

Euregio Meuse-Rhine: Euregional
Orientation and Prospects 2015

2015



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an initiative of the:

CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

Euregio Meuse-Rhine¹



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At the heart of one of Europe's most densely populated economic areas, the Belgian-Dutch-German Euregio Meuse-Rhine, characterized by excellent access and a penchant for innovation, is close to the European Union's decision-making centres and has a major slice of the EU's purchasing power. Its compact diversity, with its three languages and five cultures, means that it is often seen as the EU in a microcosm and as a "testbed" for European developments.

As a consequence of EU-enlargement in 2004 and increasing global economic competition, the Euregio Meuse-Rhine faces both great challenges and attractive future opportunities. Euregional characteristics and facilities are becoming increasingly important in the growing international competition for inbound investment. The Euregio Meuse-Rhine will require a higher profile, if it is to remain competitive, guarantee sustainable growth and retain quality economic activity. For this reason, the shared objective among its partners is to position the Euregio Meuse-Rhine as a leading region when others start 'jockeying for position'.

To mark the occasion of their 200th Anniversary, the Chambers of Commerce and Industry in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine have drafted a document entitled: Orientation and Prospects 2015, which records the principal requirements for successful cooperation on economic development issues.

2015



Principal requirements for the future

1. Standards for existing and future locations

Status: good, but upgradable

- Sustainable improvement of the economic climate for established business and new investment.
- The future strength of the SME-economy resides in:
 - the promotion of economic sectors with high potential and dynamic business partners
 - the development of habitual cross-border cooperation as the norm in the: automotive/rail, IT, life sciences, polymer, laser and nanotechnology sectors
 - the creation of new businesses
- Promotion of habitual cross-border cooperation as the norm in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine's service sector
- A distinct profile of the Euregio Meuse-Rhine as a single, unified location with accompanying marketing activities
- The Euregio Meuse-Rhine embraces all of the constituent elements of the EU – at the regional level. There is: great potential with highly qualified human resources; an excellent R & D infrastructure and a great diversity of economic activity; in short, the Euregio's potential as a European "testbed" is exemplary. Accordingly:
- Further support from the European Union, within the Interreg program, from 2006 onward would appear indispensable to the development of habitual cross-border cooperation and in creating a true Euregional economic entity.
- Creation of a "Euregional Identity", by further strengthening cross-border capability and establishing the norm of working and living in a "multinational" region with "European consciousness as an everyday feature" should be encouraged.
- Access to all national TV-programs for increased awareness of what's going on across the borders in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine is required.



2. Infrastructure

Optimization of infrastructures and increased mobility

- Optimization of the multimodal transport networks (road, rail and air) to the highest modern logistical standards
- Preparing infrastructures for increased traffic volumes
- Further extension of multimodal transport nodes including waterborne traffic (e.g.: Port of Liège, Born and Genk)
- Expansion and completion of the intraregional highway infrastructure
- A border-free trajectory is required for freight transport (following the "hub and spoke principle")
- Promotion of consumers and workforce mobility.

Some key measures:

Road

- Parkstad outer ring, three-lane A 2 highway plus tunnel in Maastricht
- Linkage between A 46 and A 2 via Sittard-Geleen
- Completion of the A1's Blankenheim section
- North-South connection between Hasselt and Eindhoven
- Connection between Hasselt – Maastricht and Bree – Weert

Rail

- Inclusion of the Euregio Meuse-Rhine in the High Speed Rail Network-extension via Amsterdam
- Linking the intraregional rail connections with the extended High Speed Rail Network
- Completion of a Light Rail/Euregio Circle Line as part of the public transport network
- Completion of a rapid transit connection between Hasselt, Maastricht and Liège
- "Iron Rhine" with connections to industrial center Genk

Air

- Liège airport: to be integrated into the future border-free concept for freight transport in order to benefit from Liège Airport's international connections to Asia in particular
- The extension of Maastricht-Aachen Airport

Water

- Port of Liège (second in Europe in terms of tonnage handled): to be thoroughly integrated within the cross-border freight transport system
- Better linkage of the Euregio Meuse-Rhine's multi-modal transport nodes between the 'hinterland' and the ports of Antwerp and Rotterdam
- Bridges over the Meuse between Belgium and the Netherlands
- Extension of the waterborne transport on the Northern canals (e.g.: Campine canals, Mid-Limburg canals).



3. Industrial sites

Development of a survey of potentials and a future strategy for the Euregio Meuse-Rhine

- Provision of attractive business parks within the Euregio Meuse-Rhine to secure economic growth and employment
- Harmonization of legal requirements on environmental issues and infrastructure provision
- Coordination of the long-term business park provision in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine: development of an inventory of available sites and potentials to keep up with the international competition for such locations
- Management and monitoring of business park supply and demand within the Euregio Meuse-Rhine.
- Increase of intraregional contacts between local towns and cities
- Specialised (IT) infrastructure for business units/economic activity areas.

4. Education/Employment

Activities to increase employment and its quality

- Cultural differences play an important role in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine and form one of its strengths.
- Encouragement of an increasingly multilingual workforce within the Euregio Meuse-Rhine
- Teacher exchange within the Euregio Meuse-Rhine
- Further internationalization of University courses
- Encouragement of student exchange between institutions within the Euregio Meuse-Rhine
- More competition among educational institutions, leading to the best system
- Encouraging labour flexibility to cope with the ageing society and the population decrease in the Euregio's younger age groups.
- Introducing the Belgian-German Dual educational system in the whole of the Euregio Meuse-Rhine.



5. Research/Innovation

Enormous potential and very high demand

- Further development of the unique top-level cross-border R & D infrastructure as a basis for investment. Leading centres of competence in a large variety of sectors are already present, very often in shape of a Public-Private Partnership (PPP).
- Developing a Euregional research network profile
- Promotion of "networking" and knowledge-transfer between Euregional research institutions, especially in the fields of automotive/rail technology, IT, life sciences, polymer, laser and nanotechnology.
- Further developing the existing R & D network between the universities of Aachen, Eindhoven, Louvain, Liège and Maastricht.
- Creation of Euregional platforms for a direct exchange of production and research for further developments.



6. Bureaucracy/Administration

Harmonization of European legislation and the reduction of bureaucratic barriers

Taking advantage of being close to the EU's decision-making centres:

Short-term:

- Implementation of the "Declaration of Roermond", i.e.: when establishing and running a company in cross-border business parks (e.g.: "Avantis") or in a 20-kilometer-zone on both sides of the border, providing an elective option of the governing national legal system (e.g.: as regards tax law).
- Introduction of this system to Belgium in a second phase.

Long-term:

Support plans for:

- EU-harmonization of relevant national legislation
- Reduction of (national) 'red tape' to facilitate investment
- Facilitation of (legal) conditions for business starters
- Completion of a legal framework in which the Euregional Chambers may cooperate in certain areas under public law, so that a Euregional cross-border Chamber organisation may be established in the near future.

7. Quality of Life/Tourism

Wide range of quality leisure pursuits

- Developing existing tourist networks and cooperation in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine
- Promotion of a Euregio which offers tourist attractions ranging from: conferences, city tourism, water recreation and countryside with facilities for walking, cycling, horse-riding through to facilities for 'wellness' and indoor ski slopes.
- Integration of the recently established "Eifel National Park", the Heuvelland (Hill Country) and Campine areas and its tourist potential
- Further improvement of the mix of tourist attractions being offered
- Launch of a web site to promote the Euregional tourist attractions
- Completion of a "Dreiländerpark" (Tri-country Park) as the "green heart" of the Euregio Meuse-Rhine.

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