

**Dr. Hans-Günther Clev**Director-general
of the MOT

Advocate for the cause of cross-border cooperation on the French borders and between other countries in Europe and beyond, I am convinced that its growing importance for the life of citizens in a united Europe and for the economic development of border territories will be increasingly recognized in the years to come. And that is true for all levels – from the citizen to the States.

The MOT has succeeded in positioning itself at the various levels of cross-border affairs, while remaining true to its priority of facilitating the implementation of cross-border projects: from its role as founding member of the CECICN network linking the networks of more than 500 inter-regional and cross-border cities (see article on this page) to the network of national cross-border cooperation support structures established on 10 December in Budapest (see news in brief on page 2), via a strengthened alliance with our friends of the AEBR.

It has been the template for structures with similar functions in other countries, and it has developed a wide array of partnerships with other organizations with a view to making use of potential synergies between them for the benefit of the needs and interests of MOT members (benchmarking, lobbying). It is true that it would be difficult to imagine an organization supporting cooperation not to itself cooperate with colleagues committed to the same cause, even if they have different strong points or work in other territories.

These positive developments which mark out an encouraging future for the MOT have made it easier for me to make a decision that is difficult, but necessary because of the responsibilities that any father has: to accept a new post from January 2011 allowing me to achieve a better balance between professional life and private life.

Remaining strongly attached to the MOT, both its staff and its members, I will be happy to be able to support it and guide it in the future. I would like to thank all those who have helped me and provided their support over the last two years. The new impetus of the MOT is a joint success.

CECICN***Meeting with Commissioner Hahn**

In the course of several working meetings which took place in Brussels on 1 December, the representatives of the CECICN, including the MOT, met with the European Commissioner for regional policy, Johannes Hahn, and the President of the Committee of the Regions, Mercedes Bresso. One of the objectives was to discuss the future of territorial cooperation impacting more particularly cities within the framework of the post-2013 cohesion policy.



The European Commissioner for regional policy, Johannes Hahn, and the representatives of the CECICN at a meeting in Brussels.

Launched officially on 23 April 2010, the CECICN brings together more than 500 towns and cities, representing a total population of more than 200 million, located in European border spaces. The six founding networks are the Iberian Network of Cross-border Entities (RIET), the MOT, the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities (CAAC), the Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities and Towns (FAICT), Medcities and the Union of Baltic Cities (UBC).

One of the objectives of this vast network is to ensure that the interests of cities, and particularly those located on the periphery and on the borders of Europe, are better taken into account at European level: nearly sixty cross-border conurbations have been identified in Europe, encompassing almost 25 million inhabitants!

On 1 December in Brussels, the Chairman of the CECICN executive committee and Mayor of Santiago, Xosé Sánchez Bugallo, obtained various undertakings from the European authorities.

In the first of these meetings, the Chairman underlined to Commissioner Johannes Hahn the necessity of boosting the European funds for the 2014-2020 period intended for cross-border territories.

The European Commissioner expressed his shared concerns for the problems of the major cities and territorial cooperation in these times of economic crisis; and invited the CECICN policy bureau to participate in the consultation on the 5th European Commission report on cohesion. The Commissioner also expressed his wish to be able to count on the opinion of the only network that represents more than 500 cross-border cities in the whole of Europe, and accepted the invitation of the mayor of Compostella to chair a forum on cross-border cooperation which should be held in late 2011. This forum should see the ...

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** Conference of European Cross-border and Inter-regional City Networks.*

Cooperation with a network of universities in Ukraine, Russia and Belarus

On 19 November, on the occasion of a visit to Kharkov in Ukraine, the MOT Director-general, Dr. Hans-Günther Clev, and Dr. Alexei Kiryukhin, general Coordinator of the

Belarus-Russia-Ukraine cross-border university consortium, signed a cooperation agreement between their two structures and outlined the priorities of an initial bi-annual working programme for 2011-2012. The university consortium, set up in 2003 on the initiative of the vice-chancellors of border universities, now has ten member universities (four in Russia, one in Belarus and five in Ukraine). Working in the cross-border field, these universities are developing cooperation with each other and are working, on their territory, for the development of the cross-border regions.

National conference in Alsace on employment

Last 16 and 17 November, cross-border cooperation on employment and vocational training was the core topic of a national conference* in Saint-Louis, Alsace.

Over the two days, 215 employment and vocational training professionals participated in the conference.

On the French borders, about 330,000 employees cross a border every day to work in a neighbouring

country. There are a number of initiatives in the border territories, and the projects are rich and varied, but there nevertheless remain a number of constraints limiting the extent of such cooperation.

