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Deepening integration in border regions within CAREC

Can 'Euroregio' be used as role-model for 'Asiaregio?'

What is 'Euroregio'?

- Its underlying concept stems from the simple idea that going a step 'further and deeper' beyond the existing framework of bilateral relations between governments is beneficial to the welfare of contiguous local communities, while paving way for better relations between nations.
- It is a framework for cooperation among regions located across national borders;
- It dates back to the late 1950s when a fatal episode close to the Dutch-German border in 1958 generated a push towards opening of the borders between two bordering regions;
- Starting in the 1990s, the concept was adopted by countries outside the EU as well, with the strong support of both the European Commission and the Council of Europe.

Model of 'Euroregio' usually entails cross-border cooperation:

- Covering various areas such as development, environment, health and emergency assistance, business and trade, tourism activities, as well as culture and sport.
- Addressing the movement of people, capital, goods and services often going beyond rules negotiated for the national economy.
- In other issue-areas of relevance to contiguous communities

Euroregions vary in size and issues covered

- There are now around 70 cross-border regions
- They play a crucial role in facilitation of contacts between government and non-government organizations as well as individuals and businesses
- They address such areas as infrastructure, education, research and development, environmental protection, access to local markets, transportation and communication

Examples of cross-border cooperation

HEALTH

- Emergency ambulances operation across border (Belgium – France)
- Cooperation of mountain assistance (France-Italy; Briancon-Turin)
- Nurse training (France-Spain; Lavelanet-Mataro)
- Cross-border Network for the primary prevention of drug addiction (Germany-Poland)

BUSINESS, TRADE and TOURISM

- EureGo (Udine and Slovenia) – local transport and infrastructure, joint tourist festivals and labor market activities)
- Euroregio Karelia (Russia and Finland) - The coordination of Interreg and Tacis programmes
- Kaliningrad (Russia), Poland and Lithuania – wholesale food market, development fund for Kaliningrad, aviation, transport

ENVIRONMENT and CULTURE

- Adriatic Euroregion
Includes projects for protection of the cultural heritage; protection of the environment; Ecotourism, fishery and agriculture
- Euroregion Baltic
(energy and water forums, green circle schools – network of schools for education and training in sustainable environmental development)

Organizational structures vary depending on local conditions, but

- They include as a rule a “steering committee” formed by regional and local authorities
 - to promote local business and cultural initiatives,
 - develop infrastructure,
 - protect the environment,
 - and facilitate movement of people and goods across borders.

Why is the experience with 'Euroregio' worth exploring?

- It has laid foundation for sharing benefits of more open borders also among countries not parties to preferential regional arrangements
- It has piloted various ideas of deeper integration tested first at a micro-level
- It has proven to be an effective instrument complementing bottom-down integration
- It has energized public support and set the groundwork for closer cooperation at central government level

Can Euroregio be transplanted?

- The experience of Euroregio can be transplanted to other regions provided there is commitment “to reinforce and foster neighborly relations between territorial communities and authorities within the jurisdiction of other Contracting parties.”
- While no equivalent of ‘Euroregio’ has as yet emerged along the borders of contiguous CAREC members, interactions already occurring and potential benefits stemming from their expansion make it an attractive concept to explore for CAREC governments.

Can Euroregio be transplanted?

- Various arrangements already exist between bordering regions, formal and informal, that would benefit from stability assured by the status of Asiaregio e.g. Kulundu on TJK-KRG border and Korgaz on KAZ-CHN border below)



The purpose of the project is

- To adopt the concept to CAREC conditions and assess its potential benefits:
- To identify contiguous regions that might benefit from institutionalized forms of closer cooperation:
- To activate a 'bottom-up' dimension of CAREC-led regional integration effort.
- To develop ideas for the areas to be included as Asiaregio-type cross-border cooperation