



ENCOUNTERS

Two regions of Europe:
Brandenburg (Germany) and
Centru Region - South Transylvania (Romania)

Booklet accompanying the exhibition organised to celebrate the 10-year
partnership between Brandenburg and Centru Region



Imprint:

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Partnerships for more solidarity in Europe

Ten years ago, Brandenburg nominated the representative for the partnership with Centru Region from South Transylvania (Romania). Many successful joint projects were initiated and have developed, on scientific, political, economic and cultural contacts and cooperation – in the counties of Sibiu, Brasov, Alba, Covasna, Harghita and Mures. The partnership representatives have continuously done excellent work over this period. Whether in Brandenburg or in Centru Region, we can be proud of this success story. These projects have given impetus, facilitated friendly encounters and, above all, brought the experience that Europe is being shaped in the regions by people who courageously break new ground.

Nowadays, more and more people are realising: we must fight for Europe. In order to preserve Europe, we must change and shape Europe. Jürgen Habermas, one of the most discussed thinkers and a passionate European, pointed out in his thank-you speech on the Franco-German Media Prize at the beginning of July that Europe's citizens are sometimes bolder than politicians, that more and more people in Europe think in solidarity beyond the interest of their own country and want a strong and solidary EU that is politically capable of action.

Against the background of isolation, protectionism, right-wing populism and anti-European tendencies, it is a question of existence whether and how Europe, with its common values, its open society and democracy, can assert itself in the world.

We face many changes in Europe today: digital infrastructure, data protection and citizen's rights, migration and the fight against flight causes, euro cohesion, security and defence – all these tasks require close cooperation between members and a binding legal framework. But all this is not enough to make Europe truly sustainable.

Usually solidarity in communities arises from a grown identity. But if we want Europe to be perceived by its citizens not only as an economic and financial institution, but as a political community with common values, then we in Europe must go the opposite way and create conditions for European solidarity from which a common identity can emerge. That is when social justice and social protection become visible and tangible for the citizens.

We need more European solidarity and a social Europe as a basis for the sense of togetherness of Europeans as a political community. Many citizens feel this and expect the EU to have the political capacity to act to overcome the growing social inequality between and within the member states. It is in this awareness and this commitment of the citizens in the regions, which is promoted, inspired and strengthened by joint European projects, that Europe has a great opportunity. For this also stand the 10 years of a successful partnership between Centru Region from Romania and the federal Brandenburg from Germany – two European regions that have a lot in common.

For the successful work over the last 10 years, I would like to thank the partnership representatives Dr. Birgit Schliewenz and Klaus-Peter Krüger.

For the next 10 years I wish the partnership commissioners to continue to have many creative ideas and much success in their projects and cooperation!



Britta Stark
President of the State Parliament of Brandenburg

The partnership representatives and their tasks

In October 2008, the state government of Brandenburg appointed partnership representatives (PSB) in Centru Region (Romanian) as well as in two Polish regions. The PSB was commissioned to maintain contacts in the partner regions, to form and maintain a network and to initiate bilateral cooperation projects and to support their implementation. The effects of the PSB instrument was evaluated in 2014. The evaluation made it clear that the strengths of the PSB lie above all in its function as a political and civil society instrument. It was then decided to refocus the tasks and the regions.

Relations with Centru Region from Romania is an important aspect of Brandenburg's foreign contacts. Based on a wide range of joint projects, many contacts and cooperation in the cultural and civil society sector have been established in recent times. Through the partnership commissioners, Brandenburg's interests are safeguarded and expanded by maintaining political, scientific, economic and cultural contacts in Centru Region - Romania.

The Commissioner initiates and supports the development and implementation of bilateral and multilateral cooperation projects. So, they contribute to Brandenburg's positive image in the partner region.

The partnership representatives are recruited on the basis of calls for tenders and subsequent appointments. Following the tenders, ManCom GmbH was appointed for Centru Region. The owners of the Potsdam-based company run a consulting firm in southern Transylvania, MANCOM CENTRU S.R.L., based in Benic, municipality of Galda de Jos. The partnership representative has an office in Alba Iulia.



Appointed partnership representative of Brandenburg for the Centru Region/South Transylvania, Romania:

ManCom GmbH
Lindstedter Straße 18 b
14469 Potsdam



The 10 years' cooperation between Centru Region and Brandenburg is the result of an administrative partnership financed by the European Union. Funds from the European Commission and the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology subsequently supported a project-oriented and truly sustainable development of relations between two regions in Europe. The bilateral and multilateral projects, the mutual visits of politicians, experts, young people and tourists led to a broad and multifaceted cooperation, personal ties and friendships. What grew step by step today is a stable and reliable partnership between two regions in Europe whose initial situations in 1989/1990 were comparable. It is a partnership that has contributed and still contributes to solving problems with European dimensions. A partnership that already at an early stage introduced important topics into the European debate. Issues of mutual interest such as demographic change, integrated urban development, the development of an energy strategy, the introduction of IT-based interactive instruments for regional planning and regional marketing were addressed and implemented at an early stage. The "Centru Region" – six districts in southern Transylvania, located in the centre of Romania – has set important accents with German and especially Brandenburg assistance in Romania integration into the current European development – also with the first Romanian regional office in Brussels. Between Brandenburg and Centru – in and for Europe – a partnership was developed that has no equal.

