

# NORTH WEST

1. Title of the practice “ <b>Chamber of Craftsmen</b> ” in Satu Mare city
2. Precise theme/issue tackled by the practice <p>Although it had been characterized by a favourable evolution in the last few years, the intensity level of economic cooperation in the cross-border region can be considered relatively low: the infrastructure connections are still insufficient, and the economic and business links are well below the potential offered by the economic characteristics of the cross-border region.</p> <p>The small firms, craftsmen and independent entrepreneurs play an important role in the economy of Satu Mare county. These represent a category with an acknowledged tradition, including firms with over 100 professions. The necessity for the establishment of an institution that would represent the joint interest of these entrepreneurs results from the significant number and diversity of this category, and from the lack of an institutional framework that could represent the interest and provide information and consultation for these firms.</p>
3. Objectives of the practice <p><b>Overall objectives:</b> Development of business infrastructure and of joint business services for the stimulation of investment, and facilitation of the Romanian-Hungarian economic relations “in order to establish a sound basis for balanced economic and social development, ensuring optimal development opportunities for Romania and Hungary”.</p> <p><b>Specific objective:</b> Establishment of the “Chamber of Craftsmen” in Satu Mare city for strengthening cross-border economic partnership relations and for improving the economic potential of the region, through the improvement of working conditions of small and medium-sized enterprises.</p>
4. Location <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Romania, North-West Region, Satu Mare County, Satu Mare city</li><li>- Hungary, North-Great Plain Region, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Hajdú-Bihar counties</li></ul>
5. Detailed description of the practice <p>For being competitive, SMEs from the Satu Mare-Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg cross-border region need new, modern business services, which they are not able to afford because of the lack of capital and lack of specific experience. The “Chamber of Craftsmen” in Satu Mare city will provide services and a proper business infrastructure for SMEs facilitating the development of business services, which will definitely contribute to the revigoration of cross-border business relations and to the improvement of the competitiveness of the SMEs from the cross-border region. The project lasted 18 months in total and it involved the Satu Mare and Northern Transylvanian Foundation for International Business Cooperation (satu Mare) and the International Council of the Union of Minorities of the Carpathian Euroregion (Nyíregyháza, Hungary). The Hungarian partner has assured the transfer of knowledge and accumulated experience from the Hungarian side. It was actively involved in the elaboration of the promotional brochures, the website and the database, in data collection, and organisation of final business meeting. The organization of the exchange of experience in Hungary was almost completely carried out by the Hungarian partner. The successful implementation of the present project was assured by the previous efficient cooperation with the Hungarian partner, dating back to 1999.</p> <p>The activities involved during the project were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Project preparation, setting up the project management team</li><li>- Public procurement process for acquisition of works, goods and services</li><li>- Preparation and implementation of works – construction of the business infrastructure of the “Chamber of Craftsmen” in Satu Mare city, and equipping its premises with furniture and IT equipment</li></ul>

- Training for SMEs: organisation of 5 seminars in Satu Mare city
- Hosting and EU expert in Satu Mare for providing consultation regarding the functioning of the future “Chamber of Craftsmen”
- Organising an exchange of experience in Hungary
- Elaboration of a promotional marketing brochure of the “Chamber of Craftsmen” in 4 languages
- Creating a database of the Romanian and Hungarian SMEs in 4 languages
- Elaboration of the website of the “Chamber of Craftsmen”
- Official opening of the “Chamber of Craftsmen” from Satu Mare, combined with an international business meeting
- Project closure.

The established “Chamber of Craftsmen” represents the main result of the project, and its sustainability is ensured by its functioning. Practically, it is self-supporting, as the membership fees of the SMEs and the incomes generated by the rent of premises covers the costs of staff and operational costs. The implementation of the project resulted in the creation of a new organisational structure: the “Chamber of Craftsmen” from Satu Mare. The building, the purchased furniture and equipment, and the elaborated marketing promotion materials (brochure, website) are property of the Applicant. At the moment the “Chamber of Craftsmen” in Satu Mare city offers high quality services for SMEs and other business organisations both from Satu Mare and from Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties. The multiplication of the project results is ensured through making use of the offered services of the Chamber by the members of the target group. In addition, as a result of the organized business events and personal meetings, new Romanian-Hungarian business relationships are established, which results in concrete transactions, investments and/or commercial-logistical cooperations.

