



## Lars Whitt

Head of Office  
Oresunddirekt  
(Denmark/Sweden)

With a third of Europe's population currently living in living in cross-border regions, it is almost inevitable that the future will bring an increased focus on local and regional cross-border collaboration. Here lies an enormous potential, hitherto only partly realised. In the Oresund region, we have tried to take the situation of cross-border commuters and businesses as our starting point. Experience has shown that by communicating directly with the citizens, and basing our communication on their individual situations, the region can be made to feel accessible to the individual. A dynamic border region is created by putting the needs of the citizen first. When Danish and Swedish politicians agreed to build a bridge across the Oresund strait in the 90's, the goal was not only to enable faster transportation between peninsular Scandinavia and continental Europe. There was also a clear ambition to create a whole new cross-border region. Since the inauguration of the bridge in 2000, the number of daily cross-border commuters has grown from a mere 2.000 to 25.000.

Sweden and Denmark both have highly developed welfare systems, and the lives of the inhabitants are characterised by a high degree of socio-economic security. Therefore, the insecurity involved in leaving a well-trusted welfare system to depend on another, and the general lack of cross-border public service information, was initially one of the main barriers to cross-border mobility. As a response to this barrier, Oresunddirekt was created, to increase transparency and act as a source of information about rules, rights and regulations for the citizens and businesses of the region.

Oresunddirekt consists of two offices: a drop-in information centre, where citizens can have their commuter questions answered in person, and a web-office that edits and maintains Oresunddirekt.com, a web portal comprising over 1.200 information articles.

One of the most dynamic, and perhaps the most important, feature on Oresunddirekt.com is its user-driven chat forum. Here, the users can get answers to their questions, great or small: What are the parking rules in Copenhagen? How much does a babysitter cost in Malmoe? What are the unwritten social rules I need to know about in order to be comfortable in my new workplace across the strait? These are the everyday, seemingly insignificant, issues that make the wheels of the region go round.

Dealing with the everyday issues of individual cross-border commuters may not seem, at first glance, to have much of a strategic impact on regional development as a whole. But in fact it is one of the most important efforts in the slow but steady development towards a more integrated region. If the idea of a new, regional Europe is to be more than a political vision, nation-states must increase their efforts to support mobility, and mobility begins in the minds of the inhabitants. Understanding the needs of individual, therefore, is the key to releasing the full potential of integrated, mobile cross-border regions.

## Involving civil society in cross-border territories

**On 11 February 2010, 120 participants assisted to the second thematic seminar of the "EGTC" URBACT project\* that was held in Tournai, Belgium, on "the involvement of civil society within cross-border conurbations".**

Develop the inhabitants' feeling of belonging to a cross-border area. Involve civil society within the cross-border public life. Those two questions are fundamental in the construction of cross-border territories and were the heart of the discussion of the seminar, opened by Patrick Peugeot, president of the Forum of the Eurometropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai.

Various examples of cross-border projects which involve directly the inhabitants from both sides of the border were presented as the Forum of the Eurometropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai or a solidarity run called "solidarity KM" organized every year for French and German children within the Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict.

However, in order to create cross-border communities, the presentations have demonstrated the necessity to work for an active participation of the inhabitants. In order to spark off a larger cultural curiosity, the role of the Medias and the creation of a "cross-border public space" are essential and the example of the "two banks newspaper" with its 15.000 visitors per day has shown that the readers' curiosity for real cross-border subjects is well alive.

Going further, the third workshop covered the introduction of cross-border governance mechanisms involving civil society and thus favouring the "legitimacy" of cross-border public action. Several examples were presented as in the Frankfurt (Oder)/Slubice conurbation, on the German-Polish border: the administrations have organized, in June 2009, a public debate forum that bring together the authorities and the civil society. In the end,



one third of the ideas, strategic objectives and projects for a cross-border conurbation come from the civil society. Among the other examples: the setting-up of a "civil parliament" (HU/SVK) within the Ister-Granum EGTC, that is a place for civil organizations to express their needs and opinions ; and the creation within the Trinational Eurodistrict Basel of an association, "Metrobasel", which represents the interests of companies, institutions and actors of the civil society. In conclusion, Dr. Hans-Günther Clev, General Director of MOT, presented the expected results of the project which will end in May 2010. He cited the publication of a final handbook that will present the methodology, the good practices, the local action plans and the European recommendations of the project. He also announced the final conference of the project in Esztergom (HU) on 6-7 May that will present and discuss the results of the project.



