

# centrope capacity

## Accomplishments, Good Practice & Lessons Learnt

### A Handbook



#### centrope capacity

an initiative of:

\_Bratislava \_Bratislava Region \_Brno \_Burgenland \_Győr  
\_Lower Austria \_Sopron \_South Moravia \_Szombathely  
\_Trnava \_Trnava Region \_Vienna



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## Content

1	Introduction	2
2	A partnership on the move	4
3	<b>centrope capacity</b> Activities & Outputs	5
3.1	The <b>centrope</b> agency: Building capacities for transnational governance in four development areas	5
3.2	Pilot Initiatives	5
3.3	Strategy 2013+ & Action Plan	5
3.4	Branding & Location Marketing	6
3.5	Outreach & Awareness	7
3.6	Peer Exchange Initiative	7
4	<b>centrope capacity</b> Good Practice	9
4.1	The Summits – Transnational political process & public visibility	9
4.2	RDR Regional Development Monitoring Pilot Initiative	11
4.3	INAT Infrastructure Needs Assessment Pilot Initiative	14
4.4	CTMT Culture and Tourism Marketing Tool Pilot Initiative	16
4.5	<b>centrope</b> Branding Process	17
5	Lessons Learnt & Recommendations	19
5.1	Success factors	19
5.2	Elaborating a common agenda	20
5.3	Building visions and identities – Marketing and branding of a cross-border region	21
	Contacts	23

## 1 Introduction

At the intersection of Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, **centrope** is emerging as a transnational region which is home to 6.5 million people. On the basis of the Kittsee Declaration of 2003, 16 partner regions and cities work jointly towards the creation of the Central European Region **centrope** in this four-country quadrangle.

From 2009 to 2012 **centrope capacity** has been the lead development project funded under the EU programme CENTRAL EUROPE. It was to create a multilateral, binding and sustainable framework for the cooperation of local and regional authorities, enterprises and public institutions in the Central European Region. It built on the results of two INTERREG IIIA projects concluded in 2007, which provided the necessary preparatory work and development steps to establish the Central European Region **centrope**. Under its “Competitiveness” programme priority CENTRAL EUROPE supported the **centrope capacity** with a co-funding of 80%.

Starting point for **centrope capacity** was the conviction that the dynamic development of this transnational region can only be advanced if efficient cooperation structures are created in all four partner countries – regional **centrope** offices that, catalyst-style, continuously generate impulses for intensified cooperation, develop concepts and promote the idea behind **centrope** in the partner regions. With this level playing field, the cooperation of the **centrope** partner cities and regions acquired a new quality standard. To render **centrope** more tangible, a main focus of **centrope capacity** rested on the introduction of practice-oriented cooperation activities. The circle of stakeholders taking initiatives in or on behalf of **centrope** was to be gradually widened.

Drawing from the wealth of project results, outcomes and publications, this handbook provides an overview of accomplishments, transferable good practice and lessons learnt. Not only a guide to activities and outputs, it highlights achievements that went exceptionally well and which could serve as models for similar regions at a similar development level. Next to the experience of the **centrope** partnership, the concluding recommendations also reflect the results of the peer exchange initiative with similar metropolitan cross-border regions in Europe.

centrope capacity **Timeframe**

Project launch: January 2009

End of the project: December 2012

centrope capacity **Partners**

**Austria**

- Federal Province of Burgenland
- Federal Province of Lower Austria
- Federal Province and City of Vienna
- City of Eisenstadt
- City of St. Pölten

**Czech Republic**

- South Moravian Region
- City of Brno
- Vysočina Region (observer)

**Hungary**

- Győr-Moson-Sopron County
- Vas County
- City of Győr
- City of Sopron
- City of Szombathely

**Slovakia**

- Bratislava Self-Governing Region
- Trnava Self-Governing Region
- City of Bratislava
- City of Trnava

## 2 A partnership on the move

### ... a political process

At its heart, the **centrope** initiative harbours a political process that enables the partner regions and cities to agree on the shape and content of their co-operation. This political dimension has found its expression in the regular political meetings of governors, region and county presidents and mayors. **centrope capacity** added a new quality to this process by rendering possible actual working meetings in a new ‘summit’ format, supported by a preparatory and follow-up workflow. As another innovation that came with **centrope capacity**, the **centrope** presidency rotates every six months (12 months from 2013 on) between the four participating countries.

