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"PARTNERSHIP IN A EUROPE WITHOUT BORDERS"

Electronic Newsletter of AEBR — N° 15 — September 2009



*This Newsletter of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) has been coordinated since 2002 by **Dr. Viktor Frhr. von Malchus**, President of the AEBR Advisory Committee (der Beirat). It is more than one year since he passed away, and it is the time to retake this tool, his tool, to keep in touch with the border regions and their friends.*

Our main aim is to present most important news on Cross-Border Cooperation for European border and cross-border regions, the AEBR members and its friends. It has been traditionally edited in English, French and German, but the present issue appears at this point in English.

*AEBR docs mentioned in this Newsletter are available in two clicks at the **Online Forum of the AEBR**:*

<http://forum.aebr.net> user: **aebr**; pw: **aebr**

Table of Contents

	page
AEBR contributions to the Future Cohesion	2
Other territorial issues	5
Structured Dialogue	6
CB <i>suiveur</i> at the EP	7
Lambert van Nistelrooij, re-elected MEP	7
AEBR Executive Committee in Burg (Spree-Neiße-Bober), 5 th June 2009	7
Secretaries General meeting at the CoR	8
Constitution of Euro-Caucasus Euroregion	8
Partnership with the Russian Federation	9
Seminar "European Dimension of CBC"	10
1 st Int'l Youth Seminar in External Borders	10
<i>In memoriam</i> , Prèsident Adrien Zeller	11
The AEBR Task Forces: TF on CB Health	12
The AEBR Agenda	14
Special Guest: Mr Hans-Günther Clev, Director General of the MOT	15
AEBR contributions to EU dossiers	16
<i>Sail of Papenburg 2009</i>	16
General Assembly and Annual Conference 2009, Ghent (Scheldemond), 5-7 November	16

Headlines

- AEBR contribution to the Future Cohesion Policy: Future CBC**
- CBC outside the EU**
- Lambert van Nistelrooij, re-elected as MEP**
- General Assembly and Annual Conference 2009 in Ghent**

The Newsletter of the AEBR

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AEBR's contribution to the debate on the European Cohesion Policy: the Future of Cross-Border Cooperation

As early as in December 2007, following the debates and final declarations of the AEBR Annual Conferences 2006 in Pamplona (Navarra) and 2007 in Lappeenranta (South Karelia), the Association developed a Working Document on the ***Future of Cross-Border Cooperation after 2013*** (available for download at the AEBR *Online Forum*).

This document was the result of exchanges of views with European border and cross-border regions, as well as with European institutions: our permanent contact with *DG Regio*, following important European dossiers on territorial issues in general, and cross-border in particular; an increasing participation in the works of the *Committee of the Regions (CoR)*, through the biannual signature of a CoR-AEBR Action Plan (2008-2009 currently in force); the still small but very rich cooperation with the *European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)*, after the collaboration to approve an EESC's own opinion on Euroregions (and similar structures) in June 2007, with a focus on social and territorial cohesion.

This strong exchange of opinions, and the corresponding analyses by the AEBR Executive and Advisory Committees, let us keep deep conversations with the European Commission (the Commissioner and DG Regio) and the CoR about the need to maintain and even increase available resources for all European border regions. In fact, Cross-Border Cooperation is the most successful chapter of European Territorial Cooperation. Various contacts have been organized since then with **Commissioner Danuta Hübner** and **Director General Dirk Ahner**, **Secretary General Gerhard Stahl**, **President Luc van den Brande**, directors and officers, having the chance to take active part and present different sets of arguments in favour of border regions in decision-making processes at the highest level.



Jens Gabbe, Honorary Member of the AEBR; Lambert van Nistelrooij, MEP and President of the AEBR; Danuta Hübner, EU Commissioner for Regional Policy -2009; Martín Guillermo, AEBR Secretary General

On April 2008, the DG Regio began consultations through a list of questions addressed to produce a first draft of a **Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion**. The AEBR reacted in written to these questions (*Online Forum*). The Green Paper was officially presented by the Commission on October 2008 and different institutions adopted their own positions. The Association kept tight contacts and assisted the *rapporteurs* for the **Position Papers** of both the **Parliament** (MEP Lambert van Nistelrooij, President of the AEBR) and the **Committee of the Regions** (Mr. Jean-Yves Le Drian, President of the French Region of Brittany) (*Online Forum*).

