



## GENERAL PROGRAMME STRATEGY

### Introduction

The overall aim of this programme for the cross-border cooperation is to contribute to the economic, social, environmental and cultural development of the Austrian-Slovak border region by providing support to joint projects, initiatives and public interventions. The CBC-programme will focus on the building of an integrated, open region by utilising the endogenous development factors of the border region and support development strategies effectively responding to new global challenges and opportunities.

The programme attempts to define the most suitable development strategies for the border region by taking into account:

- The heterogeneous social and economic conditions in the programme areas' sub-regions,
- The identified disparities and factors determining the development potential of the border regions that can be addressed by the cross-border actions/interventions in order to increase the quality of life of the inhabitants,
- Experiences and lessons learnt from the previous and still running cross-border cooperation programmes: INTERREG IIA, PHARE CBC and INTERREG IIIA (1995-2006); particularly experiences and recommendations for the 2007-2013 programming presented in the Mid-term and Updated Mid-term evaluation of the AT-SK programme 2000-2006 (see Annex),
- Relevant strategies and policies defined on the EU, national and regional levels in order to achieve coordination, complementary development impulses and synergy effects in the border region,
- Legal provisions setting out the implementation framework for Structural Funds' co-financed programmes, especially the cross-border cooperation programmes under the "European territorial cooperation" objective,
- Conclusions from the working sessions of the bilateral programming group, responsible authorities/bodies and relevant social and economic partners.

The cross-border cooperation programme between Austria and the Slovak Republic for the programming period 2007-2013 is the first programme with participation of regions from both countries as EU member states for the whole programming cycle. This represents an additional challenge for the strategic orientation of the programme in order to significantly contribute to increasing the economic competitiveness and social cohesion of the border region. The ultimate objective is to ensure further improvement in quality of life of all inhabitants of the border region.

### New challenges for cross-border regional development strategies

The accession of the Slovak Republic to the European Union on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004 was the key factor influencing the framework for cross-border cooperation between Austria and Slovakia, leading to a CBC-programme for the shortened period 2004-2006. The renewed and strengthened partnership, in a new setting of instruments and in a joint space for economic and social development, will play an important role for the next programming period.



The main challenges for cross-border cooperation in the coming years (2007-2013) are to contribute to the development of a socially, economically and environmentally integrated, attractive border region. This contribution shall be based on:

- the intensification and enhancement of the interactions between the stakeholders from both sides of the border, using existing and newly established links (networks),
- the support and implementation of projects with a distinctive cross-border dimension and sustainable effects,
- the improvement of links between the urban centres and rural areas across the border
- the promotion and support of the principle of sustainable development,
- the enhancement of cooperation in the field of research, development and innovation including the transfer of and access to knowledge,
- the inclusion of all social groups in the region (primarily those at risk of social exclusion), based on the openness and tolerance as guiding principles
- the continuous professional dialogue and exchange of know-how on strategies for the development of the border region through its integration reflecting the existing needs.

Along the border line between the old and new member states of the EU, no other CB-cooperation region includes two major capitals at such proximity. There is a great development potential for both metropolitan regions and the AT-SK border region as a whole, to contribute to the rebuilding of Europe's political and economic landscape by building an integrated cross-border region.

## Programme strategic objective

**The overall strategic objective of the AT-SK cross-border cooperation programme 2007-2013 is to build border region with vital, knowledge-based regional economies, socially and environmentally attractive, playing a significant role among European metropolitan regions.**

The border region has the potential to become one of the economically fastest growing regions in the European Union, including two capitals at close proximity. With the highest concentration of headquarters, universities and research centres of both countries, the AT-SK-region has the potential and the means to build a knowledge and economic power base for central Europe. By the effective support of these key features, the CBC-programme 2007-2013 for the Austrian-Slovak border region shall contribute to the process of *building a cross-border learning region*.

The further implementation of the knowledge based economy in the border region will require paying specific attention to the following **specific objectives of the programme**:

- **Intensifying and enhancement of the quality of cooperation** between programme-partners, in order to create and maintain the suitable and flexible cooperation networks, structures and clusters
- **Mobilisation of relevant actors from private and public sectors**, coordination of their efforts and resources to ensure that supported interventions are targeted to the accomplishment of the defined objectives
- The promotion of **rapid economic growth while pursuing a socially inclusive development path and** putting emphasis on **environmental quality**



- **Full exploitation of processes and approaches leading to advanced learning capacity** of individuals, organisations, communities and regions through transfer of know-how and experience.

Sustainable cooperation networks as central part of the future programme's interventions and important feature of the knowledge-based economy, represent a specific horizontal objective of the programme. The geographical scope of the cooperation is widened also to the border regions of the Czech Republic and of Hungary **as the option of multilateral projects**. The promotion of the multilateral cooperation aims at providing a basis for better exploitation of the potential of the wider region in the Central Europe, which goes behind the territory of the Austrian-Slovak border region. The multilateral actions will be implemented, in compliance with Article 21 (1) of the Council regulation on ERDF no. 1080/2006, in fully justified cases when the multilateral projects can bring a significant added value by involving partners from the outside of the AT-SK programme area.

The cross-border cooperation programme between Austria and Slovakia consists of **two thematic priorities** contributing to the accomplishment of the strategic programme objective:

- **1. Learning region and economic competitiveness**
- **2. Accessibility and sustainable development**

**Priority 3 – Technical Assistance** – has a horizontal character and is primarily focused on the effective and sound management of the programme for the whole programming period.

## **Correspondence with the key EU strategies and principles**

The following policies and principles provide the main regulatory framework for the preparation and implementation of the cross-border cooperation programme between Austria and Slovakia in the programming period 2007-2013:

- Lisbon strategy and its objectives, reinforced 2005,
- Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs (reflected in the National Reform Programmes 2005-2008 of Austria and Slovakia as bellow),
- Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion (reflected in the National Strategic Reference Frameworks of Austria and Slovakia as bellow),
- Gothenburg Council conclusions – the European strategy for sustainable development 2006,
- Strategies for rural development and fisheries (reflected in the Strategic Frameworks for Rural Development and National Strategic Plans for Fisheries),
- Principles and rules for implementation of assistance from the Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund in the programming period 2007-2013 defined in the relevant regulations,
- Guidelines for National regional aid for 2007-2013,
- Directive no. 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on environment (the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive),
- Equal and non-discriminatory treatment, equal opportunities,
- Lead Partner Principle – as a new mandatory feature for actions being implemented under the cross-border cooperation programmes in 2007-2013 in order to ensure the genuine



cooperation. The Lead Partner principle has significant implications on the preparation, implementation as well as structures carrying out the cross-border cooperation projects (in comparison to 2000-2006 period).

## **Coherence with other EU and national programmes**

Structural fund policy 2007-2013 can be characterized by a strengthened strategic approach, with two new elements: the “Community Strategic Guidelines“ at European level and the “National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF)“ at the level of the Member States. Both elements, as presented in the draft Council Regulation from 14 July 2004, are aimed at a better integration of Community priorities into national and regional development programmes. Therefore, the NSRFs give the general orientation, objectives and strategies, which are relevant also for Cross-border-programmes. The territorial cooperation programmes are complementary to the “mainstream” programmes implemented under the “Convergence” and “Regional Competitiveness and Employment” objectives seeking to achieve synergies. With this respect, a specific attention will be paid to preventing any possible double financing of the interventions (actions) from the Structural Funds.