The successfully implemented project provides a model for the establishment of similar chambers of craftsmen in other regions, both in Hungary and also in Romania. In this respect, the initiation of the creation of such chambers all over Romania has already been discussed by the Applicant within the frame of business meetings organized by the German Democratic Forum.

The legal framework for the project is made up of several laws, for example the two laws reglementing craftsmanship and apprenticeship in Romania. Also, the law for craftsmanship for Germany has been taken into consideration.

The total budget of the project was 175.210 EUR, 157.210 EUR being provided by the Romanian Ministry for European Integration and the EU through the PHARE CBC Programme, covering 89,73% of the total project expenses.

## 6. Evaluation

The **concrete results** of the implemented project are first of all the newly constructed business infrastructure of the “Chamber of Craftsmen” in Satu Mare city, with properly arranged and fully equipped premises where specific trainings are organized for SMEs and for the new employees of the Chamber

The Chamber also has a website and marketing brochures of the Chamber, as well as database of cross-border enterprises.

One of the possible success factors was probably the experience of the **International Council of the Union of Minorities of the Carpathian Euroregion**, assuring the transfer of knowledge and accumulated experience from the Hungarian side. Being actively involved in the elaboration of the promotional brochures, the website and the database, in data collection, and organisation of final business meeting has surely helped a lot.

This kind of institution can easily be set up in any of the border regions of the EU as long as there is interest from the SME-s in the area for international cooperation, for the sharing of information and for an institution that would represent the interests of the craftsmen.

These kinds of organizations can actively help SMEs interested in CBC cooperation through different trainings and specialized courses, overcoming language barriers, the craftsmen being united in an association that can stand up for their interests at the higher level institutions of the state, that offer counselling in different problems.

This kind of project does not really need to be adapted for SME support because it was effectively created for this purpose: to assist SMEs and craftsmen in international cooperation.

## 7. Lessons learnt from the practice

In conclusion we can see that it is not that difficult to create such a structure for supporting small firms and craftsmen in cooperation provided there is a location where this organization can perform its daily activities. It is also sustainable from the membership fees collected and from the money gathered from the different specialized trainings. Also, these kinds of structures can help craftsmen with different skills and different ideas in starting and developing their own small businesses.

#### 8. Contact information

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#### 9. Other possible interesting information

[www.cameramestesugarilor.ro](http://www.cameramestesugarilor.ro)

#### 1. Title of the practice Chamber of Hungarian-Romanian Institutional Cooperation and Cross-Border services

#### 2. Precise theme/issue tackled by the practice

The different level of development and the low level of cooperation between settlements on different sides of the Romanian-Hungarian border. Together with Romania's accession to the EU new possibilities arose which could be exploited by enhancing the cooperation between the different Romanian and Hungarian institutions

#### 3. Objectives of the practice

The overall objective of the project was to enhance and consolidate contacts between people, government, communities and economic actors from the border regions in order to create a solid basis for sustainable economic and social balance of the entire area, with benefits for both communities in Margitta , Romania, as well as Berettyóújfalu, Hungary.

The target groups:

- SMEs (mainly in the border area)
- employed personnel and councillors from the local public administration on both sides of the border
- persons from the civil society (especially young people and women) involved in social, economic, cultural fields, Romanians and Hungarians from Bihor-Hajdu-Bihar Euroregion
- population from Marghita and Berettyoujfalu municipalities

#### 4. Location

- Romania and Hungary
- North-West Region/Bihor County/Marghita town and Eszak-Alfold Region/Hajdu Bihar County/Berettyoujfalu town

#### 5. Detailed description of the practice

The project started out as an initiative in order to develop and intensify the abilities of the organizational structure from the public administration in order to promote and encourage the cross-border cooperation between the institutions and communities.

