

PEAT-Valley - An international string of pearls

Towards a Golden Triangle Web in the Peat Valley

Short intro about the Peat Regions

The PEAT Lands and Regions are associated with some of the world's last as well as some of its most productive ecosystems, and they are found from high cold-temperate latitudes to the tropics. Peat lands are wetland ecosystems that are characterized by the accumulation of organic matter, which is produced and deposited at a greater rate than it is decomposed, leading to the formation of peat. Over 90% of peat lands are in the temperate and cold belt in the Northern Hemisphere. The remaining area is concentrated in tropical and sub-tropical latitudes, much of it under forest.

Functions of peat lands are remarkably diverse:

- Peat lands as a unique natural landscape
- Excavated Peat lands as a large scale agribusiness landscape
- Peat as an Energy resource
- Peat-as a historic landscape with social-amenity and history functions
- Peat lands for recreation and aesthetic functions
- Peat as a global business: extracted and used ex situ as/for:
 - substrate in horticulture
 - energy generation
 - humus and organic fertilizer in agriculture
 - raw material for chemistry
 - bedding material
 - filter and absorbent material
 - peat textiles
 - building and insulation material
 - balneology, therapy, medicine, and body care
 - flavor enhancer
- Provision of drinking water
- Wild plants growing on mires and peat lands as/for:
 - food
 - raw material for industrial products
 - medicine

In other words Peat Lands and Peat Regions in the Northern Hemisphere are everywhere the same and yet always different and imbedded in a very strong identity.

The PEAT-Network

In the Leonardo da Vinci project PEAT-Valley seven so-called Peat-Regions situated in seven countries on the shores of the North Sea and the Baltic Sea will build a new knowledge network.

Why is the Peat-Network needed?

The initiative of PEAT Valley is developed out of the need of educational and research institutions in their surge for a better interaction between (agri-)business, nature preserving bodies, knowledge institutions and local and regional government bodies. Underlying reason for this ambition is the strong transition which currently occurs in these regions. Nearly everything is changing. Processes such as demographic decline, changing age demographics, brain drain, new economic pillars (or the lack thereof), climate change, urbanisation and leisure have an enormous impact on our daily lives. This transition is so intensive and far-reaching that we have no ability to deal with it in today's administrative and economic context. The conventional tools and approaches that we generally reach for are not up to these tasks. These tools, approaches and working methods are rooted in sector-based thinking. But this thinking in terms of water, agriculture, economics, nature, recreation, traffic or culture as separated sectors, with all their structures and organisations, no longer appears to be effective. Generally speaking, the sectors are organised very effectively from the inside out, but also differ strongly from each other, in terms of targets and target groups, and sometimes even are conflicting. There is no doubt that their specific qualities and values are highly developed; within themselves, the distinct sectors have generated an enormous amount of professional knowledge. The

problem is, that the sector knowledge by itself is no longer sufficient when addressing today's challenges. But it delivers strong input when stepping forward towards a cross cutting approach.

Towards a cross cutting approach

Within our Peat Valley-Network, we have gathered representatives of seven education institutes from seven regions. We have planned several meetings and actions to build a strong knowledge network. Are we, by doing so, adequately equipped to meet the demands of our regions? Can we, as an educational knowledge network, really bridge the gap between old school sector knowledge and a next generation cross cutting and region based ongoing learning and working network? I definitely do think we cannot.

1st Statement:

As education institutes we are just ONE player at regional level. We must rethink the operational relations between education and research institutions and their professional context outside of the school buildings.