*\* Expertising Governance for Transfrontier Conurbations: the project brings together six cross-border agglomerations in Europe. It aims at exchanging good practices and improving, for each partner agglomeration, its cross-border governance system. [www.urbact.eu/egtc](http://www.urbact.eu/egtc)*

## The MOT, the Euro-Institute and the AEBR make their partnership official

**Following a strategic alliance signed between MOT and AEBR in November 2007, two cooperation conventions between MOT and the Euro-Institute and between AEBR and the Euro-Institute have been signed on 18<sup>th</sup> march in Strasbourg at the Council of Europe aside from the 18th Plenary Session of the Congress of local and regional authorities (CLRA) of the Council of Europe.**

As underlined by Mr. Lambertz, Minister-President of the German-speaking Community of Belgium, General Reporter on cross-border cooperation for the CLRA and President of the AEBR: "Firstly it is a question of testifying at European level that in cross-border cooperation matters our three institutions complement each other and are unique". Indeed, these three institutions bring answers in terms of operational assistance as well as strategies of lobbying, exchange of

experiences, and of training, advice or support.

As noticed by Mrs. Rafik-Elmrini, Community Advisor (Urban Community of Strasbourg), Deputy-mayor of Strasbourg and Vice President of MOT, these partnerships form "a reliable network of interlocutors, not only capable of meeting the needs of border areas' expectations in Europe, but also of being a support to the European authorities". Monique Jung, Regional Advisor (Alsace) and President of the Euro-Institute, has also explained that "these conventions will also be used to supervise cooperation on a daily basis between our institutions".

Several working fields have thus been identified, such as the exchange of information, the professionalization of the cross-border stakeholders, the realization of studies, and working in common on projects of publications.

In brief

**The MOT publishes its annual report**



The MOT has just published its 2009 annual report. This document can be downloaded from the MOT website: [www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu](http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu)

**EU 2020 strategy**

The Commission has adopted its proposal for the Europe 2020 strategy, accompanied by a document giving details of the results of the consultation. This new strategy follows a public consultation which generated more than 1500 contributions and in which the MOT participated. A timetable for the Europe 2020 strategy has also been published. <http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020>

**A European boost for macro-regional strategies**

Following the adoption by the EU in October 2009 of an overall European strategy for the Baltic Sea region and the first Baltic Sea summit on 10 February, macro-regional strategy proposals are multiplying. A conference in Ulm on 2 February 2010 marked the launch of a series of consultations intended to shape the draft European strategy for the Danube region produced by the Commission. Elsewhere, also in February, the Spanish presidency of the EU called for an Atlantic Arc strategy for cooperation between the maritime countries of Western Europe. It has also placed the Mediterranean space, which will be the topic of a summit on 7 and 8 June, at the heart of its strategy.

Agenda

- **Congress of the European cross-border grouping**, 10 April 2010 in Annemasse (France)
- **Spanish presidency** - "European territorial cooperation: EGTC and cross-border cooperation", 3 May 2010 in Cáceres (Spain)
- **Final conference of the URBACT EGTC project** "Expertising Governance for Transfrontier Conurbations", 6-7 May 2010 in Esztergom (HU)



PROJECT PART-FINANCED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

- **6th European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns**, 19-21 May 2010 in Dunkirk (France)
- **European Commission** - The regions, drivers of economic change - Building sustainable growth, 20-21 May 2010 in Brussels (Belgium)
- **International conference** "Migration & intercultural identities in relation to border regions", 27-29 May 2010 in Kortrijk (Belgium)
- **General assembly of the MOT and conference-debate**, 2-3 June 2010 in Paris (France)

*Further information on these events at [www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu](http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu)*

**A proposed European card for health professionals**

*Within the European Union, border territories are spaces where the pooling of certain public-sector activities greatly facilitates access by citizens to many services. One of the most relevant areas of such cooperation is that of health.*



Between France and Belgium, the French-Belgian health monitoring unit, with its pilot projects for health facilities and centres, conducted for example between the Belgian and French Ardennes, is one of the successes of this cooperation.

