



Stefan Toscani

Minister of the interior and European affairs of Saarland (Germany)



Was it by chance that Robert Schuman, the father of Europe, came from a "seam" region located at the heart of the European continent? Probably not. Today, as at the time, the common historical heritage represents the future prospect of Europe as he described it in his declaration of 9 May, 60 years ago. For Schuman, both a Lorrainer and a Luxemburger, the common cross-border life, like the dividing effect of borders, was a day-to-day reality. From this historical knowledge was born a "small Europe" under the name "SaarLorLux Grande Region". The region, with its constituent partners in Belgium (Walloon region and German-language community), Lorraine, Luxemburg, Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate, is unique in Europe in its diversity. This uncommon nature is a consequence of the very broad societal, economic and political roots through which the common integration of Europe takes concrete form in the Grande Region.

Saarland currently holds the presidency of the 12th Summit of the Grande Region, which is the principal gathering of the political leaders in regional cross-border cooperation. This federal Land demonstrates innovation in the practical organization of the cross-border territory. For this it can be considered as the most French and - according to the conception of Robert Schuman - the most European of the German Länder.

The current projects on our agenda at the summit have been designed to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants of the region in practical terms. The Border Worker Task Force is an example. Its objective is to increase mobility in the cross-border employment market and identify legal and political solutions to the problems encountered by the individuals concerned. A very large number of Europe's cross-border workers live in the Grande Region: 200,000 persons there cross a national border every day to go to work in a neighbouring country.

The cross-border regions develop in particular where the inhabitants, crossing the borders, can meet each other. In this regard, it is mainly the local level that provides proximity and contact. A few days ago the Saar-Moselle Eurodistrict established an EGTC to give itself one of the most effective legal instruments provided at present by the European Union. It is the first time that Saarland is participating in an EGTC. The new body will organize Saar-Moselle cross-border cooperation between Saarland and Lorraine municipalities with a more practical emphasis and will be able to overcome the administrative obstacles.

I consider that this new flexibility will be of great value, and I hope that our border "laboratory" will lead to the formation of as many EGTCs as possible. Robert Schuman knew it: "Europe will be made by practical achievements". It is up to us, the new generation of European politicians, to transmit the heritage of Robert Schuman with courage to the 21st century and ensure its evolution.

The SaarMoselle Eurodistrict takes off!

After intensive preparation, the SaarMoselle Eurodistrict was officially established on 6 May 2010 in Saarbrücken. Taking the form of an EGTC, it will broaden and facilitate cooperation between the partners of the SaarMoselle conurbation, which has 600,000 inhabitants.

Welcomed by Pierre Lellouche, French secretary of state for European affairs, and Stephan Toscani, Saarland minister of the interior and European affairs, a large number of elected representatives, regional figures and citizens assembled in Saarbrücken's French-German garden to bring the Eurodistrict into being.

For Charlotte Britz, mayor of Saarbrücken and new president of the EGTC, "The European Union is still just a very abstract concept, too distant from its citizens, too bureaucratic and too paternalistic with regard to its member states. Europe can convince only through actions at regional level, the living and working spaces of its citizens. With the Eurodistrict, the municipal level will make its contribution to European integration".

The event was an opportunity to present the many initiatives of the Eurodistrict. In addition to the projects already implemented by the association Zukunft SaarMoselle Avenir, such as the "Warndt Weekend", "Velo SaarMoselle" and the museum brochure "Ticket", these included the web guide to cross-border leisure activities, the "Fire Road" and the Way of St. James of Compostella*. Other projects of the Eurodistrict cover the topics of health and transport, with as strong point the management of emergencies and local



Charlotte Britz welcomed minister Pierre Lellouche at the official launch ceremony on 6 May in Saarbrücken.

public transport.

Pierre Lellouche took advantage of this visit to the border to meet a delegation from the border workers defence committee, and discussed some highly practical issues with them, for example the lack of mutual recognition of levels of invalidity between France and Germany (a French doctor in France recognizes 100% invalidity, whereas that is not the case on the German side). Pierre Lellouche promised to attempt to "find an amicable settlement so that the assessments of French doctors are recognized in Germany". In other matters, the projected "cross-border centre" within the Saarbrücken court of first instance was judged to be "exemplary" and could be added to the proposals being prepared by the French parliamentary commission on cross-border issues. The final report of this commission should be ready by June.

* Further information: www.saarmoselle.fr

Launching of a European network, the CECICN

The Conference of European Cross-border and Interregional City Networks (CECICN) was officially launched on 23 April 2010 in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, where its head office is located.

This conference brings together more than 500 cities and towns, with a total population of more than 200 million, located in European border spaces. The six founding networks are the RIET (Iberian cross-border entity network), the MOT, the CAAC (Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities), the FAICT (Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities and Towns), Medcities and the UBC (Union of Baltic Cities).

According to Xosé Sanchez Bugallo, mayor of Santiago de Compostela, who was appointed to the rotating presidency of the conference for the first two years, the cities located on the peripheries and on the borders of the European Union are, more than any other space, places of proximity

where "the European identity of the citizens is being forged".

One of the objectives of the CECICN is to become a preferred contact organization for the European Commission on territorial cooperation issues impacting cities within the framework of the post-2013 cohesion policy, in a similar manner to the role of the AEBR for border and cross-border regions.

The conference also intends to promote new cross-border and interregional cooperation actions in key areas such as sustainable development, economic development and social and cultural cohesion. It will also be able to encourage exchange of experience and good practices between the cities and the member networks in order to bring European city-dwellers closer to European institutions.