Links to the Green Paper:

In English:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/consultation/terco/paper_terco_en.pdf

In German:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/consultation/terco/paper_terco_de.pdf

In French:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/consultation/terco/paper_terco_fr.pdf

In Spanish:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/consultation/terco/paper_terco_es.pdf



These exchanges with the institutions, plus all comments and remarks sent by AEBR's members and expressed in a great many meetings and conferences provoked by the Commission's Green Paper, further enriched our view. Thus the Secretariat General, in collaboration with the Advisory Committee, prepared a final **AEBR Position Paper** in February 2009 considering old and new challenges, as those created by globalisation, climate change, demographic change and energy supply (see *Online Forum*).



Kazimiers Branny, 2006

With these new challenges as *Leitmotiv*, innovation and competitiveness are the keywords within the new Cohesion Policy. New concepts add to "urban-rural partnership" or "polycentric development", like Dr. Fabrizio Barca's "place-based approach". This evolution shows how concepts apparently more "urban" extend in rural, peripheral or mountain areas as well. Therefore all types of border areas are aware of the complex set of challenges, added to their specific circumstances.

General policies are to be approved, but specific, concrete and reliable implementation is needed. Real joint initiatives across the borders are to be further implemented and extended, while not only Interreg, but other EU mechanisms should also be available for European border regions after 2013: risk capital funds for SMEs, reimbursable funding, and specific financial packages for certain regions.

On the other hand, there is a general consensus on the efforts needed to solve too strong bureaucratic procedures, being some of them already implemented.

At this point, **Commissioner Danuta Hübner**, who had promoted the participation of the regions and municipalities, and their Associations, Networks and Platforms, as well as promoting a strong partnership with the CoR to make steps forward, was strongly highlighting the European regions' challenges within the successive Reports on Cohesion, the Green Paper and documents like the "Regions 2020". Her strong input can be summarized at her **celebrated speech during the Informal Meeting of Ministers for Regional Policy** (Czech Presidency) in **Mariánské Lázně** on 23 April 2009, tackling the new challenges on board and announcing the independent report "An Agenda for a Reformed Cohesion Policy", prepared at her request by the specialist Dr. Fabrizio Barca, Director General at the Italian Ministry of Economy & Finance:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/future/pdf/report_barca_v0605.pdf

The **Barca Report** is an assessment of the effectiveness of Cohesion Policy to date and a series of proposals on how to reform it for the period after 2013, with the aim to offer a different approach to the discussion than the Commission's general one, mainly concentrated on economic growth.

Prof. Barca introduces the **place-based approach**, "a long-term strategy to overcome problems of potentials not used up to date, and for reducing sustainable social disadvantages in certain places through external intervention and multi-level governance. Place-based policies support the supply with integrated goods and services tailored to respective circumstances and institutional situation (place-based). Starting up interventions uses the local knowledge and actors. The territorial focus is more suitable than all other strategies which are bypassing the territorial relations and believe that the state knows everything better.



A territorial social agenda as part of the cohesion policy is required (social contract of the EU-citizens)."

Prof. Barca has introduced very interesting elements in the debate. There is an Executive Summary published by the Commission, but the AEBR has also prepared a **Summary from the point of view of Cross-Border Cooperation**, as well as a preliminary document **AEBR's Comments on the Barca Report**, submitted to the Executive Committee of the AEBR in Salamanca on 18th September 2009.

In the meantime, experts group are being called by the European Institutions in order to define concrete elements of this policy under review, taking into account other main European dossiers affecting our territories and population, with an eye on the evolution of the European Treaty. Our Association takes part in some of these groupings (DG Regio, CoR), and promote others, aiming to improve the relevance of European border areas in future programming periods.

In this framework, the CoR launched a wide consultation of European local and regional authorities on "**A new strategy for sustainable growth. The Lisbon Strategy after 2010**". The outcome of the consultation will be presented during the Open Days 2009 (5-8 October) and will feed CoR's political message to be addressed during the 2010 Spring European Council.

