

Press release – 5 June 2008

## Michel Delebarre succeeds Pierre Mauroy as president of the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière

The General Assembly of the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT)<sup>1</sup>, which was held on 29 May 2008 in Sarreguemines, elected Michel Delebarre<sup>2</sup> to the MOT presidency.

**Pierre Mauroy**, former prime minister, mayor of Lille from 1973 to 2001 and president of Lille metropolitan urban community from 1989 to 2008, has been an ardent promoter of the cross-border cause.

President of the MOT from 2001 to 2008, he spoke of his attachment to this mission and underlined **the importance of its action, which he qualified as “citizen-oriented” and directly intended to improve the lives of the inhabitants of cross-border territories** (today almost 280,000 French workers go to work every day in neighbouring countries).

**Michel Delebarre**, newly-elected MOT president, stated that he would make sure that this “citizen-oriented” dimension of the organisation was maintained while **guiding its development today at European level** in order to bring together all the players and drivers of the development of cross-border territories in Europe.

### Pierre Mauroy, ardent promoter of the cross-border cause

MOT president from 2001 to 2008, the commitment of Pierre Mauroy to progress in cross-border cooperation culminated in the official launch on 28 January 2008 of the “Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis”<sup>3</sup>, the first European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC)<sup>4</sup> to be established.

Pierre Mauroy underlined the “citizen-oriented” dimension of the action of the MOT, which he led for seven years. The MOT is not “yet another institution unrelated to the lives of the inhabitants”; its mission is to work on practical projects to facilitate the daily lives of the inhabitants of border spaces and to network the protagonists of these territories, which have a real need to share information on cooperation practices which are often novel and innovative.

<sup>1</sup> The MOT is an association specialising in support for setting up cross-border projects. Established in 1997 on the initiative of the DIACT, it comprises a network of fifty or so local authorities (and their groupings) which have developed cross-border territory projects (including conurbations, rural spaces, natural spaces). EUROMOT was established in Lille on 8 November 2007 to develop the network at European level. [www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu](http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu)

<sup>2</sup> Also MP and mayor of Dunkerque, president of the Dunkerque Urban Community and the Syndicat Mixte de la Côte d’Opale, and first vice-president of the Committee of the Regions.

<sup>3</sup> The establishment of this Eurometropolis, in the form of an EGTC, is the culminating success of seventeen years of work in the field at the service of cross-border cooperation between France and Belgium.

<sup>4</sup> The EGTC is a new structure governed by European law dedicated to territorial cooperation. According to Pierre Mauroy, it will “give a new and powerful impetus and a much broader field of action to cooperation measures between public-sector protagonists across the borders of the member states of the European Union. [...] and which will thus contribute to reinforcing European integration through practical projects affecting the daily lives of the inhabitants.”

## Real achievements

Many elected representatives from all the French borders described practical examples.

The topic of **transport** was mentioned many times. Céleste Lett, MP and mayor of Sarreguemines and president of the association Zukunft SaarMoselle Avenir, which hosted the General Assembly, cited the example of the Sarreguemines-Saarbrücken tram-train. There were reports from other borders, for example on the "CEVA" (Cornavin/Eaux-Vives/Annemasse) cross-border regional express train between Geneva and Annemasse, intended to meet needs including those of the 105,000 workers residing in France who go to work in Switzerland every day. Work was started in 2005 and should be completed in 2012.

The area of **health cooperation** was also highlighted, with the example of the construction of a French-Spanish cross-border hospital in Cerdagne at Puigcerda, which is a first anywhere in Europe. This area will also be a major topic of cooperation between EUROMOT and the AEBR (see below).

## Stronger territorial roots for the MOT Bureau

The MOT Bureau has been renewed and enlarged to provide **greater representation of the territories**. The elected officers are listed below.

