

FOUNDING DECLARATION

Network of Eastern External Border Regions (NEEBOR)



County Council
of Békés County



Region of
East Macedonia - Thrace



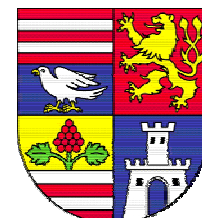
Regional Council
of Etelä-Savo



County Council of
Hajdú-Bihar County



Regional Council
of Kainuu



Košice Region



Regional Council
of Kymenlaakso



Regional Council
of Lapland



Marshal Office of
Lubelskie Voivodeship



North Great Plain Regional
Development Agency



Regional Council
of North Karelia



Council of Oulu
Region



Marshal Office of
Podlaskie Voivodeship



Regional Council
of Pohjois-Savo



Prešov Region



County Council of
Somogy County



South Great Plain Region



Regional Council
of South Karelia



Marshal Office of
Warmińsko-Mazurskie
Voivodeship



Association of Estonian Cities and
Association of Municipalities of Estonia



Association of
Local Authorities
in Lithuania



Hungarian Public
Nonprofit Company for
Regional Development
and Town Planning



Latvian Association of
Local and Regional
Governments



National Union
of County Councils
of Romania



UNION OF CYPRUS
MUNICIPALITIES

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Network of Eastern External Border Regions (NEEBOR)

The present eastern external borderline of the European Union embraces ten EU Member States and ten non-EU countries as well as over 40 regions. From the Barents to the Mediterranean, this 5,500-kilometre long borderline is a real challenge and opportunity for regional development and cross-border activities. The development of this border area is of utmost importance for the whole of the European Union in order to prevent the emergence of new dividing lines and to secure a zone of prosperity and harmony following the enlargement in 2004.

The Network of Eastern External Border Regions, NEEBOR, is an interregional and bottom-up initiative that aims at increasing cooperation between its member regions as well as visibility and understanding on external border issues at large.

To this end, **the undersigned regions declare the following:**

1. The EU's eastern external border regions share similar, if not identical, development challenges that are different from the ones confronted by other European border regions. A meaningful agenda for a more intense cooperation has, therefore, naturally emerged among our regions that are a special case in Europe. NEEBOR is an instrument to help networking and collaboration among the EU's eastern external border regions, with a view to creating added value and mutual benefits for our regions and citizens through the promotion of common interests and development of joint initiatives.
2. NEEBOR will endeavour to continuously highlight the development of this external border area as well as increase awareness of existing strengths and weaknesses and bring them to the attention of the responsible fora in the EU, Member States, regions, local authorities and the civil organisations. The NEEBOR network will seek to establish a well-functioning dialogue with relevant stakeholders on different cross-border themes, and the involved regions will seek joint positions on external border issues of common interest with a view to improving potentials and circumstances of cooperation across the EU's eastern external borderline.

3. With the introduction of the Wider Europe initiative, the launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the development of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, working across the EU's eastern external borderline has over the past few years gained welcomed attention at the EU level. The EU institutions and other stakeholders are appreciated for their positive efforts. For its part, NEEBOR will complement and strengthen the EU level activities by providing regional contributions that are, *de facto*, input from organisations delivering the appropriate EU policies at a grass-root level on a daily basis.
4. The signatory regions will encourage regular and widest possible dissemination of best practices and exchanges of experiences on cross-border issues and individual projects. Every NEEBOR region can contribute to this continuous process and learn from the other regions. In the first instance particular attention will be paid to the aspects of implementation and management of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument that requires a new approach to cross-border cooperation.
5. In the short to mid term, NEEBOR aims at creating a permanent structure and a secretariat for the network. Simultaneously, the member regions will activate local organisations from all walks of life in their own regions to establish operational relationships with their counterparts in other regions. Through the involvement of grass-root actors in economic co-operation, new synergies are expected to emerge across the borders, thereby decreasing the disadvantages of our peripheral geographical location. In general, NEEBOR will establish a system of intensive networking at three levels: (a) among the member regions themselves, (b) among the regional representation offices in Brussels, and (c) between the Brussels-based offices and the member regions.
6. NEEBOR is an inclusive and open network and welcomes any region interested in the development of the land-based EU's eastern external borderline to join its activities.

This declaration is adopted by:

County Council of Békés County (Hungary)
Region of East Macedonia – Thrace (Greece)
Regional Council of Etelä-Savo (Finland)
County Council of Hajdú-Bihar County (Hungary)
Regional Council of Kainuu (Finland)
Košice Region (Slovakia)
Regional Council of Kymenlaakso (Finland)
Regional Council of Lapland (Finland)
Marshal Office of Lubelskie Voivodeship (Poland)
North Great Plain Regional Development Agency (Hungary)
Regional Council of North Karelia (Finland)
Council of Oulu Region (Finland)
Marshal Office of Podlaskie Voivodeship (Poland)
Regional Council of Pohjois-Savo (Finland)
Prešov Region (Slovakia)
County Council of Somogy County (Hungary)
South Great Plain Region (Hungary)
Regional Council of South Karelia (Finland)
South-Transdanubian Regional Development Agency (Hungary)
Marshal Office of Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship (Poland)
Association of Estonian Cities and Association of Municipalities of Estonia
Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania
Hungarian Public Nonprofit Company for Regional Development and Town Planning
Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments
National Union of County Councils of Romania
Union of Cyprus Municipalities

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Appendix: Standing orders of the Network of Eastern External Border Regions (NEEBOR)