

The European Committee of the Regions and the Luxembourg Presidency of the European Union



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01 Foreword by the president of the European Committee of the Regions



The dynamic of the European Union has changed: there is now a manifest desire to bring the perspectives of regions and municipalities into the Brussels decision-making process. The European Committee of the Regions is the natural body for representing their opinions and concerns in the European lawmaking process. Our work is guided by our political priorities, as agreed at the June plenary session for the whole five-year term until 2020. One of the reasons for setting long-term priorities is to achieve a change in mindset that cultivates a spirit of enterprise and open innovation, experimentation and action, instead of endless planning.

However, the weight that each presidency of the Council of the European Union gives to specific policy areas also guides our everyday work in the CoR. From 1 July onwards, Luxembourg will hold the rotating Presidency for the twelfth time. In view of Europe's most pressing challenges, Luxembourg has chosen to focus on the following seven areas: continuation of the Agenda for Growth and Jobs, the social dimension of EU policies, implementation of the European migration programme and the Energy Union, reform of the

Economic and Monetary Union, negotiations on TTIP and preparations for the COP21 conference on climate change in Paris. In this context, I would like to mention some examples of policies where the CoR's work can provide real added value.

The European Committee of the Regions wholeheartedly supports Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker's EUR 315 billion Investment Plan for Europe. This is an excellent programme intended to mobilise public and private investment to stimulate the economic growth that is very much needed in Europe. In cooperation with the European Investment Bank, we would like to involve our members directly in the campaign we are launching to raise awareness at all levels of government of this plan's potential, with a view to maximising its leverage at local and regional level.

We need a mindset shift: from unemployment to employment, and from problems to challenges, to seeing opportunities. There is scope for a further push to unlock investment and to create growth and jobs, particularly for Europe's young people. We would like to see more measures in relation to youth mobility, and entrepreneurial and digital skills, combined with transparent start-up procedures and financing. Against the backdrop of the economic crisis in particular, the social dimension must be put on an equal footing with the economic dimension. I therefore welcome the Luxembourg presidency's intention to reduce social inequality and to intensify the debate on measures to counter it.

In the heart of Europe, the circumstances and problems that our border regions face – north, south, east and west – sometimes seem far away.

The tragic events in the Mediterranean call for resolute and persistent action on migration. The European Committee of the Regions is working to set up migration and integration partnerships between cities and regions of both origin and destination. Our partnerships with candidate countries from the Mediterranean (ARLEM) and the Eastern Partnerships (CORLEAP) provide forums specifically for exchanging views and best practices. The experiences of our members' regions and cities with a variety of different governance models at different stages of economic and industrial development can be edited to use as examples for our neighbours. Supporting and strengthening European partnerships – cooperation between different areas – is high on our agenda.



02 Foreword by the prime minister of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg



On 1 July 2015 Luxembourg took the baton of the EU Council presidency for the twelfth time. Our presidency comes at a critical moment for the Union, as it faces many major challenges.

This is why the Luxembourg presidency – in full accord with its traditions and convictions – will endeavour **to put citizens at the heart of the European project**. Today it is more important than ever to try and ensure that the real and direct interests of ordinary people are better taken into account in all the Union's policies.

This is a vision that we share with the Committee of the Regions, whose role is to involve local and regional authorities in the European decision-making process and so promote better public participation. Cooperation between the European, national, regional and local levels is positive for European integration.

Luxembourg has determined seven broad priorities for its presidency, priorities which match those of the Committee of the Regions' five-year term to 2020.

Our first priority, **stimulating investment to boost growth and employment**, is about revitalising

Europe's economy. We would like to see robust and rapid implementation of the Investment Plan for Europe. Measures to facilitate access to investment, especially for SMEs, must be part of this effort so as to amplify the impact of the plan. Another powerful boost will be provided with the introduction of a real capital markets union, which will also benefit SMEs.

The second priority is **deepening the European Union's social dimension**. The Luxembourg presidency will firmly support the idea launched by the European Commission president of a Europe that is «triple-A» on social issues.

Our third priority will be **managing migration, combining freedom, justice and security**. Our aim here is to produce a balanced package of measures to save lives, combat criminal networks, ensure reception of migrants under dignified conditions and afford them the necessary protection.

The Luxembourg presidency also wishes to **revitalise the single market by focusing on its enormous digital potential**, which remains underused. To further the completion of the single market, in both goods and services, the Luxembourg presidency will also encourage deployment of the most effective regulatory and non-regulatory instruments, namely mutual recognition and harmonisation. The Energy Union is another element of the single market that must be supported. The presidency will emphasise renewables-based energy transition and energy efficiency, which are key areas of concern for regions and their citizens.

The Luxembourg presidency will also seek to place **European competitiveness in a global and**

transparent framework. We remain committed to the three-pronged approach based on fiscal consolidation, economic revitalisation through investment and structural reforms that support sustainable and balanced growth.

Sustainable economic growth that benefits ordinary people must go hand in hand with ambitious environmental objectives. Luxembourg's presidency will champion **the promotion of sustainable development.** It will also promote an innovative, circular and competitive economy that is energy-efficient, that preserves biodiversity and natural resources, and that avoids waste and encourages recycling. These goals are also important to help our regions achieve sustainable growth under conditions that are tolerable for all citizens.

Finally, the Luxembourg presidency's priority of **strengthening the European Union's presence on the global stage** will underpin stability and cooperation within and outside the EU.

The presidency is committed to taking forward the European integration project and ensuring that our Union is better equipped to address the major policy challenges of our time. As Robert Schuman said, there is still time to build Europe.

Xavier Bettel

Prime minister of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg



03 Role of the European Committee of the Regions

The European Committee of the Regions is the EU's assembly of regional and local representatives.

Local and regional authorities are responsible for implementing the majority of EU policies, with almost two thirds of EU legislation put into effect at subnational level. This is also why the European Committee of the Regions was set up in 1994: to allow local and regional authorities to have their say on EU legislative proposals so that these better reflect people's needs.

The Treaties state that the European Committee of the Regions must be consulted on any proposal that could have an impact on local or regional matters. In practice, this means that the CoR is consulted on most EU legislation.

The European Commission, European Parliament and Council can also consult the CoR on matters falling outside these spheres if local and regional factors are relevant to that work.

Furthermore, the CoR can push issues up the European agenda by drawing up opinions on its own initiative and providing reports on subjects it deems important. The Committee can also address questions to the Commission, Parliament and Council if it believes that its point of view has not been taken into account, and it has the right, in extremis, to appeal to the EU Court of Justice in order to safeguard its prerogatives.





What is the European Committee of the Regions?

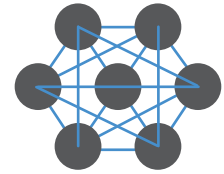
3 main principles



Multilevel Governance

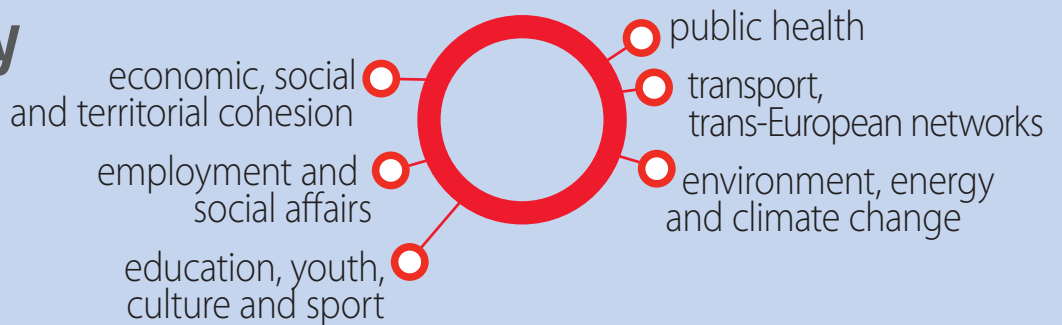


Proximity



Subsidiarity

Areas of responsibility



Commissions

6 Commissions (groups of Members) prepare draft opinions and resolutions to be submitted to the Plenary Assembly.



Territorial Cohesion Policy and EU Budget (COTER)



Economic Policy (ECON)



Natural Resources (NAT)



Environment, Climate Change and Energy (ENVE)



Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs (CIVEX)



Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture (SEDEC)

Membership



350 members

from **28** member states

5 political groups





Plenary

CoR Members gather in Plenary **5** to **6 x**/year in Brussels to vote and adopt opinions.



The President

Markku MARKKULA

(from Finland)

Mandate: 2 and 1/2 years

- directs the CoR's work
- chairs its plenary sessions
- acts as CoR's official representative

The First Vice-President

Karl-Heinz LAMBERTZ

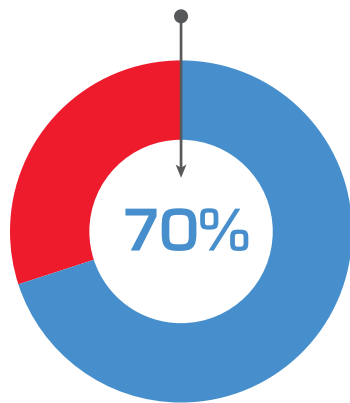
(from Belgium)

Mandate: 2 and 1/2 years



Output

over **70%** of **EU legislation** has a direct impact at local or regional level



In 2014, the CoR passed

59

opinions

23

of which
**own-initiative
opinions**

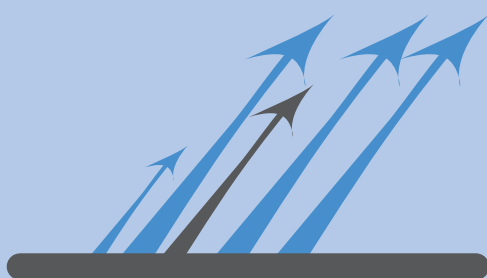
In 2014, the CoR held



**109
events**



Platforms and networks



to improve participatory democracy, such as the consultation process during the pre-legislative phase



Administrative level

The Secretary-general **Jiří BURIANEK**

Mandate: 5 years

Role: directs the CoR administration



Structure

5 Directorates ; 2 joint services

04 The Luxembourg delegation to the European Committee of the Regions

Members of the Luxembourg delegation to the European Committee of the Regions

The Luxembourg delegation to the Committee of the Regions numbers five full members and five alternates. All the Luxembourg members and alternates are local elected officials appointed by the government on the basis of a proposal submitted to the Association of Luxembourg Towns and Municipalities (Syvicol), the body which represents the country's 105 municipalities. Both geographical and political criteria are taken into account in the selection process. The members of the national delegation maintain close contacts with Syvicol, enabling each member to keep up with developments in municipal policy at national or European level.



Simone BEISSEL



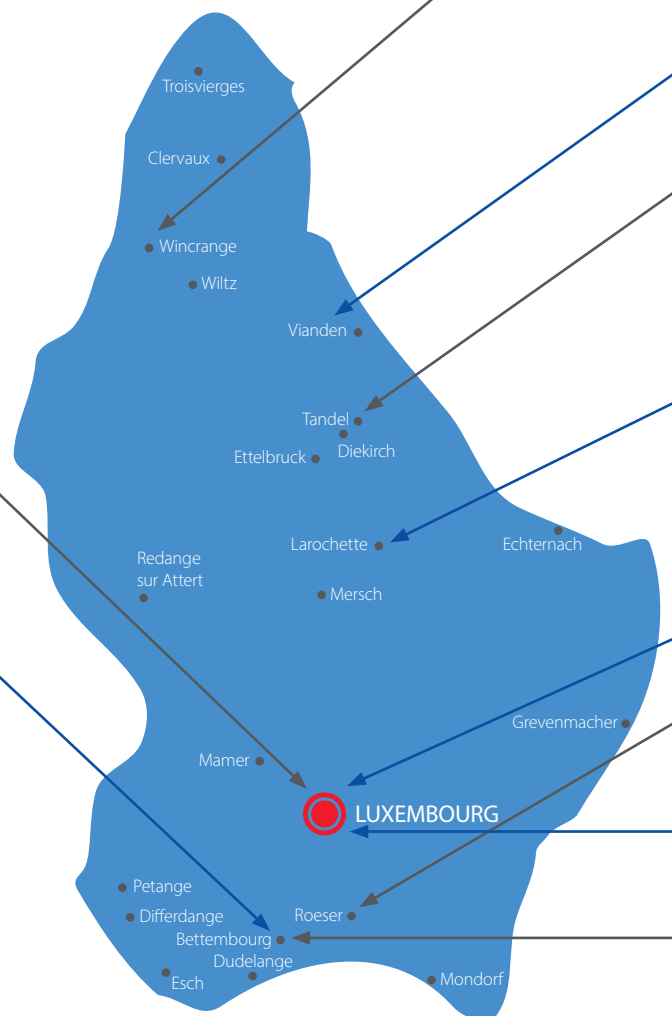
Deputy Mayor of Luxembourg City
CoR member since 31 January 2000
Member of the ECON and CIVEX commissions
Alternate member of the Bureau
ALDE Group (Democratic Party/DP)



Roby BIWER



Member of Bettembourg Municipal Council
CoR member since 31 March 2014
Alternate CoR member since 26 January 2006
Member of the NAT, ECON and ENVE commissions
Bureau member
PES Group (Luxembourg Socialist Workers' Party/LSAP)





Agnès DURDU



Member of Winrange Municipal Council
CoR member since 25 January 2002
Member of the COTER and SEDEC commissions
Vice-president of the CFAA
First vice-president of the ALDE Group
(Democratic Party/DP)



Marc SCHAEFER



Mayor of Vianden
CoR member since 22 January 2007
President of the Luxembourg delegation
Member of the CIVEX and SEDEC commissions
PES Group (Luxembourg Socialist Workers' Party/LSAP)



Ali KAES



Mayor of the Municipality of Tandel
CoR member since 24 April 2012
Member of the NAT, ENVE and COTER commissions
EPP member (Christian Social People's Party/CSV)



Pierre WIES



Mayor of the Municipality of Larochette
Alternate CoR member since 20 September 2011
EPP member (Christian Social People's Party/CSV)



Tom JUNGEN



Mayor of the Municipality of Roeser
Alternate CoR member since 31 March 2014
PES Group (Luxembourg Socialist Workers' Party/LSAP)



Martine MERGEN



Member of Luxembourg City Council
Alternate CoR member since 26 January 2006
EPP member (Christian Social People's Party/CSV)



Gusty GRAAS



Deputy Mayor of the Municipality of Bettembourg
Alternate CoR member since 22 January 2007
ALDE Group (Democratic Party/DP)



Sam TANSON



Deputy Mayor of the City of Luxembourg
Alternate CoR member since 26 January 2015

Interview with the head of the Luxembourg delegation

Marc Schaefer



Marc Schaefer is the mayor of the municipality of Vianden and a member of the Council of State. He has been a member of the Luxembourg Socialist Workers' Party (LSAP) since 1995, and was appointed to the Committee of the Regions in January 2007. He has been the head of the national delegation since February 2011.