Relations with the Centru Region in Romania is an important aspect of Brandenburg 's foreign contacts. A partnership representative (PSB) appointed by Brandenburg for the first time in 2008 serves as an interface and framework for the diverse activities and projects. PSB's mission is to cultivate contacts in the partner region, form and maintain a network, initiate bilateral cooperation projects and support their implementation. Based on a wide range of joint projects, many contacts and cooperation have been established in the cultural and civil society sector.

Personal contacts and encounters from joint projects have become the foundation and guarantor of the development of cooperation in partnership between the two regions.



South Transylvania

Transylvania is a historic land in the southern Carpathian region with an eventful 800-year history. In its largest historical expansion as a principality Transylvania covered about 62,000 km². In ancient times, the area was mainly populated by the Dacians. Between 106-271, Transylvania belonged to the Roman Empire as province of Dacia. Conquered by Hungary at the end of the 9th century, Szekler were settled in the 10th century and Germans (Transylvanian Saxons) in the 12th century as border guards. The “guests” were granted land and special economic and political rights. The Ottomans, who had invaded since 1432, were beaten twice. Transylvania was principality and Habsburg province. In 1918 Transylvania joined the Romanian state.

Romania’s membership in the EU has led to the creation of new developing regions. Today, historic Transylvania extends over various districts and regions. The largest part – Southern Transylvania – is occupied by the Centru Region with its six districts Alba, Brasov, Covasna, Harghita, Mures and Sibiu. On a total area of 34,082 km² live 2.36 million inhabitants in the Centru Region alone. The highland, surrounded by mountains, rich in forest, hold many mineral resources. Developed industrial sites and fertile soil provide a good basis for economic development. With its diversity of peoples, denominations and cultures, Transylvania has a long history of peaceful coexistence from which a modern Europe can learn much.

Brandenburg

Brandenburg used to belong to the North German Lowlands as Mark Brandenburg. It is an Ice Age shaped hilly country with glacial valleys. Brandenburg has large nature and landscape reserves (around 1.2 million ha); nowhere else in Germany there are more lakes and rivers.

Around 940 Margrave Gero subdued the territory of German rule for only 43 years. It was not until the middle of the 12th century that German rule continued with the Ascanians. German aristocratic families followed, such as the Hohenzollern, who ruled Brandenburg from 1415 to 1918. In 1701 the Duchy of Prussia became kingdom and Frederick I king in Prussia (the Polish parts of Prussia were not part of it). Frederick William I established the legendary reputation of the Prussian army and is regarded as the creator of Prussian civil service. Frederick II (Frederick the Great) was associated with the beginning of the Prussian great power position in Europe. The granting of complete freedom of religion considerably increased the number of immigrants. Under Prime Minister Otto von Bismarck, Prussia led the German unification movement that led to the German Empire in 1871.

The province of Brandenburg emerged from the Mark Brandenburg in 1815 and remained the heartland of Prussia. In 1946, Brandenburg became part of the Soviet occupation zone and was part of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) from 1949 to 1952. Divided into three districts in the GDR, it was re-established as Brandenburg in 1990 and adopted a constitution by referendum in 1992. On a total area of 29,476 km² live 2.45 million inhabitants.



South Transylvania

A special feature of the Transylvanian cultural landscape are the fortified churches, which were built at the time to defend romanian against Turkish and Tartar incursions. These free-standing churches, surrounded by high protective walls, give villages and towns a characteristic appearance.

Most of the Transylvanian-Saxon fortified churches belong to the Protestant Church. For centuries they were the centre of the religious and cultural life of the German minority. After emigrations – especially after 1990 – many churches are no longer or only rarely used. Villagers who have maintained the fortified churches for centuries have also gone with the migration.

There are fortified churches, fortified church courtyards, fortress churches and count 's castles. At present, about half of the more than 150 churches are endangered to varying degrees. The preservation of the structural foundations and the renovation mean an infinite amount of detailed work, and it is a fight against time and for money. Through private initiatives, state-sponsored measures and financing with European funds, a start is being made to preserve the unique landscape of fortified churches.

Seven castles belong to the UNESCO world cultural heritage: Bierthälm/ Biertan, Kelling/ Călnic, Dersch/ Dârjiu, Tartlau/ Prejmer (pictue above), Keisd/ Saschiz, Wurmloch/ Valea Viilor, Deutsch-Weißkirch/ Viscri.

Brandenburg

A monument has been rebuilt in Potsdam, the capital of Brandenburg. This monument - the city castle - has a subtle message „Ceci n'est pas un château“- “That's not a castle” - that adorns the frontage in golden letters. With this name, the historic building houses the State Parliament of Brandenburg and became the house of democracy. What a story!

Potsdam's City Palace was the most important and dominant building in the city centre until its destruction on 14 April 1944. Build in the middle of the 17th century, it was rebuilt between 1744 and 1752 according to plans by Georg Wenzeslaus von Knobelsdorff. The ruin was demolished by the Central Committee of the SED in 1959/60. A few parts could be saved. They were used for reconstruction.