The AEBR answered to this questionnaire (see *Online Forum*) stressing:

- the inclusion of a territorial dimension in the Lisbon Strategy;
- the need of a comprehensive European strategy and not a simple policy-mix to guarantee balanced, harmonious and sustainable development in Europe, particularly at regional and local level;
- the fact that CBC always has an additional European value;

- the required adaptation of political governance mechanisms with better allocation of responsibilities and a coherent implementation of the bottom-up principle; and,
- the development of long-term horizontal strategies and programmes, especially cross-border.

Following the resignation of Commissioner Danuta Hübner due to her candidature for the European Parliament, Mr Pawel Samecki has been designated to replace her as the Commissioner for Regional Policy. After the Elections in June 2009, Mrs Hübner is back in Regional Policy, as Chairwoman of the EP Committee of Regional Development.

On 25 June 2009, the Commission published its **Sixth Progress Report on Economic and Social Cohesion**, addressed to the Parliament and the Council:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/interim6_en.htm

This Report focuses on creativity and innovation as main elements to overcome the current economic crisis, paying a special attention to the development of local talent. The AEBR has prepared a **Summary, concentrated on important aspects for Territorial Cooperation** (see *Online Forum*). This report highlights the debate raised by the Green Paper, and has a special chapter on Territorial Cooperation, reaching the same conclusions as the AEBR in many occasions.

On the other hand, as a result of several bilateral meetings, the AEBR has also submitted a series of proposals to DG Dirk Ahner (DG Regio) to improve Interreg procedures; and to the Committee of the Regions on the improvement of the EGTC legal instrument. Both sets of arguments have been very much welcome by our institutional partners.

Comments from readers are welcome in the Online Forum, per e-mail, or any other mean.



Other Territorial issues:

The Prague Summit of Regions and Cities and some particular hints

During the Czech Presidency of the European Council in the first half of 2009, the territorial aspects of EU policies have played a important role, but some other issues were leading main debates. On 5-6 March the CoR and the Czech Presidency called for a European Summit of Regions and Cities in Prague. The Summit gathered more than 600 local and regional representatives just before the Spring European Council. The main aim was to send a clear message to the Heads of State and Government on how territorial cohesion could help regional and local authorities to get rid of the challenging social and economical climate. Mr **Konstantinos Tatsis** and the Secretary General of the AEBR took part in this Summit and supported its **Conclusions** addressed to EU Member States. A comprehensive report including photos, speakers' profiles and the conclusions can be found at:

[http://www.cor.europa.eu/COR_cms/\(S\(3itrq555hwbr3s55dhesuk55\)\)/ui/ViewDocument.aspx?contentid=cd75dac6-919b-49f7-808e-e768bb4225aa](http://www.cor.europa.eu/COR_cms/(S(3itrq555hwbr3s55dhesuk55))/ui/ViewDocument.aspx?contentid=cd75dac6-919b-49f7-808e-e768bb4225aa)

During the Czech Presidency several activities dealt with the commemoration of **20/5 Years After** (20 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain and 5 years after the Accession of the New Member States).



Deutsch-Deutsches Museum Mödlareuth (Euregio Egrensis, <http://www.moedlareuth.de>)

An outcome of these activities, especially the Conference celebrated in Tabor (South Bohemia) in May, is the initiative "**EU Strategy for the Removal of the Consequences of the Iron Curtain**" promoted by South Bohemia amongst other partners, and widely supported.

Mr Jan Zahradník (Silva Nortica) introduced the initiative at the Executive Committee of the AEBR in Salamanca (18th September). The approved statement will be circulated amongst members, friends and involved institutions (*Online Forum*).

Particular Cross-Border Areas: Rural, mountain and maritime border regions

The AEBR members keep debates on the development perspectives for these especial regions, following up EU and national developments, as well as introducing new elements arguments and proposals. In coordination with active members in these fields, the AEBR has organized seminars and/or has promoted several statements and position papers in the last years.

These seminar and docs should be prepared, but electronic exchange can be very helpful to elaborate innovative proposals with the participation of AEBR members and friends. Here is a state-of-the-art of these debates in our Association:

Cross-border rural areas: a working paper has already been developed by **Landrat Hermann Steinmaßl** (*Euregio Salzburg-Berchtesgadener Land- Traunstein*) (*Online Forum*) to promote the debate about rural development and metropolitan areas. The European Parliament is working on a Resolution on "**Complementarities and Coordination of Cohesion Policy with Rural Development Measures**". A summary has been prepared by the AEBR in order to facilitate the discussion amongst AEBR members (*Online Forum*).