«Local and regional representatives are the guardians of municipal autonomy at both national and European levels.»

] *Mr Schaefer, you have been a member of the Committee of the Regions and head of the Luxembourg delegation for many years. What have you drawn from your experience?*

I had the good fortune to be appointed as a member of the Committee of the Regions in 2007 and have served in that capacity for over eight years now. During this period, I have watched the Committee of the Regions go from strength to strength following the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, which reinforced its institutional role, and I welcome its ever increasing influence in the European decision-making process, mainly due to cooperation agreements concluded with the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Commission, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, and more recently with the European Parliament. The debates and discussions held during plenary sessions and commission meetings with representatives of national governments, the Commission and other European institutions show that our activities are bearing fruit. Even though we only have an advisory role, I am pleased to see that we are adding value to the initiatives of the European Commission, which is giving greater attention to our views.

As members, we are the Committee of the Regions' ambassadors in our countries at all levels, but we are also the institution's spokespersons to citizens, who sometimes perceive the EU as far too remote. Local and regional representatives are a crucial link in the chain since they are the link between the public at large and the institutions at all levels of the European Union. I feel very strongly about my mission as a member, since it constitutes a considerable and daily opportunity. The Committee of the Regions brings together representatives from small rural communities and large highly urbanised regions, mayors or councillors, and contact with my colleagues enriches my experience as a local politician and, more importantly, as a European citizen. As the mayor of a historically rich municipality surrounded by unspoilt countryside, I am particularly attentive to the conservation of natural resources and the cultural heritage. Being a member of the Committee of the Regions gives me insights into the Commission's work which I would not otherwise have and which are useful to my region's development. I have gained a better understanding of EU decision-making mechanisms but also, and above all, of the resources available to us, mainly through the European Regional Development Fund, to improve the quality of life of the citizens I represent.

» *The Luxembourg delegation to the Committee of the Regions is one of the smallest delegations but it is very active within and outside the Committee of the Regions. How do you explain this?*

The members of the Luxembourg delegation to the Committee of the Regions have put in a considerable amount of work, starting with the late lamented Léon Bollendorff, who guided the first steps of the institution until its first inaugural session on 9 and 10 March 1994 in his capacity as oldest member, right up to the present. Our members and alternates have always been and remain very involved in the Committee's work. We are a very close-knit team despite our political differences, which certainly explains why, despite being small, our delegation has achieved much to be proud of. Thus, since 2002, the members of the Luxembourg delegation have served as rapporteurs for six opinions and, for my own part, I drew up two draft opinions in 2008 and 2011. In September 2012, for the first time since the establishment of the Committee of the Regions, a member from Luxembourg, Ms Beissel, was elected chair of one of the main commissions, namely the ECOS commission. She undertook this role successfully and my main objective is to support our delegation to ensure that it can actively pursue its efforts within the Committee of the Regions. Our members are also active in the political groups: I was the PES Group's coordinator in the CIVEX commission for two years, and Ms Durdu was first vice-president of the ALDE Group. Finally, the delegation's members participate regularly in, or chair, conferences and seminars held by the Committee of the Regions.

However, our responsibilities cannot be interpreted restrictively. It is not enough to come to Brussels. It is our mission and duty to promote the Committee of the Regions' work and activities with citizens. Every year, our delegation participates in Europe Day events held by the European Parliament information office and the European Commission permanent representation in Luxembourg. We receive visitors at the Committee of the Regions' stand and speak to them about the institution, its organisation and its working procedures. It has to be admitted that many of them know nothing or next to nothing about the Committee of the Regions. While we need to listen to citizens, which is the Luxembourg Presidency's guiding principle, we also need to pass on information about European issues and raise public awareness of the progress achieved thanks to the European Union and by the European Union. As a teacher, I tell my students that they are both EU citizens and citizens of an EU country, and I relay the ideas promoted by Europe's founding fathers, such as Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman.

» *In Luxembourg, there is no intermediate level of government between the state and cities and municipalities. So how are the interests of Luxembourg's local authorities taken into account at national and European levels?*

At national level, Luxembourg's 105 municipalities are represented by SYVICOL, the association of Luxembourg towns and municipalities set up to promote, protect and defend the general and common interests of its members. Its mission is to establish close and ongoing consultation between its members in order to study and address all matters of relevance to the administration of municipalities and their relations with public authorities and bodies. SYVICOL was set up in its current form in 1986, but the Committee of the Regions' history at the European level can be seen mirrored in the association's history at the national level. SYVICOL had to consolidate its legitimacy and, although it was regarded with caution in its early stages, it has now emerged as the Luxembourg government's main partner for all matters concerning the municipal sector. National government consultations with SYVICOL have not been formalised but are now virtually automatic, and the association also issues recommendations on its own initiative on matters with a local impact. Furthermore, our system differs from others since it has no intermediate level of government; responsibilities are shared directly between state and municipalities.

In a small country like Luxembourg, this division of responsibilities works relatively well even if the state experiences the occasional temptation to appropriate municipal powers. This is why local and regional representatives are the guardians of municipal autonomy at both national and EU levels. We are pushing for legislation to be drawn up on the basis of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, as enshrined in Article 5 of the Lisbon Treaty, taking due account of decentralisation and active citizen participation. Decisions taken by the European Union affect our daily work since around three quarters of European legislation is implemented at local or regional level. However, when a draft EU regulation

comes before the Chamber of Deputies, the government does not always consult SYVICOL as a matter of course. It is therefore essential for local and regional politicians to have an institution that represents them upstream of the legislative process, before regulations become law in the municipalities and regions we represent. This makes our work at the Committee of the Regions extremely important since we are informed of the preparation of new legislation in good time to be able to contribute to improving it before it is adopted.

Viewpoints of the delegation members



Simone Beissel



It is now more than fifteen years that I have had the pleasure of being involved with and contributing to the work of the Committee of the Regions. I am a member of the CIVEX and ECON Commissions, the latter having taken over the brief of the ECOS commission, which I chaired for the last two and a half years. Throughout my term of office the CoR has been looking at how to re-establish the virtuous circle of growth in the European Union and trying to find ways to meet the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The Committee has held conferences on each of the strategy's seven flagship initiatives with a panel of politicians, experts, policy makers, civil society stakeholders and representatives of the EU institutions. However, the mid-term review of the strategy – four years after its launch – showed it was floundering and that Europe needed a new impetus to achieve those objectives. Otherwise it would have a failure on its hands.

The European Commission's new, dynamic approach taken to re-launch investment in Europe through the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) is therefore welcome. This plan, which proposes to raise EUR 315 billion of investment over three years to finance strategic sectors and stimulate growth and jobs, is on a scale commensurate with the challenge the Commission has taken on. The local and regional tiers are necessary partners

for the success and implementation of the plan, particularly in view of their experience of regional and cross-border cooperation.

The Committee of the Regions must ensure that investments will actually benefit all of Europe's regions and cities, in keeping with the aim of territorial cohesion, and local and regional authorities should be integrally involved through the European Investment Advisory Hub. Some of the proposals the Committee made in its opinion have also improved the EFSI regulation, notably regarding the participation of cities and regions. This new instrument serves to supplement the European long-term investment funds, the final regulation on which has just been adopted (April 2015) by the Council. These funds marshal the capital available for long-term infrastructure projects that support sustainable economic growth.

In its opinion adopted in 2014, for which I was the rapporteur, the Committee of the Regions welcomed a positive step towards funding the economy in future, while being very clear about the need to make the fund attractive to investors. The aim of unleashing the potential of EU investment for growth and jobs also necessitates reform of banking systems and the creation of the Capital Markets Union, which should cast aside hurdles to funding. The Luxembourg presidency should tackle this issue following the agreement in principle on 19 June 2015 by finance ministers on the proposal for a regulation to reform the banking system.

Roby Biber



My position at the Committee of the Regions gives me the opportunity to defend the interests of nature at European level as well as locally. At local level, I am particularly involved as president of the Natur&ëmwelt association, Luxembourg's prime nature and environmental protection body, and president of SICONA, the umbrella organisation for 21 municipalities engaged in nature protection.

I am concerned, following the publication of its report on the state of nature conservation, by the European Commission's wish to submit the EU's two key nature protection directives to an assessment under the Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme (REFIT). These directives – known as the birds and habitats directives – followed the discovery, thirty years ago, of a dramatic fall in species diversity. Today, Europe can be proud of having set up the world's largest nature protection network.

The directives have been a success and the Natura 2000 areas play a key role in protecting biodiversity in the EU, notwithstanding the tremendous pressure on habitats and ecosystems from urbanisation, infrastructure, agriculture and the like. It is therefore vital to hold on to what has been gained and not to water these directives down, which would be disastrous for the environment.

The ENVE Commission has tasked me with drafting an own-initiative opinion entitled «Contribution to the REFIT process for the EU Birds and Habitats Directives», due to be presented at the December plenary session. In connection with this, I have chaired a debate at the Green Week on the subject «Natura 2000 as a source of regional identity and values» organised by the Committee of the Regions and the European Commission. It was stressed on that occasion that the Natura 2000 network is an instrument that helps to promote a modern regional identity and to bolster territorial cohesion, encourages cooperation and shared public commitment and is an asset for a region's image and economy. It is absolutely essential to stress the real development potential and attractiveness for the regional economy in these areas.

I expect the Luxembourg presidency to work for stringent nature protection and to act on its concerns to wed environmental protection and economic development, with the emphasis on preserving biodiversity and sustainable economic growth for the public good.

The Committee will also have to pay close attention when it comes to the EU position at the 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which will be held in Paris in December. A draft opinion on «The Paris Protocol – A blueprint for tackling global climate change beyond 2020» will be debated in plenary this autumn.

Agnès Durdu



As a member of the Luxembourg delegation to the Committee of the Regions for thirteen years and a member of the ALDE Group, of which I have recently become first vice-president, my focus is on the COTER and SEDEC Commissions. As vice-chair of the CFAA, I am particularly interested in the internal workings of the Committee of the Regions, in raising its visibility and in political and administrative cooperation with other institutions, such as the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Parliament.

Budgetary and financial matters are crucial to both the proper functioning of the European institutions and for local and regional authorities. In 2014, I was rapporteur for the Committee of the Regions' opinion on the 2015 European Union budget. The shape of the European Union annual budget has a direct impact on regional and local authority budgets, since one third of public expenditure and two thirds of public investments are effected by cities and regions, which are extensively involved in the management and/or use of the EU budget.

The COTER Commission's ad hoc working group is currently examining the 2016 draft budget submitted by the Commission on 27 May, which shows an increase of 1.6% compared with last year. I hope that the Luxembourg presidency, which will have the responsibility of conducting discussions on the 2016 budget at Council level and with the European Parliament, will reach agreement promptly to avoid the 2014 scenario, when an agreement was signed at the last minute.

If the EU, too, is to have fiscal discipline and consolidation, these must not hamper the stimulation of growth and employment, which is part and parcel of a more social Europe. Needless to say, I endorse the presidency's aim of «deepening the European Union's social dimension», which mirrors the aim of the European Commission to launch a «triple A social rating» that focuses on education, training and social investment. The European Union must underwrite the social justice and protection enshrined in the Treaties.

Finally, the Luxembourg presidency means to work to improve welfare systems as a way of helping national governments to optimise the performance of their labour markets, especially to benefit the young. It is they who have suffered the most from the economic crisis. We must therefore welcome the Commission's decision to release EUR 1 billion under the Youth Employment Initiative and the EUR 1.8 billion made available to the Erasmus+ programme to improve the education and employability of young people.

Gusty Graas



I am a member of parliament and a councillor in Bettembourg, where I am responsible for the economy, trade, sustainable development, clubs and associations, the voluntary sector, sport and tourism. Since 2007, I have been an alternate member of the Luxembourg delegation to the Committee of the Regions and have been fortunate enough – thanks to the trust I have enjoyed from my colleagues – to regularly attend the Committee's meetings. Last year, the Committee of the Regions adopted an opinion on the new guidelines for state aid for energy, of which I was the rapporteur. I welcome the Luxembourg presidency's backing of the Commission's initiative to bring about an Energy Union in order to create a common legal framework for European energy policy, though I would stress that this will require adapting state aid schemes by extending them to local and regional beneficiaries.

As rapporteur of the Committee of the Regions' opinion on the proposal for a Council directive on a common consolidated corporate tax base (CCCTB), which dates from 2011, it is only natural that I welcome the Luxembourg Presidency's willingness to restart discussions on this directive in connection with the action plan for major corporate taxation reform in the EU launched by the European Commission on 17 June 2015. The origins of the CCCTB go back to 2004, and after more than ten years of obstruction and procrastination this initiative finally has a chance of success thanks to the consensus that has emerged on the need to combat harmful tax competition.

I am delighted to see that the Commission proposal endorses the Committee opinion, which had argued for the CCCTB to be mandatory, and that it provides for a temporary mechanism for cross-border compensation. It fails, however, to take matters to their logical conclusion when it comes to the consolidation of the results, which will be tackled at a subsequent stage. I regret that the Commission is not minded to do anything about corporate tax rates, although the natural and logical conclusion to a CCCTB is a harmonisation of national rates, or at least the introduction of a minimum rate that ensures healthy tax competition between Member States.

It is a pity that the goal of fiscal harmonisation in the European Union has been put back, since this is a major handicap, above all for SMEs. I would also point out that the Committee of the Regions had requested an analysis of the impact the introduction of a CCCTB would have on local and regional taxes, which will be directly affected in most Member States, and I hope that this request will be met.