### ... a development partnership for future-oriented issues and sectors

At the project implementation level, experts have been working to deepen cooperative relations and to draft and develop common strategies, measures and activities. These efforts included multilateral development platforms as well as e.g. the expertise of business agencies. **centrope capacity** pilot projects, too, have resulted in more detailed knowledge regarding the potential of cooperative development within **centrope**. However, the most important objective has been the establishment and testing of a viable transnational structure for the partnership-based steering – “governance” – of cooperation in the region as a whole.

### ... a work and development process

The **centrope capacity** Steering Committee and the operative **centrope capacity** Agency, represented in all four countries, guided the development process and were responsible for project implementation. The Steering Committee was conceived as a forum for discussion among the regions and cities involved regarding the goals of cooperation and the form these efforts should take. It has been the central body of the **centrope capacity** project, maintaining close contacts with the political level.

### 3 centrope capacity **Activities & Outputs**

#### 3.1 **The centrope agency: Building capacities for transnational governance in four development areas**

The **centrope** agency handled the multilateral cooperation management of the Central European Region and was composed of regional offices in all four participating countries as well as of one coordination office. The four decentralised **centrope** offices generated impulses for intensified cooperation, developed concepts and promoted the idea behind **centrope** in the partner regions.

The main operative responsibility for the development focuses “Knowledge Region”, “Human Capital”, “Spatial Integration” and “Culture & Tourism” likewise were distributed among the four partner countries, while the **centrope** Coordination Office handled the transnational fine-tuning of the project as a whole. In its entirety, the **centrope** Agency was conceived as a cross-border consortium active on behalf of the regional and local authorities backing the **centrope capacity** project.

#### 3.2 **Pilot Initiatives**

Three pilot projects served the purpose of exemplary and visible realisation of the **centrope** aims, provided additional in-depth knowledge and helped to establish viable structures. While their focus varied depending on the project, they were in any case directed at concrete, medium-term objectives in all four partner regions. The pilot projects conducted between 2010 and 2012 comprised a Regional Development Report (RDR), an Infrastructure Assessment Tool (INAT) and a Culture and Tourism Marketing Tool (CTMT).

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see below **centrope** Good Practice 4.2 to 4.4

#### 3.3 **Strategy 2013+ & Action Plan**

The **centrope** Strategy 2013+ is the result of the development and consultation process that took place in the context of the **centrope capacity** project. The Strategy’s main value lies in a common understanding of the overarching and long-term aims of co-operation in **centrope**,

embodied in its various parts – what **centrope** stands for and what it is to achieve in the years to come.

With this strategy, the partner cities and regions emphasise their commitment to a broad collaboration that extends from research and innovation to human capital development, spatial integration as well as culture and tourism. In all these areas, the partners agree on a set of shared goals and support a range of suggestions of how to concretise these ambitions through projects or initiatives. The 20 propositions listed in the Strategy 2013+ represent the main outcome of the development work accomplished by the decentralised offices according to their respective thematic responsibility.

The **centrope** Strategy 2013+ is aligned to two complementary key documents which are to guide the **centrope** initiative through the coming years: While the **centrope** Action Plan contains concrete projects – “alliance cooperations” – that are already under way thanks to their initiation in the context of **centrope capacity**, the **centrope** Business Plan 2013+ contains the operative priorities for the years 2013/2014, before the opportunities associated with the new EU funding period 2014 to 2020 will kick in. The more than 20 cross-border alliance cooperation projects aim for, e.g., start-up and SME support, labour market monitoring, an energy cluster, expansion of agritourism, improved mobility management etc.

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<http://www.centrope.com/en/centrope-project/strategy-2013>

### 3.4 Branding & Location Marketing

**centrope capacity** included a professional branding process to establish **centrope** as a resilient and well-known brand name across the entire region and internationally – a distinct notion, associated with specific qualities and characteristics. This branding process resulted in a Regional Branding Strategy paper which serves as the starting point for all other promotional activities.