Cross-border mountain areas: Pyrenean and Alpine regions have raised this regularly. Now, Carpathians and other massifs increase the voice of these beautiful, low populated and threatened territories. A strong attention is to be paid to the networks of **Elected Representatives from Mountain Regions**, to find common issues and cooperate for the benefit of the population living in mountain border areas.



AEBR **Vice-President François Maïtia** (Aquitaine), **Mr Roger Barrau** (Midi-Pyrénées) and **Mr Klaus Luther** (South Tirol) have raised this issue several times in our Executive Committee, introducing new elements to debate. Increasing activities are organized in this framework, like the "European Biennial of Mountains", being the third one celebrated in Plombières-les-Bains (Vosges) on 17-18 September 2009. An AEBR Forum on this regard is also expected to be organized in 2010 in South Tirol.

Cross-border maritime areas:

maritime cooperation is becoming more relevant at European sphere due to the 70,000 km of European coastline and the 22 coastal or island EU Member States. Also, 40% of the population lives in maritime regions, generating 40% of our economy.



Nordic Council of Ministers, 2008

The cases of the Baltic and the Mediterranean cooperation are growing issues; and the way CBC is to be considered within the European maritime dossiers is not fully clarified. A success in the coordination between the different regional and local platforms in Europe has been the the **Regional and Local Euro-Mediterranean Assembly (ARLEM)**, promoted by the CoR. A wide agreement was achieved on the composition of the first Political Secretariat of the ARLEM, which shows the good health of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, but the necessary coordination with the Union for the Mediterranean, has motivated a delay its constitution (foreseen on 7th December 2009).

European Associations have agreed to propose relevant European politicians to be the ARLEM's core group. The new President of the Regional Government of Andalucía, **Mr José Antonio Griñán Martínez**, will represent the AEBR in this promising European initiative in the Mediterranean.

On 19-20 May, a major Stakeholders' Conference on Maritime Policy took place in Rome, being the AEBR represented by **Mr Francesco Attaguile** (Region of Sicily). The main issues raised were the EU's Integrated Maritime Policy, with a strong focus on sustainable development of maritime regions, and the respect for the sea.

Other hints: The Structured Dialogue

As one of the five large European regional organisations the AEBR has been involved in the Structured Dialogue at EU-level from the very beginning. The Structured Dialogue with the Commissioners is organised and carried out by the Committee of the Regions. Since its establishment the AEBR maintains a close partnership with the CoR, including our active participation in the Dialogues.



Several dialogues have already taken place between the Presidents of the Associations and the President of the Commission, **Mr. Manuel Barroso**, on general EU issues; and various sectorial dialogues between the Associations and the respective Commissioner on European Transport Networks, Cross-Border Health Care, the Lisbon-Strategy, or the EU Development Policy with Third Countries.



With Commissioner Wallström



Pekka Sauri, Dep. Major of Helsinki; Erwin Mohr, Major of Wolfurt; EU Comm. Wällstrom; Hilde Bruggeman (AEBR); Gerhard Stahl CoR Secretary General

On 26 May, the Structured Dialogue with the **Commission's Vice-President Margot Wallström**, dealt with the Working Programme of the Commission for 2010. The meeting was co-chaired by **Mr Luc Van den Brande**, CoR's President, and **Erwin Mohr**, CoR member and mayor of Wolfurt (Austria), and brought together representatives of local and regional authorities and their national or EU-level associations. Comm. Wallström presented and discussed the EU executive's plans for 2010, with a focus on the following priorities:

- Economic and Social Recovery
- Climate Change and Sustainable Europe
- Europe as a World Partner
- The Stockholm Programme – putting the citizen first



Mrs. Hilde Bruggeman, Representative of the Province of Eastern Flanders, represented the AEBR at this Dialogue on behalf of the Euregio Scheldemond.

A *suiveur* on CBC at the European Parliament



At the end of the last period at the European Parliament, MEP Tunne Kelam (Estonia) was nominated as "suiveur" on CBC, having the chance to make a first report last March.