On tax transparency, the Luxembourg presidency will have to finalise the proposal for a directive on the automatic exchange of information on tax rulings, which should be in place on 1 January 2016. Luxembourg is likely to receive no shortage of attention, having been at the centre of the turmoil of recent months. Even so, I am convinced that the presidency will strive to bring about equitable and effective corporate taxation so that companies pay their fair share.

Tom Jungen



2015 is not just the year that Luxembourg takes over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, it has also been declared European Year for Development. This initiative seeks to inform and educate the European public about aid to developing countries and turn the spotlight on the EU's role on this front. According to a survey carried out in the 28 Member States, more than 90% of people questioned in Luxembourg think it important to help those in developing countries. Luxembourg has a key role to play in the campaign for the European Year for Development, not solely because it holds the presidency, but also because it is one of the few European countries to apportion 1% of its GDP to cooperation.

*The Luxembourg presidency has set itself the goal of making EU Member States' development policies more mutually consistent, an idea the Committee of the Regions keenly supports. Local and regional authorities must be involved, since it is they who carry out a vast amount of work through local partnerships in developing countries. My municipality, for example, supports the *Solidaresch Hëllef Réiserbann* non-profit association, which assists local communities in Argentina and Brazil.*

*Nevertheless, local and regional authorities should be encouraged to make more use of the connection between development cooperation and fair trade, which is itself aid in another guise. In 2011, my municipality of Roeser was the fourth in Luxembourg to be designated a *Fairtrade Gemeng*, or fair trade borough, which shows that we are committed to supporting fair trade and disadvantaged small producers. My municipality buys and consumes fair trade products in its institutions, encourages local traders to offer such goods, and helps bring them to the attention of the public. The number of Luxembourg municipalities involved in this label is steadily growing and now stands at 22. The City of Luxembourg is also part of the Quattropole network (together with Metz, Trier and Saarbrücken), which has been engaging in cross-border cooperation on fair trade since 2005.*

Fair trade is also booming across Europe, with better public recognition and support. I hope that the Committee of the Regions' call for a common European fair trade strategy – voiced in its June 2015 opinion on local and regional support for fair trade in Europe – will this time be heeded by the European institutions. As public procurement authorities, municipalities have great economic potential and at the same time set a good example for others. From this point of view, the new EU public procurement directives – under which the purchase of fair trade products or other ethical, social or ecological approaches can be included as award criteria or conditions for performance of contracts – are a major stride forward in responsible purchasing.

Ali Kaes



More importantly than being a deputy mayor and member of the Committee of the Regions, I am above all a European citizen. I believe in – and think it crucially important to respect – the values on which the European Union stands. Respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality and respect for human rights, including the rights of minorities, are fundamental rights enshrined in the Treaty on European Union.

This means that each citizen of the European Union must enjoy the same rights and guarantees in whichever country he lives. I therefore very much uphold the aim of consolidating the rule of law in the EU Member States and the Union's accession to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), which are priorities of the Luxembourg presidency.

In June 2015, Europe celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the Schengen Agreement, which has great symbolic value for the Grand Duchy. Over that time, thousands of migrants have lost their lives trying to reach Europe. I am sometimes disappointed by what I hear, including from those around me. For every life lost there are broken hopes, perhaps a family left behind. All migrants are refugees of a sort because they seek refuge in Europe, because they have fled from a predicament – sometimes risking their lives – and because they have endured trials that nobody could have contemplated. We cannot remain indifferent and hide behind our borders. We have to display courage and our political responsibilities matter little in comparison with our mission to save lives, to show solidarity, and to extend a dignified welcome to those in need of protection. In my municipality of Valeriusshaff we have a reception centre for applicants for international protection, managed by the Luxembourg Reception and Integration Agency (OLAI), a state body, which hosts around ten people. Their integration into the local population has been very successful and we have given our consent to the building of a new centre to shelter around eighty refugees in the future. This is a considerable contribution for a small town of 2 000 inhabitants. What signal are we sending to our populations if we, the leaders, refuse to welcome migrants?

I am pleased that the resolution adopted by the Committee of the Regions reflects this spirit of tolerance and solidarity. However, Europe should not be swayed by the emotions of the moment and act precipitously: it needs to review immigration policy, as the Luxembourg presidency has suggested, combating the trafficking of migrants and working on relocation and resettlement, visas and return policy. This process should also entail updating Europe's foreign policy – something the Luxembourg presidency, even if it has no more than a peripheral role to play, will have to take some initiative on. Europe must demonstrate its openness in deepening its relations with its closest partners and in its enlargement strategy for the countries of eastern and southern Europe, despite the fear of a UK exit from the European Union.

Martine Mergen



I have been an alternate member of the Committee of the Regions for nearly a decade now. As a doctor, I am particularly interested in public health matters, which the NAT Commission deals with. However, since health services and medical care are a matter for the Member States and local and regional authorities, in line with the subsidiarity principle, there are not so many Committee of the Regions opinions in this area. The programme of the Luxembourg presidency of the EU Council on this front is not revolutionary.

Nevertheless, an important step forward was taken with the agreement reached on 19 June 2015 at the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) on modernising legislation on medical devices. After three years of fruitless negotiations, Luxembourg has received a formal mandate to negotiate with the Commission and the European Parliament on medical devices and in vitro diagnostic devices. This is about offering patients safe, good value and good quality products, with safety the key target following the recent scandals with health implants and prosthetics. I am also pleased that the Member States have tasked the Luxembourg presidency with discussing a future EU framework for the fight against alcohol abuse.

Conscious that Europe is contending with population ageing, the presidency wishes to improve the care of patients suffering from dementia. Luxembourg has itself launched a national dementia prevention programme this year to improve patients' quality of life by making sure they get adequate monitoring and guaranteeing care in the early stages of the illness. If the development of personalised medicine – ensuring that patients have access to bespoke medical care – is to be encouraged, I think we also need to look at the right to health for all and the access of the most vulnerable populations to health services so that we achieve the goal of genuine universal health coverage for everyone.

Another major challenge in public health – and one which particularly taxes public opinion – is the question of GMOs. Luxembourg was heavily involved in negotiations on the EU directive on GMO cultivation, which is prohibited in the country, and now the revision of the authorisation procedure for GMOs in food and feed will be starting under the Luxembourg presidency.

On the other side of the coin, there are also measures targeted at bolstering food safety and consumer information, including the labelling of fats. The Luxembourg presidency will also review implementation of the directive on cross-border healthcare. This was welcomed by the Committee of the Regions, which called on the Member State authorities to sign cooperation agreements. Finally, I am surprised that health and safety at work is not one of the priorities of the Luxembourg presidency.

Marc Schaefer



Luxembourg is taking over the presidency of the Council of the European Union for the twelfth time in its history, but this time the circumstances are very different from 2005. The institutional context, firstly, given that the Council now has – since the Treaty of Lisbon – an established president; and then the political context, since these are very fraught times for Europe. Things do not augur well for this presidency and the months ahead will be very animated and at times difficult, but I am confident that Luxembourg will draw on its experience to manage the sensitive issues of the moment to which swift solutions must be found.

The EU presidency is an excellent opportunity for Luxembourg to prove our strong commitment to the ideas that underpin European integration. Working on the basis of the strategic agenda adopted by the European Council and the ten priorities identified by the European Commission in its Agenda for Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change, the presidency has adopted a bold programme and the Committee of the Regions must fully play its part in the consultation discussions and proffer its expertise and its local and regional perspective to improve future legislation for the benefit of the people of Europe that we represent.

The presidency's priority of «revitalising the single market by focusing on its digital dimension» in order to achieve a digital single market should be particularly highlighted. The European Commission's success on 30 June 2015 in concluding an agreement with the European Parliament and the Council should be welcomed. This will put an end to roaming charges in June 2017, with costs starting to drop from April 2016. This is an improvement consumers have long been waiting for. In 2008, I was rapporteur of the Committee of the Regions opinion on the regulatory framework for electronic communications networks and services and I welcome the fact that the Commission's efforts to give users stronger rights in the electronic communications sector have borne fruit, even if there is still some way to go with revising the EU regulatory framework on telecommunications.

But consumers are not the only casualties of the fact that there are 28 different legal systems: legal and administrative barriers are still stalling the development of a single market in goods and services whose aim is to enable Europe's consumers and businesses to buy and sell goods and services everywhere in the European Union as easily as in their home markets. As regards energy supply, the presidency intends to address the transition to sustainable energy by encouraging discussion between the Commission and the Member States while building on the regional and local dimension. Finally, consumers should also benefit from the future single electricity market, which is part of the Energy Union proposed by the European Commission.

Sam Tanson



I joined the Luxembourg delegation as an alternate member in February 2015. Although I have not yet had the chance to be involved practically in the work of the Committee of the Regions, the enthusiasm of my more experienced colleagues has been contagious. I am first deputy mayor of the City of Luxembourg and responsible for mobility in the city, traffic, planning, regulation, signalling and parking areas, public transport and finance. This remit is close to the heart of my political family, the Greens, for whom working and living in a green economy and a healthy environment are a priority.

The City of Luxembourg has made sustainable development a thread running through our work for a qualitative change in the city and we are concentrating our efforts on diversifying public transport and promoting soft mobility to counter climate change and reduce the carbon footprint. To this end, the city encourages the use of public transport, deploying a fleet of very advanced and versatile buses and currently undertaking numerous other projects: construction of an urban tram line scheduled to be up and running in 2020, a new station and a funicular. Alternative and sustainable modes of transport, such as car pooling and sharing, are also being encouraged. Cycling is increasingly important thanks to a well-functioning network of cycle paths, modern infrastructure and a city bike hire service, which make it easier to cycle in the capital. Luxembourg city is also known for its short distances between various points of interest and has developed a concept of urban planning centred on the pedestrian. Soft mobility will be discussed at an informal Council in Luxembourg in October and this is the first time that a genuine strategy for sustainable mobility is on the European transport policy agenda.

The Luxembourg presidency will also launch a big debate on European transport policy with a view to promoting the least polluting modes of transport. The cities and regions are expected to sign up to this. Local and regional authorities have significant competences in transport policy and their involvement is therefore essential as part of an approach based on multi-level governance.

I hope that the Commission will incorporate any proposals the Committee of the Regions may make in future and I would note that in its 2011 opinion on the White Paper the members had called for a more ambitious programme. European energy policy will have to incorporate the environmental goals that underpin an affordable and competitive energy transition and the key drivers of green and sustainable growth, which creates wealth and jobs throughout the EU.

Pierre Wies



I am an alternative member of the Luxembourg delegation to the Committee of the Regions, but also a member of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (CLRAE). Along with the Committee of the Regions, the Congress of the Council of Europe is the only international organisation that gives the municipalities and regions of Europe political representation. It comprises 648 elected members of regional and municipal councils, mayors and presidents of regions, representing over 20 000 authorities from 47 European countries.

Like the Committee of the Regions, the Congress of the Council of Europe is concerned in particular with overseeing the application of the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. Its remit is to promote local and regional democracy, improve local and regional governance and strengthen the autonomy of local and regional authorities. I am a member of the CLRAE's Chamber of Local Authorities, taking responsibility for governance, public finance, cross-border and interregional cooperation and e-democracy, as well as cooperation with intergovernmental bodies.

This remit complements the one I have at the Committee of the Regions, just as the two institutions complement each other on the basis of a cooperation agreement signed in 2006 in which they undertake to work together to ensure respect of the subsidiarity and proportionality principles. The Congress of the Council of Europe has also worked

with the Committee of the Regions on drafting the Charter for Multilevel Governance in Europe, which has been open for signature since 9 May 2014.

I intend, therefore, to follow closely the discussion on territorial development up to 2050 that is to commence under the Luxembourg presidency. This discussion is important, since better territorial cohesion can create the proper environment for investment that benefits all of Europe's regions. The presidency intends to advance proposals to improve cross-border cooperation by paving the way for the adoption of special legal measures for border areas.

Cross-border cooperation is all the more important for a small country such as Luxembourg, which is also involved in the revision of the territorial development programme throughout the Greater Region that it constitutes together with Belgium, France and Germany. The presidency has already held two conferences on cross-border cooperation, which included setting up a working group on cross-border cooperation. The participants discussed the challenges in this undertaking and highlighted the need to introduce specific legislation to promote such cooperation. Moreover, the external meeting of the Committee of the Regions Bureau being held in Luxembourg on 1 and 2 September 2015 will include the topic of a «New impetus for cross-border cooperation». Specific instances of successful cross-border cooperation will be presented and participants will be invited to think about how to facilitate and promote cross-border partnerships.



05 Cross-border cooperation

Joint interview with Corinne Cahen, Minister for the Greater Region, and François Bausch, Minister for Sustainable Development and Infrastructure



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» *Under the Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg has set itself the goal of achieving greater synergies between regions, in particular by encouraging cooperation in cross-border areas. Given that almost a third of Europe's population live in cross-border areas, what are the aims and what action does the Grand Duchy plan to take in order to achieve them?*

François Bausch: The European Union does not hold specific powers in the field of cross-border cooperation which, in line with the principle of subsidiarity, remains under the authority of the Member States. However, the Lisbon Treaty, which entered into force in 2009, includes the objective of territorial cohesion, on an equal footing with economic and social cohesion.

With regard to cohesion policy, territorial cohesion and urban policy, the Luxembourg Presidency has, in a joint approach with the Presidency Trio that includes Italy and Latvia, set the goal of achieving progress on the concept of territorial cohesion.

It is in cross-border areas that the lack of territorial cohesion can be seen most clearly. There have been many cross-border cooperation initiatives over a number of years: the achievements of the Schengen Area and the single currency in a large part of Europe have facilitated cross-border contacts and helped more closely align living conditions on the two sides of the border.

Legal barriers, however, continue to hamper the implementation of common projects. Most of the time, this is not deliberate but simply the result of historical developments. The Luxembourg Presidency is aiming to establish a legal instrument that would make it possible for specific legal provisions to apply to border areas, if the provisions help achieve development-related goals. Healthcare would appear to be the area with the greatest potential for progress.

Another focal point is cooperation between border towns or cross-border metropolitan conurbations. Acting as a single urban area and crossing borders, where this makes sense, will enable border to increase their hinterland and their influence.