The objective of the national conference held in Saint-Louis was to identify and capitalize on the cross-border experiments already undertaken in the border territories of France (north-western, north-eastern, south-eastern and south-western borders) and to find ways of eliminating the obstacles to the development of cross-border cooperation: border learning, recognition of qualifications, vocational training benchmarks, transparency of the labour market, etc.

The programme comprised three plenary round tables, during which the issues, the present situation and the desirable changes in cross-border cooperation on employment and vocational training were discussed by employment and vocational training experts from various organizations, cross-border cooperation experts such as the MOT and members of parliament and representatives of the state from France and neighbouring countries.

Three workshops were also organized to present cross-border experiences and highlight the obstacles encountered, in order to start the follow-up measures to be implemented within the framework of cross-border cooperation.

At the final round table, various options for eliminating the constraints on cross-border cooperation were identified, such as the possibility for young people to undertake placements, particularly in businesses, in border countries by means of cross-border work placement agreements, the establishment of a cross-border monitoring unit by the Alsace regional council, and the setting-up of a project group (which could include Pôle Emploi - the French national employment service - and the MOT) on monitoring, employment and vocational training, with the objective of drawing up an inventory of current initiatives in these three areas and identifying the limits to cooperation.

* Organized by the "Maison de l'emploi et de la formation" of the "Pays de Saint-Louis/Trois Frontières" and of the "Pays du Sundgau" and by Saint-Louis municipal council.



Press review

■ **The conclusions of the informal Council meeting on the cohesion policy after 2013**, Belgian Presidency of the EU Council, www.eutrio.be, 23 November - "The European ministers pronounced themselves in favour of upholding an ambitious Cohesion Policy, concerning all the European regions, and making a strong contribution to the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy."

■ **Towards a new organization of regional policy**, Euractiv, 7 December - "The European Commission is proposing to set up a 'partnership contract' between the regions, the States and Europe, in order to define the objectives to be reached using European funds."

■ **A tunnel to link Germany and Denmark**, Le Monde, 7 December - "For environmental reasons, the consortium responsible for this project for a fixed link between the two shores of the Fehmarn strait is recommending the construction of an immersed tunnel rather than a bridge."

■ **A steep tax for the cross-border tram**, Le Républicain Lorrain, 10 December - "The German company Saarbahn, which operates the Saarbrücken-Sarreguemines tram, does not want to pay a new tax of €644,000. [...] The Sarreguemines station stop is the only one on the French side. And some doubt is hanging over its future since the introduction of the flat-rate tax on network businesses (IFER)."

■ **Inauguration of the high-speed railway bridge spanning the Rhine between Strasbourg and Kehl**, AFP, 10 December - "The new twin-track high-speed railway bridge spanning the Rhine between France (Strasbourg) and Germany (Kehl) has been officially inaugurated [...] in the presence of the transport ministers of the two countries."

■ **An EU-funded project wins the Single Market Award**, Inforegio News, 16 December - "The 2010 Single Market Award went to 'Grenzoffensive', a cross-border project that helps to make it easier for small and medium enterprises to do business across borders in the neighbouring regions of Bavaria (Germany), Upper Austria and Southern Bohemia (Czech Republic)."

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... presentation of a white paper on territorial cooperation, currently being drafted. The possibility was raised of a meeting in January between the CECICN executive committee** and the members of the commissioner's cabinet to discuss the preparation of this white paper in 2011.



Mercedes Bresso, President of the Committee of the Regions, and the CECICN representatives at a meeting in Brussels.

For her part, the President of the Committee of the Regions, Mercedes Bresso, stated that she hoped that the CECICN will participate in close collaboration with the Committee in the debate on European policies and funds for 2014-2020. She proposed, as a first step, that the members of the CECICN executive bureau should meet the Committee of the Regions team and the internal market Commissioner, Michel Barnier.

** Composed of the six Secretaries of the member organizations.

In brief

■ Establishment of a European platform of national cross-border cooperation support structures

At an international conference held in Budapest on 9 and 10 December 2010, under the auspices of the president of the Republic of Hungary, Dr. Pal Schmitt, the representatives of four national cross-border cooperation support organizations (the MOT for France, the CESCO for Hungary, the Ministry of the Interior for the 'Grensmakelaar' of the Netherlands and the Galicia/North Portugal and Castile and León/North Portugal Working Communities for the Spain/Portugal border) signed the Budapest Declaration establishing a European platform of national cross-border cooperation support structures. Further information: www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu

■ At the MOT

Olivier Denert has been appointed as secretary-general of the MOT within the MOT directorate. He will manage the transition until the arrival of a new director-general in 2011. (See point of view on page 1).