

Report on the ASEAN Boundary Study Tour (ASEAN BST)

During the “International Symposium on Land and River Boundaries Demarcation and Maintenance in Support of Borderland Development”, held in Bangkok from 7th to 11th November, 2006, the organizers from Thailand asked the head of the EuroBoundaries project, Heinz König, if it would be possible to organize a boundary study tour to Europe. This request was inspired by the presence of the European boundary experts, many of them being also members of the EuroBoundaries core team (Pekka Tättilä/Finland, Michel Bacchus/France, Herbert Wilmes/Germany, and Heinz König/Austria).

The idea of a boundary study tour was supported by the EuroBoundaries core team and the Project Manager Pierrette Fraisse from Belgium, the NMCAs in Austria (BEV) and Switzerland (swisstopo) and the national boundary delegations of Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Germany/Bavaria, Hungary and Austria. Since the beginning of 2007 Heinz König as the main organiser had prepared this study tour and had been supported by the above mentioned organisations and experts. In the course of time the number of Asian participants increased from first only Thailand to finally seven Asian countries: Brunei (1), Cambodia (2), Indonesia (1), Laos (3), Myanmar (2), Vietnam (2) and Thailand (7), totally 18 participants; thus the group was named “ASEAN Boundary Study Tour” (ASEAN BST). It was agreed to travel from the 20th to 29th June, 2007.

The programme was as follows:

- It started at the swisstopo head office in Bern with presentations about the international boundary management in Switzerland and the tasks of swisstopo in general,
- continued with field trips to specially selected sections of the international borders Switzerland-Austria (river Rhine), Austria-Liechtenstein (lower parts between Feldkirch and river Rhine), Austria-Germany (mountains – watershed between northern Vorarlberg and Bavaria, and border demarcation on bridges and hydro power plants between Salzburg and Bavaria) and Austria-Hungary (region of the Neusiedler See showing the boundary monument in the lake) and
- ended at the BEV head office in Vienna with presentations covering the international boundary management in Austria and the tasks of the BEV in general;
- special presentations concerning boundary matters were given by the EuroBoundaries core team members Pierrette Fraisse (head of EB/ Belgium), Pekka Tättilä (NLS/Finland) and Robert Balanche (swisstopo/Switzerland), and by Manfred Neubauer (BEV/Austria); Heinz König accompanied the whole ASEAN BST as boundary expert and guide;
- the boundary experts from Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Germany/Bavaria, Hungary and Austria met the Asian boundary experts both in the field and at the head offices and gave special information on boundary demarcation, boundary treaties, boundary documents and the boundary management in their countries.

The participants of the seven (out of ten) ASEAN countries gave a very positive feed back:

- they were informed about many legal, administrative, technical and practical aspects of international boundary management,
- they got important information to help them to develop a common understanding of boundary matters in their region,
- they confirmed to continue the process to define and determine the international boundaries in that region and
- they suggested to intensive the contacts and initiate an ASEAN forum for boundary experts within the frame of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Heinz König, Vienna, 2nd July, 2007