The shell, is a simple, functional place of work in which there is no room for splendour. The 400 offices for the 88 deputies and for employees of the deputies, the state parliament administration and the Court of Auditors, are simple Prussians and have an average size of 18 square meters each. The colours of Brandenburg dominate: red carpet, white walls, white built-in cupboards. The architect Prof. Peter Kulka has succeeded in creating a symbiosis between history and modernity, which was accepted after a short time.



Vlad Țepeș – Vlad the Impaler

Today, “Dracula” is usually immediately associated with the name Transylvania. The model for this character was the Prince of Wallachia, Vlad III. Drăculea (1428/29-1476), later called Vlad Țepeș – Vlad the Impaler. He is probably the best-known personality of these regions today. Vlad Țepeș became famous for his atrocities and transylvanians have an ambivalent relationship with this figure. They cannot identify with him and all his bloodthirsty deeds, since he tortured and murdered many compatriots. And yet he had a strong sense of justice and fought more successfully than other princes against the Ottomans and for the liberation of the Danubian principalities. This earned him a historical appreciation from the Romanian side.

Vlad was born in Transylvania, probably in Schäßburg, where his father, later Prince of Wallachia Vlad II - Dracul, lived as a refugee in exile at that time. Father and son swore the oath as members of the Dragon Order and thus to resist the Ottomans – hence their nickname.

Vlad III – the Impaler - came to the court of the Ottoman Sultan Murad II as a child together with his half-brother Radu in hostage. Meanwhile, he was often flogged for his stubborn and refractory behaviour. During that time he developed a strong aversion to his half-brother Radu and the later Sultan Mehmed II. His relationship with his father, who used the two children as a pledge, was shattered. The father had also broken the oath to the Dragon Order. During this time Vlad III became acquainted with the oriental way, especially cruel, of staking enemies and prisoners, which later became his trademark.

Friedrich II of Prussia

Actually, he had nothing to do with Germany. And yet he became one of the most popular kings in the German lands and also one of the most hated: Friedrich II of Prussia. During his lifetime he was already reverently called Friedrich the Great: a witty philosopher, a musically gifted aesthete, an ingenious general, but also an unscrupulous power seeker.

His life was as contradictory as his reputation: he started three wars, lived by the motto “Everything or Nothing”, from his youth Friedrich was also an artistic person who loved playing the flute and cultivated it against the will of his strict father. He composed, his compositions being preserved to this day. Frederick was a philosopher, Voltaire was one of his close friends for a long time. Friedrich’s Enlightenment writings attracted attention throughout Europe. He cultivated Prussian virtues such as discipline, thriftiness and diligence. That these virtues are considered typically German today can be traced back, among other things, to Friedrich II. He staged himself as a righteous father of the country. He himself polished up his image, described himself as he wished to be seen. Later biographers write him off but seeing and understanding who he really was is still a fascinating adventure even after three centuries.

The people of Brandenburg call him their old Fritz. He decided that Sanssouci Park should remain accessible to all and that he should be buried next to his dogs. However, his last will was not realised until 1993. On his simple tomb slab fans always put flowers and potatoes, as he brought the potato to Germany as a vegetable and side dish. And yet he remains the unscrupulous conqueror who sent soldiers to their deaths with the words “You damned rascals, do you want to live forever?”



South Transylvania

As a member of the European Union, Romania is obliged to implement the directives for the conservation and restoration of biological diversity. The country is part of the Europe-wide network of protected areas under NATURA 2000. A percent of 8.3 % of Romania's total land area is currently designated as protected areas. In Transylvania there are national parks (Călimani, Cheile Bicazului-Hășmaș, Rodna, Königstein/Piatra Craiului, Retezat), biosphere reserves (Retezat), nature parks (Apuseni, Bucegi, Grădiștea Muncelului-Cioclovina, Defileul Mureșului Superior) and various nature reserves. The flora of Transylvania comprises more than 2,590 plant species, of which 68 occur exclusively in this region. Large forest areas, especially mixed forests, run through the country where the upper forest limit is approx. 1,700 m.

Romania's wildlife comprises 3,600 species, some of which are rare. In the Carpathians, chamois, bearded vultures, brown bears (approx. 6,600 specimens), wolves (approx. 3,100) and lynxes (approx. 1,500) belong to it. Life with wild animals such as the brown bear and wolf is a matter of natural course for the people of Transylvania, but the lack of caution such as feeding brown bears can sometimes lead to accidents. Still, human intervention in nature, such as the fragmentation of habitats by road construction or the expanding cities, irritates wild animals that have to leave their ancestral territories. The task for the future is to preserve nature's richness.

Brandenburg

Due to its natural features Brandenburg has large undissected landscapes, extensive forest areas, numerous rivers and lakes and, in the glacial valleys, extensive lowland moorland and alluvial plain landscapes. Although numerous rare and endangered animal and plant species still exist, the diversity of species of Brandenburg is also threatened by landscape change and increasing intensification.