Towards a Golden Triangle Web

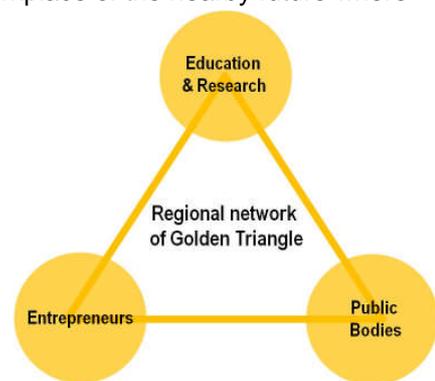
What we do need is the development of a golden triangle web within PEAT-Valley in which personal and students of our schools and educational institutions, personal of government bodies and the workers in companies and NGO's will come together working on projects and innovative questions. Education is a key partner in this process, as we are training tomorrow's employees. (Vocational) Students will have to be prepared for our diverse, international orientated and competitive knowledge society, in order to be capable to work in this type of work environment. It is not sufficient to just learn for a certain job during formal education. Students will have to learn to be flexible, to be capable of gaining new competences. To reach the maximum effect of learning, a student needs to make a connection between (work) experiences and theoretical knowledge. Such authentic learning environment has to be similar to the real working situation: the workplace of the nearby future where the partners of the Golden Triangle work together.

What is the Golden Triangle?

The Golden Triangle is an ongoing cooperation between:

1. Public bodies and civil society
2. Entrepreneurs
3. Education and Research Institutes

They are linked to each other in a permanent *Community of Innovative Learners*. Their shared aim is to innovate their regions towards welfare and wellbeing, based on the specific regional assets and demands.

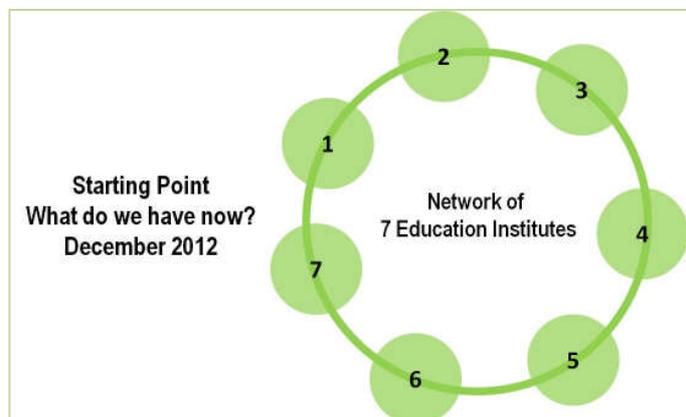


How can we achieve building a Golden Triangle Web?

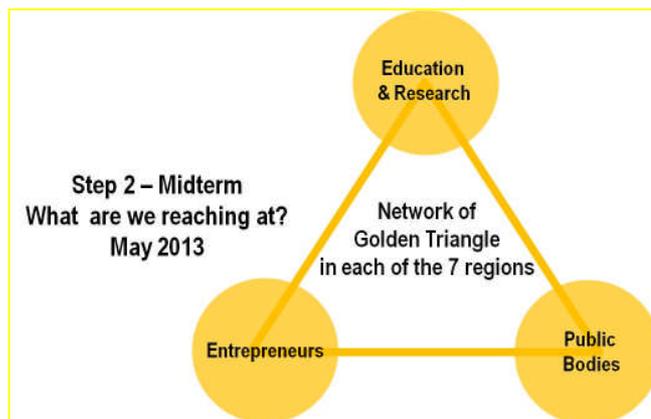
To create this environment, our project makes a three-steps-movement:

1. Starting point and current status is building a network of 7 education institutes.

Meaning: The partners meet, get to know each other's situation (demands, wishes and input) in order to take the first step towards building a sustainable partner network on shared themes within the peat region.

