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.

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."


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 Édouard 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 Gerètage 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."

Formation of a German network of cross-border metropolitans - ImEG

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.

Press Review