



Ex-Post Evaluation - INTERREG III 2000-2006

PROGRAMME: INTERREG III A Alpen-Bodensee

**DACH+
Raumentwicklung im Grenzraum Deutschland, Österreich,
Schweiz, Lichtenstein (Spatial Planning in the border region
Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Liechtenstein)**

Project Good Practice Study

**Project study: DACH+
Raumentwicklung im Grenzraum Deutschland – Österreich – Schweiz -
Liechtenstein (Spatial Development in the Border Region Germany – Austria –
Switzerland - Liechtenstein)**

1. General Information

Keywords: Cross-border spatial planning, environment, urban and rural development

Region: Border region Germany – Austria – Switzerland – Liechtenstein

DACH+ is an acronym composed of the first letters of the nationality signs of Germany (D), Austria (A) and, Switzerland (CH), while “+” represents the Principality of Liechtenstein. The geographical coverage of the DACH+ project is identical to the region covered by the INTERREG programme. The German part of the DACH+ project includes the rural districts to the south of Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria (rural districts Bodensee, Constance, Schwarzwald-Baar and Waldshut, Lindau, Oberallgäu and the city of Kempten). In Austria, the entire Bundesland Vorarlberg is covered by the ABH programme. The Swiss partner regions are the “Kantone” Aargau, Appenzell, Glarus, Graubünden, Schaffhausen, St. Gallen, Thurgau and Zürich. The Principality of Liechtenstein is covered entirely by the DACH+ project.

Programme/strand: INTERREG Strand A

Programme: Alpenrhein – Bodensee - Hochrhein

Measure: 2.2 Spatial planning

Priority topic(s): Environmental and spatial development

Duration: 2004 - 2008

Cost and co-funding: Total costs: €800,000, of which ERDF funds accounted for €200,000; Switzerland’s contribution was €75,000 and Liechtenstein’s €25,000. The remaining € 500,000 represent Austria’s and Germany’s national co-financing.

Lead partner:

Regionalverband Hochrhein-Bodensee

2. Project Aim

Cross-border cooperation in the border region between Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Liechtenstein has become increasingly important in spatial planning, which can be an effective tool for encouraging sustainable cooperation structures between these countries. The main objective of the project was to develop a conceptual and technical basis for sustainable cross-border spatial planning in the entire programme area. This approach aimed at creating framework conditions for optimising the existing economic and developmental potential of partner regions with distinct natural and cultural resources that are of vital importance to the development of the tourism sector, which should benefit indirectly from co-ordinated cross-border spatial planning.

3. Project Description

Four central objectives were defined for the project: a content-related structure of cross-border spatial monitoring; the development of the technical tools for cross-border spatial

monitoring; the establishment of a communication and exchange platform and; the creation of a meta-database for the collection and processing of adequate data on spatial planning and development. The scope of data generation was meant to focus on transport planning, settlement planning and cultural and land use planning.

The centrepiece of the project was the preparation and implementation of four conferences regarding the following topics: central developmental issues of the border region; transport and settlement development scenarios; land use and cultural landscape development, and an outlook on overall spatial development. These conferences were intended as a platform for developing a common cross-border understanding of spatial development in the overall DACH+ region, and a tool for collecting information about spatial monitoring and policy. Interdisciplinary expert teams from all participating regions were involved in the preparation.

Further subsequent activities were to be determined depending on the results of the conferences in order to capitalize on these achievements in the most effective way (documentation of the proceedings; selection and consolidation of data) the partners planned to establish a joint database (standardized and with clearly defined flags) and a mapping tool for users in local administrations (searching data and processing it into tailor-made maps).

In order to ensure the optimum quality of project results, it was essential to ensure that the partners were sufficiently trained and experienced in various fields of spatial analysis and in co-ordinating local spatial policies. The readiness to coordinate analyses and policies with their partners across the border was a prerequisite.

4. Political and Strategic Context

Borders hamper economic development and welfare. Along borders, such as those in the Alpine Rhine–Lake Constance–Upper Rhine area, several different national patterns of spatial policy have been developed, hence local space has been organised by aims and standards that were formerly neither compared with each other, nor co-ordinated. There had always been cross-border cooperation among the four regions, but a harmonized spatial development strategy and the corresponding planning were lacking. Consequently, there were enormous costs in utilising the common space. This problem was already recognised by the major political and administrative stakeholders of the Alpine Rhine–Lake Constance–Upper Rhine area in the 1990s. They consequently called for concerted action to improve the efficiency and sustainability of the common use of space and natural resources. The Bodensee-Raumordnungskommission served as the initial forum to develop the ensuing project idea.

