



Copyright Markku Tano



**NEEBOR (The Network of Eastern External Border Regions)** network aims to increase the awareness of EU institutions, member states, regions and local authorities and the civil organizations on both sides of the borders of the weaknesses and strengths of the cross-border region. NEEBOR serves as a platform for open dialogue and coordination of joint actions and initiatives in order to promote the exchange of good practices and enhance cooperation and synergies in the region.

**NEEBOR Interreg IVC project (Networking for Enterprises In the Eastern External Border Regions)** is a project of 12 partners grown out from the network. The overall objective of the NEEBOR project is to exchange and exploit solutions for a more competitive and innovative SME sector while increasing the efficiency of regional SME development and innovation policies in the external border areas.

## FINAL CONFERENCE, BRUSSELS

The final conference of the NEEBOR (Networking for Enterprises In the Eastern External Border Regions) INTERREG IVC project was held on June 2011 in Brussels. The three year project implemented by the members of the NEEBOR Network was focusing on the specific geographical challenges of the SMEs on the Eastern external border regions of the European Union.

After collecting good practices and exchanging experiences from the area of 12 partners of 10 EU regions and 8 countries, study visits, staff exchange programme, and transferability studies were concluded. As a result of the project, policy recommendations were drafted and presented during the conference. Mr. Ákos Kajdi, Head of Department Ministry of National Development, Department of Development Coordination on behalf of the Hungarian Presidency welcomed the participants of the conference. In his speech he outlined from a Presidency perspective the future orientations of the cohesion policy, specifically focusing on territorial cooperation programmes.

During the roundtable discussion of the event Mr Colin Wolfe on behalf of the European Commission DG REGIO and Mr. József Ribányi, Member of the Committee of the Regions outlined also the concept of the territorial cooperation in the EU and its perspectives. Ms. Riikka Manner, Member of the European Parliament as a current rapporteur of the future regulation on European Territorial Cooperation programme focused on the difficulties and advantages of ENPI CBC programmes. She stressed the importance of the neighbourhood policy and its regional dimension. Mr. Thomas Spriet, Officer of the European Affair Unit Managing Authority Team (Region Nord-Pas de Calais) presented the results of the 3 calls of the INTERREG IVC programme and mentioned some of the already available results of the projects. He noted on NEEBOR INTERREG IVC project as a unique project involving regions from a specific geographical area.

Ms. Malgorzata Wasilenko, Director of the Warmia-Mazury Regional Office in Brussels presented the network opinion on the future of the ENPI. In her presentation she outlined the specificities of the Eastern dimension of the programme, how it could be organised more in favour of partners involved in these programmes

In its conclusion Ms. Joanna Held, First Secretary of the Permanent Representation of Poland to the EU, Regional and Cohesion Policy Unit, outlined the Polish Presidency priorities especially focusing on cohesion policy and European neighbourhood policy instruments.

The event was concluded by a family photo of the partners in the Atrium of the Committee of the Regions which was kindly hosted the final conference of the NEEBOR INTERREG IVC project.

Find our more on [www.neebor.eu](http://www.neebor.eu)

## PROJECT MEETING IN BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

The last project dissemination and project generation seminar took place in Brussels on 12<sup>th</sup> of October 2011.

Among the topics discussed by the partners were policy recommendation document, action plan, as well as overall project result performance and future cooperation between and above the partners. Overall project implementation has been carried out good; final inputs will be done in dissemination and communication component. Although, project is coming to its final destination; results will live long after the project. In the meeting future cooperation: possibilities and actions were tackled and will be reflected in action plan, which is planned to be available in December 2011. At the place partners looked back on already drawn future cooperation and discussed frames for future through gained experience and its use in future. Couple of the project ideas has been sent to partners, looking for decisions for participations. Communication to partners and NEEBOR network will be continuously kept through email list and webpage.

After the meeting it was possible for partners to take part in EU OPEN DAYS events, one of which was Opportunities and challenges for the outermost regions. Major topic was regarding islands territory of EU opportunities for cooperation through project funds: sharing, transferring and utilising good examples in other regions. In main line it was clarified that similarities for outermost regions and remote areas e.g. Northern part of EU are existing and funds available. EU expects from those regions to actively participate in developing of EU future.

## GOOD PRACTICE FAIR KRAKOW, POLAND

Good Practice fair was organised by INTERREG IVC programme to share project good practices identified and transferred in project so far. Fair took place on 24<sup>th</sup> of November 2011 in Krakow, Poland. Along with selection of topics conference participants were encouraged to share experience also in exhibition stands of the interregional cooperation project, one of which was NEEBOR. Over 220 policy-makers and practitioners from all over Europe attended the first INTERREG IVC Good Practice Fair.

During the conference 6 different topics were presented on energy efficiency, smart use of waste land, entrepreneurship, innovations, as well as climate change and demographic change. Additionally, video and brochure library were made where participants had possibility to learn about good practices too.

Throughout the day visitors gathered around NEEBOR stand to learn, find similar issues and initiate cooperation. For example, similar question for the life after project has ENSPIRE EU NETWORK project where connection of the people, ideas and actions are kept through social network e.g. LinkedIn, Twitter. NEEBOR was proud to present lessons learned and transferred during the project.

One of the important tools which was presented during the conference is the Good Practice Database, a collection of good practices that have been identified within the course of INTERREG IVC projects. You will find information from link: <http://www.interreg4c.eu/findGoodpractices.html>

Report of the event shall be found from INTERREG IVC website after December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011. From the section dedicated to the first Good Practice Fair could be found also gallery of the event, cinema collection and other related information.

Similar events are promised to be organised also in future.