Mr Kelam introduced the topic in the Parliament's agenda and this is supposed to be the first of a series of reports regarding CBC and border regions at the Parliament. His report can be downloaded in the *Online Forum*.

AEBR President Lambert van Nistelrooij re-elected member of the European Parliament

Lambert J.J. van Nistelrooij, President of the AEBR, was re-elected to the European Parliament in the last European Election 2009. He has joined for a second period the Committee on Regional Development at the European Chamber.



AEBR Executive Committee meeting 5 June 2009, Burg Euroregion Spree-Neiße-Bober

Nearly 40 representatives of the European Border and Cross-Border Regions met in Burg in order to discuss important subjects on the future of cross-border cooperation and the AEBR: the cooperation



with the EU institutions and the Council of Europe, the Future European Cohesion Policy, several sectorial issues and projects, and the reports of the Task Forces.



Landrat Dieter Friese welcomes AEBR members, with Mrs Ilona Petrick, Director of the Euregio Spree-Neiße-Bober, and the AEBR President and Secretary General

The preparation of the AEBR General Assembly and Annual Conference 2009, to be held in Ghent (Euregio Scheldemond) next 5-7 November 2009, as well as the AEBR Award *The Sail of Papenburg 2009*, were presented, and AEBR Positions on the Future Cohesion, Cross-Border Health, and the TEN-T were adopted in Burg. All of these documents are available for download on the AEBR's *Online Forum* as well.

The Secretaries General of European Territorial Associations meet at the CoR

AEBR Secretary General Martín Guillermo Ramírez participated in the meeting of the Secretaries General held on 9 June 2009 in Brussels. The meeting, besides general coordination issues between the CoR and the Associations, dealt with the current challenges of European territories (future Cohesion Policy, financial crisis, climate and demographic change, energy supply) and some important events: the **Open Days** (5-8 October in Brussels) and the **UN Climate Change Summit** in Copenhagen next 7-18 December 2009. Other topics raised were the CoR White Book on Multilevel Governance, already adopted, and the European Eastern Partnership.

The AEBR Secretary General explained on that occasion the main priorities of the Association, which are in line with those of the other Associations and the CoR, but stressing the particular conditions of European border and cross-border regions. Next meeting will take place in Brussels on 27th October 2009.

Foundation of the new Euroregion "Euro-Caucasus" between Armenia and Georgia

AEBR Secretary General Martín Guillermo Ramírez took part in the signing ceremony of the establishment agreement of the "Euro-Caucasus" Euroregion celebrations, which were held on 14 June in Vanadzor (Armenia) and on 15 June in Tbilisi (Georgia).



Nodar Sabiashvili, Governor of Bolnisi and President of the Georgian side of Euregio "Euro-Caucasus"; David Melua, Executive Director of NALAG (Georgian Municipalities Association); Mamuka Abuladze, President of NALAG; Natalya Lapauri, Executive Director of CAA (Armenian Municipalities Association); Samvel Darbinyan, Mayor of Vanadzor and President of the Armenian side of "Euro-Caucasus"; Dr. Inge Toschev, Senior Officer of the German Ministry of Economy and Technology; Emin Yeritsyan, President of CAA and Vice-President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (European Council, Strasbourg)

This new Euroregion has been constituted in a very crucial moment for the Caucasus. It has been very much supported by the *Euregio Bayerisches Wald-Böhmerwal-Unterer Inn*, the German Federal Government and some experienced NGOs, Like OST-Euro. Euro-Caucas gathers municipalities of the Armenian regions Lori, Tavush and Shirak as well as the Georgian municipalities Bolnisi, Ninosminda, Marneuli and Dmanisi.



AEBR Secretary General meets high-ranking representatives of the Russian Federal Government

On 16 June 2009, a working meeting took place with the Deputy Chief Ekaterina A. Raimkhen at the Federal Agency for Development of the State Border Facilities of the Russian Federation. The authority, dealing almost exclusively with checking control at the many borders of the Federation, showed great interest to meet EU external border authorities, as well as on the activities of the AEBR at the Russian border regions and euroregions.

The establishment of this Euroregion will be of political, economical and cultural great importance for this area, creating new opportunities for cross-border cooperation.