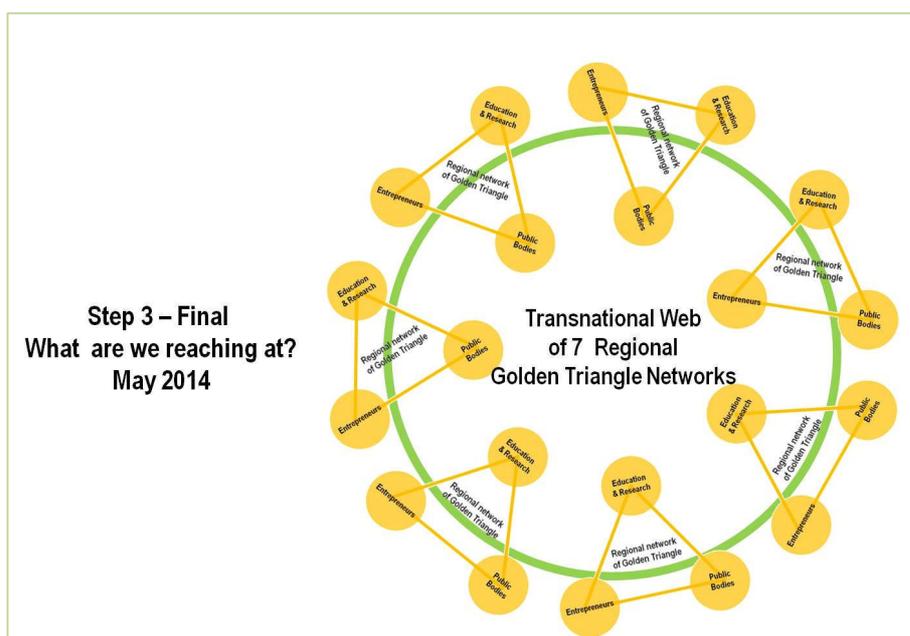


2. **From this starting point we will develop our regional Golden Triangle Networks.** Meaning: each representative from our education Network will build a regional network with key players from education & research, the business sector and government bodies work together. They will elaborate the regional SWOT and identify the leading regional theme(s). These regional networks will prepare input towards the transregional web..



3. **As a final step we will develop a transregional web entailing representatives from all the seven regional networks.**

Meaning: On a strategic level we will develop a collaborative transnational strategic plan. This collaborative strategic plan entails the regional plans of all the partner countries involved. It is based on revitalizing the peat regions. It will gain innovative solutions for problems within this area and developing changes to connect students to the region and realize more attractive education. Developing a transnational biobased strategy focused on the innovation capacity of the relevant international peat-regions creates chances. It leads to Business to Business, innovations regarding biobased that can be transferred within the region of each country and students that will be educated regarding this topic. This can be achieved by facilitating and strengthening of networks and relationships between government, entrepreneurs and education. Process and product innovation are the results of this cooperation. This leads to added value and economic growth for all parties concerned. The methodology that will be developed, leads to a sustainable cooperation system that results in joint projects, knowledge sharing and economic progress.



Our project thus will allow for and deliver output towards larger projects such as a DoI, ToI, Interreg, EFRO and Life.

Our shared aim

The main aim of this project is threefold:

1. To build a network with partners from peat regions within the North European countries. Partners consist of representatives of education, government, research, Agri-Business and the citizens from this peat-region (The transregional Golden Triangle Web);
2. To identify and inventory the problems, possibilities, challenges and chances, questions and innovations regarding biobased themes from all the partners (the regional SWOTs);
3. To develop a strategy which shows possibilities for larger projects related to biobased and agri-business related themes which directly contribute to the curricula of vocational education students (the transregional strategy)

2nd Statement:

It is not enough for regional stakeholders like government bodies, entrepreneurs, the public, and the education and research sector to come into contact with each other in *Kenniswerkplaats*. Our aim must be *Learning with each other and from each other*, going through a development process together, changing together. Our shared result must be the transition of the region, from a loose cooperative relationship towards a *structured learning region*.

Next actions

1. As a first action, we would like to invite each of you
 - To identify the key players in your region
 - To select the main representatives from public bodies, entrepreneurs and their associations and colleagues from education and research institutes.
 - Difficult for you to do? Please don't hesitate and call us for help. Our project allows for face to face assistance.
2. At our next meeting in spring 2013, we will prepare a conference with participation of all regional Golden Triangle representatives.
 - Each of you will get a podium for introducing your regional Golden Triangle and the main topics in your region.
 - Together we will identify further actions at regional as well as at transregional level.