However, border crossing by health professionals (whether in a context of long-term relocation or of short-term service provision) is still subject to cumbersome administrative procedures with the competent national authorities.

The projected European card for health professionals, funded in part by the European Commission and backed by a consortium of competent health professional registration authorities in Europe (the HPRO\* consortium), is coordinated by the French Chamber of Pharmacists. Its aim is to facilitate the movement of the five health professions designated in directive 2005/36 on the recognition of professional qualifications, adopted by Parliament and the Council in 2005. With this card, any doctor, nurse, dental surgeon, midwife or pharmacist will be able to move more easily within the European Union.

The objective is also to ensure the best possible safety for all European patients, by guaranteeing that they will always be dealing with an authorized professional. The card will provide access to the databases of the professional orders of the different countries for verification that the health professional is certified to practice, giving his or her qualification and indicating any disqualification. This means that there is no intention to introduce a new European database, but rather to make use of the existing national databases, updated daily.

The consortium has identified 893 competent authorities in Europe responsible for the registration and monitoring of almost 6 million health professionals. In order to give its work greater continuity and visibility, the HPRO consortium is now being transformed into a permanent European network, a forum which will be able to coordinate the new initiatives of the competent authorities and respond to other European Union projects or proposals in this area.

For example, the project is now investigating the possibility for Belgian pharmacists to read the pharmaceutical files of French patients and deliver the drugs necessary for their treatment, taking account of prescriptions already filled out in France.

\* Health Professionnal Card - Further information: [www.hprocard.eu](http://www.hprocard.eu)  
Contact: Patrick Fortuit, member of the French order of pharmacists, [patrick.fortuit@gmail.com](mailto:patrick.fortuit@gmail.com)

Press review

- **For structured exchanges between EGTCs**, *Le Journal des Deux Rives*, 12 March  
*Le Journal des Deux Rives*, a French-German on-line daily paper, is publishing a series of articles on the MOT and EGTCs. Further information at [www.2-rives.com](http://www.2-rives.com).
- **Michel Delebarre to meet the future challenges of the EU regional policy**, Committee of the Regions, 1 March – "On 11 February, local and regional elected representatives from the whole of Europe elected Michel Delebarre (FR/PSE), mayor of Dunkirk, as president of the commission for territorial cohesion policy (COTER) of the Committee of the Regions until mid-2012..."
- **Territorial cohesion: continuation of the discussion in Brussels on 12 March**, *Inforegio News*, 9 March – "The European Commission has received almost 400 contributions to the consultation opened in October 2008 by the Green paper on territorial cohesion..."
- **A cross-border materials cluster: Birth of Intermat**, *L'Union*, 9 March – "On 3 March [...] the clusters Materialia (France), MecaTech (Belgium) and SurfMat (Luxemburg) met to sign the first cross-border cooperation agreement on processes and materials..."
- **Focus on border workers**, *JIM*, March-April - "One in two of the working population of Annemasse works in Switzerland. On the occasion of the cross-border workers show which is held every spring [...] the *JIM* proposes a focus on border workers. Report prepared in collaboration with the European cross-border grouping."
- **A French-Italian programme for better river management**, *Le Dauphiné libéré*, 8 March - "The Pellidrac project, a European cooperation programme between France and Italy, aims to study and compare the river Drac, in Hautes-Alpes, and the river Pellice, in Turin province in Italy, in order to share and pool the acquired data..."
- **The Perpignan-Figueras high-speed rail line should be operating by end-2010**, *Le Moniteur*, 26 February - "The 44.4 km section between Perpignan [Pyrénées-Orientales] and Figueras (north-eastern Spain) of the future high-speed line between Paris and Barcelona should be put into service 'at the end of the year'..."
- **Surprises from the Spanish taxman for tunnel workers**, *Sud Ouest*, 3 March - "The French employees of the Somport tunnel company would have preferred to avoid the surprise reserved for them by the Spanish taxman. A fortnight ago they learned that the deduction from their wages would increase from 16% to 24% every month... from 1 March..."