» *The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, which shares its borders with 3 countries and 5 regions, is a pioneer in cross-border cooperation. What conclusions can be drawn from this cooperation today and what are the next steps to take?*

Corinne Cahen: On 20 November 2015 in Marche-en-Famenne, the current Walloon Presidency will celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Summit of political executives of the Greater Region. The first summit was held in 1995 at Mondorf-les-Bains. On 17 June 2015, the new House of the Greater Region was inaugurated in Esch-sur-Alzette.

Over the last twenty years, Luxembourg has attached great importance to the development of cross-border cooperation. Considerable progress has been achieved in the areas of labour market integration, mobility, transport, higher education and research, education and training, multilingualism and culture. The Greater Region now has the highest cross-border flows of any region in Europe. One example is the creation of the University of the Greater Region cross-border grouping, which is improving the mobility of 115 000 students and 6 000 teachers/researchers and is expanding educational provision.

Another example worth mentioning is Luxembourg and the Greater Region, European Capital of Culture 2007, which created a large number of cross-border partnerships, especially in the cultural sphere.

Cross-border cooperation forms part of the European Union's integration process. The internal market, the Schengen Agreement, the single currency and EU programmes have all promoted exchanges. Cooperation, however, needs political, economic and social impetus. This has been provided by the Summit of political executives, the Interregional Parliamentary Council and the European Economic and Social Committee. As a result of these initiatives, the Greater Region has become a model for cooperation within the European Union.

The Cross-Border Polycentric Metropolitan Region (CBPMR) development concept launched by Luxembourg is a practical project for the future development of the Greater Region. The aim of this CBPMR process is to develop synergies and areas of common interest to the regions in terms of infrastructure, transport, training and innovative businesses, in order to make the Greater Region more attractive economically and to be able to compete against Europe's other metropolitan regions. The specific measures for achieving this CBPMR will be implemented under a territorial development scheme that is due to be finalised by 2018.

» *The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg has recently signed three cooperation agreements with France, on civil security and emergency services, apprenticeship-type vocational training and university education. In what sectors is cross-border cooperation most beneficial, and where could such cooperation be developed further still?*

Corinne Cahen: Cross-border cooperation takes place at two complementary levels - bilateral and multilateral. The bilateral framework agreements signed in Paris in May 2015 at the meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission for cross-border cooperation between France and Luxembourg are clear examples of cross-border cooperation, specifically intended to improve people's daily lives. Similar topics were also on the agenda for the joint meetings between the Luxembourg government and the governments of the Saarland, Rhineland-Palatinate, Wallonia and the German-speaking Community of Belgium. The Summit of political executives of the Greater Region, the Interregional Parliamentary Council (IPC) and the European Economic and Social Committee also strive to find common solutions to the public's legitimate expectations. Questions relating to the labour market in the field of healthcare and to a qualified workforce that meets the expectations of business and questions relating to mobility should all be further developed.

» *Cross-border cooperation sometimes comes up against legal and administrative barriers, or faces linguistic and practical difficulties. What solutions could be found to simplify the cooperation process and improve the performance of regional development programmes, while minimising the risks inherent in applying different legislations?*

Corinne Cahen: It is true that cross-border cooperation faces numerous legal and administrative hurdles. It is however important to note that today we are managing to make real progress on issues for which it would have been hard to find solutions twenty years ago. Under the presidency of the Rhineland Palatinate, for example, a framework agreement on vocational training was able to be signed on 5 November 2014.

What is more, politicians have, over the years, managed to put in place the tools needed to achieve the goals that have been set. In 2006, the European Council and Parliament established the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation. This legal instrument makes it easier to support cross-border cooperation. As a result, the Alzette-Belval EGTC and the Joint EGTC Secretariat of

the Summit of political executives of the Greater Region were set up in 2013 and 2014 respectively.

Reference should also be made to the 'border' task force, which was created in 2011 and which has its headquarters in Saarbrücken. In response to the difficulties facing cross-border workers and businesses, this task force drafts proposals for legal solutions. The topics they deal with relate to labour law, social legislation, tax law, recognition of diplomas and recognition of occupational disabilities. Since it was set up four years ago, the Border Task Force has actively contributed to the removal of a number of barriers faced by cross-border workers.

François Bausch: As I stated above, the Luxembourg Presidency intends to pave the way for a European legal framework that would allow Member States to adopt specific legal provisions to benefit border regions and to support regional development projects. These provisions must not create new borders and must never be implemented at the expense of "hinterland" communities. In the presidency's view, the provisions are more technical in nature and will at first probably apply to smaller areas, but will be designed to create substantial cross-border dynamics, allowing cross-border public services to be set up, making them more effective for operators and less cumbersome for the public.

» *The European Committee of the Regions supported the creation in 2006 of European groupings of territorial cooperation (EGTC), enabling regional and local authorities from different Member States to cooperate more effectively, for example by allowing them to apply for and manage European funds directly. Three of these bodies have been set up in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg (INTERREG Greater Region Programme, the Greater Region Summit Secretariat and Alzette-Belval). What lessons can be drawn from the implementation of the EGTC in the Grand Duchy?*

François Bausch: Luxembourg participates in five European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), two of which are based in Luxembourg and operate under Luxembourg law. A sixth EGTC, also operating under Luxembourg law, is in the process of being set up. These figures place the Grand Duchy broadly among the average for countries that use this innovative instrument.

Two specific features should be pointed out. The State of Luxembourg is a member of all EGTCs. It is true that, given the country's small size and the absence of a regional level of government, the national level is more closely involved

in cross-border activity than is the case in other countries. The second specific feature is that the INTERREG IVA Greater Region EGTC is the only one to take on the role of managing authority for a Structural Funds programme. Despite the operating difficulties, the experiment is being repeated under new auspices in the INTERREG VA Greater Region programme. The ESPON (European Spatial Planning Observation Network) programme also operates in the form of an EGTC, and is the programme's sole beneficiary, which is a unique solution in Europe.

The Alzette-Belval EGTC is more traditional, in the sense that it supports cross-border cooperation in a highly urbanised area, with the aim of creating a cross-border conurbation of almost 150 000 inhabitants in a region that is in the process of finding alternatives to its steel industry.

Experience shows that the EGTC is still too little known by local authorities and by some public bodies. The Committee of the Regions' work to publicise the EGTC instrument must now be further developed and supported. Experience has also shown that when an EGTC is being set up - in both political and technical terms - it is essential to involve the State authority responsible for the EGTC approval procedure at the national level (or regional level, where applicable).

» *The European Commission's INTERREG programme, which this year will have been running for 25 years, is entering a new programming phase for 2014-2020, with a budget of EUR 351.8 billion for investments in the regions and Member States, including EUR 10.1 billion allocated to European territorial cooperation. What measures has the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg put in place to encourage local authorities to take up these European funds and to make cross-border cooperation more attractive to cities?*

François Bausch: In order to facilitate municipalities' access to Structural Funds and to support the action they take, there is a plan to implement a series of support and advice measures to improve municipalities' take-up of Structural Funds, in particular by improving the provision of advice available to Luxembourg operators in general.

The contact points lie at the heart of this mechanism. Thus, for each of the three INTERREG programmes in which the Grand Duchy participates, namely the INTERREG Greater Region cross-border cooperation programme, the INTERREG North-West Europe transnational cooperation programme and the INTERREG Europe interregional cooperation programme, a specific contact point will

be established. These contact points are the first line of contact for operators interested in developing a cooperation project. They have a three-pronged role - to inform, to advise and to support. The contact points therefore provide general information on the strategy and the thematic priorities of each programme, on possible subsidies and on the practical procedures for submitting and implementing a project.

Throughout a project's development phase, the contact point is available to Luxembourg operators in order to advise them on the many questions that may arise during this phase, such as: is the project's underlying premise consistent with the programme strategy? How can cross-border partners be found? How is a project budget drawn up to comply with the programme's rules?

In practical terms, the contact points also help operators to put together their applications by assisting them throughout the project's development and submission phases. If the project is approved, assistance continues to be provided throughout the project's implementation. This means that operators can always deal with the same contact person, who will be responsible for providing explanations of the programme's rules and procedures and who will assist operators with the administrative formalities involved in managing a project.

In order to facilitate access to information on the INTERREG programmes, a common Internet portal was established in cooperation with national programmes financed by the Structural Funds: **www.fonds-europeens.public.lu**. The purpose of centralising information on the different strategic approaches and the different financing possibilities is to give users a better overview of the different forms of support and to make it easier for them to find the relevant information. Also in the pipeline are information events related to INTERREG programmes aimed specifically at municipalities.

Lastly, the Ministry for Sustainable Development and Infrastructure is planning to organise, in cooperation with Luxembourg's National Institute of Public Administration (INAP), training courses for members of the national civil service and local staff (as for any other potential operator).

These courses will help explain the overall workings of the INTERREG programmes and will provide advice on setting up and managing projects.

As regards cross-border cooperation between cities, particularly in the context of cross-border conurbations, it should be pointed out that a new regulatory instrument - Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) - is now being put in place. This mechanism will make it possible to implement a series of projects and actions relating to different thematic priorities but all serving to implement a single regional strategy within a given geographical area. This new approach will facilitate the task of operators actively participating in the implementation of such a strategy because they will no longer be forced to carry out several individual projects; the strategy could instead be implemented in a comprehensive way.



Examples of successful cross-border cooperation in the Greater Region

As the main area of cross-border trade, the Greater Region brings together four Member States, five languages and forms a total area of 65 401 km² with a population of 11.4 million. It includes the territories of the Saarland, the Rhineland-Palatinate in Germany, Luxembourg and Lorraine in France. In Belgium, Wallonia, the French-speaking Community and the German-speaking Community are full members of this partnership.

The Greater Region forms an urban, industrial and rural network, a source of economic and cultural relations, marked by continual flows of cross-border workers and consumers. Cross-border cooperation within the Greater Region therefore constitutes a real asset and the basic pillar of the region's development.

In 1995, cross-border cooperation in the Greater Region took a decisive step forward with the establishment of a permanent Summit of the Greater Region, a strategic steering body bringing together the political executives of its territorial bodies. The Summit produces the joint policy guidelines for the Greater Region, which are then implemented by thematic working groups. It is flanked by two consultative bodies; the Economic and Social Council of the Greater Region (ESCGR) and the Interregional Parliamentary Council. The Greater Region has placed the 2020 Strategy targets at the heart of its action, which is based on a common approach to cross-border territorial development and land-use planning.

This institutional cooperation at the political level has gone hand in hand with the implementation of national, regional and local cross-border projects in smaller geographical areas, supported by EU funds, especially the ERDF. In 2007, on the initiative of the European Commission, a single **INTERREG Greater Region** programme was set up to enable projects to be carried out across the region, but limited to border areas, in line with the first pillar of EU regional policy.

The programme is managed by a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). For the 2007-2013 programming period, the programme received an allocation of EUR 106 million and helped co-finance 174 projects grouped under 3 headings: the economy, space and people.

Following the success of INTERREG IV A, the Greater Region, preparations are being made to launch the 5th generation of the programme INTERREG VA, the Greater Region, for the 2014-2020 programming period. The operational programme unveiled in June 2015 is based on a three-pronged approach: employment, territorial development and the economy, and prioritises support for employment on the Greater Region's labour market. This strategy is based on 4 priority headings, with the ultimate aim of ensuring sustainable development in the greater region, enabling this space for dynamic cooperation to pursue its economic development while safeguarding good environmental quality, which is essential to its inhabitants' quality of life and to maintaining the region's attractiveness.

The Greater Region in a few figures:

65 401 km², spread across the territories of Belgium, France, Germany and Luxembourg.

11.4 million inhabitants (2014)

A gross domestic product of EUR 317.1 billion (2010), or 2.6% of the EU's entire GDP.

213 000 cross-border workers

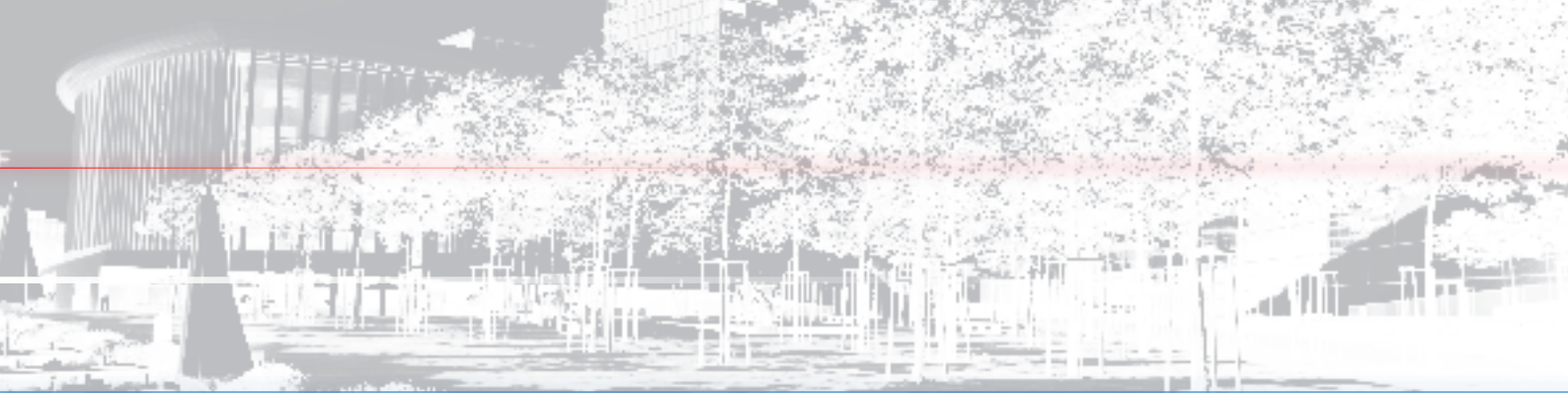
EUR 106 million for the INTERREG IVA Greater Region programme 2007-2013

174 cross-border projects accepted from 2007 to 2013

The following pages give some significant examples of successful cross-border cooperation within the Greater Region and co-financed by the European Union and which have the potential to make a difference for the region's inhabitants.