The objective is to create a permanent structure for institutional cooperation and cross-border services inside the city hall of Marghita municipality.

Main activities:

- \* creation of the workgroups
- \* creation of the CCIS of public interest
- \* "people to people" exchange experience
- \* elaboration of information and promotion materials
- \* trainings, seminars
- \* organisation of the "Cooperation Festival"

The project took in total 12 months to implement (December 2006 – November 2007)

Implementing bodies: City Halls of Marghita and Berettyoujfalu.

The specific activities supporting cooperation between institutions, communities, building institutional joint transfer of knowledge and experience in different sectors, focusing in particular on issues of European integration. Another activity was focused on creating a structure with a potential multiplier effect established within the Marghita City Hall – CCIS providing information and documentation that could develop and maintain cross-border cooperation.

The project would also involve support for the establishment of local cross-border contact points especially in the field of culture, administration, economy and tourism. Supporting cross-border events and "people to people" projects was an other priority as well as multiplying cross-border contacts of the target groups, especially in the case of young people and women.

Last activity foreseen was improvement of the access to updated information on: local government structures from Marghita and Berettyóújfalu, local institutions and organizations for economic and business opportunities, cultural, sport and tourism in the Bihar - Hajdu-Bihar border region

The total budget of the project was 54.712 euro, of which 48.712 EUR was financed by the European Union, through the Phare CBC Programme, the own cofinancing of the partners being 6000 EUR (10,97%)

## 6. Evaluation

Probably the biggest result is the CCIS itself. By equipping the technical personnel trained and location, the CCIS is the basis of a sustainable network of support and promotion of cross-border contacts, release of local projects for small and medium in the administrative, economic, cultural, social and even tourism. The CCIS can also be a model with a potential multiplier effect to both the Euro and the entire Romanian - Hungarian border area.

There were also lots of promotional materials created, like brochures, CDs, leaflets, banners, etc.

There were also training courses organized within the project with almost 100 participants who have benefited from an intensive training on European integration and the pre-accession funds themes.

There have also been study visits organized with working groups where around 64 persons benefited from the know-how and information from the Hungarian partners and other institutions in Hajdu Bihar, thus multiplying the permanent contacts.

The good practice is easily transferable to other border regions, having a low budget and involving activities which are not uncommon for personnel working at local councils and town halls in border regions. Possible success factors were the interest of both parties, sometimes the knowledge of each-others language in the case of both partners.

Together with the enhancement of the cooperation between institutions new possibilities arise for economic actors, being easier to get in touch with other SMEs in the neighboring country, getting information about different legal aspects as well as advice on cooperation and business aspects.

## 7. Lessons learnt from the practice

## 8. Contact information

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9. Other possible interesting information

<http://www.marghita.ro/pages/despre-proiect.php>

- Documents (reports, presentations, etc.)

1. Title of the practice

The Support of the Integration of the Export-Import SMEs of Bihor County within the European Single Market by Developing Cross-Border Business Services

2. Precise theme/issue tackled by the practice

As Europe wishes to create a unique space by erasing borders between countries, the formation of Euro-regions and of a clear framework for the support of trans-border co-operation by involving the local and regional actors, an obvious need appeared: designing a framework to facilitate and compensate the lack of contacts and interactions necessary for the economic development, the export and import activity in the cross-border region, being included. In spite of any progress achieved, the integration and the structural coherence of the border areas still suffered from serious deficiencies concerning the following aspects: the inter-institutional cross-border cooperation was still less developed; the forums organized in order to ease the approach of the neighbour inhabitants and institutions were still very few; the business economic links were under the potential limit offered by the economic features of the area. The integration process must be managed so as to take into account the needs of the different economic categories under pressure. The easiest way of accomplishing this was by means of real examples, by sharing the experience of the partners from Hajdu-Bihar (Hungary).

3. Objectives of the practice

**The overall objective** of the project was the successful training and integration of Romanian export and import SMEs on the European Union market after the accession of 2007, using the two year experience of Hungary in the EU and exploiting the possibilities offered by the programs and projects already developed.

