mentioned.

These proposals were adopted by the AEBR General Assembly on November 9, 2012, thereby establishing the Task Force Cross-Border Culture.

Further developments

In order to implement the T4CBC and to realize the tasks and missions that had been agreed upon, the identification of the target audience as well as the specific approach, meetings, workshops, brainstorm session and consultations with cultural operators and other European cultural networks took place.

The minutes of the most important meetings and the funding text of the AEBR-T4CBC that resulted from these meetings can be consulted on the AEBR Internet site:

www.aebr.eu

Please find a non-exhaustive overview of the meetings that took place in the framework of the implementation of the AEBR T4CBC:

1. 18/05/2012: AGE Board, proposal to establish an AEBR T4CBC (Istanbul);
2. 22/05/2012: Meeting with the ECOC Maastricht in order to discuss future cooperation between Maastricht 2018 and the AEBR T4CBC (Maastricht);
3. 03/06/2012: Meeting with the leaders of the ECOC 2017 Sonderborg in order to discuss future cooperation between Sonderborg 2017 and the AEBR T4CBC (Brussels);
4. 07 + 08/06/2012: Meeting with the leaders of ECOC San Sebastian in 2016 in order to discuss future cooperation between Donostia 2016 and the AEBR T4CBC (San Sebastian);
5. 08 + 09/11/2012: General Assembly, establishment of the AEBR T4CBC (Berlin);
6. 03/09/2013: AGE Board meeting and AEBR T4CBC meeting: planning of the first steps (Santiago de Compostela);
7. 25 + 26/04/2013: cooperation workshops by ECOC Maastricht 2018 and the AEBR T4CBC (Maastricht);
8. 03/06/2013: Meeting with Ms. Julie Meiresonne of Cultuurnet Vlaanderen in order to discuss Internet-based solutions for the cultural cooperation in border regions in Europe (Brussels);
9. 27/06/2013: Meeting with Ms. Profeta Giulia ADCI/EUROMETINCULTURES regarding cooperation with the Mediterranean area (Marseille);
10. 09/09/2013: Meeting with the President of the European network of national cultural institutions EUNIC, Mr. Charles-Etienne Lagasse, regarding future cooperation between EUNIC and the AEBR T4CBC (Brussels);
11. 18 + 19/09/2013: brainstorming: tasks and implementation of the AEBR T4CBC (Liege);
12. 16/10/2013: meeting concerning the future cooperation between the AEBR T4CBC and two ECOC: ECOC San Sebastian + ECOC Mons (Brussels);
13. 10/09/2013: Brainstorming T4CBC with "Les Rencontres" and EUNIC regarding closer cooperation with the AEBR T4CBC (Mons);
14. 22/10/2013: SMart (Société Mutualiste des Artistes): Meeting concerning the future cooperation between the AEBR T4CBC and SMart.EU (Brussels);
15. 11/08/2013: General Assembly of the AEBR and AEBR T4CBC meeting (Liège / Maastricht);
16. 03/12/2013: Meeting with Mr. Wolfgang Selke Euro-District Saar-Moselle concerning Internet-based solutions for the cultural cooperation in border regions (Saarbrücken);
17. 01/16/2014: Meeting with Ms. de Brouwer from the contact point "Creative Europe" in order to submit a project for the expansion of AEBR T4CBC (Brussels);
18. 01/16/2014: Meeting with Ms. Kramer of the AER for future cooperation between the AEBR T4CBC and the Cultural Commission of the AER (Brussels);
19. 23 to 01/25/2014: Meeting with the leaders of cultural dialogue and the Regional "Kontor" Sonderjylland-Schleswig to prepare the first meeting of the Facilitatore meeting AEBR T4CBC (Padborg);
20. 28/01/2014: Cultuurnet Vlaanderen: Meeting with Ms Julie Meiresonne concerning internet-based solutions for the cultural cooperation in border regions (Brussels);
21. 30/01/2014 Brainstorming (redaction) meeting concerning the funding text of the AEBR T4CBC (Brussels);
22. 05 to 07/02/2014: Meeting of the European Network of Cultural Capitals and regions: proposal for cooperation between the AEBR T4CBC, "Les Rencontres" and the EU network

