

Hannes Schaffer

EUROPE AFTER THE ENLARGEMENT

The creation of a cross-border economic region in the heart of Europe, called CENTROPE is the greatest opportunity that EU enlargement offers to border regions in Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. The CENTROPE region, strategically located in the heart of the "New Europe", is one of the continent's most dynamic economic regions. In contrast to Western Europe's saturated markets, Eastern Europe offers enormous growth opportunities with an economic expansion rate of up to five percent anticipated over the next few years.

of the region that is reflected in cross-border economic, cultural and social activities. The spatial development after 2004 knows no borders any more - policy still does.

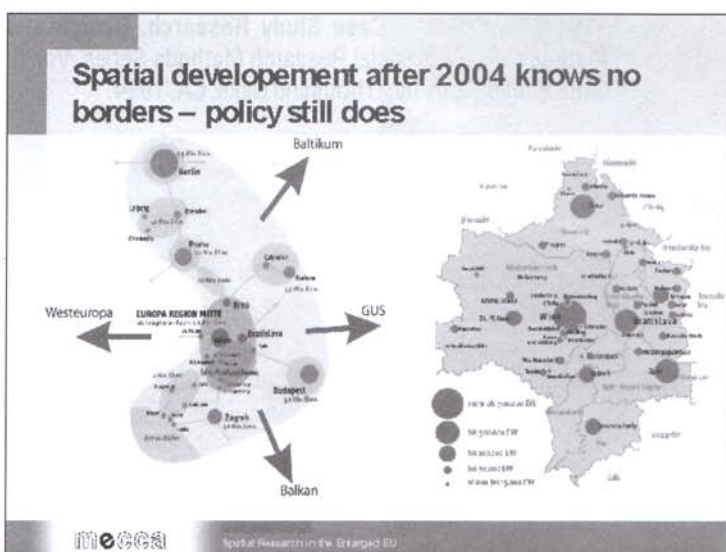
The expansion of the EU is significantly improving the opportunities for enhanced integration and collaboration. The four neighbouring countries constitute a region which is diverse in terms of its citizens and markets. Intensive cooperation can make the region unique, attractive and strong: capable of meeting the challenges posed by the competition between the European regions. In my view the economic success of the region is closely linked to two factors: the system of education and research and the system of planning

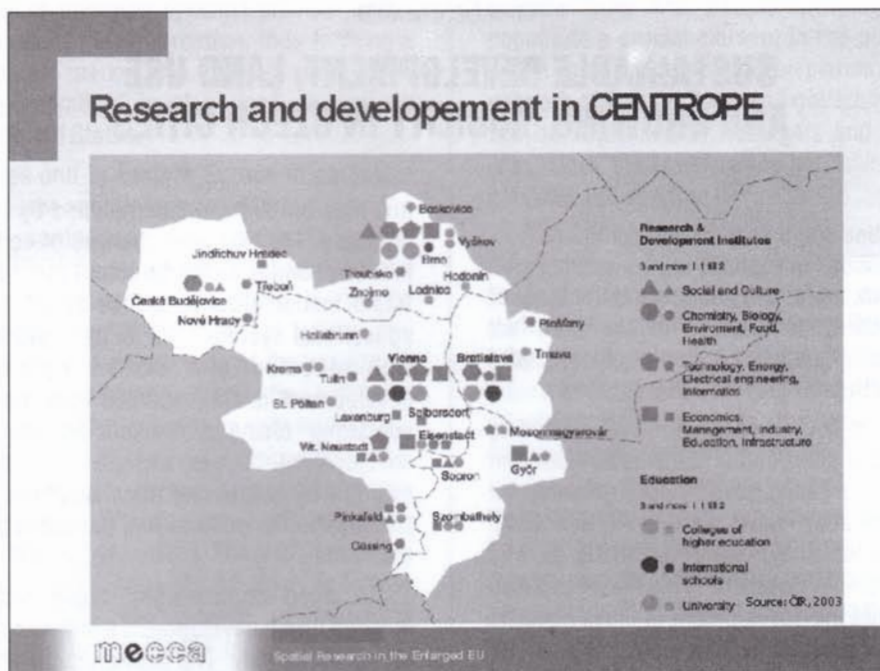


The system of education and research

The efforts invested in research and development (R&D) and the investments in education are major factors for the performance capability of an economy. As an indicator for the technological performance capability of an economy, the volume of spending on research and development in percentage of GDP is used (R&D ratio). Austria achieves the European average with approx. 1.9%, the Czech Republic with 1.3% (a value that is higher than the figures for the Southeastern EU member states), while Slovakia (0.7%) and Hungary (0.8%) are at around 40% of the EU average. Typical for the entire CENTROPE region is a broad offer of educational and qualification institutions and the respectively high level of qualification of the population. The systems of school education in the CENTROPE countries hardly differ from each another. Basically, all four countries have general secondary schools, technical and economic higher secondary schools, and specialised colleges and universities. The educational system meets the needs of a competitive economy" very high.

The region looks back at a long common history and had strong functionally ties in the past. Only political events in the 20th century turned that region into a border region. Even though economic and systemic differences currently exist, the accession to the EU of the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary revives the spatial functionality





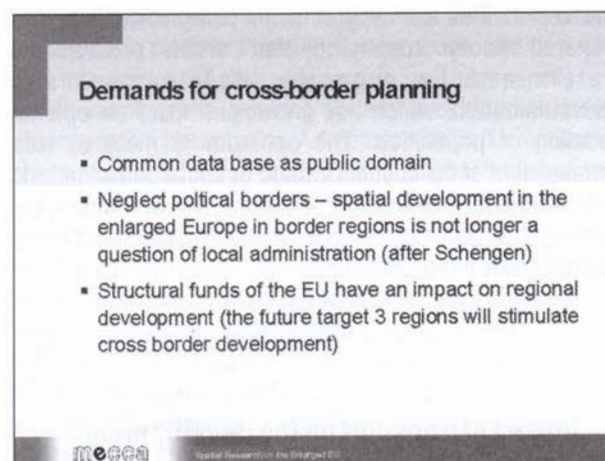
The system of planning

The next years will see strong changes in the spatial development of the CENTROPE region. Economic activities, the creation of new jobs in different centres of the CENTROPE region. Trade and traffic will influence spatial structures across the administrative borders. Numerous new conflicts are arising: Infrastructure development versus "green" image, urban centres versus peripheral areas, the twin cities Vienna - Bratislava and the rest of the region. The planning system in its present structure is not capable to cope with those problems as long as we have to deal with 4 different administrative systems and 4 different languages.

How can we think across borders if we have no precise cross border digital map for public purposes? The barrier in the brain is the white spot on the map too.



To develop effective tools for cross border planning is a major task for the CENTROPE region in the next years.



Sources:

CENTROPE REGION, Regional Analysis, Final Report
September 2003,
[HTTP://CENTROPE.COM/CENTROPE/TOPICS/INVESTING_IN_CENTROPE_EDUCATION](http://CENTROPE.COM/CENTROPE/TOPICS/INVESTING_IN_CENTROPE_EDUCATION)
Europa Region Mitte, Industriellenvereinigung, 2003