**Specific objectives**

- improving the technical and managerial capacities of the personnel involved in the import and export SMEs thanks to the experience exchange with the Hungarian partners and to the training to which they attended within the project;
- strengthening their capacity to manage, to operate and to implement cross-border projects;
- improving the competition capacity of 70 import and export SMEs in the cross-border area;
- settling a Cross-Border Business Services Centre;
- developing course modules for the training of import and export Romanian SMEs, seminar module based on case studies on domains;
- designing cards in order to draw structural funds from the European Union,
- elaborate a Guide for export and import SMEs on the brink of the European integration.

The objectives and measures stipulated by this project aimed at getting rid of the registered constraints and intended to strengthen the economic and human relationships between the two border counties and also the cooperation between SMEs of these two counties, beneficiaries of a lasting development.

4. Location

- Romania, North-West Region, Bihor County
- Hungary, Eszak-Alfold Region, Hajdú-Bihar county

## 5. Detailed description of the practice

The project was financed through PHARE CBC 2005 Programme between September 2007 and November 2008.

The project is extremely relevant for the priorities of the Programme for the following reasons: it increased the number of cross-border meetings of the import and export SMEs representatives, generating further contacts and meetings of Romanian and Hungarian potential partners and it increased the degree of acknowledgement regarding the cross-border cooperation and the information on the European Union integration by attending training and seminars.

The lead partner of the project was Oradea University, Faculty of Economics and the main partners were the Local Council of the Private Small and Middle sized Enterprises Oradea, Bihor; the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Hajdu-Bihar; University of Debrecen – Faculty of Economics and Business Administration; Bihor-Hajdu Bihar Euroregion; Romanian Association for Business Promotion.

The main activities of the project:

### **Activity 1. Project team organization and setting up the working groups**

In order to achieve project team organization, the members of the team met in Oradea and they clearly established which are the tasks of each partner. The setting up of the working groups implied the creation of 5 Romanian-Hungarian mixed working groups, on 5 fields of activity: agriculture, industry, trade, tourism and services. Each Romanian-Hungarian mixed group was made up of: 38 people representing the export-import SMEs included in the project – 20 representing the Romanian firms and 18 the Hungarian firms. As it has been mentioned, the structure of these groups was suggested and sanctioned by the project partners during the common meeting which took place at an agreed location and date.

### **Activity 2. Project kickoff conference. Visibility**

The project kickoff conference, called *“Together on a single market”* was held in Oradea, when the project team, the scientific group, the course attendants, the experts and the representatives of the organizations, associations and institutions involved in the project met.

### **Activity 3. Event organization “The Days of Trans-Border Businesses”**

The organization of the event *“The week of trans-border businesses”* opened the series of Romanian-Hungarian bilateral meetings in order to promote and achieve the objectives of the project. These meetings were held between the project partners, organizations, associations and institutions involved in supporting and promoting of the SMEs of Bihor County being organized in 3 workshops: University environment and trans-border cooperation workshops; governmental and local involvement in stimulating foreign trade; European commercial policy impact on SMEs.

### **Activity 4 Establishment of the Trans-Border Business Service Centre (TBSC)**

This Centre, which is meant to serve the border area with Hungary, has the function to inform, assist, consult and gather information about Euro regional problems of general and local interest, with a direct impact on SMEs.

There was also developed a **TBSC** website which hosts the project; there was also in view an access link of the project on the University of Oradea's site - [www.uoradea.ro](http://www.uoradea.ro) and on the National Council for Small and Middle sized Enterprises' site.

### **Activity 5. Training activities**

Organizing specialised courses for acquiring economic, technical and environmental knowledge in order to ensure the SMEs the capacity to deal with the competition on the single market

For the project completion, the participants attended 10 specialty courses, on foreign trade and economic integration; the courses, which were addressed to the Romanian representatives of the 5 working groups, mainly contained the theoretical part, representing the basis for further seminars and their length was determined by the type of course – generally a course lasted 16 hours. At the end of the training, evaluation questionnaires were applied in order to obtain feed-back from the participants and to improve the existing course packages.