EU enlargement has created a further challenge for an efficient spatial management in the project area. Such increasing complexity, even at the local levels called for a more far-sighted approach toward strategic co-operation across Europe. Today, cross-border spatial co-operation of the Alpine Rhine–Lake Constance–Upper Rhine area is no longer an issue along the local borders of the region, it is expected to be integrated into a wider trans-national form of co-operation, open enough to align the full variety of patterns of spatial policies effectively and always with a view to reap synergy effects from combining and integrating different ways of spatial management across borders.

The major promoter of this project was the Regionalverband Hochrhein-Bodensee, dating back to the times of INTERREG II. Prior to INTERREG there were no co-ordinated spatial / land-use planning tools or any development concepts for the overall cross-border area. The lack of reliable and adequately standardised data on spatial and land-use planning made it necessary to coordinate local spatial planning among the four participating

regions, conduct spatial development analyses, and develop policies in a co-ordinated manner. By and large, this was the justification for the DACH+ project.

The positive conviction of the DACH+ partners was that borders are actually a key point where inter-cultural comparisons can be best made, and that they are key locations for a well-founded documentation of history with respect to time and space.

5. Project Implementation

Initially the project concept, prepared by the Swiss, Austrian and German initiators, was discussed and approved within the meetings of the "Bodensee-Raumordnungskommission" (ROK-B). This Commission is the successor of the German-Swiss Spatial planning Commission (Raumordnungskommission) and was established in 2000. The objective of the commission is to improve spatial planning and development within the Lake Constance area. The partnership consisted of numerous local authorities for spatial planning in all four participating countries, while the coordination of the project was entrusted to the lead partner, the Regionalverband Hochrhein-Bodensee.

During the project preparation phase, partners agreed on an implementation structure, obliging all individual partners to actively participate in carrying out the various project activities and contributing with their own specific knowledge and experience. This included preparing and hosting the conferences and contributing to the development of technical tools and databases. It was the explicit aim during this phase to make use of all spatial planning tools already proven to be effective in the different partner regions. Thus, synergies of existing strengths were created instead of just implementing one-sided concepts.

The first conference (on central developmental issues of the DACH+ area) was convened by the Austrian partners in Bregenz on 2 December, 2004. Three papers from Germany, and Switzerland, all of them addressing space and borders, and defining communalities and differences of the DACH+ region were at the centre of this meeting. A second conference (on transport and settlement issues), convened by the Swiss partners in Schaffhausen on 1 December 2005 included mobility issues, settlement of planning data requirements and local spatial visions including the presentation of best practice examples from the participating countries. The third conference organised by the German partners in Constance on 29 March 2007 addressed cultural landscape development. Here two papers on spatial monitoring and the prospects of the development of the cultural landscape, three policy statements on political, economic and technological challenges of the local habitats of the DACH region and a final reflection on cultural landscape development were on the agenda. The final seminar represented the closing project conference and took place in Bregenz on 12 June 2008. The outcomes of these conferences were translated into the practical work of the local spatial planning authorities. The data was further streamlined and the communication platform developed accordingly.

As for the management of the project, Regionalverband Hochrhein-Bodensee, the lead partner, was in charge of administrative and financial management. The local project partners in Switzerland, Austria and Liechtenstein were responsible for coordinating the project activities in their areas of expertise, in a decentralised manner. Regardless of this division of tasks between partners, the project was managed in close co-ordination and guided by the common goals of DACH+. The project Steering Group was the actual management body, meeting twice a year and supervising project progress.

Fruitful co-operation relies on common interests and goals. According to the lead partner, expectations among the partners were to a large extent homogeneous. Although

interests at the outset were by no means identical, which was quite natural, a common understanding was reached through ongoing dialogue and by providing each other with insight into spatial development issues and problems in the partner regions.

In terms of the initial interest, the Swiss partners, on the one hand, appeared more pragmatic and theme-oriented, favouring concrete actions and results, which could be directly related to their organisation of spatial planning and development. A similar position was occupied by Liechtenstein. On the other hand, Germany pursued a more general approach, with its main focus on the development of a general spatial concept, while Austria advocated an intermediate position between the two approaches. Within the steering group all these issues were discussed and negotiated. In the end, it was possible to reach a mutual agreement, both to adopt the general approach and consider the more specific requests of all partners.