The business agencies of **centrope** worked in cooperation with the **centrope capacity** project to further develop and market the **centrope** brand, taking advantage of their long-term professional experience in dealing with investors and in supporting companies. Results of these activities are e.g. a **centrope** location marketing brochure and a **centrope** image clip.

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see below **centrope** Good Practice 4.5 &

[www.centrope.com/repository/centrope/downloads/centrope%20Location%20Marketing%20brochure.pdf](http://www.centrope.com/repository/centrope/downloads/centrope%20Location%20Marketing%20brochure.pdf)

### 3.5 Outreach & Awareness

Raising awareness for **centrope** and its goals among public and private stakeholders, within expert communities and vis-à-vis the wider public has been an integral aspect for most of the **centrope capacity** activities. Special attention was paid to accessible, attractive and multi-lingual communication products throughout, resulting among others in a range of information leaflets, promotional brochures, summary publications of pilot initiatives, videoclips, a 3-monthly newsletter as well as a comprehensive web presence; all in line with the **centrope** corporate layout and branding guidelines. Within the four partner countries as well as on a European level, means were available for placing **centrope** in print and broadcasting media

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[www.centrope.com/en/centrope-project/downloads2](http://www.centrope.com/en/centrope-project/downloads2)

[www.centrope.com/en/centrope-newsletter/newsletter-5-2012](http://www.centrope.com/en/centrope-newsletter/newsletter-5-2012)

### 3.6 Peer Exchange Initiative

As part of **centrope capacity**, a peer exchange initiative of cross-border regions was established for mutual learning and knowledge transfer between comparable transnational regions which have a polycentric, metropolitan structure. The **centrope** partnership regarded this as an opportunity to bring together a “peer group” of six similar regions and to discuss, in a very practical, hands-on and informal way, challenges which are equally present in all cross-border regions. The five regions invited were

- the Öresund Region (Copenhagen-Malmö),
- the Meuse-Rhine Euregion (Aachen-Liège-Maastricht),
- the Greater Region (Saar-Lor-Lux),
- the Eurometropolis (Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai), and
- the Regio Basiliensis/RegioTriRhena/Upper Rhine (Basel-Freiburg-Strasbourg-Karlsruhe).



Three meetings took place in Vienna; each of these was dedicated to cross-cutting challenges present in the day-to-day work of building and sustaining a Euro-regional framework. Starting in June 2010, the workshops resulted in a **centrope** Peer Review Report. A concluding policy seminar took place in Brussels in November 2012, to publicly discuss the shared challenges with a view to the upcoming EU programme period 2014 to 2020.

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[www.centrope.com/repository/centrope/downloads/centrope\\_Peer\\_Review\\_Report\\_EN.pdf](http://www.centrope.com/repository/centrope/downloads/centrope_Peer_Review_Report_EN.pdf)

## 4 centrope capacity **Good Practice**

### 4.1 **The Summits – Transnational political process & public visibility**

The semi-annual summit meetings of the Mayors and Governors of the **centrope** partner regions and cities served to deepen the co-operation agenda at the political level and allowed for conclusions on further actions and initiatives of co-operation. Each of the four Board meetings in 2011 and 2012 went along with a **centrope** Public Conference that was dedicated to a key topic for crossborder co-operation.

Together, this two-pronged process with its short intervals proved an effective way for fostering political commitment and anchoring cross-border coordination in the administrative structures of the involved authorities, next to reaching out to a wider public in all four countries. The rotating presidency meant that the partners found themselves in an agenda-setting role at a certain point, thus greatly enhancing “ownership” of **centrope** across the entire region. Initiatives developed on expert or administration level gained momentum from the political backing provided by the summits. The conclusions and priorities agreed in the political meetings exemplify how, step-by-step, a common development agenda took shape and eventually led to the adoption of strategic documents:

#### **Summit 1 Győr, May 2011**

- Increasing labour market mobility
- Broadening the base of skills needed on the **centrope** labour market
- Employment according to educational & qualification attainments
- Making the business location **centrope** visible
- Securing robust transport-infrastructure for economic success
- Positioning **centrope** in the European Cohesion Policy

#### **Summit 2 Tomášov/Bratislava, December 2011**

- A Transport and Infrastructure Strategy for **centrope**
- A regional Public Transport Initiative for **centrope**
- A dedicated co-operation framework for **centrope**
- Effective co-ordination within the EU Strategy for the Danube Region
- A regional perspective on the “beyond GDP” debate

### **Summit 3 Brno, May 2012**

- High-capacity transport infrastructure for an accessible **centrope** region
- User-friendly public transport services for an interconnected **centrope** region
- Internationally visible research cooperation for the **centrope** knowledge region
- Sustainable governance structures for an increasingly integrated **centrope** region

### **Summit 4 Pamhagen, October 2012**

- Maintenance of co-ordination standards and involvement of partners at an equal level
- Keeping up the high dynamism in the cross-cutting agenda of mobility
- Specific initiatives in different thematic fields – the **centrope** Strategy 2013+

Meanwhile, the titles of the four summit events indicate the topics that were at the centre of the public conferences that took place simultaneously: “Region without limits” (mobility), “destination@centrope” (tourism), “Education Meets Research & Innovation” (knowledge region) and “informed\_connected\_inspired” (stakeholder mobilisation). The conferences were successful in, on the one hand, targeting specific, topic-related transnational expert communities, whilst, on the other hand, raising general awareness for **centrope** by way of organising them in all partner countries. The summits provided ample opportunities for extensive media coverage both on national as well as on regional level.

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<http://www.centrope.com/en/centrope-project/political-conferences>

## 4.2 RDR Regional Development Monitoring Pilot Initiative

The **centrope** Region as one of the most important cross-border economic areas at the former external border of the European Union is characterised by substantial internal disparities and, at the same time, by increased integration and cross-border co-operation. If this integration is to be supported, cross-border analysis as well as policy co-operation need to be enforced.

The **centrope** Regional Development Report is one instrument to provide regular transnational analysis and policy recommendations. The concept was based on the experience of the **centrope** Business & Labour Report, which had been elaborated as a prototype in 2007. This pilot project showed that such an annual report on the economic and labour market development of the **centrope** Region can provide an important common information basis for future policy initiatives. Yet, to reach this objective, major efforts were necessary to improve the data situation as well as the analytical methodology.

Building on the experience of the **centrope** Business & Labour Report, the **centrope** Regional Development Reports comprised the following features:

- **Three Annual Regional Development Reports (2010-2012):** monitoring of the economic development of the region and its individual parts, including description of the macro-economic development in the individual **centrope** countries, survey of the economic development of the **centrope** Region. The reports evaluate the current development of the region and put forward policy suggestions for improving cross-border policy delivery. The focus is on analysing the development of key indicators and cross-border flows of foreign direct investment, foreign trade and cross-border labour flows. A quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the development perspectives of the region is also part of the report. The concluding report 2012 was built around a comprehensive SWOT analysis.
- **Four Thematic Focus Reports:** in-depth analyses of issues of particular relevance for the **centrope** Region. These reports focused on:
  - **Technology policy, R&D and Innovation in centrope:** The focus report monitored and analysed the current R&D efforts and linkages within **centrope** with the aim of comparing the competitive position of the partner regions in a European context. A further focus was on how innovation is generated in **centrope**, e.g. through R&D conducted at company level, in co-operation with public institutions such as universities or within clusters/networks. Finally, the role of policy, from both a strategic and implementation point of view, was analysed. The central questions guiding the research were thus: How competitive is **centrope** on the map of the EU-wide science and innovation system? What are the most significant strengths and weaknesses of the whole region and its individual sub-regions with regard to R&D, science and

innovation? What are the special R&D and innovation characteristics of the partner regions? In consequence, the report firstly compares the national and regional innovation systems by means of country studies; secondly analyses R&D expenditure and personnel, human resources in science and technology as well as employment in high-tech sectors vis-à-vis the EU average; and thirdly uses European patent applications as a basis for comparing the R&D and innovation performance.