### **Activity 6. “People to people” experience exchanges, study visits**

The meetings within the experience exchanges were held on 5 working groups, on 5 fields of activity: agriculture, industry, trade, transport and services. There were 4 meetings for each group, 8 hour each. After

accomplishing the experience exchange, those 5 subgroups of the export-import SME managers (14 managers- 10 Romanians and 4 Hungarians per working group) performed study visits to firms in Hungary.

**Activity 7. Performance of main seminars and case studies on working groups on the 5 fields of activity and the drawing up of the SMEs fiches meant to attract structural funds as a form of evaluation of the SMEs participants**

These seminars were moderated by the project's experts and scientific assistants and the training combined the communication with the conveying of theoretical and practical knowledge, which helped the participants to training programmes to implement what they have learned. There were 4 seminars for each work group. The course attendants elaborated 25 SMEs fiches (during two months) in order to draw structural funds (5 fiches for each working group).

**Activity 8. Elaboration of the *Guide for SMEs integration on the European Single Market***

The Guide was based on the course materials already existing for the 10 specialty courses, as well as on the results of the evaluation questionnaires applied to the working groups.

**Activity 9. Final conference: presentation of the results**

There was organized a two day conference, called "*Together towards a European future*" where the main results of the project were presented to all the parties involved, directly or indirectly, in the project

The Romanian Partners had the following tasks:

The University of Oradea – implemented the project, selected the experts, offered adequate rooms for the project and an office for the TBSC as well, and promoted the TBSC, locally and regionally. The Local Council for Private SMEs Oradea, Bihor – identified and selected the import and export SMEs of Bihor County, ensured the database completion referring to the economic, touristic, cultural opportunities of the area, promoted the TBSC. The Bihor-Hajdu-Bihar Euroregion – managed the new common project proposals for Bihor and Hajdu Bihar Euroregion, supporting the instituional co-operation. The Romanian Centre for Trade Promotion – Bihor subsidiary transmitted the project results towards other non-government organizations.

The Hungarian partners had the following tasks:

The Chamber of Commerce, Debrecen – identified and selected the import and export SMEs that took part in the project, organising the visit of Romanian partners and collaborators to Debrecen, Hajdu-Bihar, preparing some materials to be discussed during the visit and working groups; presented the cross-border cooperation project proposals and identified the potential Hungarian partners for university projects. The University of Debrecen – ensured and provided specific database for cross-border strategies, proposed some case studies regarding the accession to the EU as a support for seminars, identified potential Hungarian partners for university joint-projects, correlating the information exchange.

The target groups were the import export SMEs whose working strategies were going to be influenced by Romania's accession to the EU: 70 export and import SMEs from Bihor, Romania (50 SMEs) and Hajdu-Bihar, Hungary (20 SMEs); 4 organisations, associations and institutions involved in the SMEs promotion: The Commerce, Industry, Services Office, Bihor, The Customs Authority, The Regional Development and European Integration Service – The County Council Bihor, The Romanian Center for Commerce Promotion – Bihor.

Among beneficiaries one can name: 70 managers of SMEs involved in the project – 50 Romanians and 20 Hungarians (involved in working groups), 10 experts, 33 representatives of organizations, associations, institutions, local authorities and community, 200 SMEs partners, 100 SMEs from other fields – production, services, transport etc, 30 researchers from the Romanian and Hungarian university area, public administration representatives, institutions, NGOs and associative structures of SMEs from the Bihor- Hajdu-Bihar Euro-region, the active population of the economic sectors from Bihor and Hajdu-Bihar counties (approx. 15000 people).

The total budget of the project was 142884.39 EUR, out of which 29129.49 Euro was provided by the Romanian Ministry for European Integration, European cofinancing through the PHARE CBC Programme 86970.51Euro, covering approximately 61% of the total project expenses and other sources summing 26784.39 Euro.

**6. Evaluation**

This project stimulated cooperation between SMEs as this was the only way by which population, economic and civil organizations of border counties could be integrated in the cross-border cooperation.

