

Minutes of the 4th Euregio II project partner meeting “Solutions for improving health care cooperation in border regions” project partner meeting held in Vienna, Austria
Cologne, Germany. 22nd/23rd November, 2010

The 4th Euregio II project partner meeting was held in Vienna, Austria alongside a workshop on a handbook for ‘the effective use of INTERREG funding in cross border care.’ This handbook is the key product from work package 4 and one of the core deliverables of the project. This workshop was organized in order to collate, present and discuss the materials which would be utilized in the production of the draft version of the handbook. The first day of the project partner meeting was therefore dedicated to this workshop. It was opened with a short introduction and quickly followed by a general overview of the Work package by the Work package leader.

This overview covered the content, targets and general progress of the work package over the last one and a half year. Challenges that had arisen over the course of the project were highlighted along with the solutions that had been applied to them. Finally, she gave an overview of the preliminary index of the handbook. Following this, there was a presentation from the Association for European Border Regions (AEBR), concerning the relevance of European Union funding for cross border health activities in European Union border regions. The session was then rounded up by a presentation from Gudula Ward on the findings of the Euregio project with regard to potential fields of action for cross-border health initiatives.

The second session of the day was dedicated to the presentation of case studies from various border regions (new and old member states, including Switzerland). This session was rounded up with a plenary session on the added value of these case studies to the current state of health care cross border cooperation. The second day and meeting proper of the steering committee was kicked off with a seminar on the role of communicative action in cross border health care in border regions by Matt Commers. The agenda of the meeting included updates from the different work packages. The external evaluator responsible for the evaluation of the project was introduced to the project partners and took part in majority of the sessions of the first day and all of the second day. Issues

relating to the actual developments, budget amendments, interim report were also discussed.

Actual developments

The proposed grant amendments which included an increase in the work hours for work package 4, transfer of the budget for the external evaluators from the budget for Liga.NRW to UM subcontracting costs were discussed and accepted by all partners. It was agreed that the budget to increase the work hours for work package 4 would come from the 'other costs' budget of the University of Maastricht (UM) and the 'personnel budget' of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR). Unfortunately the internal evaluation report could not be discussed even though the results had been collected. This was due to the fact that the person delegated the task of compiling the internal evaluation results from the partners lost a close relative just before the project partner meeting in Vienna. The group was updated on the discussion that the project coordinator had with the project officer from the agency (EAHC) concerning the strategic relevance of the project to the agency including the acceptance of the interim report. The external evaluator for the project, (Health Monitor) was introduced to the group as already mentioned above. It was agreed that the external evaluator would commence with the evaluation of Work Package 4. This would be followed by the evaluation of Work Packages 5 and 6. The methodology for the evaluation would be developed in conjunction with the project partners but in line with the milestones and deliverables stipulated in the grant agreement. The venue and timing of the next project partner meeting were raised and it was agreed that February was quite early to have another project partner meeting in view of the closeness to the one held in Vienna. The fact that it would be preferable to have the meeting after most of the deliverables were in the phase of dissemination was also raised. Partners also discussed that the logistics involved in getting to Varna were challenging, hence the issue should be raised and discussed between the project leader and the project officer.

Work Package 2 and 7

A broader and more detailed dissemination strategy was presented, discussed and adopted. The poor rate of contribution of materials to the blog was also discussed. However, an important observation was made that there were a lot of hits to the blog but few actual content contributions. It was therefore decided to seek out more interactive web based tools as a platform for communication. Other avenues to disseminate the deliverables and products of the project include the executive committee meetings, the task force cross border health, a possible workshop at the general assembly, direct communication to all members, journal articles, participation in conferences, seminars, symposia, dissemination of the project flyer, project poster and the possibility of a launching a platform on a professional social networking site. The elaboration and optimization of all networks connected to the project was also highlighted as having a high impact role in the dissemination of the products and deliverables from the project.

Work Package 4

The draft index for the handbook agreed upon the previous day was presented for a final viewing before the final process of actually writing the handbook commenced. The work package leader also discussed a time line and informed the group that a draft would be ready by January for review by the Maastricht University. Following this review process the draft version would be disseminated for comments and contributions from stakeholders. After this process was completed, the final version of the handbook would be ready for dissemination to all actors interested and involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of cross border projects in health care.

Work Package 5

The current state and development of the work package was presented to the partners. An outline for the working format for the draft of the guidelines was presented along with the work plan for the testing of two pilot HTA studies on the guidelines in 2 separate border regions. The results and analysis of the questionnaire survey of hospitals in border regions on the need and use of HTAs in decision making were discussed during this presentation.

Work Package 6

A more formalized version of the outline of the legal report was presented and discussed extensively by the partners. The work plan and approach taken by the legal expert was to describe 3 case studies of border regions cooperating in health care with legal challenges. The strategic but much ignored difference and peculiarity of legal challenges of institutions collaborating and cooperating in border regions as opposed to patient mobility across borders was highlighted during this discussion.