

## **Interview with Anna Winkler, Association of European Border Regions**

# **Improving information for commuters in the European border Regions**

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Between 2011 and 2012, the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) has put in place a project to raise awareness about legal and administrative information for EU nationals working in another EU country. In this interview Anna Winkler, AEBR Projects and Finances officer, describes the project in brief.

### **1) What issues did the project intend to address?**

The project focused specifically on cross-border regions. Due to their peripheral location and the different legislations, languages and cultures, the availability of reliable information for border commuters proves to be particularly challenging. Although information on standard situations can be obtained quite easily via brochures and websites, finding information on more complex cases is difficult. For that reason this project was supposed to: firstly, promote the exchange of information between cross-border advisory services; secondly, elaborate concrete proposals to improve the existing advisory services; thirdly, raise awareness about the problems and challenges faced by cross-border workers.

### **2) What is the main lesson learned from the project?**

Information is a crucial element for the promotion of labour mobility in Europe. In this regard, personalised advisory services play a key role in letting migrant workers access complex information. Accordingly, cross-border information networks alongside the existing personalised advisory services must be maintained and supported. Without reliable information for European cross-border workers and the exchange of information between all relevant stakeholders, it is difficult to achieve a real cross-border labour market.

### **3) How can cross-border commuters benefit from this project?**

This summer, 20 years after the creation of the European internal market, the Committee of the Regions, supported by the AEBR, will issue an opinion on the situation of cross-border workers. We hope that this opinion will help raise awareness about the obstacles and challenges faced by these workers at European and national level.

From the national perspective, cross-border workers make up for only a small group of workers. Accordingly, the national legislation in most cases doesn't sufficiently take into account their particular needs and problems. Therefore, we are expecting that the opinion will give rise to new initiatives and actions at European, national and regional level, promoting mobility in the European Union. The AEBR plans also to launch a task force focusing on cross-border labour market that should make easier the exchange of information and strengthen the network created in the scope of the project.