



PRESS RELEASE June 9th 2010 <english version>

Announcement of unique collaboration with Canada's prestigious Institute without Boundaries.

Recentre starts education programme on sustainable design in Meuse-Rhine Euregion.

Recentre, the centre that promotes sustainable design in the Meuse-Rhine Euregion, is working together with the world-renowned Canadian Institute without Boundaries on a unique education programme revolving around sustainable design. The collaboration was announced last weekend to representatives of design academies from all over the world on the closing day of the international Cumulus conference.

Recentre was established not so long ago to promote the use of sustainable design and to stimulate the sustainable economy in Belgian and Dutch Limburg and Liège, known as the Meuse-Rhine Euregion. The centre was recently introduced to the press for the first time and is now drawing the spotlight once more.

Given its goal of promoting sustainable design, Recentre is aiming to set up an education programme in the region focused on this theme. To this end, it is working together with the distinguished Institute without Boundaries, a postgraduate institution affiliated with George Brown College in Toronto, Canada. The Institute is particularly active in the area of design from a sociological, ecological and economic viewpoint. Its inaugural project, Massive Change, put it on the international map. Also notable is that it targets not only design graduates, but anyone who is interested in sustainability and design. At the Institute you thus also come across urbanologists, sociologists, psychologists, economists, architects, lawyers and more.

Why a Euregion programme?

"We aim to promote sustainable design and support the sustainable economy in our region – and we do this in many different ways", says Recentre director Natascha Rommens. "For example, we work intensively with the business world. This collaboration has shown that our region already has at its disposal a huge amount of knowledge in many facets of sustainability. This forms a solid basis that we would like to put to the best possible use. But it's also clear to us that having our own programme in sustainable design could be a strong additional trump card for the development of the Euregion. It will help us to consolidate our knowledge and experience still further, and to anchor our trump cards in the region."

And the programme is well on its way. Together with the Institute without Boundaries, Recentre is now in the process of developing the programme. By summer next year, the first 'summer school' will be planned. This will involve a short course of a few weeks, aiming to provide participants with new insights via an intensive curriculum in the field of sustainability and design. Thereafter, the offer will be extended, working up towards a full-fledged, one-year postgraduate programme in sustainable design by 2014. What exact form all this will take is a question that is now being worked on. However, as in Toronto, the programmes will be targeted not only at designers, but at graduates of all possible backgrounds.

As Luigi Ferrara, director of the Institute without Boundaries, puts it: "Our aim is to produce graduates who, in the words of Buckminster Fuller, are 'a synthesis of artist, inventor, mechanic, objective economist, and evolutionary strategist.' To do so, we need to eliminate boundaries between design and other professions, and between designers and the local and global constituents they serve. This is directly reflected in the name of our institution."

Ferrara is already looking forward to the collaboration with the Euregion: "Our regions share a similar industrial history as well as a number of complex problems: the heavy industries that are gradually disappearing and demanding a new economic direction, the ageing of the population and constantly widening generation gap, the 'brain drain' of young talent. Moreover, just like in the Euregion, we also have different languages and many different cultures all living in close proximity to one another. This means that the people are used to crossing boundaries, so to speak. In your cases it's exactly the same. And this mentality is the perfect breeding ground for what we want to do. It's our experience that creativity always flourishes in these sorts of circumstances."

Euregion as creative biotope

Recentre's mission is to give the Meuse-Rhine Euregion a head start in the field of sustainability by giving young, creative companies the chance to establish themselves here and thus make their contribution to the region and the society in which they live. With an education programme like this, the region is taking another step forward to achieve this goal.

Recentre is a partnership of Wallonie Design in Liège, Z33/Design Platform Limburg in Hasselt and NAIM/Bureau Europa/the Province of Limburg in Maastricht. Recentre is partly financed through the Interreg IVa programme and is supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

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