

Networks and co-operation structures

Over the last two decades co-operations across the Austrian-Hungarian border emerged on every level and developed the following most relevant structures:

- Transborder co-operation structures like Alps-Adriatic Community, ARGE Donauländer, CENTROPE, Spa World;
- Cross-border co-operation structures like EuRegio West/Nyugat Pannonia, joint national/nature parks management, joint world heritage management, Grenzkommunalforum, city networks (e.g. Sopron-Eisenstadt-Wiener Neustadt, Szombathely-Köszeg-Oberpullendorf-Oberwart);
- Regional co-operation structures like regional development agencies, regional labour offices, economic chambers, economic clusters, universities, civil organisations.

At the start of the new programming period the Austrian-Hungarian cross-border co-operation has wide scope of experiences. The institutional level experienced almost 20 years of co-operation. Since the mid 1980s the border became more permeable.

In the field of spatial development a government co-operation called Austrian-Hungarian Spatial Development and Planning Committee was established in 1985. The Committee set up subcommittees where the counties (Győr-Moson-Sopron and Vas) and Burgenland were involved. In 1992 the Cross-border Regional Subcommittee was established. The evolution of these institutional co-operations led to the foundation of West/Nyugat Pannon EuRegio in 1998 including Burgenland, Győr-Moson-Sopron and Vas. In 1999 Zala joined the EuRegio. In 2002 the Council of the EuRegio adopted the document on "Leitbild of EuRegio West/Nyugat Pannonia". This strategy is a key document for the middle part of the border region regarding the forthcoming programming period of 2007-2013.

In the north part of the Austrian-Hungarian border region the natural process of economic development led to a political agreement of key actors to utilise the favourable investment site potential and strengthen co-operation among regions and cities within a Central European region, by formulating a platform called CENTROPE on political level (including large parts of the eligible area of this programme, except for Zala and Oststeiermark but covering also West Slovakia and South Moravia). The strategy of CENTROPE may give a new impetus to the present territorial co-operation programme.

On a professional level the Biosphere growth region concept has been developed within the project "Joint Regional Development Strategy for Vienna-Bratislava-Győr Region (JORDES+)". The major principle of this concept is the use of natural resources (land, landscape, warm and thermal water, renewable energy resources) for economic activities like tourism, energy production and transport in a sustainable way.

The southern part of the programming area – Südburgenland, Vas, Zala and Oststeiermark – has more relations to the centres of Graz and Maribor. Networking of cities in a wider southern space is also expected to have a positive influence on this programme area.

Beside these strategic regional co-operations also a lot of small actions and projects were implemented. The people-to-people actions (e.g. Small project funds, SPF-projects) on different levels were often the starting point of close relations. The contacts linked directly to the border are the backbone of close communication and a good co-operation climate.

Over the last 10 years the Interreg-Phare CBC programme initiated and supported the institutional co-operation across the border. A strong obstacle of joint projects was the different program environment for Interreg and Phare implementation. In the last period (Interreg-Interreg 2004-2006) – the requirements for real partnership have received more weight. Almost 500 organisations have participated in cross-border co-operation activities over the last 10 years.