

SECTORS OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION

After a period of fears in Austria about the opening-up of its borders (free movement of workers, capital and goods), the public players have focused on the development of cross-border synergies that would benefit the cross-border territory as a whole. First, information projects aimed at cross-border workers have made it possible to limit the risks of downward wage competition in Austria, since they have been informed about their rights and the working of the Austrian social security system. A specific information initiative has also been carried out regarding service-sector jobs that cannot be moved abroad. Second, Austrian businesses are encouraged to take advantage of their neighbours' economic development to find export opportunities, notably by offering innovative products with high value added (mainly supplies to the automotive industry).

On the Slovak side, the participation of SMEs still appears a little more difficult than on the Austrian side, but some have got involved in cross-border R&D projects.

- ↘ **Projects to promote networking among businesses** have been financed by INTERREG, such as a directory of firms categorised by sector across the region of Trnavá (SK) and South Moravia (CZ).

The linguistic proximity facilitates cooperation between Czechs and Slovaks, whose languages are mutually comprehensible. Language remains a barrier to cooperation with the other countries.

The Vienna-Bratislava axis is important for the public players in these capital city regions, with notably reflections about public transport

provision (network of Viennese suburban trains crossing over the border, study of Vienna airport's rail connection and corresponding links with Bratislava airport). Nonetheless, there is still a lot of room for strengthening cooperation.

- ↘ In parallel with this axis, the regions of Lower Austria and Trnavá have developed with their chambers of commerce **a project called "DUO**STARS"**, which makes it possible to better organise joint public action around economic development and links between businesses, research and innovation in networks that enable the sharing of expertise in activities with high value added. Joint promotion of these territories internationally is also a declared objective of this cooperation.
- ↘ On the larger scale of the four countries of this area, **the Centrope Region has developed cooperation projects around universities, research centres and companies** in the fields of biotechnologies, nanotechnologies, environmental technologies and renewable energies, in order to facilitate technology transfer and R&D (the "Centrope_tt" project).

The "dual training" that exists in the four countries does not yet have a cross-border dimension (issue of language and competition in the recruitment of young people in training), but the question is being looked at, with Austrian players in particular providing the impetus. Partnerships between universities are gradually emerging, mainly linked to the needs of businesses (training, R&D, innovation and technology transfer), as mentioned above.



The Danube in Bratislava