► Map of the Greater Region





TRANSPORT AND MOBILITY

MOBIREGIO: Mobility Centre of the Greater Region

PROGRAMME: INTERREG IVA Greater Region

PROJECT MANAGERS

- Verkéiersverbond (LU)
- Verkehrsmanagement Gesellschaft Saar mbH (DE)
- Ministry of the Interior, Sport and Infrastructure of Rhineland-Palatinate (DE)

PARTNERS

- Ministry of the Economy, Labour, Energy and Transport of Saarland (DE)
- Verkehrsverbund Region Trier GmbH (DE)
- Lorraine Regional Council (FR)
- Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy (FR)
- Belgian Province of Luxembourg (BE)
- Regional Transport Company of Wallonia (BE)
- Region of Wallonia (BE)

COSTS

- Total: EUR 446 250
- ERDF: EUR 223 125 (50%)

DURATION

- 01.07.2012 - 31.12.2014

The “Mobility Centre of the Greater Region” project marked the beginning of a partnership and regular and structured cooperation between public transport operators in the Greater Region. The initiative was supported by the Economic and Social Council of the Greater Region, among others. A trade mark has been developed along with a website, which features a cross-border route calculator mainly aimed at border-area residents and tourists.

This portal, called Mobiregio, offers numerous solutions with the emphasis on soft mobility and public transport in the Greater Region. The multimodal information system is thus able to calculate a cross-border route including buses and trains but also individual trips on foot, by bicycle or car. The portal also provides users with information on the cost per trip and special deals for cross-border connections.

Moreover, a network linking transport organising authorities and communities has been established in the Greater Region. Through intense cooperation direct relationships have been established, improving mutual trust between the partners. The objective of a common communication strategy for cross-border public transport in the Greater Region has thus been achieved.

Since January 2015, the project has no longer received support from European funds, but it is continuing in order to pursue the objective of long-term cooperation between public transport operators in the Greater Region, which is to be translated into tangible measures to improve cross-border mobility. The route calculator is to be extended to include new functionalities and it will serve as a way of monitoring transport planning.

For more information, see: <http://www.mobiregio.net/>



HEALTH

NESCAV: Nutrition, environment and cardiovascular health

PROGRAMME: INTERREG IVA Greater Region

PROJECT MANAGER

- Centre de recherche public de la santé (Public Health Research Centre) (LU)

PARTNERS

- École de santé publique (School of Public Health), University of Liege (BE)
- Centre hospitalier universitaire de Nancy (FR)
- University of Saarland (DE)

COSTS

- Total: EUR 1 447 322.20
- ERDF: EUR 723 661.10 (50%)

DURATION

- 01.01.2009 – 30.06.2012

NESCAV is the acronym of the European "Nutrition, Environment and Cardiovascular Health" project. It arose from the recognition that there are major differences in statistical terms in cardiovascular mortality in the Greater Region, but no information on the cardiovascular risk factors, measured with the same standard tools. The NESCAV project was thus established to reply to this question and to support cross-border public authorities and professionals in their efforts to combat risk factors by providing them with objective data. It aims to develop a network of cross-border professionals involved in the prevention of cardiovascular disease and it is intended to help reduce the prevalence and incidence of cardiovascular disease in the Greater Region by proposing prevention policies geared to needs. The ultimate objective of the project is to support a reduction in healthcare costs and economies of scale in public expenditure for the prevention of cardiovascular diseases.

The project examined the state of public health in the four cross-border regions in Luxembourg, Lorraine (FR), the Province of Liège (BE) and Saarland (DE), comparing modifiable cardiovascular risk factors in the population (food, environment) and identifying high-risk populations. Almost 3 000 persons participated in the NESCAV project, which showed that the population of the Greater Region has a high prevalence of cardiovascular risk factors. The study analysed, inter alia, the nutritional habits of the population, comparing them to the recommendations of the public authorities in each of the regions, and the link between environmental pollution and cardiovascular risk factors. Recommendations were drawn up with a view to coordinating at cross-border level all activities aimed at promoting cardiovascular health and preventing risk factors, standardising nutritional recommendations and monitoring cardiovascular health indicators in a proactive way in a cross-border context.



ENVIRONMENT

NETWORK OF NATURE PARKS OF THE GREATER REGION

PROGRAMME: INTERREG IV A Greater Region

PROJECT MANAGERS

- Haute Sûre Nature Park (LU)
- Our Nature Park (LU)

PARTNERS

- Deux Ourthes Nature Park (BE)
- Haute-Sûre Forêt d'Anlier Nature Park (BE)
- Vallée de l'Attert Nature Park (BE)
- High Fens-Eifel Nature Park (BE)
- Au Pays de l'Attert non-profit organisation (BE)
- High Fens-Eifel Nature Park, North Rhine-Westfalia (DE)
- High Fens-Eifel Nature Park, Rhineland-Palatinate (DE)
- Lorraine Regional Nature Park (FR)

COSTS

- Total: EUR 1 320 891.22
- ERDF: EUR 660 445.61 (50%)

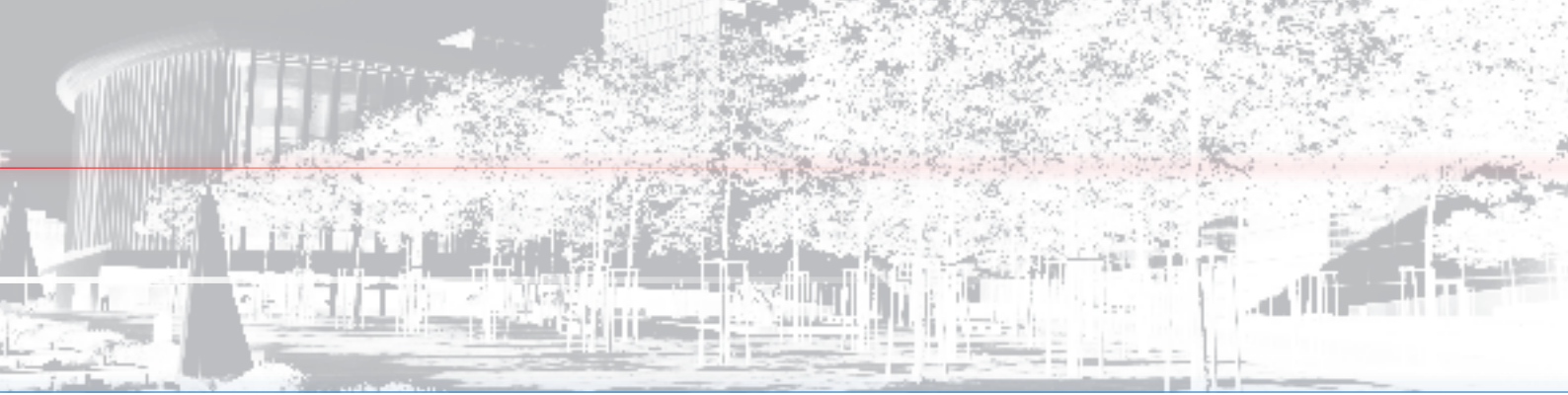
DURATION

- 01.11.2008 - 31.10.2011

The network of nature parks in the Greater Region is a project which was set up in 2009 and brings together nine nature parks in the Greater Region, associated with five partners – Vallées de la Burdinale et de la Mehaigne Nature Park (BE), South Eifel Nature Park (DE), Saar-Hunsrück Nature Park (DE), Northern Vosges Regional Nature Park (FR) and Vulkaneifel Nature Park (DE). The Greater Region offers a high density of nature parks, which cover 21.5% of the territory, much of which is located at regional or national borders. For a number of nature parks, cross-border cooperation was already an integral part of the strategy for development of their territories. The Platform's objectives are the development of cooperation activities and projects, the promotion of a new urban-rural relationship and the positioning of nature parks as tourist and cultural destinations, together with raising the profile of nature park activities.

The "network" project has led to the establishment of structured and sustainable cooperation across the Greater Region, through common actions, dynamic exchanges and synergy effects. This has strengthened the role of nature parks as actors in the construction of the Greater Region and the implementation of a sustainable development policy for the benefit of the region and its residents.





EDUCATION AND TRAINING

UNIVERSITY OF THE GREATER REGION: UniGR

PROGRAMME: INTERREG IV A Greater Region

PROJECT MANAGER

- University of Luxembourg (LU)

PARTNERS

- University of Liège (BE)
- University of Lorraine (FR)
- University of Saarland (DE)
- University of Trier (DE)
- University of Kaiserslautern (DE)
- Saarland (DE)
- Region of Wallonia (BE)
- Region of Lorraine (FR)
- Rhineland-Palatinate (DE)

COSTS

- Total: EUR 6 425 281.54
- ERDF: 3 212 640.77 (50%)

DURATION

- 15.10.2008 – 14.04.2013

The University of the Greater Region cross-border grouping is to be considered as a first step towards a coordinated union of universities of the Greater Region, and thus the creation of an integrated higher education area in the Greater Region. The main objective of the project is to increase the mobility of students, academics and doctoral candidates by simplifying administrative formalities, providing access to student services and negotiating preferential rates in cooperation with the regions and the public transport companies of the Greater Region. Students from partner universities can thus follow courses or course modules without having to pay registration fees, have access to training and obtain the student card of the host university, which entitles them to the student rate at the University canteen and to use all the relevant university libraries.

The project also aims to develop the range of courses offered and research profiles at the partner universities through the establishment of new double or joint degrees, coordinated courses and mutual recognition of credits and seminars across borders. The last pillar of the project is based on improved cross-border research and the training of doctoral candidates through networking of academics, the sharing of specialised equipment, and close cooperation on the training of doctoral candidates through the promotion of joint research activities. In the medium term, the project aims to integrate other higher education institutions in the Greater Region.

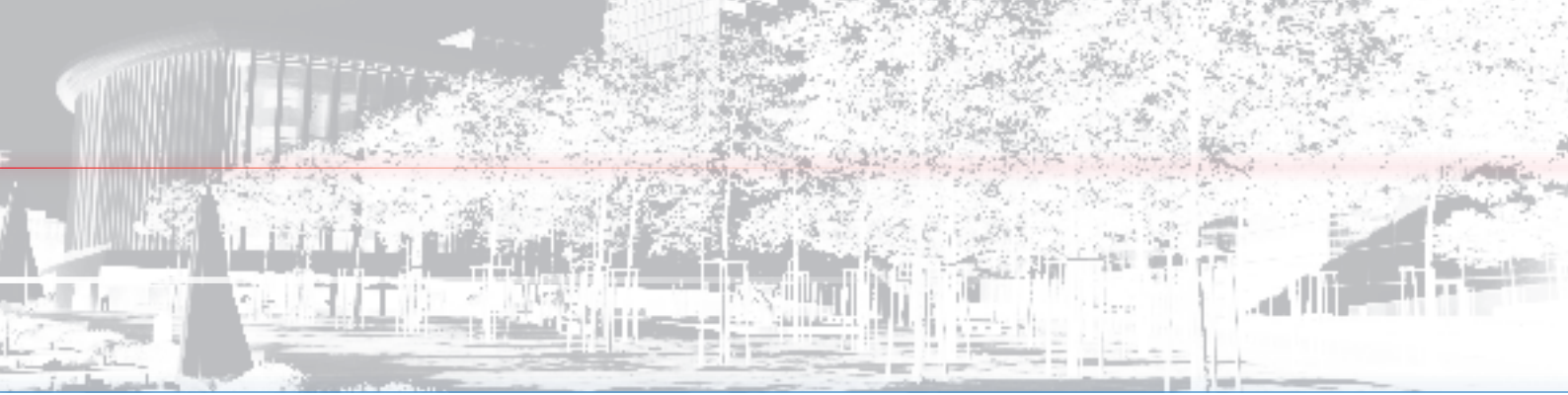
The many activities implemented and the positive results reported during the project have encouraged the University of the Greater Region to develop its joint activities and cooperation further, to assess existing initiatives and create new ones. The UniGR has put in place a governance structure, with a joint council, a coordinating committee and a student council. In the field of training, the UniGR has created a new SaarLorLux Masters programme in Physics and established a European doctorate of the University of the Greater Region.

For more information, see: <http://www.uni-gr.eu/>



UNIVERSITÉ DE LA
GRANDE RÉGION
UNIVERSITÄT DER
GROSSREGION





YOUTH

COMENIUS REGIO: Culture as a route to academic success

PROGRAMME: Lifelong Education and Training 2007-2013

PROJECT MANAGER:

- Ministry of National Education, Childhood and Youth (LU)

PARTNERS

- Research and Educational and Technological Innovation Coordination Department
- Lycée Bel-Val (LU)
- National Further Vocational Education Centre (LU)
- Kulturfabrik (Culture Factory) (LU)
- Meurthe-et-Moselle General Council (FR)
- Meurthe-et-Moselle Directorate for National Education Departmental Services (FR)
- Claude le Lorrain middle school (FR)
- École des musiques actuelles (School of Contemporary Music) of Nancy (FR)
- Albert Camus middle school (FR)

COSTS

- Comenius Regio: EUR 35 000

DURATION

- 01.10.2013 – 01.07.2015

The «Comenius Regio: Culture as a route to academic success» cooperative project is a European exchange project which tackles issues relating to the difficulties experienced by young people in schools. It aims to conduct experiments using culture as a vector of mediation and motivation for school students in their relationship with school, facilitating comparison of the experiences of professionals in the areas of national education, culture and the social sector.

Over a two-year period, school students, accompanied by teachers, educators and artists, experience cultural enrichment in their schools, in France and Luxembourg. The whole project is monitored by an educational psychologist, Serge Boimare, who developed the methodology, which aims to reconnect young people with learning and give them new types of social relationships. The project emphasises the important role that culture can play in supporting the aims of schools, particularly in the case of students facing major challenges. The project includes a diagnostic phase, exchange of best practice, training, implementation of cultural projects for young people (writing, film, theatre, sculpture and painting workshops and cultural visits) and development of a sustainable framework for cross border cooperation.

In Luxembourg, a literary and artistic programme was designed with the Kulturfabrik for secondary pupils of the Lycée Bel-Val experiencing difficulties with learning French, with a writing workshop. The project ended on 8 July 2015 with a major conference attended by almost 400 people. The project has been a success: with cultural enrichment, students have significantly improved their school results, and positive effects on behaviour have been identified. It is now planned to organise cross-border training on cultural enrichment, while continuing cooperation with other countries.