The Europe-wide NATURA 2000 network of protected areas serves to safeguard biodiversity within the European Union in the long term. The implementation of Natura 2000 is therefore also one of the most important nature conservation tasks in Brandenburg. With the notification of a total of 27 European bird protection areas and 620 FFH sites (protected areas under the Habitats Directive), Brandenburg's unique natural heritage with its diverse cultural landscapes became part of the Europe-wide network of protected areas.

Intensive conservation measures and the natural conditions have enabled the wolf to return to the state of Brandenburg. Although the process of natural resettlement, which began in 2000, is not always popular, it is accompanied by active prevention measures to promote acceptance.

The crane – bird of happiness - still a rarity decade ago, has also developed positively in Brandenburg's cultural landscape. Meanwhile Brandenburg has the largest inland crane dormitory in Central Europe, where up to 80,000 cranes gather in autumn. The associated natural spectacle is also of considerable importance for regional policy in rural areas.

Brandenburg is one of the moor-richest federal states and has 18 different types of moor. The vast majority of the bogs are heavily drained and thus in poor condition. Only 1% of the moors are still close to nature. Against this background, Brandenburg is actively endeavouring to preserve and restore moors. This not only serves biodiversity, but also actively contributes to climate, soil and water protection.



South Transylvania

Transylvania is a region in Romania, surrounded by Carpathians mountains, a scenic gem “beyond the forests” (origin of the Latin and Romanian name).

Romanians, Transylvanian Saxons and Szekler have left their mark here. In towns, tranquil villages and market towns, tradition and customs have been well preserved. Not to mention the architectural heritage, the village and church castles in Transylvania.

There are forests and castles here in lavish abundance. The mountains call the hiker with steep peaks of the Carpathians, the mountains, caves and gorges in the Transylvanian Western Mountains (Apuseni, Retezat). Those seeking relaxation are pampered by countless thermal and mineral water springs. Salt mines and baths are not only attractions for the health-conscious. Untouched, wild nature with rare animals and plants, bold hikes, exciting stories, culture worth seeing and lovable people – pure adventure and hospitality- can be found here in Transylvania.

One of the main attractions is the “Dracula Castle” Törzburg/Castelul Bran from the 14th century. Schäßburg/Sighişoara is the only completely preserved and inhabited medieval castle in Europe. In Kronstadt/Braşov you can find the Protestant Black Church, the largest Gothic church in Transylvania and Southeast Europe. The flair and reputation of Hermannstadt/Sibiu are known far beyond the borders. The Vauban Fortress in Karlsburg/Alba Iulia is the last largest defensive structure in Transylvania with a circumference of over ten kilometres and an area of more than 100 hectares.

Brandenburg

Nature in Brandenburg leaves plenty of room to breathe deeply: when cycling, doing water sports, hiking or just strolling around. Nowhere else in Germany are there more lakes and rivers. Ideal areas for recreational captains, ideal places for holiday homes and hotels – including bathing pleasure.

Brandenburg is an inspiration. The variety inspires. The rush is far away. It draws you out to the countryside: farm shops and cakes like grandma ‘s did it, stork clatters and frog quacks, feet in the water and somewhere far away: the horizon.

About one third of the country ‘s territory are biosphere reserves, national parks and nature park Unteres Odertal, are unspoiled nature like the Grumsiner Forest - the only world natural heritage in the country. Throughout the country there are castles, mansions, parks, medieval castles, renovated historic city centres, industrial monuments, museums and thousands of events annually – Brandenburg is a cultural country with a great history. From the Prussian muse city Rheinsberg, the cradle of the Mark, the city of Brandenburg, past the castles and gardens of Potsdam to the capital of Lusatia Cottbus, along the river landscapes of the Elbe, Spree, Oder and Havel, Brandenburg has a lot to offer.

As early as the end of the 17th century, the “Great Elector” and his court went on a “short wellness holiday”. Today there are numerous health resorts, thermal baths, adventure pools and hotels with a wide variety of wellness offers.

Berlin-Potsdam’s cultural landscape with its castles and gardens is one of the largest Germany’s World Heritage Sites in terms of area.



The idea came from a theatre pedagogue, the theatre director of “theaterloge Luckau e.V.” She attended a school with extended German classes, where the pupils rehearse and perform a play every six months. When young people develop, rehearse and perform a play together, intensive contacts are established that promote understanding, respect and tolerance.

In 2013 the first premiere took place in Alba Iulia. Members of the theater box had worked together with students of the St. Iosif-Gymnasium on a play. Already in 2014 this piece was successfully performed in Brandenburg, Luckau and Potsdam. Until today the actors keep in contact with each other.

In 2016, an experimental play by Potsdamers and students of the St. Iosif high school celebrated its premiere in Alba Iulia.

In 2018 a play by students of the German Lyceum Mühlbach/Sebes and the Dr. Wilhelm-Poltier-Oberschule Wittstock was developed as part of their school partnership. The premiere took place in Wittstock, followed by performances at the Romanian Embassy in Berlin and in Alba Iulia. The theatre is an important part of the school partnership. New friendships have been made and are being cultivated.