- **Extent of spatial integration within centrope and of centrope with the EU.** Spatial integration in this report is understood as economic integration in terms of the EU's four freedoms (i.e. the free movement of goods, capital, services and people). The report took an explicitly bird's eye view on spatial integration of the **centrope** regions, firstly amongst each other and secondly with the European Union (EU) and the rest of the world, rather than focusing at the very detailed bottom-up level of individual projects or regions. The reason for this is that economic theory suggests a number of reasons why integration understood in this way has a positive effect on an economy. The report thus focused on the extent and structure of foreign direct investment, foreign trade and labour movements among the different parts of **centrope** as well as between **centrope** and other parts of the world. It augmented this information by interview data on the wishes for cross-border labour mobility and enterprise co-operation in the region to gain further insights into the potential advantages and impediments to deeper integration of the region.
- **Human capital, education and the labour market in centrope.** Major labour market trends in **centrope** were discussed under this heading. In particular, a central focus was on issues of labour supply (i.e. the consequences of demographic ageing on the **centrope** Region and the associated shortages of skilled labour that can be expected to emerge in the long run) and labour demand (e.g. the likely medium-term consequences of the economic crisis). Given the essentially good labour market situation in centrope and the substantial institutional changes introduced with the opening of the Austrian labour market in 2007, the report determined recent trends, common problems and potential areas of co-operation in the field of labour market policy among the **centrope** regions. In particular, it presented a detailed analysis of the structure of employment and unemployment in centrope, the extent of spatial mismatch and the factors impeding and enhancing student mobility in the region.
- **The service industry as a growth factor in centrope,** with special emphasis on the role of the tourism industry as well as the structure of the business service industries. Given that **centrope** is characterised by sharp internal differences, which are shaped by a strong divide between urban, industrial and agricultural/peripheral regions, this analysis focused on the differentiated role of both tourism and business services in shaping the competitiveness of these types of regions. The report first of all dealt with the structure of the service sector in **centrope** and secondly analysed the

development of the tourism industry. The first part looked at patterns of specialisation in different service sectors as well as at investment data, with a view to identifying the comparative advantages of individual regions in service sector development. The second part paid special attention to the structure of both the supply and the demand side of the tourism industry in the region and moreover discussed aspects of tourism co-operation within **centrope**.

These reports led, for the first time, to a common picture of the economic state of development and served as a basis for transnational economic and labour market policy initiatives, such as the **centrope** labour market monitoring. In contrast to the existing data compilations, the primary aim of these reports was to provide the actors of the region not only with data but primarily with interpretations, conclusions for better data collection and policy options.

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<http://www.centrope.com/en/centrope-project/pilot-projects-2010-2012/regional-development-report>

### 4.3 INAT Infrastructure Needs Assessment Pilot Initiative

Ever since the beginning of intensified cross-border co-operation under the **centrope** initiative, infrastructure and transport issues have played a key role. They are not only about the very concrete needs and concerns of many citizens who regularly pass the borders but relate to something much more fundamental: new linkages for transboundary mobility and shortened travel times in many cases will create a functional cross-border region in the first place, where only limited interaction has existed so far. The notion of **centrope** as a common, polycentric crossborder region thus cannot stand without fast and capable transport links that allow for a high degree of economic integration as well as labour market mobility and workplace commuting.

Likewise, the notion of **centrope** as an easily accessible business location, European crossroads and hub for Central Europe is dependent on efficient high-level rail and road links, attractive airports and a Danube that lives up to its full potential as a waterway. At the same time, **centrope** will only succeed as a region that is able to reconcile its infrastructure and transport requirements with a sustainable form of mobility, ensuring ecologically sound development and high quality of life.