The balance sheet of Pyrénées-Atlantiques - Gipuzkoa cooperation

In the Basque country, on the French-Spanish border, the Diputacion de Gipuzkoa and the Conseil général des Pyrénées-Atlantiques have drawn up the balance sheet of their collaboration since the signature of their cooperation agreement in April 2005.

Meeting to draw up this balance sheet, Inaki Galdos, Gipuzkoa's officer for external action, and Jean-Jacques Lasserre, vice-president of the Conseil général on the French side, affirmed their determination to pursue the joint work, while emphasizing the need to cooperate with the other cross-border organizations of the territory, such as the Basque Eurocity and the Euroregional Conference.

The balance sheet after five years appears to be very positive. The agreement has given impetus and structure to cooperation and has emphasized six areas: social policy, environment, economic development, infrastructure and transport, spatial planning, and culture. The cooperation methodology has been based on topic-centred working groups between the departments concerned and the setting-up of a cross-border technical unit.

A number of projects in the territory have been initiated or strengthened, such as the establishment of cross-border children's holidays, the production of a white paper on the organization of sport in Gipuzkoa and Pyrénées-Atlantiques and the upcoming opening of a website on cross-border sport* for the promotion of cross-border sporting collaborations, a cross-border coastal trail, an Interreg Lorea project on oceanography, and a number of actions related to social policy, for example a trilingual baby guide to the rights and obligations of Spanish parents resident in France (and vice versa) and meetings on the management of handicap.

The balance sheet was also an opportunity to list the territory-specific difficulties encountered every day by the teams. In first place appears the poor knowledge by the technicians of the neighbouring language and administrative structure. A recurrent obstacle in the project approach is the transition from the experience-sharing phase to that of practical actions and projects. Adjustment to turnover of technical personnel is another issue in improving cooperation.

This assessment, very positive while remaining objective about the difficulties encountered, is accompanied by new political impetus. The new agreement for 2011-2016, to be prepared by the end of the year, will be the occasion to define new rules in order to benefit from this first experience. New cooperation topics have already been identified, such as civil defence and emergency services, collaboration between archives and cooperation on attention models for persons with Alzheimer's disease.

* www.transpyresport.com



Cross-border children's holidays at Zarautz (Gipuzkoa) in 2009

MOT events

■ Conference and AGM

Pierre Lellouche, secretary of state for European affairs, and **Michel Mercier**, minister of the rural space and spatial planning, will take part in the **conference organized by the MOT on 2 June in Paris on the topic "organization and funding of cross-border cooperation in Europe"**.

Fabienne Keller, senator for the Bas-Rhin department, MP commissioned by these two ministers on cross-border issues, and **Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid**, MEP, will also attend in order to present the initial measures identified by the parliamentary report expected at the end of June. This report is being prepared with **Etienne Blanc**, MP for the Ain.

The conference on 2 June and the AGM of MOT on 3 June will be chaired by **Michel Delebarre**, MOT president, former minister of state, and MP and mayor of Dunkirk.

www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu

■ The results of the URBACT EGTC project

The final conference of the URBACT EGTC (Expertising Governance for Transfrontier Conurbations) project was held in Esztergom, Hungary, on 6 and 7 May 2010. This project, guided by the MOT as lead partner, **has networked six cross-border conurbations in Europe** since November 2008 on the topic of governance.

In liaison with European institutions, the participants were able to discuss the **results of the project**, judged very positive, and the **follow-up** that they would like to implement for it. A leaflet summarizing these results has been published; it is available on request from the MOT and on the project website.

www.urbact.eu/egtc

Press Review

■ **Informal health council: Madrid reopens the debate on cross-border health care**, Europe Information Service, 26 April – "[...] Spain submitted a compromise document to the ministers of health meeting in Madrid on 22 and 23 April in order to push forward the discussions."

■ **Environment: Brittany at the heart of two new France (Manche) - England cooperation projects!**, Newspress, 22 April – www.newspress.fr

■ **Neighbouring France will have its eco-neighbourhood before Geneva**, *La Tribune de Genève*, 30 April – "Kick-off of a cross-border energy policy. [...] At] the French-Swiss meeting held yesterday in Archamps on the topic of the energy challenges of the France-Vaud-Geneva conurbation."

■ **A revolution for border workers expected in June with the binational mobile phone...**, *Le Dauphiné libéré*, 4 May – "[...] most people who spend time on both sides of the border have two telephones, one Swiss, the other French [...]. A long-running story, the cross-border plan is going to arrive."

■ **Border worker pensions at last boosted!**, *Front@ligne*, 7 May – "The European cross-border grouping had taken action to persuade the French and European authorities that border workers who have had part of their career in France and the other in the European Union or Switzerland should no longer be penalized when their French pension is calculated. These steps have resulted in a new circular."

■ **Televisió de Catalunya continues to be received in Northern Catalonia thanks to DTT**, *Lettre de la Casa de la Generalitat de Catalunya a Perpinyà*, May-June – "The minister of culture and the media of the Generalitat, Joan-Manuel Tresseras, held an information session during which he particularly highlighted the first reception by DTT of the four channels of Televisió de Catalunya [...] in almost the whole of northern Catalonia." – Note: The MOT worked with local partners to reach this solution.

In brief

■ Committee of the Regions and EGTC

The Committee of the Regions, in liaison with the European Commission and the EU presidencies, has launched a European consultation on cross-border cooperation, targeting cities and regions. The consultation kicked off on 3 May 2010 at a conference in Cáceres, Spain, on the EGTC, in which the MOT took part.

The results of the consultation, planned to continue until 20 July, will be used as a basis for discussion on the 2011 review of the European regulation on the EGTC, the European instrument of territorial cooperation. They will also be presented at a Committee of the Regions workshop at the 2010 OPEN DAYS on the EGTC.

www.cor.europa.eu/egtc