The technical and managerial capacities of the personnel involved in the import and export SMEs were improved thanks to the experience exchange with the Hungarian partners and to the training to which they attended within the project, strengthening their capacity to manage, to operate and to implement cross-border projects; improving the competition capacity of 70 import and export SMEs in the cross-border area; settling a Trans-Border Business Services Centre, 1 web site, 10 course modules for the training of import and export Romanian SMEs, 5 seminar module based on case studies on domains, designing a number of 25 cards in order to draw structural funds from the European Union, drawing up a Guide for export and import SMEs on the brink of the European integration, 3 events – 2 conferences and 1 event, more than 52 Romanian and Hungarian meetings on working groups.

The fact that 78 % of those questioned viewed the European integration as a positive aspect and that 78% were willing to undergo the risks of an international business demonstrates, that there are more reasons to be optimistic than pessimistic in what concerns the capacity of the SMEs in Bihor county to cope with the challenges of the European single market. The high percentage (43%) of those who wish to extend their area of activity to Hungary shows that there is a great potential for the development of cross-border business relationships, nonetheless, even if progress has been made in the Bihor-Hajdu-Bihar Euroregion, the economic and business relationships are characteristics of the area/region.

The successful accomplishment of the project led the import and export SMEs of Bihor on a superior level potential. Using the financial contribution of both the financial backer and the applicant, the necessary investments may be carried out, equipment and materials necessary for a proper activity development can be purchased, experts, training courses, daily allowances can be paid so as to enable the Hungarian partner to attend the settled activities etc. Thus, the investment accomplished within this business category will consequently bring along the superior economic outcome together with the economic integration process, and of course, with a developed competition capacity.

The dissemination of the project results consisting of advertising, press conference, guide and fiches issuing created the premises necessary to their expansion by means of: spreading the good practice to promote SMEs, within the framework of the allignment to the UE standards; promoting an innovative strategy in the field of the overseas commerce; for managers, it will certainly become an investment incentive in the human resource of businesses.

When the financing of the CBC Phare Program ceased, The University of Oradea financed from its own resources the common actions as well as the TBSC functioning. Following the aim for which it was created TBSC offers consulting services for all the institutions, organisations, firms involved in the overseas commerce activity, and consequently affected by the process of economic integration. Thus, on the medium and long term, it is assumed that TBSC will function through self-financing using the offered services. The University of Oradea and The Faculty of Economics are institutions under the high supervision of the Ministry of Education and Research, holding acknowledged specializations according the Education Law; thus, this structure will exist and develop on so as to allow the continuation of the TBSC activities when the non-reimbursable funding ceased. There is a common interest of the partners in continuing the collaboration after the implementation of the project taking into account that by means of these working group activities appeared cross-border collaboration and cooperation proposals, with positive effects on both sides.

#### 7. Lessons learnt from the practice

The project had as a goal to determine the improvement of the technical and managerial abilities of the personnel working in the import-export SMEs from Bihor county by means of exchange of know-how with the Hungarian partners and training activities, thus, consolidating their capacity to administrate, operate and implement cross-border projects, and, at the same time, to induce a change in the attitude and mentality among the SMEs regarding the process of European integration and the European single market. This change of attitude reflected itself in the improvement at the level of applying and interpreting legislation, at the level of rendering the management of human and material resources more efficiently, at the level of the awareness of the necessity and usefulness of a management and development plan of the company on short and medium term, as also at the level of the development strategy that respects the European tendency.

The Euro-regional dimensions of the strategies used by the SMEs must be developed by creating a frame which should facilitate and compensate for the lack of contracts and interaction, which are necessary for the

development, including the import-export activity in the cross-border region. The easiest way is to facilitate the cross-border exchange of know-how between the companies, which belong to the same field, which are confronted with the same problems and subjected to the same pressures, by means of cross-border cooperation programmes, by organizing different associations of the SMEs in specialized fields.

8. Contact information

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9. Other possible interesting information

- Website: <http://www.csat-oradea.ro/index.html>

- Documents (reports, presentations, etc.) <http://steconomice.uoradea.ro/anale/volume/2008/v1-international-business-and-european-integration/046.pdf>