#### **A joint strategy growing from a centrope capacity pilot action**

It is therefore all the more significant that the pilot action “Infrastructure Needs Assessment Tool” (INAT) was implemented within the project **centrope capacity**. As a first step, it produced a comprehensive overview on the state of transport infrastructure development in the quadrangle and a thorough analysis of shortcomings and future demands (INAT Mapping Report). Based on a common methodology, a transnational project team from all four countries accessed relevant documents and conducted a comprehensive mapping of existing regional development strategies, functional specificities as well as the infrastructure status quo. Eventually, this assessment – which also included feedback loops with the relevant authorities of the partner cities and regions – led to the development of the first-ever common picture of the state of transport and mobility affairs in **centrope**. Even more, by providing a set of compelling reasons for a more co-ordinated approach, it suggests that a common development strategy is all but indispensable.

The “Strategic Framework for Transport and Infrastructure Development in **centrope**”, elaborated as a second step within the INAT **centrope capacity** pilot action, represents the common answer of the partner regions and cities to the needs thus identified. Crucially, they now subscribe to a joint vision of how transport links and infrastructure should look like in the future from a cross-border perspective and which public transport and other services should

be on offer. The recurrent consultation process among the partner regions and cities that led to the Strategic Framework peaked with its discussion and eventual adoption on a political level at the biannual **centrope** Summit meetings. The agreement on the Strategic Framework at the Brno Summit of May 2012, however, marked only the beginning of the implementation phase of the co-operation agenda.

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[www.centrope.com/en/centrope-project/pilot-projects-2010-2012/infrastructure-needs-assessment-tool](http://www.centrope.com/en/centrope-project/pilot-projects-2010-2012/infrastructure-needs-assessment-tool)



#### 4.4 CTMT Culture and Tourism Marketing Tool Pilot Initiative

The interactive and accessible tool [www.tourcentrope.com](http://www.tourcentrope.com) developed especially for outdoor tourists, families with children and “best-agers” offers up-to-date tourist information from all over **centrope** in just one click. This product is a welcome aid in times when regional short trips represent an ever more popular form of tourism in the four-country region.

The tool launched in 2012 offers a large pool of information for those interested in experiencing the many opportunities for a short holiday or weekend trip in **centrope**. Designed by a consortium based in Bratislava, the portal is the main outcome of the **centrope capacity** pilot project “Culture and Tourism Marketing Tool – Exploring **centrope** together” and responds to growing interest in regional short-trip tourism. Its primary goal is to go beyond the available tourist information sources offered by municipal and regional tourist boards and organisations and to provide tourists with a multi-lingual cross-border service.

Thus users find three different content categories at the new portal (attractive locations, cycling routes, events) – all given in the four **centrope** languages and in English and covering all eight **centrope** sub-regions. In total, the tool in its pilot phase presents 40 cycling routes with specific information on their length, difficulty or prevailing road surface and 60 cultural events – 15 from each **centrope** country. Furthermore, more than 160 regional points of interest are currently listed on the website, including UNESCO World Heritage sites, natural wonders, museums and galleries. These attractions are selected according to their uniqueness as well as good accessibility by bike or other forms of transportation. A mobile application for both iPhone and Android to accompany the portal is available as well.

The launching of the tool went along with a number of promotional activities and took place in the context of the opening of the March/Morava cycle bridge between Bratislava Region and Lower Austria. A business plan contains provisions for maintaining and expanding the tool in the coming years.

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[www.tourcentrope.eu](http://www.tourcentrope.eu)

#### 4.5 centrope **Branding Process**

The **centrope capacity** project rested on the results of various INTERREG III A projects conducted until 2007 which had laid the foundations for trans-boundary co-operation in the **centrope** Region or which dealt with the development and implementation of a marketing strategy for the business location **centrope**. All these projects used the name “**centrope**” but employed different logos.

**centrope capacity** started a general branding process. The goal was a wide range of communication, branding and marketing activities to establish **centrope** as a well-known brand across the entire region and among the international business community. This branding process was supported by an external agency. Activities started in July 2010 and ended in January 2011. After a basic analysis, a standardised questionnaire was designed and used by the **centrope** offices for interviews with stakeholders of all **centrope** sub-regions (e.g. persons from tourist boards, city and regional administrations, enterprises, research institutes, etc.). Based on the results from the interviews, first drafts of a new **centrope** regional identity were developed and presented at a dedicated branding workshop in December 2010, where participants from **centrope** cities and regions were to reach a decision on the unique selling points and general slogan concept. The final outcome was a manual that contains regional identity and USPs of **centrope** as well as exemplary messages for three target groups (tourists, investors, citizens).

