

In work package 2 Leiedal started an open discussion towards a better and more efficient governmental organisation of the Region. The discussion uses the co-operative agreement approach.

Current regional network: There are few regions in Flanders where there are as many networks and regional actors working closely together. The inventory (published in March) listed up 135 organisations / 'networks' as we call them, that have a regional focus in their activities and where the public sector is involved (financially or otherwise).

Link with higher government levels: This project coincides perfectly with, but is independent of, the 'Internal State Reform of the Flemish Government'. Flanders is also working on improved policy on three governmental levels: Flanders, provinces, municipalities. Apart from these three levels, regions come in the picture as important intermediate levels, in close contact with the level that directly serves the citizens. This project 'Sterk Besturen in een sterke regio' is performing its own reflexion process, and is feeding the debate and the text documents produced by the Flemish Government concerning the Internal State Reform.

Our regional Colloquium on 7 December coincided with the publication of Flanders 'White Book' that will decide on how to execute the internal state reform. The Flemish responsible Minister will present his statements and his future efforts and supportive measures for our region on the Colloquium.

'Sterk besturen in een sterke regio': Leiedal continues working with a steering committee of internal and external stakeholders to set up the guidelines for improved networking strategies for the municipalities and other governmental levels, as well as private partners (non profit).

- Several ingredients for a better and more efficient governmental organisation of the region, have been discussed during debates and seminars. The list is long, the themes diverse. Therefore, every three months a public 'sounding board forum' is organised, where a synthesis is presented, often followed by workshops on specific subjects (e.g. the SWOT of the region, intermunicipality cooperations, Internal State Reform, ...). About 100 people show up each time to participate in the debate. During the last forum (6 september) a synthesis document of the whole process was presented and discussed.
- In order to be able to learn from 'do's and don'ts' from abroad, a public debate 'Learning from the Netherlands' was organised on how the public sector is organised on regional level in the Netherlands (the 'Wgr Plus regions'). It was a seminar with Prof. Bas Denter from the region of Twente, who is involved as academician as well as citizen in the city-region evolution and debates. The 'Wgr Plus' regions have their own government, that decides and finances special projects (e.g. concerning mobility, housing zones, industrial zones, ...). Our region is debating on whether or not to construct a similar system of a regional government. This discussion is held with the mayors, the administrative secretaries, special planning experts, ...

Ingredients for strategic projects and for building up regional identity: the region of South West Flanders, also called the Kortrijk Region, is seeking on how to build up a better image and a stronger identity. Politicians are very sensitive for this issue. The region does not even have a name that is generally accepted.

We organised debates and gathered study material on the following themes:

- Can space be a carrier for strategic projects in the region, space as structural 'peg' for multisectoral projects with supraregional irradiation. The region has certain strengths with regards to spatial planning. There are strongly urbanised zones, there are green, rural zones. Can an ambitious project on regional level, that is built up around these green axes, serve as a lever project where other sectoral projects can be integrated (mobility, recreation, housing and industrial zones, ...)?
- How can culture evolve from fragmented local initiatives to a regional strategy with priority projects with regional and supraregional radiation. Today the 'regional culture consultation table' that gathers the cultural administrators and aldermen, is too limited in its actions and in its ambitions on regional level. We are looking for a method to improve this. Culture could also be a lever for regional strategy and identity.
- Is entrepreneurship still the natural strength of this region, as it was 20 years ago, when strong coalitions between companies and local authorities succeeded in pushing the region forward? Several debates with entrepreneurs organisations and unions led us to the conclusion that the 'old days' are gone. Large companies are no longer involved in the development of the region (they are 'multinationals'), whereas

SME's have a functional relationship with their region, that should result in direct wins, in return on investment. They are involved in several networks that serve entrepreneurs. We noticed that the emotional involvement with the region is very poor.

Colloquium: The conclusions of these debates are integrated in the final synthesis document that was presented on the Colloquium of 7 December 2010 in Kortrijk. On this Colloquium the region presented scenario's for a better and efficient governmental organisation of the region. Several groups and forums engaged themselves in the action program, to be started up in 2011.

Dissemination

The project 'Sterk besturen in een sterke regio' launched her website in july 2010: www.sterkeregio.be. It contains all information on the project, as well as reports and documentation from other regions/countries. There's also a public forum, who gathered public opinions for the colloquium organized on 7 december 2010.