- "On the move" (promotion of the mobility of artists) (Brussels);
23. 02/18/2014: Meeting with the EU network "Audience Europe" (Audience development) in order to cooperate with the AEBR T4CBC and engage in a European call under the EU program "Creative Europe" (Brussels);
 24. 24/02/2014 Meeting with Mrs Klein, General Secretary of the Cultural Area Greater Region (CAGR) to prepare a project for the Erasmus + call with the CAGR and the AEBR T4CBC (Luxembourg);
 25. 05/03/2014 24 second meeting with Audience Europe in order to discuss future cooperation with the ARFE T4CBC and participation in the Creative Europe call (Bruxelles);
 26. 09 + 10/04/2014: first Facilitator-meeting of the AEBR T4CBC (Padborg);
 27. 13/03/2014 Meeting with Mrs. Menchede of the AER "Commission on Culture" for future cooperation between the AEBR T4CBC and the AER Commission on Culture (Strasbourg);
 28. 4/25/2014 Cultural Area Greater Region: preparation of the second facilitators – meeting of the AEBR T4CBC in the Greater Region October 2014 (Luxembourg);
 29. 6/17/2014: Meeting of the Board of the Cultural Area Greater Region: future structural cooperation, next AEBR T4CBC meeting and membership in the AEBR T4CBC (Trier);
 30. 06/25/2014: Preparatory meeting of the second AEBR T4CBC facilitators meeting in the Cultural Area Greater Region (Luxembourg);

During these discussions, it became progressively clear that if we aim to combine and use the border regions' creative potential and to facilitate access to the "culture of others" for people in border regions, we have to bring together not only the creators but also the so-called "facilitators"; the cultural actors and representatives of cultural networks in border regions who are profoundly familiar with both their region's cultural scene as well as the political and economic environment. The aim- with the help of AEBR's partner regions- is to find these "facilitators" and to bring them together so that they can cooperate on a transnational and European scale.

During those discussions, the idea already submitted in Berlin (that success can be multiplied if the "Facilitators" network is also connected to different existing European networks), became more and more obvious.

The challenge therefore became to create close cooperation and to form clusters with both influential European cultural networks linking local and national political decision-makers and with networks supporting cultural cooperation on a European level and included them as closest as possible and systematically in the facilitators meetings.

Potential partners include for instance:

- EUNIC - the European National Institutes for Culture network,
- The Cultural European Routes of the Council of Europe,
- The Culture Commission of the Union of Baltic Cities;
- the "Les Rencontres" network linking political experts for European Capitals and regions of Culture,
- the Cultural Commission of the AER,
- the European network for Audience development: Audience Europe;
- Cultural Space Greater Region (a sort of T4CBC between DE/LU/FR/BE),
- EUROMEDINCULTURE(s) (Mediterranean region);
- ACIDI : Association pour le Développement Culturel Européen et International (MARSEILLE, France) ;
- On the Move (focus on creative people and artists' mobility),
- SMART (which establishes a kind of European social secretary for creative people and artists),

What has been achieved, which have been the AEBR-T4CBC actions?

The above mentioned organizations and networks have all been contacted.

They all expressed their interest in cooperating with the AGEG T4CBC and the results of those meetings have been involved in the realization of the AEBR T4CBC. This was of utmost importance for the self-definition of the T4CBC in the European concert of the cultural networks, avoided duplication and promoted the complementarity between the different European networks.

In this framework, the AEBR T4CBC also decided to support Sønderborg's (2017) and Maastricht's (2018) applications for European Capital of Europe.