The Armenian side of the Euregio Caucasus signed an agreement with the AEBR in order to organise common activities, promote the exchange of good practises and information, and begin the procedures for the Euregio to become AEBR full member in the near future.



Mrs Natalya Lapauri, Executive Director of the Armenian side of the brand-new Caucasian Euregio, sign an agreement with AEBR Secretary General minutes after the formal constitution, in presence of Mr Emin Yeritsyan, President of the Armenian Communities Association

This unprecedented Caucasian structure has begun with strong impetus elaborating several cooperation proposals within their territory, in the Black Sea and with the EU.

The afternoon meeting took place at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. On that occasion, Mr. Guillermo discussed with Mr. Vladimir Lebedenko, Deputy Director of the Department for Liaisons with the Constituent Entities of the Federation, the Parliament and Public Organisations, about current territorial issues in Russia and the EU. Mr Lebedenko showed the strong support of the Federal Government to the development of current and new Euroregions in the borders of the Russian Federation. And this is also the case of the proposal of the Euroregion Yaroslavna to hold the AEBR General Assembly and Annual Conference in Kursk in 2011. This fluent relationship is extremely useful for the development of CBC far beyond the EU.

Other relevant contacts were made with the Department of State Governance, Regional Development, and Local Self-Governance, depending from the Prime Minister Office.



Seminar on European Dimension of Cross-Border Cooperation, Euroinstitut, Strasbourg

AEBR Secretary General was invited to give a speech on AEBR's activities with regard to cross-border lobbying at European level. Organized by the Kehl Euro-Institute, it was a perfect chance to exchange views with academicians, institutions and civil society. There is a strong input given by the Euro-Institute to the development of knowledge related to territorial cooperation, as well as promoting similar research institutions in other parts of Europe. Their development opens new possibilities to increase knowledge (and then innovation) in CBC.

26 June, Regional Parliament of Extremadura

The Secretary General was also invited to introduce the AEBR and main working priorities before the Committee on European Affairs of the Regional Parliament of Extremadura late June.

1st International Working Seminar for Border Youth

With the aim to show the participants a very interesting field within the entire process of European Integration, with a wide continental scope, to share views about the perspectives of cross-border cooperation at the external borders of the EU and far beyond, and to promote the exchange of ideas between young students from the EU external borders, the Italian Autonomous Region of Friuli-Venezia-Giulia hosted from 13 to 18 July the first AEBR Youth Seminar especially addressed to youngsters interested in international relations coming from the EU External Borders either inside or outside the EU. It was co-organized by the host Italian region through the Regional Government and ERDISU (the Regional Institution for the Opportunities and Right to University Studies), together with the AEBR Task Force of External Borders.

10 Estonian, Greek, Italian, Hungarian, Russian and Ukrainian participants were selected amongst the various applications and followed a programme full with activities. These were hosted by the Universities of Udine and Trieste, and the Municipalities of Gorizia, Udine, Trieste, Tarvisio, Lignano Sabbiadoro, Klagenfurt (Austria) and Kranjska Gora (Slovenia).



The Task Force organized a workshop on Cross-Border Cooperation with the participation of Mr Urpo Moisio (South Karelia Region, FI), Chairman of the Task force, Ms Laura Comelli (Friuli-Venezia-Giulia), Mr Doede Sijtsma (Province of Gelderland, NL), Mr Sarunas Radvilavicius (Nordic Council of Ministers), Ms Ekaterina Shibalova (City of St. Petersburg) and Mr Martín Guillermo (AEBR).

The Task Force met in Udine on 18th July, with the main objective of launching the preparation for the 2nd AEBR Youth Seminar on External Borders in the summer on 2010 also in Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, the planning of new activities and the coordination of several initiatives in the three sub-regions.

This activity has been quite well evaluated both by organizers and participants. It has received some proposals of improvement for future editions and aims to be a permanent activity for the training of young students living at the EU external border areas.