New ideas were developed: A working group for learning the Romanian language was founded at Wittstock school. Students from Wittstock participated in sports events in Alba Iulia as international guests. The Lyceum in Sebeş was able to expand her school library considerably.

It was not only in the plays that the tolerant treatment of one another was discussed. On stage and especially in the meetings of the theatre group, different cultural and life views met. Mutual curiosity as a prerequisite followed by openness and understanding towards the other made respect grow. In the plays, the actors' own experiences were brought to the stage in a playful way. They delighted their audience in every performance.



What does Europe know, what do we Brandenburgers know about Romania: Mostly Romania is associated only with Transylvania and Dracula.

But: Romania and its history really have a lot to offer for today's Europe. That is why the partnership commissioner organizes a lecture week with Romanian students every year: "Students for students. Stories with bite." (bites as sarcasm).

German-speaking Romanian students travel through school in Brandenburg during this week's lecture to talk about their home country in their own multimedia lecture. The lecture starts with a quiz. This arouses curiosity and brings first experiences. Of course, Dracula is a theme and somehow always a key to immerse yourself in this amazing European country and its culture. The people of Brandenburg are proud of the tolerance decreed and enforced here. And then comes the surprise: the Transylvanians can point out that their country was the first in modern Europe in which religious freedom was permanently enshrined in law. Confessional diversity prevailed in the largely autonomous Principality of Transylvania as early as 1550 and attained a previously unknown diversity. With the "Four Recognized Religions", a multi-denominational constitution between Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists and Unitarians came into force with the Tolerance Edict of Thorenburg/Turda of 1568. The Orthodox Church was the fifth religion to be tolerated. This tolerance is still decisive in Transylvania today. A Romanian pupil said to applause in his lecture: "We have no "Pe- or Po- or otherwise-what -gida" and we don't need them either."

There is much to tell about traditions and customs, but also a lot about the new Romania. When it comes to digitization, German students usually hold their breath in amazement: Romania has one of the world's fastest Internet networks...

By the way: This series of lectures triggered several other projects and aspects of the partnership, such as the development of school partnerships on the initiative of pupils from Brandenburg....



At the edge of the small town Mühlbach/Sebeş, in Petersdorf/Petreşti is the „Casa Crestina pentru Copii Saraci“, “Christian home for poor children” (boarding school Casa Onisim). A Lusatian and a Germany-wide international association are the sponsors of the project. The aim of the work is to help poor families in Romania to help themselves through a holistic approach. Three pillars determine the commitment: the securing of the material supply for the children, a successful schooling and education process and the teaching of Christian values as a guide in life. Around 80 children and young people live in the boarding school on a voluntary basis. The proven success rate of over 95% makes the committed project also interesting for other sponsors or educational institutions. Modestly one speaks of the school education, where the children and young people grow up bilingual, a large part learns at elite schools and enterprises like “Star Assembly” of Daimler in Mühlbach/Sebeş train young people gladly and employ them as specialists.

Lectures of the boarding school supported by the partnership representative brought the idea and vision of Casa Onisim to Brandenburg. The renowned Hoffbauer Foundation became attentive and is currently examining cooperation. Many questions that arose in Brandenburg in view of the migration movement could be answered faster with the approaches and experiences from the Casa Onisim and the teaching institution of the Hoffbauer Foundation.

Social issues will continue to play an important role in Europe in the coming years. Regional cooperation can and will help to combat deficits. This is precisely where it becomes clear that no region is just a donor or just a recipient. We all face the greatest challenges in education, in the fight against poverty and in inclusion.



Germany is Romania's most important foreign trade partner. There are currently more than 8,000 companies with German participation, as subsidiaries or another German background nationwide.

New challenges require new impulses and strategies: for example, regional economic cooperation, issues of securing skilled workers and the design of initial vocational training have become topics of cooperation in partnership. With Brandenburg Business Days, which took place twice in the Centru Region, Brandenburg has created a new, very individual format for the exchange of economic experience and the initiation of business cooperation.

In view of labour market situation, questions of training and qualification of workers have become an important topic for the exchange of ideas and experience. The first German vocational schools under the dual system of Centru Region were established in Kronstadt/Braşov in 2012, followed by schools in Karlsburg/Alba Iulia and Hermannstadt/Sibiu. Today they are a model for the whole of Romania.

European projects with Brandenburg partners, such as the Berufsförderungswerk e.V. of the Berlin-Brandenburgs Construction Industry Association, the IBS-Cemes Institut GmbH in Lauchhammer or the Bildungsgesellschaft Pritzwalk mbH, were and are providers of ideas and companions in a process of exchange of experience for mutual benefit on questions of motivating young people for skilled occupation, on dual vocational training for today and tomorrow or on "lifelong qualification" of workers.

Economic development processes in Brandenburg were an inspiration for Centru Region, for example for the development of renewable energies or the development of clusters. It is good that the successful was not simply copied, but that a further development was set in motion, from which in turn the creator or the idea also benefits.



Hundreds of thousands of projects across the EU have benefited from investment in regional development over the years. They also play an outstanding role in the cooperative partnership between Centru and Brandenburg.