## ACTION PLAN

NEEBOR partners have compiled Action Plan for securing the future cooperation and summarizing the cooperation ideas and common development targets grown out during the NEEBOR INTERREG IVC project. It is statement of the partners of having strong interest to continue the successful collaboration on external border issues embracing the objectives of the NEEBOR network. Action plan will be implemented in cooperation with the NEEBOR network and relevant financing possibilities and programmes will be followed.

The following topics and development targets rose up in the common discussions, which support the regional development strategies and areas of expertise:

- Tourism: cross-border, rural and nature tourism has a lot of unexploited development potential in the external cross-border regions. The regions are often relatively rural, sparsely populated with a lot of recreation areas, nature parks and clean nature, as well as they have a unique and rich culture and history "between two cultures".
- Education, lifelong learning and vocational training: regions highlighted the need to develop lifelong learning and vocational learning.
- Renewable energies and energy efficiency: a lot of unused potential on developing more energy efficiency and bio based and renewable energies.
- Innovation economy, science parks and innovation environments: partner regions highlighted the need to develop science parks and innovation environments in the peripheral external border regions.
- Research cooperation: many universities on external border regions have common interest on research topics such as border studies, external border policies, cross-border interaction and institutional framework to name a few.
- Culture: the external border regions have interesting historical background between two cultures and changing borders which can create interesting cooperation possibilities on cultural sector, and challenging too.



Project co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund within the INTERREG IV C programme.

## POLICY RECOMENDATIONS

Policy recommendations for improving eastern external border regions' SME and innovation policies. Remove Borders! Policy recommendation for more innovative external border policies composes one of the main outputs of the NEEBOR project. Recommendations are targeted for the EU level, national level and local and regional level policy-makers and actors and they enlightens the experiences gained during the project based on partners' common discussion, studies and exchange of experiences. They tackle three themes: external cross border cooperation, access to financing an access to knowledge.

Cross-border cooperation on external border regions brings possibilities. Development strategies in the NEEBOR regions support and promote closer cooperation with the EU's eastern neighbouring regions. As often seen as an obstacle, external border location is also opportunity and strength for the regional development and also for the entire European Union; these regions are bridge between EU and its eastern neighbours and thus the whole EU can benefit from the positive steps taken in the border regions

Flexible access to financing must be secured. In addition to traditional business financing sources like bank loans, many programmes and project based financing sources in the partner regions. Mostly they are from the EU and national public financing sources and based on EU's structural funds

Use of EU's specific programmes for SME and innovation development such as competitiveness and innovation framework programme (CIP) and 7th framework programme (FP7) are not so commonly utilized.

Conceptualization of innovation in external border context is needed. Knowledge is needed for stimulating new innovations. It is important to understand innovation in policy level equally as both high-tech research-based as well as softer service and social innovation as especially latter approach offers possibilities for rural and peripheral regions. It is important also to take advantage of the location on external border and create innovation systems across the border.

## NORTH KARELIA DISSEMINATION EVENT, FINLAND

NEEBOR project took part to the events organized by the ERDF funded Neppari Project to disseminate the NEEBOR project's results and good practices. Three events were organized during the autumn 2011 and they were especially targeted for women entrepreneurs in rural areas which mean that events reached e.g. many tourism, food, handicraft and wellbeing enterprises. NEEBOR project introduced some good practices from the NEEBOR regions in the fields of networking and innovation activities. Also future networking possibilities with the other NEEBOR regions was discussed.

The Neppari project is managed by the North Karelia Enterprise Agency:<http://pohjois-karjala.uusyrityskeskus.fi/>

## PROJECT DISSEMINATION EVENT IN LATVIA, VIDZEME REGION

On December 14, the NEEBOR project was presented by the Vidzeme Planning Region to regional politicians and entrepreneurs to disseminate the NEEBOR project results and policy recommendations on a wider platform. The objective of this event was to inform about the NEEBOR project and network and get regional actors more involved in the NEEBOR activities. Project participants pointed out the key benefits of the project – the exchange of good practices, improving visibility and understanding of external border issues and access to knowledge. During the discussion, most of the participants agreed that the exchange of good practices was the way how new innovations could be accepted more easily and valuable resources could be used efficiently, and it would be very important to participate in projects like NEEBOR in the future.

## 7<sup>TH</sup> NEEBOR ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2012 “EUROPEAN BORDER DIALOGUE”

**The 7th NEEBOR Annual Conference “European Border Dialogues” will be organised in Kirkenes, Norway from 6 to 8 February 2012. The registration is open!**

The 7th NEEBOR Annual Conference is organised in the Norwegian border town to Russia, Kirkenes, located in the European High North. Kirkenes has since the signing of the Kirkenes declaration, the Barents Euro Arctic Cooperation, back in 1993 been one of the core points for cross border cooperation in the high north. The town has hosted a number of cross border cooperation events and has been visited by a number of high level politician and officials from all over the world. There are also several institutions working with cross border cooperation issues located in Kirkenes. Like the International Barents Secretariat, The Barents Institute and the Norwegian Barents Secretariat.

Registration, practical information you will find from:

[http://neebor.eu/index.php?page=news&id\\_news=202&str\\_nr=1&lg=gb](http://neebor.eu/index.php?page=news&id_news=202&str_nr=1&lg=gb)

Deadline for registration is 20<sup>th</sup> of January 2012 through this link (available also from link above):

<http://simpleeventsignup.com/event/9294>

**NEEBOR INTERREG IVC project is closing on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2011. Continues action will be kept through the NEEBOR Network:**

**NEEBOR Network Secretariat**  
[www.neebor.eu](http://www.neebor.eu)  
[neebor@eszakalfold.hu](mailto:neebor@eszakalfold.hu)