In Memoriam Président Adrien Zeller



With Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin, on 18th November 2005, inauguration of the new *Maison de la Région* in Strasbourg (Badias – Région Alsace)



At Mulhouse Station, inauguration of the Eastern European TGV, 10th June 2007 (Badias – Région Alsace)

It is with deep regret that we knew of the death of Adrien ZELLER, President of the Région Alsace, on 22nd of August at the age of 69 years. Mr ZELLER also served as a French Member of the European Parliament from 1974 to 1976 and from 1989 to 1992. There, Mr ZELLER was Member of the committee on Social Affairs, Employment and the Working Environment. Mr Adrien ZELLER was also a Member of the Delegation for relations with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

In the French Wikipedia article you can find more information about President Zeller:
http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adrien_Zeller

Here you will find information on the homage made last 26th August in Saverne, as well as some more documents:
http://www.region-alsace.eu/dn_actualites/2009-08-27-hommage-az-stoessel.html



So long, President Zeller!



The AEBR Task Forces

In this issue of the AEBR Newsletter "Partnership in a Europe without borders" we will begin a series of articles introducing the AEBR Task Forces. Currently the following are operational: Cross-Border Health, External Borders, Strategy and Finances, and Languages and Borders. This series will begin with an article devoted to the Task Force on Cross Border Health.

I. The Task Force on Cross Border Health

This Task Force was established in September 2007 in Lappeenranta (South Karelia) with the main aim promote Cross-Border Cooperation on Health Care in Europe, through launching a great Alliance amongst interested parties. AEBR members are welcome to register in order to be included in the mailing list of the Task Force. It meets online and on a personal basis several times per year. The last meeting took place in Linz on 21st July 2009. The basis for that meeting was the AEBR Position Paper approved by the Executive Committee in Burg (Euregio Spree-Neiße-Bober) on 5th June 2009.

This AEBR Position Paper can be downloaded at the *Online Forum*, and it contains the position of the Association towards the proposed **Directive on CB Health and Patients' Rights**, some more actions to be taken by the AEBR to support the Directive, and especially the development of the pilot role of border regions. Some projects are in different stages of development: EUREGIO II almost finishing its first year of implementation, and many possibilities opened by the "Draft Outline Strategy: Health in CB Regions from the Patients' Point of View", developed in close cooperation with the patients' organisations EPECS (European Patients Empowerment for Customized Solutions).

The Task Force is preparing a new issue of their own Newsletter, in which it will be included the first announcement for the **III Basel Conference on CB Health**, co-organized by the Regio Basiliensis and the AEBR, with the Canton of Basel and the Land Baden-Württemberg.

Meetings with Commissioner Androula Vassiliou



On 9th December 2008, the Structured Dialogue with Commissioner of Health, Mrs. Androula Vassiliou, took place in the premises of the CoR in Brussels. There it was possible to ask foreseen questions as well as establishing a real dialogue with her during two hours approximately. **Mr. Konstantinos Tatsis**, President of the Prefectural Authority of Drama-Kavala-Xanthi (Greece) and member of the AEBR Executive Committee, as well as active member of the CoR, posed AEBR questions and insisted on some interesting topics for European border regions.

She showed a great interest on keeping exchanges of views with the AEBR. Last 28th January, through Mr. Tatsis' intervention, we were called to keep a meeting at her offices. There we had the chance to discuss with her about our views on the proposed Directive on Cross Border Health Care and Patients' Rights, the possibilities to use AEBR Network to follow up the implementation of the Directive and the AEBR Project Proposal, to be developed in cooperation with the Patients' Association EPECS. The Commissioner has appointed some members of her Cabinet to be in contact with the AEBR in order to discuss further cooperation.



Conference on Cross-Border Health Services on 22 May 2009 in Palma

The Conference was organised at the invitation of the President of the Government of the Balearic Islands, **Francesc Antich I Oliver**, and **Ms. Mercedes Bresso**, President of the PES Group in the Committee of the Regions and President of the Piedmont Region.

Health, and consequently healthcare, are key concerns of citizens in all Member States and in a European Union without borders. The Group of the PES at the CoR discussed with the Commission and independent experts about how health and healthcare can be organised and improved for all, especially in certain European regions. There was a permanent reference to the current debate about the Commission's proposal for cross-border health provision, and the development so far of EU action in this area. All of this showing how politically sensitive this issue is. In particular, the most sensitive questions are: the pertinence of a partial or full integration of healthcare provision at European level and the appropriate legal basis that would justify it; the ways to address existing disparities and guarantee social cohesion; as well as the political repercussions of a rejection by the European Council of the Commission's Draft Directive.