One of the first joint EU-funded projects aimed at “strengthening regional identity by exploiting tourism potential – IdeQua” (2004-2007). Five EU countries and various regions were involved.

The project “Renewable Energy Sources – A path for the sustainable Development of Two European Regions – Re-nERg EuReg” (2009-2012) set content milestones. As a tangible example project, it opened the way for further projects-related initiatives and involvement of private sector actors.

One project, in which 11 EU member states alone were involved, dealt with “Possibilities for managing demographic change through regional policy instruments – DART” (2010-2012). The results clearly show how we can learn from each other. While Brandenburg had already raised issues of demographic development and planning in Centru Region as part of twinning projects in 2012, the results of this project have been in urgent demand as best practice for Brandenburg since 2012.

The project “Strengthening the institutional capacity of the regional education consortium of the Centru Region” (2010) helped to focus on the issues of dual vocational training and the qualification of the workforce. In this area in particular, there are now several successful projects or projects are currently in the implementation phase.

Project “Development of a Skills and Employment Strategy for Alba County” (2014)

Project “The development of entrepreneurship among young people between 18 and 24 years and the establishment of two regional vocational training centers in the districts of Alba and Cluj” (2014-2015)

ERASMUS plus – Strategic Partnerships (2017-2019)

ERASMUS plus – Mobility (2017-2019)



It seems banal: exchange of experience through encounters, analysing the good and bad experiences, questions, questioning, discuss, customize, try and meet again and again. Experience as the cheapest investment!

This also distinguishes this partnership relationship. In January 2009 State Secretary for Federal and European Affairs, presented the partnership representative of Brandenburg in the Centru Region in Alba Iulia. During the trip, the State Secretary signed the contract to extend the use of the premises at the Representation of Brandenburg in Brussels as the Centru Region.

The political leadership of Centru Region visited Brandenburg once again in July 2010. In the same year, a delegation from the Centru Region took part in Brandenburg Day in Schwedt. This was the foundation of a tradition, because since then there have been both in the region on all Brandenburg Days that enjoy a lively stream of visitors.

In autumn 2014, another delegation headed by the Regional Development Agency (RDA Centru) visited Brandenburg and asked questions, for example, about the development of clusters and the connection between research and business. In April 2017, a delegation led by RDA Centru General Director discussed questions of intelligent specialisation.

In June 2017, during the visit of State Secretary for Europe and Consumer Protection, to the Centru Region, the partners signed an agreement on priorities for further cooperation.

In April 2013, the Partnership Commissioner spoke for good reason at the Franco-German seminar “50 years of the Elysee Treaty and Regionalisation in Romania” in Bucharest. The cooperation in partnership between the two regions is considered to be exemplary. According to Brockhaus, a partnership is the “principle of trusting cooperation between... organizations or states that can only achieve their goals together” (Brockhaus 19th edition).

The development of the partnership

The road to a Europe of regions was long and rocky. It goes without saying that we move in this almost boundless space – and boundless is meant literally. At present, however, there is sufficient concern to preserve this achievement of a common Europe.

Nevertheless, in all the problems facing the construct of Europe – the living project Europe and the idea of Europe – philosophers, politicians, thinkers continue to address the question of what a truly united Europe could look like. Many experts in Brussels take care of the external shape of European unity. But Europe is lived by and through every individual at home, in the regions, districts and municipalities. Here Europe is often present, but rarely really perceptible and tangible. The Europe of the Regions offers a good framework and points of contact for more tangible experience for the individual.

One example of this is the cooperation between Brandenburg and Centru Region. This cooperation is seen in Brussels as a model for people in their communities to come together through joint activities and projects. Mr. Ahner, former Director General of the Directorate-General for Regional Policy of the European Commission, said that the regional cooperation should work in the same way as the partnership between Brandenburg and Centru Region.

This cooperation has its own history, has grown and is developing step by step – from twinning projects, from follow-up projects, from bilateral and multilateral EU projects, from mutual visits by politicians, experts, young people, tourists. It is a stable and resilient partnership between two regions whose comparable starting point for transformation leads to shared experiences. A partnership that has contributed and contributes to solving problems with a European dimension. A partnership that brought important issues into the European debate quite early on.



The beginning

The partnership developed out of an initiative of the European Union to support the development and functioning of regional structures and the adoption of the „aquis communautaire“ – the „general ownership“ of the European Union – in the future member states. Experts from the „old member states“ were sent to the national and regional level within the framework of twinning agreements.

In the course of preparations for accession to the European Union, the necessary regional structures were also created in Romania from 1998. The European Commission's funds for twinning in 2002, and later the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology, promoted truly sustainable development in relations between two regions in Europe. The relationships are based on the development of joint project ideas. And the more concrete the formulation of the problems could be, the more successful and beneficial the results were.

Right from the start of the first activities within the framework of the administrative partnership, the project managers agreed that this opportunity for regional cooperation should be used for mutual benefit. The first joint idea arose from the task of passing on experience in the development and management of projects. The partners decided to solve this task as practically as possible: first, a fictitious project was developed and all documents prepared for a fictitious application for funds from the European Union. And without actually expecting that a first project, a first attempt to obtain funds from the European Programme for Interregional Cooperation, could be successful, this project for the development of regional identities through valorisation of tourism potentials was submitted – and it was confirmed. The successful implementation motivated the search for further project ideas of mutual interest.