### Honorary President

**Pierre MAUROY**

Former prime minister

### President

**Michel DELEBARRE**

MP and mayor of Dunkerque, president of the Dunkerque Urban Community and the Syndicat Mixte de la Côte d'Opale, first vice-president of the Committee of the Regions

### Vice-Presidents

**Alain LAMASSOURE**, MEP

**Martine AUBRY**, mayor of Lille, president of Lille Metropolitan Urban Community

**Christian DUPESSEY**, mayor of Annemasse, vice-president of Annemasse Agglo

**Nawel RAFIK-ELMRINI**, community councillor and deputy mayor of Strasbourg, Strasbourg Urban Community

**Joël GIRAUD**, MP and mayor of Argentière-la-Bessée, vice-president of the Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur region

### Secretary

**Christiane ECKERT**, deputy mayor of Mulhouse

### Treasurer

**Jean-Marc GARNIER**, territorial actions officer, Territorial development directorate of the Caisse des Dépôts

## Europe-wide development

Pierre Mauroy emphasised that **the development of the MOT** is his proudest achievement during his seven years as president. MOT membership has doubled from 26 in 2001 to 52 today. The municipalities, cities, groupings, etc., of the early years have now been joined by many regions and even states (Luxembourg became a member at the beginning of the year, for example). The network is also developing at European level, with members from non-French borders (such as the Euregio Meuse-Rhin which has just joined) and **the establishment of EUROMOT, a European network of cross-border local authorities**, on 8 November 2007 in Lille, resulting in extension of partnerships on a number of borders in Europe.

A conference on this topic was organised in Saarbrücken on 28 May, the day before the General Assembly, to explain the issues and the objectives of EUROMOT. EUROMOT is now formed by three partners: the MOT, Eixo Atlántico (network of border towns in the North region of Portugal and Galicia in Spain) and City Twins (network of twin cities in Germany, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Sweden, Finland and Russia). Established on 8 November 2007, EUROMOT aims to form a European network of cross-border local authorities in Europe in order to:

- share their practices and promote their proposals for meeting the needs of the inhabitants of cross-border territories,
- ensure that better account is taken of cross-border cooperation in national and European policies.

The concrete actions of EUROMOT, now being organised and developed, will concern operational assistance with projects, training and research, networking and interfacing between local and European levels, with all the regional, national and European authorities.



Conference on 28 May (left to right): Jacques Houbart, Klaus Baldauf, international cooperation officer of Frankfurt-Oder city council and vice-president of the EUROMOT executive committee, and Martin Guillermo-Ramirez.

**Jacques Houbart**, MOT director-general and president of the EUROMOT executive committee, outlined the content of the strategic alliance signed between EUROMOT and the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) on 8 November 2007.

**Martin Guillermo-Ramirez**, AEBR secretary-general, put forward concrete proposals for giving an operational content to this alliance, which must enable sustained sharing between the two networks in order to obtain more effective

promotion of cross-border cooperation at national and Community levels while maintaining a strong connection between the local protagonists and the institutions.

There are thus many challenges for the new MOT presidency, including this European development, but also the launch of the new cohesion programmes for 2007-2013, for which the MOT has applied, and the increasing numbers of EGTCs which will need guidance on their establishment and networking.

### Manifesto for cross-border cooperation in Europe



The policy committee meeting of EUROMOT, that was held in Lille on 11 April 2008, adopted the first EUROMOT publication : the "Manifesto for cross-border cooperation in Europe" (published in French, English and German). It puts forward **concrete recommendations for advancing cross-border cooperation in Europe**. These recommendations, produced by the 12 workshops of the Lille European conference "Cross-border territories: day-to-day Europe" (8 and 9 November 2007). They are going to be submitted officially to National and European authorities, in particular within the framework of the French presidency of the European Union. They cover the following **twelve topics**: cross-border territories, cross-border conurbations, cross-border rural and natural territories, maritime cooperation, economic development, employment and training, health, environment, public transport, culture and territorial integration, legal instruments of cooperation, training in cross-border professions. The Manifesto is available on the website [www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu](http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu).

**Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière contact:** Tel: +33 (0)1 55 80 56 80

**Press contact: Echos de Villes:** Tel: +33 (0)1 42 21 12 18