While this manual is only destined for internal use, it formed the main basis for the “**centrope** style book”, which inter alia outlines layout rules and the general policy of use of the brand “**centrope**” by third parties. The style book was complemented by a pool of messages/stories/images (again from all **centrope** sub-regions) to substantiate the brand “**centrope**” for awareness raising.

All promotional material and branding activities then followed the new corporate identity, such as a **centrope** image brochure, a location marketing brochure, an image clip (shown e.g. as in-flight advertisement for business travellers) and direct business marketing activities (reaching as far as the US).

### **General idea of the new centrope brand**

One important result of the stakeholder interviews was the desire to avoid patterns like “old vs. new Europe”, “East vs. West” or “rich vs. developable”. This approach is mostly outdated due to recent economic developments and hence not suitable for future campaigns. Certainly, some differences between the single **centrope** sub-regions remain, but there are also differences within the sub-regions (e.g. between urban and rural areas). Generally, the **centrope** Region can be seen as big mosaic of various aspects that together form a clear but heterogeneous picture. This shall be reflected in the new branding concept “**centrope** as a meeting point of differences”. The following four areas of intersection were identified and are to serve as “unique selling points (USPs)” of **centrope**:

- Meeting of four interfacing nations
- Meeting of tradition and innovation
- Meeting of humanity and nature
- Meeting of complementary markets

**centrope** can be seen as a region that puts the ideas and philosophy of EU integration policies into practice. Thus the general slogan “**Meet Europe. Meet centrope.**” was born at the branding workshop. This slogan has already become part of the key communication material. However, for specific activities and/or specific target groups, variations of the slogan are to be employed.

## 5 Lessons Learnt & Recommendations

### 5.1 Success factors

Cross-border governance is a challenging task. It has to find a way to effectively manage an entity that unifies regions with different legal competencies, bureaucratic structures and traditions and embedded in varying national frameworks. And it has to do this without creating cumbersome bureaucratic institutions or just another decision-making level which runs counter to decision-making bodies at the respective national levels. Some general principles for good cross-border governance can be identified.

- **Mobilise stakeholders – horizontally & across government levels**

Do not infringe on the competencies of the local or regional level. Instead of in-fighting about competencies with existing decision-making bodies, cross-border governance models must mobilise public and private stakeholders at different levels. It is essential that a broad range of stakeholders (politics and administrations, universities, social partners, economy and enterprises, civil society) is involved and active in cross-border co-operation to develop a broad range of activities in different sectors.

- **Be flexible & adaptable.**

This of course does not mean that all stakeholders are to be involved in each and every activity. Rather, establishing different levels of co-operation (at a regional and local level) as well as “selective” partnerships which might involve only a limited number of partners is important to realise output-oriented co-operation ventures and projects. In other words: cross-border governance has to be a flexible and adaptable broker for co-operation and its goals.

- **Use EU funding.**

In many cross-border regions, tailor-made INTERREG A programmes serve as the instrument to initiate projects that later become autonomous and durable co-operation activities. INTERREG programmes can not only secure substantial funding for cross-border regions but also act as a vehicle for the integration of a region – if they secure an unbureaucratic framework for stakeholders to develop cross-border projects.

- **Secure political commitment....**

Obviously, one thing cannot be flexible and selective in cross-border co-operation, i.e. strong commitment on the part of the political decision-makers. The challenge to obtain this commitment might vary from region to region but, independently thereof, two strategies have proven to be very useful.

1) A rotating presidency can add to the commitment of partners if the region in charge can

formulate priorities of a work programme; the term should be long enough to make sure that certain priorities can be realised.

2) Informal discussions and closed-door meetings provide an atmosphere that increases the possibilities of reaching joint agreements and advances co-operation.