It is worth mentioning is that the initial opposing positions did not hamper the process or spirit of the project. On the contrary, such controversies over the right approach actually fuelled the very experimental nature of this project. Lively discussions and reflections about *pros* and *cons* of this and that position helped provide much more insight into the complex facets of such a strategic adventure. Improving and harmonising the database and finding a common denominator for the highly different planning structures in the participating countries (especially between the EU Member and non-Member States) was a tough 'trial and error' process and truly innovative. Partners tested the feasibility of further initiatives of spatial monitoring and development. This led to technical and social learning among those involved and affected, perhaps more so than if partners already shared a common understanding at the outset of the project.

According to the lead partner, the project was designed to be sufficiently flexible that it could easily accommodate regulatory changes or modified procedures. In addition, the group had considerable experience with INTERREG and was thus fairly well prepared to apply sound anticipative management to cross-border project planning. In the future a comprehensive cross-border physical development plan for the entire region and specific sectoral and sub-regional planning concepts are on the agenda. Furthermore, partners intend to launch pilot projects to assess how cross-border spatial development and monitoring evolves in practice (e.g. settlement development, public transport, land use), and the implementation of international and European legal provisions relevant to spatial development.

6. Project Results

The main goal of the project was to establish a communication and database platform to provide the technical foundation for future cross-border spatial planning in the entire transnational area. The main results of the project were: content-based data gathering into cross-border spatial monitoring; technical data gathering into cross-border spatial monitoring; a communications and exchange platform; a meta-database.

The three most important fields of spatial planning (habitat, transport and cultivated landscape) were addressed. The project produced a data-bank containing detailed information and documentation related to these areas. Furthermore, the project still operates its own homepage that addresses possible economic development scenarios in the project region. In so doing it provided transparency and encouraged broad participatory processes for public engagement.

The Geo-Portal was launched, enabling spatial planning authorities of the region to use the data and the analytic mapping facility in their daily work. This instrument has made the cross-border dialogue on spatial monitoring and planning much easier. Together, the Intranet, website and Geo-Portal allow for an efficient communication process. Further to

that, the four successful conferences on cross-border spatial development served as a 'market place' of ideas and subsequent networking among spatial planners and experts.

The meta-database was developed and successfully integrated into the Geo-Portal, ensuring that relevant and standardized data is processed. Spatial monitoring in the four different countries is now comparable. Policy decisions (land use, environmental, economic etc.) have become much more consistent. As such the project was innovative in pioneering the coordination of different national spatial monitoring systems and policies for complex border regions.

The project enhanced various forms of inter-institutional communication and organizational learning processes. The four conferences, various workshops and publications facilitated the important acquisition and dissemination of technical and management know-how on spatial monitoring and policies. The major results of DACH+ are, however, the transformations in administrative patterns and behaviour, e.g. the German partner authorities adopted a number of very useful components from the Swiss system of spatial affairs.

The project was very useful for municipalities and districts in the entire ABH area, which are still extensively using the data and documentation produced by the project for their spatial planning at local level.

In the long-run, DACH+ aims at establishing a platform capable of catalysing the exchange of know-how (spatial data and information), innovation (pioneering ideas of strategic spatial relevance and laboratory for testing the feasibility of multi-national agreements in cross-border spatial policies, promotion of niche products based the spatial diversity of the region), improved cross-border co-operation (networking, piloting, testing tailor-made solutions) and communication (broad publicity and exchange with other cross-border areas).

7. Key success Factors and Lessons Learnt

The DACH+ project is of a major strategic relevance to the Alpine Rhine-lake Constance-Upper Rhine area. The permanent communication and close networking have largely improved the transparency of the spatial context and the economic potential of the German-Austrian-Swiss and Liechtenstein border regions. A key success factor for that process was the strong and very obvious need to improve the efficiency of land use and the allocation of natural resources. Despite minor differences in their operational strategies, the Swiss, German, Austrian and Liechtenstein partners were guided by a common overall interest.

From a socio-cultural viewpoint, intensive discussions during project implementation helped eliminate initial prejudices and a perceived one-sided interest of the German partner. The style of dialogue was cognitive discourse, which allowed a better understanding of the culture and the way of thinking of the respective partners. Interestingly, what initially appeared to be just a feasible compromise later turned out to be the superior solution for all partners, including Germany. Partners learnt an important lesson about the benefits of respect and reflection in an inter-cultural dialogue.

DACH+ recognized the positive aspects of the different borders and capitalised on them. The project pursued a multi-dimensional approach of borders, recognising them as political, cultural, spatial and environmental. True partnership and political support were a precondition for any success in the DACH+ project. In fact, the key to furnishing a common goal was the mutual conviction that an integrated cross-border spatial policy could enhance regional integration in the Alpine Rhine-Lake Constance-Upper Rhine area.