

## **Local and regional development**

On the Austrian side, there exists a strong network of regional management structures. Similarly, in Slovenia, through the implementation of the Law on balanced regional development, the regional development agencies were established in the past programming period, and those operating in the programme area became one of the key actors in the cross-border regional development.

The collaboration also improved as a result of the establishment of the two cross-border partnerships assembling the regional development structures acting in the programme border area: Cross-border partnership Karavanke/Karawanken and EUREGIO Styria – North East Slovenia. Cross-border development strategies were developed at regional level by both partnerships. They acted as contact points for matching cross-border partners and assisted in project development. The effectiveness of those partnerships was partly limited by the obstacles imposed by imbalances in resources and functions of the partners on both sides of the border. Furthermore, it was noted that cooperation in the previous period had a strong east – west divide on the Austrian side, mostly due to the Länder system, while PHARE-CBC projects with a volume of over 1 mio euro proposed by Slovene applicants had more focus on covering the whole border area. However, the mentioned partnerships contributed strongly to the development of the existing cross-border linkages and transfer of good practices.

Beside regional development structures of RDAs in Slovenia, a potential for strengthening of cross-border collaboration on local levels exists in the network of local business support centres. Moreover, a network of so-called rural development cores is active in the field of entrepreneurial development of rural regions.

On the other hand, a strong tradition of cross-border collaboration is to be mentioned on the part of chambers. As in Slovenia a proposal is made to introduce voluntary membership to the Chamber of Economy, the organisation structure might change, which can also influence the potential for cross-border cooperation. The cooperation among chambers of agriculture and forestry has also been quite intense.

The implementation of the Small Project Fund on the part of the cross-border partnerships as well as through Phare contributed a lot to strengthening the non-government sector and establishing links by supporting different cross-border initiatives.

The need for strong and sustainable partnerships is of great importance for the future project development and implementation, and for the development of cross-border cooperation in many fields.