



The history of the Region of Sønderjylland-Schleswig

The signing of the agreement on Danish-German cooperation in the Region of Sønderjylland-Schleswig represented the culmination of a process spanning several years. Important milestones were the setting-up of a working group between Danish and German municipalities in 1992, the memorandum of the Schleswig-Holstein Department of European Affairs in 1994 and the first Danish-German border region congress in 1995. In the summer and fall of 1996, a draft for cooperation in the envisaged border region was developed. Finally, the respective future partners decided on the formation of the Region during 1997. As a result, formalized cross-border cooperation along the Danish-German land border became reality on Sep. 16, 1997. The partners to the agreement were the District of Southern Jutland on the Danish side and the Districts of Nordfriesland and Schleswig-Flensburg and the City of Flensburg on the German side.

The cooperation is still based on the text of the agreement on Danish-German cooperation in the Region of Sønderjylland-Schleswig as of Sep. 16, 1997 in its updated version of Nov. 3, 2011, according to which the overriding objective of the cooperation is to implement joint activities that help to promote the development of the Region and at the same time foster contact between people, industry and associations from both sides of the border as well as intensify cross-border cooperation in general.

In 2007, the South Jutland municipalities of Aabenraa, Sønderborg, Haderslev and Tønder became partners to the agreement as a consequence of the Danish local authority reform (municipal reform), and the newly formed South Denmark Region, the legal successor to the District of South Jutland, was integrated into the cooperation.

The jointly funded administration and information office (secretariat, "Regionskontor & Infocenter") of the Region of Sønderjylland-Schleswig is located in Padborg, on the Danish side of the border. Since 2007 the office is open to employees, employers and institutions concerning questions about living and working in the region. It was formally integrated into the administration of the municipality of Aabenraa in 2012. This was a pragmatic solution contractually agreed upon between the board and the municipality in order to accentuate the municipal character of the office as well as its location close to the border, but also for reasons of practical convenience.

The Region has undergone a number of internal adjustments since 1997, mainly due to changes in political intentions and preferences. Regular evaluations of the Region's work are also part of the contractual agreement. These evaluations have led to changes in the structure and the organization's main areas of focus. For example, the number of committees maintained by the Region has changed over the years. The Regional Assembly, which was the supreme decision-making body when the Region was founded, was abolished in 2011, which meant that the role of the board changed.

In a European context, the Region acts as one single entity. The District of South Jutland and the City of Flensburg were among the founding members of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) in 1971. The Region of Sønderjylland-Schleswig has been represented on the AEBR board since 2006.