The approximately 60 experts from Brandenburg and Berlin who worked within the framework of the administrative partnership have started something very good: they have reported on their own mistakes at home, on the conse-

quences of those mistakes and on the money with which the mistakes had to be corrected. This was not only at that time very unusual. Preference is always given to best practice. Of course, you are proud of your own results. The good is to set an example, to be „imitated “. But it’s not really about imitation. It’s about learning and adapting to one ‘s own conditions.

Many advisers from the old Member States had become more and more routine in their advisory work for the candidate countries during the enlargement of the EU and had begun to impart experiences soulless. The addressees had the clear feeling of being run over, of being forced into a foreign experience. Similar to East Germany, the people from Centru Region did not get rid of the feeling that now the EU and the consultants know everything better, can do everything better. Many Brandenburgers are still in demand as consultants because they deliberately did not want to convey this feeling. They had just experienced that themselves. And they and their partners remembered time and again that an individual self-confidence is very important for every member state and every region in Europe.

Another characteristic of the Brandenburg experts was that they were not satisfied with answers such as „We have not“, or „We have never done that before“ or „we have never needed that, these figures do not exist“ etc. With great patience and persistence, they expected that their new friends would not simply be satisfied, make an effort to think about how to arrive at figures or results. They can also be managed if the leader is competent and qualified. And also the refusal: „we do not write your documents, but we show you how to do that“ was important. They helped the partners to develop and profile themselves. Today the specialists trained at that time do their work really well! And it is not uncommon for former teachers to learn from their „students“ as well.

Trust and reliability

In this way, trust in the experts, in political support and in mutual reliability was built up systematically and step by step. Personal ties and friendships developed. Institutions have concluded cooperation agreements. Joint EU projects



provided the time and financial basis for the expansion of cooperation. The partners could slowly adjust each other. On this basis, something very special has developed between Brandenburg and Centru Region – in and for Europe.

The more the consulting became a cooperation, the more frequently the question was asked in Brandenburg: And what do we get out of it?

Two examples:

First: Against the background of its current problems, the Brandenburg state government recognized the value of a well-founded population forecast and the need to react. The insight into demographic change „migrated“ with the Brandenburg specialists to the Centru Region. The same tendencies could be observed and predicted here – with a little time lag. And it was also the same reaction of the politicians to observe: to react first against unpopular realizations restrainedly. Experts and politicians in both regions worked together intensively on the topic.

At the European level, they have helped to initiate the process of dealing with demographic change and with the search for political control options. Today, Brandenburg is regarded throughout Europe as competent in questions of demographic change. Jobs were created through EU projects in both regions and for some associations the funds were sufficient to secure their livelihoods. The demography check is a matter of course for the approval of subsidies in order to avoid investing public funds in projects (especially the infrastructure) that will no longer be needed in the foreseeable future.

A second example: Brandenburg has won the „Leitstern – Federal State Prize for Renewable Energies“ several times as overall winner. It is considered to be the leader in this field in Germany. In parallel with the experience gathered by the State of Brandenburg, Brandenburg’s experts have also promoted this topic in Centru Region from Transylvania. The openness of RDA Centru and the Regional Development Council is to be thanked for the fact that the region addressed its potential very early on. Thus, the energy strategy of the Centru Region has also prevented or limited undesirable developments. A joint EU project was carried out within the framework of the 7th EU Research Frame-

work Programme, which actively promoted the fact that this topic also played a greater role throughout Europe. In Brandenburg and Centru regions, discussions have been promoted in the research centres for renewable energies. Jobs were created.

The cooperation at different levels, the mutual visits of politicians and experts, the manifold topics of cooperation, the number of joint multi- and bilateral projects, the business trips and business delegations, school partnerships and the presentation of the respective region cover various topics and are based on joint project work and mutual benefit.

Together in Brussels

An important milestone in the joint work was the first representative office of a Romanian development region in Brussels. RDA Centru sent a representative for 18 months, who has provided with an office in the premises of the State Representation of Brandenburg in Brussels. With this offer, Brandenburg wanted to support Centru Region in such a way that representatives from the region experienced the opportunities in Brussels for the region themselves, researched independently, understood how to use the wide-ranging possibilities of regional cooperation quickly. This had a positive signal effect not only for the developing regions in Romania. It was a unique opportunity for the Centru Region to establish itself in Brussels. The regional partnerships initiated during this time are still the basis for participation in international projects and an essential part of the international relations of Centru Region.

The experience of Brandenburg in European cooperation was gratefully received by the Centru Region. Today, the regions, Centru and Brandenburg work together in the Committee of the Regions and other European institutions. They coordinate their discussions on the direction of the Structural Funds and they support each other when it comes to the interests of cities and municipalities. This has a significant impact on the use of European funding in the two regions and the associated national and regional planning. The representatives in the Committee of the Regions,



coming from the Centru Region and other parts of Romania, quickly appreciated the Regional Office. The cooperation that has developed under the umbrella of the state representation of Brandenburg, the joint activities, the possibility of mutual political support and mutual assistance in defending the interests of Brussels institutions are continuing and joint regional initiatives have reached an immense impact.