For more information, see: <http://culture-reussite.eu/>



CULTURE

PLURIO.NET: Culture portal of the Greater Region

PROGRAMME: INTERREG IV A Greater Region

PROJECT MANAGER:

- Luxembourg Cultural Action Agency (LU)

PARTNERS:

- Ministry of Culture and Communication, Regional Directorate for Cultural Affairs of Lorraine (FR)
- Lorraine Regional Council (FR)
- Lorraine Cultural Resources Centre (FR)
- Ministry of Culture (LU)
- Ministry for Education, Science, Further Education and Culture of Rhineland-Palatinate (DE)
- Ministry for Education and Culture of Saarland (DE)
- Wallonia-Brussels Federation, Directorate-General for Culture (BE)
- German-speaking Community of Belgium (BE)
- Wallonia-Brussels International (BE)

COSTS

- Total: EUR 1 480 416
- ERDF: EUR 740 208 (50%)

DURATION

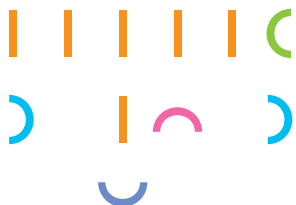
- 01.01.2008 – 31.06.2011

In 2004, the representatives of the regional public organisations of the Greater Region agreed on the need to enhance the cultural programme and promote the professionalisation of the players in the field. Under the «plurio.net» project instruments to encourage cross-border cooperation and facilitate the presentation of the Greater Region's cultural programme were developed and made available to the target audience. The cultural programme of the Greater Region is thus highlighted on the www.plurio.net cultural portal. The portal has become the main point of reference for cultural affairs in the Greater Region. It collates and disseminates cultural content from the whole Greater Region on its dedicated website. Between 2 000 and 6 000 events are listed online daily and around 10 000 cultural addresses are presented on the portal, which lists over 2 000 operators. Cultural news, job offers and calls for projects in the cultural sector are also available on the site.

In addition to presenting the Greater Region's cultural programme, the «plurio.net» project also develops the instruments needed for the development of cross-border cooperation. The aim is to make the programme and the data more visible while taking advantage of the approaches and experiences developed when creating the Greater Region's cultural portal. The project also further pursues the developments achieved when setting up the Greater Region's cultural portal by creating specific instruments which it makes available to cultural actors, the media and the general public. Plurio.net has also been praised by the European Commission and is being copied elsewhere in Europe. When EU funding ended, the project partners were able to ensure the continuation of the portal and its services through a long-term cooperation agreement.

For more information, see: <http://www.plurio.net/fr/>

plurio.NET



CULTURE

GREATER REGION CULTURAL AREA

PROGRAMME: INTERREG IV A Greater Region

PROJECT MANAGER:

- Cultural Area of the Greater Region, non-profit organisation (LU)

PARTNERS

- Wallonia-Brussels Federation (BE)
- German-speaking Community of Belgium
- Province of Luxembourg (BE)
- Ministry of Education, the Family, Women and Culture of Saarland (DE)
- Ministry of Education, Science, Youth and Culture of Rhineland-Palatinate (DE)
- City of Trier (DE)
- Lorraine Regional Council (FR)
- Ministry of Culture, Higher Education and Research (LU)
- City of Luxembourg (LU)

COSTS

- Total: EUR 1 316 520.04
- ERDF: EUR 658 259.91 (50%)

DURATION

- 01.07.2008 – 30.06.2012

In 2007, on the initiative of Luxembourg, the region won the title of European Capital of Culture. As the first cross-border region to be defined and presented as a shared cultural area, during the year it succeeded in realising more than one hundred projects with partners from across the Greater Region. In order to ensure continuity of cooperation between actors, in 2008 the cultural administrations of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland, Lorraine and Wallonia set up the Cultural Area of the Greater Region association in Luxembourg. The blue deer symbol of the Cultural Capital was adopted as the logo of the Association. The partners adopted the objective of drawing attention to the value, diversity and originality of the cultural and artistic scene in the Greater Region. The Cultural Area of the Greater Region association thus has the task of coordinating, monitoring and promoting cross-border projects and it encourages cooperation and professionalisation of cultural actors across borders.

In this context, it aims to improve the mobility of cultural actors and audiences, and to increase the number of meetings. Apart from encouraging cross-border cultural cooperation, the Cultural Area of the Greater Region association acts as intermediary between cultural actors and ministries of culture. It promotes culture in the Greater Region with specific actions and it coordinates the activities of the regional coordinating bodies.

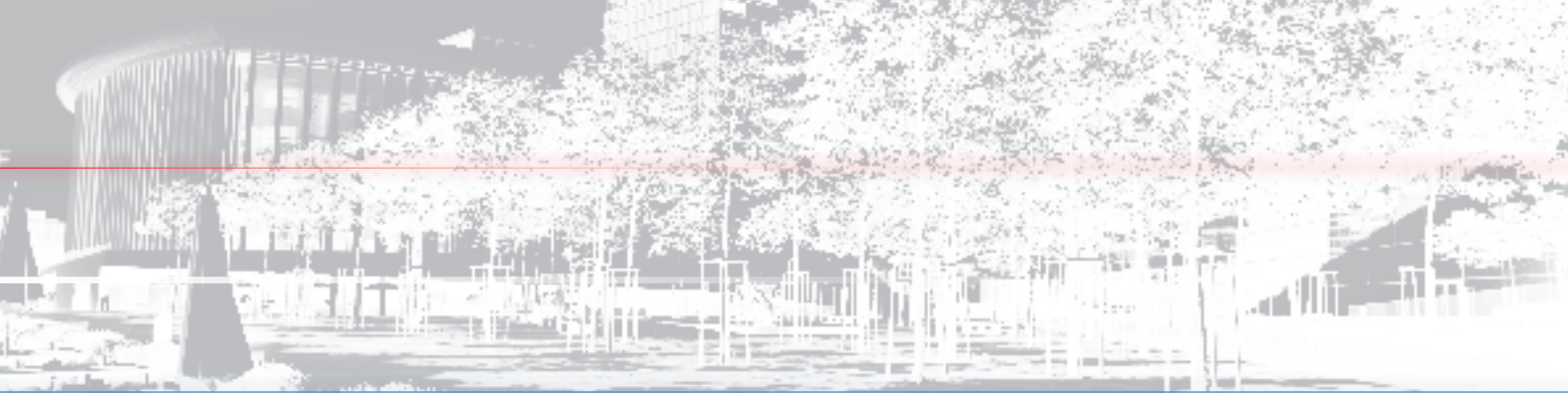
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The 50 or so photographic, film, music and artistic projects that emerged with the support and coordination of the Cultural Area of the Greater Region include the culture portal for young people in the Greater Region, Grrrrr.eu, launched at the end of 2010. It is a participatory website which provides information on cultural events and new releases in the Greater Region aimed at young audiences: its aim is to arouse young people's interest in cultural diversity in the Greater Region. The articles and ideas come from young authors from across the Greater Region.

The project has been extended beyond the stage of EU co-financing by contributions from all regions, and in the long term it aims to develop a concerted cultural policy involved in promoting the Greater Region as cross-border cultural area.

For more information, see: <http://www.espaceculturelgr.eu/fr> et <http://www.grrrrr.eu/>





TOURISM

TOURISM MARKETING IN THE GREATER REGION

Creation of a common transnational marketing concept for tourism in the Greater Region

PROGRAMME: INTERREG IV A Greater Region

PROJECT MANAGER:

- Saarland Central Tourist Office (DE)

PARTNERS

- National Tourist Office (LU)
- Ministry of Economic Affairs (LU)
- Rheinland-Pfalz Tourismus GmbH (DE)
- Regional Government of Rhineland-Palatinate (DE)
- Ministry of the Economy, Labour, Energy and Transport of Saarland (DE)
- Wallonia-Brussels Federation (BE)
- Wallonia-Brussels Tourism (BE)
- German-speaking Community of Belgium (BE)
- Tourist Office of the Eastern Cantons (BE)
- Saarland Central Tourist Office (DE)
- Region of Lorraine (FR)
- Lorraine Regional Tourist Committee (FR)
- Meuse Regional Tourist Committee (FR)

COSTS

- Total: EUR 2 500 000
- ERDF: EUR 1 250 000 (50%)

DURATION

- 01.03.2009 – 30.06.2015

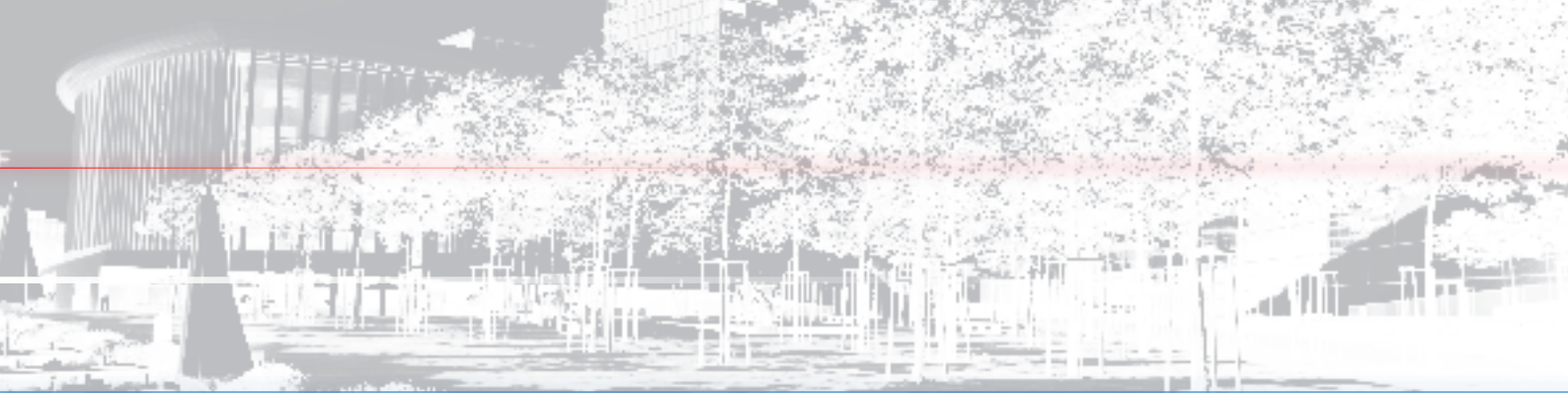
The project is based on the idea of developing a common approach to tourism marketing in the Greater Region. In terms of implementation, innovative cross-border marketing measures will be developed jointly and applied in the field of tourism in the Greater Region. The project also includes a series of practical measures to promote the development of tourism in the region, such as the development of travel itineraries on different themes, to create economic added value and enhance the image of the region. Intercultural exchange and exchange of operational expertise between managers will bring substantial benefits. The tourism bodies of each country or region cooperate in the project and jointly develop marketing measures focusing mainly on urban tourism, cultural tourism and food tourism, according to the target groups. They also aim to forge new partnerships in the search for marketing benefits and real synergies, and to collect statistics in order to harmonise databases and develop comparable indices on tourism in the Greater Region.

The project activities cater for both the interregional and international public and for tourism professionals. Tourism opportunities in the Greater Region have thus been expanded by means of the FreizeitCard (recreation card), available as of the 2013/2014 season. The card gave free access to more than 200 tourist attractions in Saarland, Lorraine, Luxembourg, Rhineland-Palatinate, the East Cantons and Wallonia. Tourism professionals have been invited to take part in order to raise the visibility of the Greater Region and make people more aware of it as a tourist destination.

For more information (in French and German only), see:
<http://www.tourismus-grossregion.eu/fr>



TOURISMUSMARKETING FÜR DIE
GROSSREGION
MARKETING TOURISTIQUE POUR LA
GRANDE RÉGION



TOURISM

NATURE TREKKING PARK DELUX

(NATURWANDERPARK DELUX): premium trekking in the German-Luxembourg Nature Park

PROGRAMME: INTERREG IV A Greater Region

PROJECT MANAGER:

- German-Luxembourg Nature Park

PARTNERS

- Our Nature Park (LU)
- Municipality of Hosingen (LU)
- Municipality of Putscheid (LU)
- Municipality of Burg-Reuland (DE)
- Regional Tourism Office, Mullerthal Region (LU)
- Regional Tourism Office, Luxembourg Ardennes (LU)
- Joint Board of the Southern Eifel Nature Park (DE)

COSTS

- Total: EUR 1 612 775.25
- ERDF: EUR 806 387.54 (50%)

DURATION

- 01.04.2009 – 31.10.2012

This project builds bridges across borders: by constructing and repairing footbridges across the border rivers of the Our and the Sûre, managing cross-border trekking trails and connecting them to the German-Luxembourg-Belgian network, the project aims to highlight the opportunities for trekking at the intersection of the three countries. The Nature Trekking Park delux offers nine top quality walking tours covering a total of 170 km. The itineraries are varied and pass through the unique cultural and natural landscape of the nature parks of the Southern Eifel, the Our and the Northern Eifel. The trails are all of a very high quality, have been designed to meet demanding criteria of the German Hiking Institute and have been designated as European «routes of excellence». The concept includes a common system of signs and signposting, rest areas, benches, a trail register based on the Geographic Information System of the Greater Region (SIG-GR) and a joint advertising campaign. In addition to repairing six footbridges along trekking trails, two new bridges will also be built. The project partners are planning to create and promote a cross-border trekking label as a means of drawing attention to cross-border trekking tourism. The Nature Trekking Park delux was officially inaugurated on 6 June 2012.

For more information, see: <http://www.naturwanderpark.eu/>



ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

TASK FORCE FRONTALIERS (BORDER WORKERS TASK FORCE)

PROGRAMME: INTERREG IV A Greater Region

PROJECT MANAGER

- Saarland Ministry of the Economy, Labour, Energy and Transport (DE)

PARTNERS

- German-speaking Community of Belgium (BE)
- Rhineland-Palatinate Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour and Employment (DE)
- Regional Prefecture of Lorraine (FR)
- Region of Lorraine (FR)
- FOREM – Wallonia Office for Vocational Training and Employment (BE)
- Ministry of Labour and Employment (LU)

COSTS

- Total: EUR 01138042.06
- ERDF: EUR 569 021.03 (50%)

DURATION

- 01.01.2011 – 31.12.2015

On 29 September 2004, the Committee of the Regions suggested to the European Commission that regional cross-border «cells» be set up to resolve border issues. This proposal was accepted by the Interregional Parliamentary Council of the Greater Region Summit which launched a Border Workers Task Force (TFF) in the Greater Region to address legal and administrative disparities. The project thus aims to increase the mobility of border workers in the labour market across the Greater Region. The TFF is responsible for drawing up and proposing legal and political solutions to issues and problems confronting workers in the border areas of the Greater Region and the companies that employ them. It is active in the following legal areas: labour law, social law, tax law and the right to education and training. The first stage of the project is to identify current obstacles to mobility. These are mainly reported by the project partners or identified by the members of the legal team. As a result of very close cooperation, the cross-border labour market stakeholders in the Greater Region are also invited to report obstacles to mobility, including additional services or partial unemployment. In the second stage, the TFF team will put forward legal or administrative solutions, which will then be forwarded to the appropriate institutions and policy makers.

