

**Stephan Toscani**

Saarland Minister of the interior and European affairs



The Saarland presidency of the 12th Summit of the Greater Region is based on three priorities: take the Greater Region forward, overcome the borders, bring the Greater Region closer to the citizens. Cross-border mobility was the theme running through all of our initiatives. With more than 200,000 border workers every day, the SaarLorLux Greater Region has a leading place among the border regions of the European Union. The cross-border employment market has been natural for a long time - with all its advantages, but also its difficulties. That is why we have made particular efforts to improve the situation of border workers. The policy is confronted with the challenge of providing the best framework for the common inter-regional economic and employment market. This determination is bearing fruit. The current work of the Greater Region economic and social council (CESGR) is evidence of this: analysis of the effects on the Greater Region induced by the economic and financial crisis has confirmed that a common economic and employment market policy in the Greater Region is contributing to reinforcing competitiveness.

The Greater Region Summit is a form of cooperation unique in Europe. Our ambition is to be a model European region of multilevel governance. But this also means that various partners with divergent competences cooperate in the diverse components of the Greater Region. On this point we have been able to make substantial progress, for example with a view to the establishment of a joint secretariat for the Summit on the basis of an EGTC. In addition to the coordination of policies and the principle of partnership, we need above all inter-regional solidarity between the political, economic and civil society participants along with strong inter-regional political determination. That is why the representatives of the regional components speak with a single voice in Brussels. The "SaarLorLux Inter-regional Group" within the Committee of the Regions (CoR) issues joint opinions on European policy. The identification of all the participants with the Greater Region is the foundation of this cooperation. That is why public relations play a principal role for the SaarLorLux region. As an example, the first Greater Region Day, held last July, offered an exciting cocktail of information stands, cultural events and games. After all, the objective of our joint action in the SaarLorLux European region of competence is to make sure that the citizens feel at home in their cross-border environment. We are well on the way towards this objective.

Review of the 12th SaarLorLux Greater Region Summit

On 24 January 2011, the 12th Summit of the SaarLorLux Greater Region took place on the former Völklingen ironworks site, listed as a world heritage site by UNESCO. There the heads of the executive councils of the five regional components, i.e. Saarland, the Lorraine Region, Luxembourg, Rhineland-Palatinate and the Walloon Region, decided to give new impetus to cross-border and inter-regional cooperation in the Greater Region.



This event, graced by the presence of high-ranking public figures, marked the end of the 18 months of the Saarland presidency of the Summit, emphasizing the theme of mobility. Stephan Toscani, Saarland minister of the interior and European affairs, gave a positive assessment: "During this 12th presidency of the Summit, under Saarland responsibility, we have achieved a number of objectives together. These include the initiative taken to set up a 'Border Workers Task Force'. This is intended to supplement the existing consultation services such as EURES, deal systematically with the legal problems faced by border workers and back solutions at national and European levels". The objective is to remove the obstacles to mobility related to the border situation in the areas of schools, initial and continuing training, employment, universities and research, language and transport.

A task as ambitious as it is important, as the 200,000 daily border workers of the SaarLorLux region place it at the forefront of border regions in the European Union. But the people living in the border region are not just the workers who go to their workplace every day on the other side of the border, they are also the citizens of the Greater Region, lovers of sport and culture, and entrepreneurs. The mobility of the citizens must continue to increase through the provision of transport. Education at all levels is called upon to train citizens so that they are better able to seize the opportunities offered by mobility in the cross-border labour market. The reinforcement of public relations has also made an essential contribution to awareness of the Greater Region and to citizen identification with it. The first Greater Region Day, for example, a cross-border festival aimed at the general public held in July 2010, attracted more than 30,000 visitors.

For an overview of the results of the Saarland presidency of the 12th Summit of the Greater Region: www.granderegion.net

European conference on the EGTC in Gödöllő

Within the framework of the Spanish, Belgian and Hungarian presidencies of the European Union, the Hungarian ministry of justice and public administration organized a conference on the topic of EGTCs and multilevel governance from 21 to 23 March in Gödöllő, Hungary. This was the closing event in a series of meetings organized by the three presidencies.

The conference took place in the context of the revision of Community regulation 1082/2006 on the EGTC. Michel Delebarre,

president of the MOT and of the COTER Commission of the Committee of the Regions, chaired a workshop on this topic. The MOT network and its European activities were presented at another workshop on the advantages of networking in the implementation of EGTCs and territorial cooperation in Europe.

The conference also covered the issue of multilevel governance, from the angle of the representation of local authorities in the institutional organizations of the Community and of the Member States.

In its conclusions, Hungary hopes that this conference can open a broad platform leading to stronger cooperation between existing institutions and organizations at all levels. The objective is to bring the Community decision-making mechanisms closer to the citizens.

Further information: www.eu2011.hu

The role of cross-border cooperation in boosting the European single market

In October 2010 the European Commission presented proposals for strengthening the single market by means of measures to stimulate growth and reinforce citizens' rights. Since 1992 many advantages related to the free movement of goods, services, capital, and persons have been gained from the single market; however, obstacles remain and, in some sectors, there is no really integrated European market.