Wishes for the future

Project-based cooperation between a German Land and a region that has voluntarily formed from the association of districts can work well. However, administrative or cooperation between different institutions is not always without complications. In many cases, suggestions or initiatives have reached their limits because the administrative allocation of decision-makers posed complications. The problem also arose at the political level in the state of Brandenburg. Sometimes it turned out to be difficult to find the same level and corresponding contact persons.

Without constant communication and support, the majority of projects would most likely not have come about. For the future, the people of Brandenburg wanted a strong, administratively firmly anchored partner region with stable contacts, with more managing regional development, a truly executive role, with binding planning documents, with funds for its own budget to balance territorial disparities, for efficient economic promotion and for a stronger profiling of regional structures.

Europe is too far away for many people, and in individual states the claim to national interests is clearly more demanding. A stronger focus on the European Union on the regions, cities and municipalities seems urgently necessary. The common Europe of today is thus facing immense challenges. Enlargement to the east has not only shifted the borders of the European Union. The changes that have taken place have proved to be more drastic than the southern enlargement. Old conflicts have taken on new dimensions and new ones have been added.

This makes it all the more important to strengthen our Europe of the regions; it is all the more desirable to reduce disparities in the framework conditions for regional development, and the more important is an effective use of European funds for territorial cohesion.



It needs the support for:

1. **One** Europe, that grows together from below;
2. **One** Europe of the regions, that can be experienced – touched;
3. **Regional partnerships**, that thrive for mutual benefit and are based on mutual respect;
4. **One** policy for regions that also gives the regions the necessary leeway.

For more than 10 years, Brandenburg and the Centru Region have been following the same path – a path that we call the transformation process. In Centru Region it is said that we have found a friend. What began as a know-how transfer has long since become a cooperation at eye level and with mutual benefit. This cooperation is a very living example of the Europe of the regions. This form of cooperation is becoming increasingly important, as the future of the continent is in the hands of people, especially young people. And with their curiosity, openness, adventurousness and tolerance, they no longer want to do it without the freedom of this Europe of ours.

Lessons Learnt

In the course of the development of regional cooperation, the partnership representatives have always seen themselves as contact persons, as mediators. They search to find the right people for each other, ensures that the future partners have sufficient interest, a well-founded idea as a basis and a real will to work together. This will include achieving results and progress in individual areas for the people in both(!) regions (not for individual interest groups such as parties and organisations).

The prerequisite is a firm establishment in both regions by those responsible for the partnership. An exact knowledge of the problems and topics as well as the current and future challenges is the way the target group can be reached, can be defined and the search for suitable partners and responsible persons, who work result-oriented and efficiently, will be successful.

Cooperation in partnership promotes an understanding of the mentality, culture and identity of the respective partner – cooperation demands and promotes cultural acceptance and human tolerance.

In preparation of mutual visits, the goals, problems, difficulties and limitations for the desired results are communicated to both partners. The partnership representative has always tried to prepare the topics and tasks in advance in such a way that there is as little effort and a great effect in the adaptation of the results and experiences as possible. Pragmatism and concreteness of the tasks and topics of cooperation as well as patience and persistence in the sense: there is no impossible... have proven to be a guarantee of success. The measure of success has never been exclusively quantitative indicators, but always the value of experience, its usefulness and practicability.

Another indispensable prerequisite was and is to ensure the technical and factual comprehensibility of terms that have to be precisely translated or described. In the case of bilateral and multilateral cooperation of corresponding projects, the limitation to the English language clearly limits the concreteness, comprehensibility and scope of the



projects. It can still be assumed that specialists who perform excellently in their field do not always have a perfect command of the English language. The financial scope for translation services in bi- and multinational projects should be significantly expanded, regardless of whether these projects are implemented at regional, national or European level.

Cooperation between Brandenburg and the Centru Region has developed on an equal footing, characterised by responsibility, trust and reliability – the basics of a successful partnership with a European dimension.

Imprint exhibition boards

The exhibition on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the partnership commissioners of Brandenburg and Centru Region from South Transylvania - Romania was sponsored by the Brandenburgian Ministry of Justice, for European Affairs and for Consumer Protection.

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Photos chart 4: Equestrian statue- Beek100

Photos chart 5: Bear, Bison and mountain Lake - Romanian Tourist Office Berlin; Pair of wolves - Gunnar Ries; Cranes - Dr. Rainer Zelinski; Calla palustris - Dr. Thilo Geisel

Photos chart 6: Rosenau - Romanian Tourist Office Berlin; Studenturm Schäßburg - Walter Wawra; Festival - Dieter Hainbach; Rheinsberg Palace – TMB-Photo Archive/Yorck Maecke; Biosphere Reserve – TMB-Photo Archive/Gerhard Hoffmann; Sanssouci Palace- TMB-Photo Archive/Joachim Boldt

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