On 21 and 22 April 2015 the Border Workers Task Force organised a conference in Eupen on the labour market, entitled «Overcoming and shaping the European borders». The conference enabled the players working in border areas to compare and exchange experiences and to discuss recent developments in cross-border labour mobility in Europe, the guiding principle being to pinpoint possible improvements to contribute to removing barriers to cross-border labour mobility in the Greater Region and beyond. The results of the work carried out, in the form of twelve solutions, were presented in a bilingual brochure entitled «Improving labour market mobility within the Greater Region». The proposed solutions in support of better mobility have already been partially implemented or will be in the near future. For example, the TFF has already succeeded in putting an end to one disadvantage faced by border workers in the calculation of sickness benefit, and in introducing throughout the Greater Region a certificate of ongoing cross-border training of professional drivers that is recognised across Europe.

For more information (in French and German only), see:
<http://www.tf-frontaliers.eu>

TASK FORCE



Grenzgänger / Frontaliers

ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

TIGRE: Transfer of Technologies and Innovation in the Greater Region

PROGRAMME: INTERREG IV A Greater Region

PROJECT MANAGER

- INTERFACE Entreprises-University of Liège (BE)

PARTNERS

- University of Lorraine (FR)
- University of Saarland (DE)
- Kaiserslautern School of Graduate Studies (DE)
- LuxInnovation (LU)
- Henri Tudor Public Research Centre (LU)
- Innovation Management Sarl (DE)

COSTS

- Total: EUR 1 148 871.18
- ERDF: EUR 574 435.59

DURATION

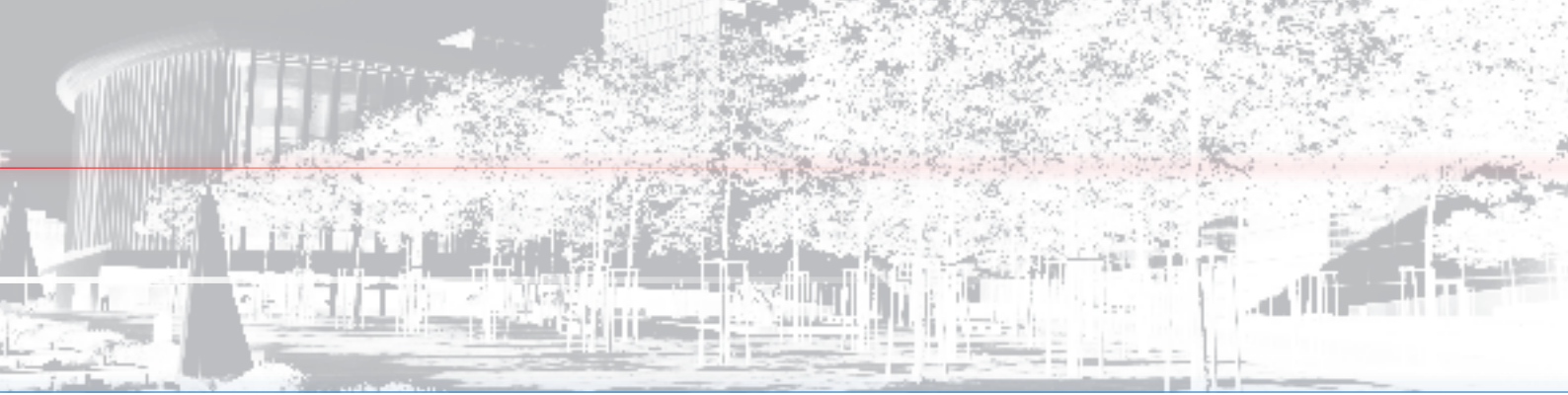
- 01.03.2009 – 30.06.2012

The TIGRE project's main objective is to achieve a real match between supply from public research laboratories and demand for new technologies on the part of small, medium and large enterprises in the Greater Region. It thus seeks to promote the exchange of best practices between the public and private sectors and to translate research outcomes into economic benefits, by pooling regional professionals' individual and joint technical expertise. It makes technical assistance and a network of contacts within the Greater Region available to all operators. The TIGRE project complements the Interreg «University of the Greater Region» project, which focuses on the education and research missions of universities.

The project has made it possible to step up cross-border cooperation between enterprises and research institutes in the Greater Region, and to develop common tools to exploit the economic potential of research and technology transfer, for example in the sphere of patents or industrial research contracts. The organisation of meetings and events between researchers and industry has helped to fine-tune public research competences to the needs of cross-border businesses.



Transfert de technologies et Innovation
en Grande Région
Technologietransfer und Innovation
in der Großregion



SPATIAL PLANNING

CIG-GR: GeoPortal of the Greater Region

PROGRAMME: INTERREG IV A Greater Region

PROJECT MANAGER

- Rhineland-Palatinate Ministry for Education, Science, Further Education and Culture (DE)

PARTNERS

- Saarland Ministry of the Environment, Energy and Transport (DE)
- Rhineland-Palatinate Land Registry Department (DE)
- Saarland Land Registry Department (DE)
- Ministry for Sustainable Development and Infrastructure (LU)
- Lorraine Regional Council (FR)
- Meurthe-et-Moselle General Council (FR)
- Moselle General Council (FR)
- Regional Prefecture of Lorraine (FR)
- Business Promotion Agency of Eastern Belgium, non-profit organisation (BE)
- Wallonia Public Services (BE)

COSTS

- Total: EUR 815 428.76
- ERDF: EUR 407 714.38

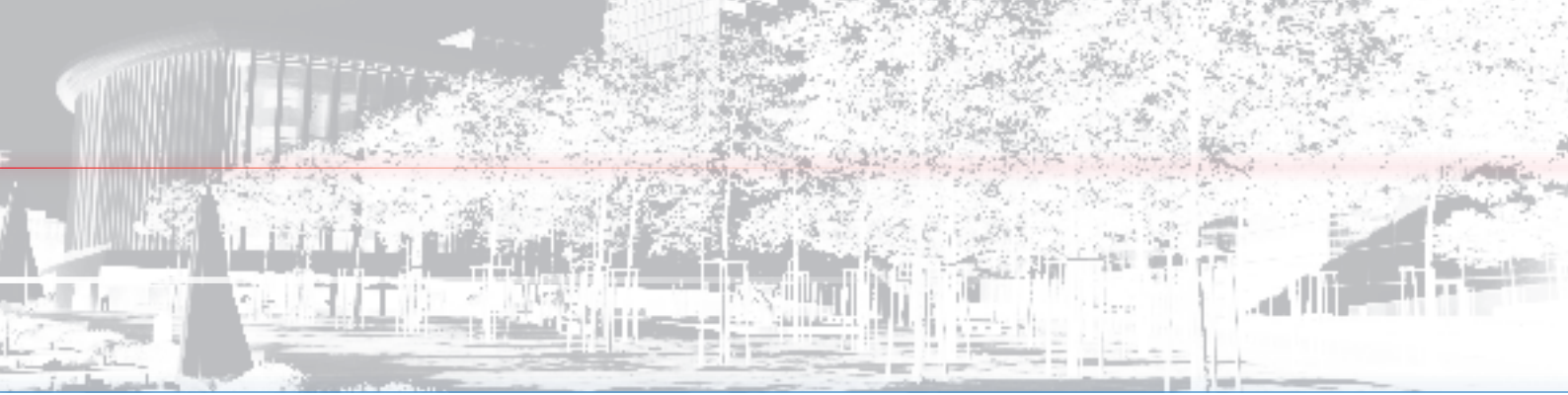
DURATION

- 01.04.2010 – 31.03.2013

In recognition of the fact that better and more concerted cooperation in cross-border territorial planning and development, in urban and rural areas, is a prerequisite if the Greater Region is to become an area with a high added value in social, economic and environmental terms, politicians have decided to establish a Geographic Information System of the Greater Region (SIG-GR). This is a working instrument for implementing the common approach to territorial planning and development in the Greater Region. It is a system for entering, processing, organising and presenting harmonised cross-border geographical data produced by regional or national information systems that were already up and running, but were not compatible with each other and stopped in general at national borders. The SIG-GR makes it possible to produce a spatial analysis of the Greater Region as a whole, with results that can inform decisions on cross-border territorial development and planning. Furthermore, by setting up a single geoportal, where overall data - for example on social and economic issues - are published, the whole of the population concerned in the Greater Region can access and retrieve geographical information across borders. The SIG-GR project has now become a permanent joint working tool between all territorial entities.

For further information (in French and German only), see:
<http://www.gis-gr.eu/portal/fr/accueil.html>





SPATIAL PLANNING

HABITREG

Networking for local habitat policy issues

PROGRAMME: INTERREG IV A Greater Region

PROJECT MANAGER

- Intersection of the Lorraine countries (FR)

PARTNERS

- Intercommunal Syndicate for the Promotion of the Canton of Clervaux SICLER (LU)
- Syndicate for the Planning and Management of the Our Nature Park (LU)
- Wallonia Rural Foundation (LU)
- Walloon Housing Company (BE)

COSTS

- Total: EUR 796 792.50
- ERDF: EUR 398 396.25 (50%)

DURATION

- 01.04.2010 – 31.12.2013

The same problems with local housing policies arise right across the Wallonia-Lorraine-Luxembourg area: land pressure at borders and the need to adapt the habitat, partly in response to population development and partly in light of environmental needs and challenges. The aim of the Habitreg project is therefore to create a network of elected representatives and stakeholders affected by the issue with a view to sharing experience and best practices in terms of sustainable settlements in rural and suburban areas. More specifically, three operational aspects of housing policies have been addressed: meeting new housing needs arising from social and demographic trends, combating urban sprawl by promoting the centres of villages and supporting justified expansion, reconciling the need for accommodation with the need to protect the human and natural environment.

The project was divided into three stages, starting by gathering and analysing of existing data, followed by setting up a network of stakeholders through study visits, and finally providing assistance and support for launching cooperation initiatives involving local stakeholders. The activities and dynamics created by the cross-border network will continue after the project ends.

For more information (in French and German only), see:

<http://www.habitreg.net/fr/home/>





EuRegio: speaking for municipalities in the Greater Region

Speaking on behalf of municipalities when dealing with national, regional and cross-border bodies: this is the prime mission of EuRegio SaarLorLux +, an association of municipalities and groups of municipalities in the Greater Region.

This is a political objective enabling municipalities and local areas to assert their role as stakeholders in the development of the Greater Region. EuRegio can come into play at different levels:

- ✿ at political level, through initiatives taken by elected representatives of EuRegio in following up different issues for the summit or for their respective regions;
- ✿ at operational level, through its involvement in the various working groups.

The second pillar of the EuRegio mission is to act as a platform for local communities across the Greater Region.

Fact-finding, disseminating information, exchanging, meeting and cooperating: these remain essential ingredients for pooling the interests of municipalities, making their views known and bringing their experiences to bear when dealing with regional and cross-border bodies.

Since June 2015, the association has taken up residence in the Maison de la Grande Région in Esch-sur-Alzette, now the headquarters of all the cross-border bodies of the Greater Region, which should result in **better coordination and synergy** at all levels and make the Greater Region more operational.

Generally speaking, the missions of EuRegio are to work alongside municipalities in seeking out the right contacts and, subsequently, to assist them throughout their projects. In practice, rolling out cross-border projects is the responsibility of the municipalities, and examples include:

- ✿ the community of municipalities in the Cattenom area, situated in the north of the Moselle Department and along the border with Luxembourg, is currently working on the creation, development and

promotion of five business zones, including an area of 40 hectares that has been planned alongside the A 31, a few kilometres from the border. The community of municipalities has requested the help of Euregio as it would like to work in partnership with Luxembourg. The association is therefore helping the community to find appropriate contacts and is accompanying it in its initial meetings;

- ✿ since 1997, EuRegio has been the contact point for the Luxembourg Ministry of National Education and its adult training services in charge of setting up Luxembourgish language courses for adults in Lorraine municipalities. Indeed, in a number of sectors, knowledge of Luxembourgish is an additional asset, even a necessity, for border workers. Each year, 200 people follow some twenty courses at different levels, organised in nine Lorraine municipalities;
- ✿ in 2013, twelve Luxembourg and Lorraine municipalities situated along the French-Luxembourg Alzette river came together at top administrative level (local and regional authorities and the states of French and Luxembourg) to set up a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) to plan a joint territorial project comprising a series of operational measures. EuRegio and this EGTC are in regular contact with each other in order to highlight these activities throughout the Greater Region.

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EuRegio

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06 Festivals and traditions

2 FEBRUARY:

☀ LIICHTMËSSDAG



Saint Blaise is the patron saint of many craft professions and is believed to protect not just livestock but also people – from sore throats, ulcers and the plague. It is to honour him that on the eve of his feast day children celebrate *Liichtmëssdag* (Candlemas). Armed with torches, they go from door to door singing «*Léiwer Härgottsblieschen, gëff ons Speck an Ierbessen, ee Pond, zwee Pond, dat anert Joer, da gi der gesond*» («Dear Saint Blaise, give us bacon and peas, one pound, two pounds, next year you'll be healthy once again ...»). Children used to ask for food, but nowadays it is usual to give them sweets or money.

FEBRUARY/MARCH:

☀ FUESEND

Candlemas also marks the beginning of *Fuesend* (carnival), which in principle continues until Ash Wednesday at the beginning of March. The high points of *Fuesend* are:

- ☀ *Fetten Donneschdeg* (Fat Thursday): on this day there is a tradition that women take control in a society that has tended to be male-dominated. Women are allowed to cut off men's ties, symbolising the loss of male authority.
- ☀ On *Fuessonndeg* (Carnival Sunday) and *Fuesméindeg* (Carnival Monday), town centres are taken over by people in costume, the *Fuesbôken*. Local associations organise numerous masked balls, pageants and parades for adults and children. The most famous

parades are those of Diekirch, Esch-sur-Alzette, Remich and Pétange.

