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Grenzhoppers

Breaking down borders

Grenzhoppers is a Dutch-German crossborder network of people and organisations that want to share and cooperate in crossborder projects and initiatives. The network includes municipalities, firms and sociocultural organisations in the border region Achterhoek-Borken. Over the last three years, the network has grown from 16 to over 360 participants.



Initial situation

- At the beginning, the initiators of the network were unaware of the existing crossborder activities and contacts and found themselves in the following situation:
 - Unknown counterparts: Who is who?
 - Unawareness of existing projects and initiatives: What is already happening?
 - Parallel projects and initiatives: duplication of work
 - No exchange of knowledge and experiences
- These aspects led to the main challenge: What can be done to improve the situation?

Objectives

- Grenzhoppers' main objectives were and are:
 - Becoming acquainted within national borders and crossborder
 - Gaining insight in existing projects and initiatives
 - Sharing information on projects and initiatives
 - Building up the network
 - Eliminating existing borders
 - Starting new joint projects

Implementation

- Grenzhoppers was pursuing the goal to start networking quickly and learn by doing. This included:
 - Starting to work in practice: organising several meetings and events.
 - No formal structures: a team of coordinators manages the network.
 - Bottom-up initiatives
 - Low budget: There is a small general budget to finance the network. Costs of events are borne by participants.

Achievements

- Number of participants increased from 16 to over 360 within three years.
- Five working groups on the topics economics, education, tourism, culture and health sports have been established. Two annual plenary meetings as overall network events have been implemented.
- Participants have diverse backgrounds: companies, schools and governments.
- The Grenzhoppers Business School was founded.
- Several new projects have been initiated, e.g. the Steam Academy and the 3D Café.
- Several visits from other regions that wanted to learn from Grenzhoppers, e.g. the Parkstad Limburg and the City of Aachen.
- Transferability: Grenzhoppers can be implemented everywhere. It only needs enthusiastic people.

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