- **...and joint financing.**

To achieve stable and functioning cross-border co-operation, it is essential that all partners be equally committed and engaged financially. Moreover, long-term cross-border co-operation needs financial resources on a continuous basis and a permanent office structure which acts as a broker and promoter for co-operation. A strong dependency on co-financing through INTERREG projects may endanger this continuity; therefore cross-border regions should strive for funding of their basic structures (at least partly) from the partners and stakeholders in the region itself.

- **Develop lobbying power.**

Political commitment is a precondition for developing lobbying power as a cross-border region. Successful lobbying is directed towards the respective national governments as well as towards the European Commission.

## **5.2 Elaborating a common agenda**

Cross-border co-operation is usually motivated by one of two objectives (or both): it must have the capability to solve problems which immediately arise out of the geographic location of border regions (e.g. commuter flows, environmental protection, labour market issues, etc.) and it must be able to define and realise the specific potentials of bundling capacities and regional assets. Especially for the latter task, exact knowledge about the strengths and weaknesses of a region is necessary and a precondition for developing realistic goals for co-operation and the necessary commitment of the relevant stakeholders. Common cross-border development strategies have proven to be a very useful tool in order to obtain both – knowledge and commitment.

### **Process and product**

However, these development strategies are not to be understood as a concrete roadmap for cross-border co-operation but rather act as a strategic framework. The process of elaborating such a strategic framework is just as important as the product itself, since it has the potential 1) to define the strengths and potentials of a region, 2) to clarify the aims and goals of cross-border co-operation, 3) to involve decision-makers as well as representatives from business circles, civil society, media and culture and therefore strengthen their commitment to cross-border co-operation, and 4) to increase the awareness of a wider public. In practice, however, it has become evident that the last point is the most difficult to achieve. Nevertheless,

examples from cross-border regions show the positive mobilising effect of such processes, even if they are largely restricted to an expert/stakeholder level.

### **A framework for concrete action and a yardstick for success**

At best, a common co-operation agenda develops into a strong framework of shared goals and strategies which facilitates the implementation of concrete co-operation measures “on the ground”. Although these declarations and plans are not binding, they can facilitate day-to-day co-operation immensely, as they are built on mutual co-operation interest. A common development strategy translated into an “action plan” serves as a yardstick for the success of cross-border co-operation, as it creates positive pressure to fulfil defined targets or solve problems that politicians have promised to tackle.

## **5.3 Building visions and identities – Marketing and branding of a cross-border region**

### **From regional USPs to regional identities**

As cross-border regions are competing in an international market for investment, talent and visibility, the definition of unique selling points (USPs), which have the capability to differentiate a region from others, is becoming increasingly important. Moreover, a clear understanding of what a region is all about not only has an outward effect but is also inward-oriented, as it communicates a region’s strengths and characteristics to its inhabitants and therefore creates the base for a regional identity.

Sometimes a region’s USPs are quite obvious, as is the case with the Öresund Region which in a very concrete way started as a bridge-building effort. In other cases, the qualities of a cross-border region are not symbolised by an iconic building or visible infrastructure; thus identity building and the definition of USPs have to take a somewhat different path. A set of key aspects to take into account:

First of all, we must realise that not every regional characteristic is automatically a USP that can be “sold” accordingly. Rather, some characteristics are shared with other regions, non-cross-border and cross-border alike. Accordingly, regional identity rests on a mix of unique and shared characteristics.

Building on this understanding, identity building is to be seen as a process which

- needs to combine an understanding of what is already there with a picture of where a region wants to go;
- is about developing a bottom-up and top-down approach, i.e. providing incentives and room for bottom-up initiatives as well as developing a strong political (=top-down) vision backed by “testimonials”;
- is about productively building on a shared history, i.e. openly communicating the positive as well as the negative portions of the common history;
- is about capitalising on existing cross-border activities (e.g. festivals and events); and
- is about bringing the region “to the ground” by creating tangible added value through good projects.

Some of these key aspects can be condensed and translated into major events. Such initiatives aim to act as catalyst projects that support a region in realising its qualities and potentials and help to develop ideas and a common understanding of which direction a region wants to choose for its future.

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