- ☀ In Remich, in eastern Luxembourg, a symbolic fire lit on Ash Wednesday marks not just the end of carnival but also the end of the cold and dark time of the year. A straw figure, the *Stréimännchen*, is carried through the streets of the town and then tied to the railings of the bridge across the Moselle on the German border, where it is set alight with torches to expiate the sins of the revellers.

Throughout this whole period people can enjoy typical Luxembourg carnival delicacies such as *Verwurrelt Gedanken* (scrambled thoughts) or *Täertelcher* (beignets).

MARCH:

☀ BUERGSONNDEG



On *Buergsonndeg*, which is the first Sunday after carnival, *Buergen* (bonfires) are lit on hills just outside towns and villages throughout the Grand Duchy. The bonfires are huge – several metres high – with a large cross placed in their centre. In certain places it is customary for the honour of lighting the bonfire to go to the most recently wed couple. This ritual, which attracts thousands of people each year, takes place around the equinox and symbolises the awakening of spring and end of winter. The event traditionally begins in the afternoon with the building of the bonfire, followed by a torch procession and culminating in the lighting of the bonfire as night falls. During this cold time of the year, people like to drink mulled wine and eat grilled food and traditional

dishes such as *lerzebulli* (pea soup) and *Bouneschlupp* (green bean soup).

MARCH OR APRIL:

✿ BRETZELSONNDEG

On the fourth Sunday of Lent, the Luxembourgers celebrate *Bretzelsonndeg* (Pretzel Sunday). The *bretzel* is a Luxembourg confection made of Danish pastry covered with a sugar glaze and almonds, and shaped like a pair of embracing arms. On Pretzel Sunday, the boy presents his sweetheart with a pretzel. If the girl accepts the pretzel, then the boy can visit her on Easter Sunday, when she will give him eggs in return. If she spurns him, she will give him a basket instead. Hence the Luxembourg expression *de Kuerf kréien* («receive a basket»), meaning to be rejected. During leap years the format is reversed and the girl gives the pretzel.



Pretzel recipe

Ingredients: 550 g flour, 8 g fresh yeast, 12 g salt, 60 g sugar, 1 egg, 75 mL milk, 600 g butter, 4 tablespoons water, 30 g flaked almonds, apricot jam.

Preparation: Make the Danish pastry and leave to chill. Roll out the pastry into a square about 3 mm thick and cut into a dozen narrow strips. To form the pretzel, twist two strips and lay them next to each other. Plait the two strips together and bring the ends to meet in the middle. Arrange the pretzels on a baking sheet and leave for 30 minutes. Preheat the oven to 200°C, brush the pretzels with a mixture of egg yolk and lukewarm milk, then bake for 10-15 minutes, depending on the size of the pretzels. Take the pretzels out of the oven and place them on a rack to cool. When they are just warm, coat them generously with the apricot jam mixed with a little water. Sprinkle the flaked almonds on top.

APRIL:

✿ EASTER



Luxembourg has some of the same religious and culinary traditions as other countries around Easter, but it also has a few that are typically Luxembourgish, including the *Klibberen*, *Emaischen* and *Oktav*.

- ✿ There is a legend that the church bells fly to Rome after mass on Maundy Thursday to receive the Pope's Easter blessing. To call the faithful to religious services, children go around all the villages with their *Klibber* (noisemaker), a small wooden percussion instrument, singing the *Klibber* song: *Dik-dik-dak, dik-dik-dak, haut as Ouschterdag* («Dik-dik-dak, dik-dik-dak, today is Easter»). As a reward for doing the job of the church bells, the children traditionally receive painted eggs.
- ✿ On Easter Monday the *Emaischen* folk festival takes place in the old part of Luxembourg city and in Nospelt. Easter Monday has for a long time been the day on which the potters' guild held their festival. This is why the *Emaischen* is known above all for the *Péckvillercher*, a type of terracotta whistle found only in Luxembourg which is shaped like a bird and makes a cuckoo sound.
- ✿ Since the 17th century, the most important religious event in Luxembourg has been the annual pilgrimage to the statue of the Virgin Mary carved out of lime wood. In 1678 this Madonna was named the patron saint of Luxembourg and consoler of the afflicted. During the fortnight of the *Oktav*, from the third to the fifth Sunday after Easter, worshippers from throughout the country and the Greater Region converge on the capital of Luxembourg. The pilgrims process in prayer from the outskirts of the city to the cathedral of Our Lady, where services are celebrated several times a day. Right next to the cathedral, the *Oktavmäertchen* (Oktav market) takes place on the Place Guillaume, providing refreshment for the faithful after church or an opportunity to buy trinkets. The *Oktav* concludes with a solemn final procession

bearing the statue of the Virgin through the streets of the capital. Representatives of the Grand Duchy's royal family, government, parliament, courts and other public bodies join the faithful in this procession.

1 MAY:

☀ MEEKRÄNZ

In the olden days people used to strew holy herbs and palm fronds around their houses, stables and barns to protect against evil spirits, chalking giant crosses on doors and sprinkling rooms with holy water from which they then drank themselves. Nowadays the Luxembourgers head into the forest on 1 May to collect branches with fresh leaves and weave them into Meekränz (May wreaths). After being paraded around towns and villages, these are attached above front doors or on façades. This custom to usher in the summer is often associated with drinking an aromatised wine known as the *Maitrank*.

WHIT MONDAY:

☀ GEENZEFEST



Since 1948 the town of Wiltz, capital of the Luxembourg Ardennes, has hosted the *Geenzefest* (gorse Festival) on the Whit weekend. This festival celebrates the small yellow gorse blossoms which grows so abundantly on the local hills at this time of year. The high point of the festival is the gorse parade, which takes place on Whit Monday. A myriad of floats brightly decorated, together with national and international bands and folk groups, make their way through the streets. The final float in the parade carries the gorse Queen, accompanied by her six maids of honour. The event is completed by a huge programme of events: exhibitions, crowning of the gorse Queen, a flea market at the castle and in the main street, concerts, performances and the gorse Ball.

WHIT TUESDAY:

☀ SPRANGPRESSESIOUN

Featuring on the Unesco Intangible Cultural Heritage List since 16 November 2010, the Echternach *Sprangpressessioun*



(Hopping Procession) is part of a very old religious tradition dating back to the late 15th century. On Whit Tuesday several thousand pilgrims and tourists converge on the tomb of Saint Willibrord, which is in the crypt of the basilica in Echternach. Saint Willibrord was an Irish-Scottish monk and missionary who in the year 698 settled in Echternach, where he founded an abbey that over the centuries became an important local spiritual and cultural centre. The Hopping Procession literally consists in the participants hopping from one foot to the other as they advance through the streets of the religious quarter. Over three hours the dancers, forming rows of five or six people and linked by handkerchiefs, hop in time to the processional music, which is based on the folk song «Adam avait sept fils».

23 JUNE:

☀ NATIONALFÉIERDAG



Luxembourg has celebrated the birthday of its monarch since the 19th century. Under the reign of Grand-Duchess Charlotte (1919-1964), the national holiday was therefore on 23 January, but due to the climatically unfavourable time of the year, it was decided in 1961 to transfer it to 23 June. This day has been kept as a public holiday since then and is celebrated as a national holiday, the *Nationalfeierdag* (National Holiday). In Luxembourg city the festivities commence on 22 June with a solemn changing of the guard in front of the Grand Ducal palace. After a torch procession and firework display from the Thüngen fortress in the Trois Glades park, celebrations continue in public

spaces around the capital and throughout the country. On the morning of 23 June an official ceremony takes place at the Philharmonie concert hall in Luxembourg, followed by a 21-gun salute. The Grand Duke then inspects the troops at the traditional military parade on the Avenue de la Liberté. The festivities conclude in the afternoon with a *Te Deum* in the cathedral of Our Lady in Luxembourg city.

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER:

☀ SCHUEBERFOUER



Started in 1340 by John 1st of Luxembourg (John the Blind), King of Bohemia and Count of Luxembourg, the *Schueberfouer* is the biggest funfair in Luxembourg and the Greater Region. For three weeks at the end of August and the beginning of September, more than 200 attractions, dozens of restaurants and bars, sweet stands, lottery stands and shooting galleries await more than two million visitors on the Glacis square. On the opening day of the funfair, early on Sunday morning, a procession of musicians and sheep (*Hämmel*) pass through the streets of the city, the musicians dressed in the blue smocks of 19th-century peasants, playing the famous *Hämmelsmarsch* tune and inviting residents to join in the fun. The former marketplace is now transformed into an amusement park where visitors can enjoy themselves while savouring specialities like *Gromperekichelcher* (potato cakes) or *Fouerfësch*, whiting cooked in brewer's yeast accompanied by fries, a beer or a glass of dry Moselle wine.

OCTOBER:

☀ NËSSMOORT



On the second Sunday in October, in the little medieval town of Vianden in the north of the country, the *Veiner Nëssmoort* (Vianden Walnut Fair) has taken place since 1935. From the beginning of the 20th century this region has produced almost 20% of the Grand Duchy's walnuts. Since many walnut producers sell their wares at various market in the Oesling region or at the weekly market in Luxembourg city, it was decided to organise one single big market after the harvest. The Vianden Walnut Fair is now an established local, and indeed national, tradition. As well as walnuts, the



fair features a wide range of walnut-derived products, such as schnapps made from walnuts, which is known for its beneficial effects on the digestive system.

6 DECEMBER:

☀ KLEESCHEN



On 6 December every child in the Grand Duchy is eagerly awaiting *Kleeschen* (Saint Nicholas' Day) and his presents, while fearful of *Houséker* (Servant Rupert), who gives a switch to any child who has been naughty. At the end of November children are already putting their slippers by the bedroom door every night so that *Kleeschen* can leave them goodies, including the traditional *Boxemännercher* (brioche in the shape of a little man), before he comes on the night before 6 December to deliver toys and treats. This event is so important that the Minister for Education decided to make it a holiday for nursery and primary school children, and during the days running up to 6 December *Kleeschen* visits children in their classrooms.



07 Calendar of events

July

3 JULY

EU Commission visit

✳ LUXEMBOURG

7 JULY

CoR Bureau meeting

✳ BRUSSELS

8-9 JULY

CoR plenary session

✳ BRUSSELS

18-19 JULY

Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate

✳ LUXEMBOURG

September

2 SEPTEMBER

Extraordinary CoR Bureau meeting and debate on cross-border cooperation

✳ LUXEMBOURG

14-15 SEPTEMBER

EU Citizenship and Justice conference

✳ LUXEMBOURG

15-16 SEPTEMBER

25 Years of Interreg conference

✳ ESCH/BELVAL

21-24 SEPTEMBER

European Youth Conference

✳ LUXEMBOURG

24 SEPTEMBER

Luxembourg Sustainability Forum 2015

✳ LUXEMBOURG

October

1 OCTOBER 2015

Competitiveness Council

✳ LUXEMBOURG

5 OCTOBER

Eurogroup

✳ LUXEMBOURG

8-9 OCTOBER

European Sustainability Development Network conference

✳ LUXEMBOURG

12-15 OCTOBER

Bureau

Plenary session

OPEN DAYS 2015

- Territorial Visions and Scenarios for Europe in 2050
- The need for specific legal provisions in cross-border areas
- The potential of small and medium-sized towns in cross-border polycentric metropolitan regions

✳ BRUSSELS

20-21 OCTOBER

International conference on development aid post-2015

✳ LUXEMBOURG

November

16-17 NOVEMBER

EUROPEAN DATA FORUM

✳ LUXEMBOURG

December

2 DECEMBER

Bureau

✳ BRUSSELS

1-2 DECEMBER

Living City 2015 conference

✳ LUXEMBOURG

3-4 DECEMBER

Plenary session

Official reception given by the Luxembourg delegation

✳ BRUSSELS

3-4 DECEMBER

Conference on the social and solidarity economy

✳ LUXEMBOURG



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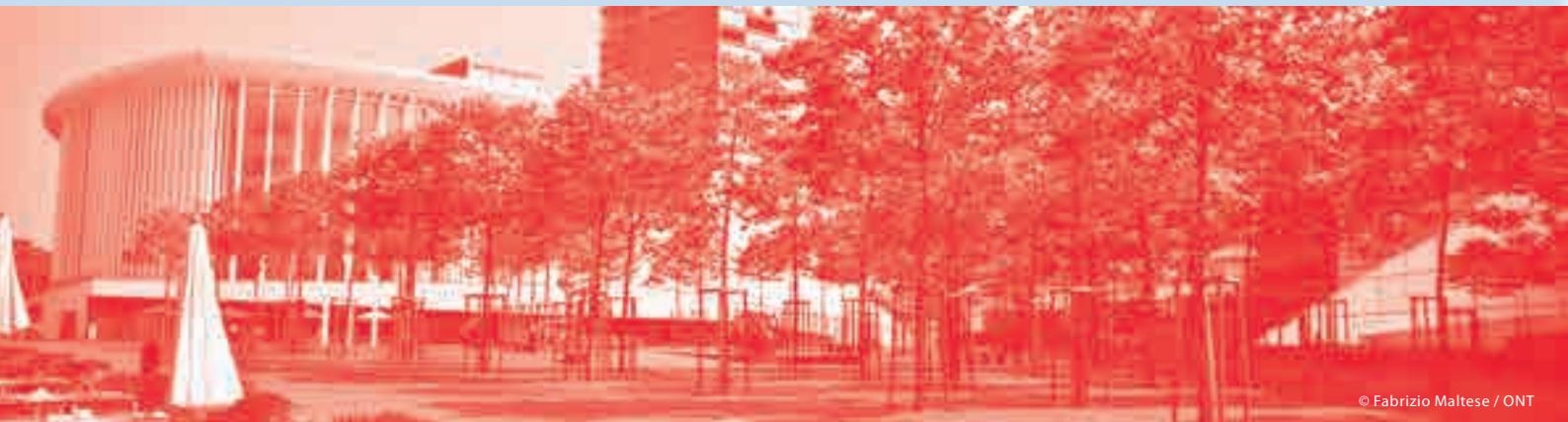
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EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions

Presidency of
the Council of the
European Union

GRAND DUCHY OF
luxembourg

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