Agreements

Agreements and realizations as listed below have been established with the following networks:

- "Les Rencontres": a representative of its Board of Directors has been appointed and participates in the meetings of the T4CBC AGEG and especially the European "Facilitators" meetings. A closer cooperation between the two organizations is currently being discussed.
- SMart: idem «Les Rencontres". Additionally, the possibility to establish cross-border offices in the border regions which, on the one hand, tackle the specific frontier problems of cultural workers and on the other hand offer the usual services of SMart (social secretariat, pre-financing, consultancy, Crowd funding ...) is currently examined with SMart.
To this purpose, a first test phase is currently being undertaken in cooperation with the GC / EMR;
- The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe: here also, a representative has been appointed to represent this organization during the "Facilitators" meetings.
- EUNIC does not have the possibility to appoint a representative to the Facilitators meetings. EUNIC forms worldwide clusters in cities where at least three national cultural institutions are present and ensures common culture events. EUNIC is willing to transfer this concept to the border regions' cities and to allow the AEBR -members to build up cultural cluster with EUNIC (in border regions in which at least three national cultural institutions are represented);
- With the Cultural Space of the Greater Region, an ERASMUS + project was introduced to finance the Facilitators meetings of the T4CBC of the AEBR, whose main beneficiary is the AEBR. We are currently awaiting a positive answer;
- With Audience Europe, a project under Creative Europe was introduced for the improvement of the public involvement in the border regions. Again, the project acceptance is still pending.
- With the Cultural Commission of the AER, an ad hoc cooperation was agreed upon that allows for thematic cooperation and mutual participation in our respective meetings.
- With the "cultural dialogue" and at the invitation of the border region of Schleswig-Sonderjylland the first Facilitatorentreffen the AGEG-T4CBC was held in Padborg (DK) in April 2014. The analysis of this first meeting shows that more time than an evening and a day must be provided for this meeting. Learn addition acclimatizing and the presentation of the projects inviting border region, the presentation of the projects of the other border regions present or European networks must also be given sufficient time, the workshops must be based thematically on them and the exchange of future cooperation must in the preparation these meetings are consistently scheduled with.

Concrete results and challenges for the future

The connection to all the mentioned networks and organizations allowed us to easily recognize and establish cooperation possibilities between important European networks and the AEBR members and thus to establish new cross linking where collaboration did not yet exist.

For example, the cooperation of AEBR T4CBC with EUNIC and "Les Rencontres" led to a situation in which the classical orchestras of Donostia, Luxembourg and Mons (even more cities are under discussion) now exchange young soloists and that Mons and Donostia now cooperate within the framework of their respective renowned international film festivals. ...

In the future, the impact of the AEBR's task force Cross-Border Culture could be enhanced: each individual border region should evaluate which partner networks already exist in their respective border region, how these partners could be integrated in a cross-border and transnational cultural cooperation and how local clusters can be formed.

Concerning the results of the submitted projects to the European programs Erasmus + and Creative Europe, we are currently awaiting feedback.

However, practice has shown that it is extremely difficult for the T4CBC and the AEBR to submit such projects and it's impossible to do so on its own behalf, as neither the AGEG nor their T4CBC are recognized as cultural organizations. **For its further development, the AEBR T4CBC would for instance need, like mentioned in several meetings, an internet portal and visibility on social media, and in order to do so, needs additional human- und financial resources.**

Here, we have to find solutions on a short term notice that enable us to respond to European calls and avoid us from taking adventurous detours.

The next Facilitators meeting takes place from 15 till 17 October in the Greater Region (LU / BE / DE / FR), in Eupen - Belgium. The AGEG members have already received a "save the date". The meeting's main theme, in continuation of what is already happening in the field of classical orchestras and international film festivals, is the promotion of the careers of (young) talented artists and creative professionals.

The over next meeting will be held in April 2015 in the Euregio Waldviertel. The first information regarding this meeting will soon be available (during the next weeks).

September 2014
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