In this context, and with the objective of stimulating growth, competitiveness, and social progress, DG MARKT decided to launch a debate on boosting the single market, covering both territorial and citizen aspects. Michel Barnier wishes to make this a policy priority and propose concrete measures by the end of 2012.



The MOT responded to the consultation organized by the Commission between November 2010 and February 2011 with the objective of showing that "local **cross-border territories** have the capacity to play the role of **European laboratories** and to be **drivers of European integration**": "Within these territories, businesses and citizens have daily experience of the advantages but also the failings of the single market. The problems encountered affect consumers, students, border workers, public services, entrepreneurs, etc." Here are some other issues highlighted by the MOT contribution:

"**Cross-border investments** are impeded by national administrative, regulatory and fiscal differences. Businesses encounter many difficulties when they want to cooperate across borders or when they venture out of their 'natural' territory bounded by the national border. A whole series of obstacles arises in terms of distortions of competition (public-sector contracts, etc.), lack of interoperability in terms of standards, insurance, certifications, labour market, public policies centred on national territory, etc. It thus appears important in cross-border territories to develop services to businesses that want to develop cross-border markets, through cooperation of the various protagonists concerned."

"**Border workers** come up against tax problems relating to an assignment in the neighbouring country, and more generally against difficulties of access to employment opportunities (or to labour for businesses). With regard to vocational training, the joint establishment of training programmes, of tools for determining equivalence of vocational diplomas and qualifications between bordering countries, and of coordinated validation of acquired experience is fundamental."

"For the **populations** living in border areas, the question arises of **public services** which cross the borders. Some examples: transport infrastructures are not sufficiently integrated across borders and do not always deliver a collective transport service to border workers; access to healthcare, such as the use of a facility located in the neighbouring country and the reimbursement of medical services, still raises a number of problems."

"Many **civil society** participants are directly impacted by a boost to the internal market and will have to be closely associated with the discussions."

Further information: http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/consultations/2010/smact_en.htm
Download the MOT contribution: http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/contrib_mot_marche_unique_2011.pdf

Press Review

■ **European Parliament: 'Funding territorial cooperation is not a luxury, it is a necessity' declares Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid**, *Going Local*, 25 February - "That is what MEP Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid (PPE) declared when she presented her draft report on 'The future agenda of cross-border, transnational and inter-regional cooperation' to the regional development committee of the European Parliament."

■ **French employees are European champions of cross-border mobility**, *Le Figaro*, 21 February - "Nearly 320,000 employees live in France but go to work every day in a foreign country. A trend which is growing constantly."

■ **The bases of a cross-border park are outlined**, *Le Républicain lorrain*, 8 March - "With its president Edouard Jacque, the Association transfrontalière du PED (European development hub cross-border association) intends to set itself new objectives. The establishment of a cross-border regional nature park is being studied."

■ **In Pau, Navarre and Pyrénées-Atlantiques hand-in-hand**, *Sud Ouest*, 8 March - "In Pau this morning, Navarre (Spain) and Pyrénées-Atlantiques (France) signed an advanced cross-border cooperation agreement covering three years."

■ **The Puigcerdà European Hospital marks the limits of cross-border cooperation**, *La Clau*, 12 February - "Recognized as the spearhead of France-Spain and European-Catalan cooperation, the future Cerdagne Hospital marks the limits of cross-border policies. For it depends on the South-Catalan right of decision, particularly as the town where it is located, Puigcerdà, nevertheless remains on Spanish territory."

In Brief

Overcoming the obstacles to cooperation



The MOT network has contributed to the Council of Europe questionnaire on the elimination of obstacles and the promotion of good practices in cross-border cooperation in Europe.

The questionnaire drawn up by the committee of experts* on local and regional government institutions and cooperation (LR-IC) is intended to collect experiences and basic information on the topic for the purpose of formalizing practical measures for improving cross-border cooperation in Europe. It consists of three parts: areas of cross-border cooperation, obstacles, and solutions or good practices.

As part of this approach, a conference is planned in June 2011 in Ukraine, organized jointly by Hungary (EU presidency) and Ukraine (presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe).

The MOT contribution is downloadable at: www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu/quest_coe_2011.pdf

* Of which the MOT is a member.

Formation of a German network of cross-border metropolitan regions - IMeG



The cross-border metropolitan regions initiative circle IMeG (Initiativkreis Metropolitane Grenzregionen) was established on 17 March 2011 in Berlin. Its founding members* represent four cross-border metropolitan regions: the Meuse-Rhine Euregio, the SaarLorLux Grande Région, the Upper Rhine trinational metropolitan region and the Lake Constance region. The specific nature of these spaces was analyzed from 2008 to 2010 as part of the demonstration project of spatial planning** (MORO) "Supraregional partnerships in interconnected cross-border regions" supported by the German federal ministry of transport, building and urban development.

*The Südlicher Oberrhein, Mittlerer Oberrhein, Hochrhein-Bodensee and Bodensee-Oberschwaben Regionalverbände (regional associations), Regio Aachen and Saarland
Further information: www.metropolitane-grenzregionen.eu (with the final report of the MORO project, in German)