The seminar was opened by PES Group President **Mercedes Bresso**, and key

speakers include: **Marina Geli Fábrega**, Minister of Health of the Catalan Government, **Vicenç Thomàs Mulet**, Minister for Health and Consumer Protection of the Autonomous Community of the Balearic Islands, MEP **Bernard Soulage**, Vice-President of the Rhône-Alpes Region, **Guillermo Fernández Vara**, President of the Autonomous Community of Extremadura, and **Piero Marrazzo**, President of the Lazio Region.



Mrs. Marina Geli, Regional Health Minister for Health of Catalonia; Mr Francesc Antich, President of the Balearic Islands; Mrs Mercedes Bresso, President of Piemonte and CoR PES Group; Mr Guillermo Fernández Vara, President of Extremadura; and Mr Karl-Heinz Klär, Secretary of State for European Affairs (Rheinland-Palatinate) and First Vice-President of the CoR PES Group

AEBR Secretary General took part in the 2nd session "Initiatives and solutions on the spot", where introduced AEBR's point of view, particularly on the possibilities opened by the Commission's Draft Directive.

In the next issue:

- The AEBR General Assembly and Annual Conference 2009 in Ghent
- Multi-Level Governance: a new paradigm to govern Europe
- The Task Force on External Borders: The European Neighbourhood Policy, the Eastern European Partnership and the Mediterranean Cooperation
- The III Basel Conference on European Cooperation in the Health Sector, 10th December 2009
- AEBR Project Partnerships
- The New Website of the AEBR: new platform for partnership and exchange of experiences



Agenda of important AEBR events

2009:

- 17 September. Salamanca (Castilla y León), Meeting of Spanish AEBR member regions.
- 18 September. AEBR Executive Committee meeting, Salamanca.
- 12 October. Maastricht, Meeting AEBR Task Force on CB Health and the Patients' Association EPECS
- 5 - 7 November 2009: AEBR Executive Committee meeting, General Assembly and Annual Conference, Gent, Euregio Scheldemond, Belgium
- 27 November. Meeting of the Advisory Committee
- 10 December. III Basel Conference on CB Health in Lörrach

2010:

- January. AEBR Task Force CB Health (place to be determined)
- 4-5 February. AEBR Forum on CB Transport Networks, Aragón (Spain)
- February. Haparanda-Oulu, AEBR Forum and Executive Committee
- April. AEBR Task Force on Languages and Borders (Heerlen)
- May. European Conference on the Future of the Lisbon Strategy, Budapest
- May. EU External Borders and the Mediterranean, Spanish Presidency, Madrid
- May-June, Executive Committee, Alentejo
- July. II AEBR Summer School for Youngsters at the EU External Borders, Friuli-Venezia-Giulia
- July: AEBR Task Force on External Borders, Friuli-Venezia-Giulia
- September: AEBR Task Force on Cross-Border Health (place to be determined)
- 18th September, Executive Committee, Udine
- End of September. VI Conference on CBC in the Russian Federation, the EU and Norway. St. Petersburg, Tallin, Helsinki
- Beginning of October: International Conference on CB Languages (Brussels ?)
- Mid-October: AEBR General Assembly and Annual Conference. Dundalk (Ireland) – Newry (Northern Ireland)
- November. AEBR Forum on CBC in Mountain areas, Bolzano (South Tirol)
- November. AEBR Forum on Research, Innovation and Development. Vigo (Galicia)
- November. AEBR Task Force on Health. Vigo
- December. AEBR Forum on CBC in Central Europe. Prague - Bratislava

Other events to take note of:

- 21 September. Vila Velha de Rodão. Constitution of EUROACE (Euroregion Alentejo-Centro-Extremadura)
- 22 September 2009. College of Europe-CoR, Brugge, Conference on Multi-Level Governance
- 28-29 September. St. Petersburg, V Conference on CBC in the Russian Federation, the EU and Norway
- 20 September. Budapest, Europrosperitas 2010 Foundation, Conference "Enhancing Cross-Border Creativity and Innovation in Europe"
- 1-2 October. Gothenburg, General Assembly of the CPMR
- 5-6 October. Lyon, Seminar of the European Platform of Local/Regional Authorities for Development (LRADC) on the "Added Value of Decentralised Cooperation"
- 5-8 October. Brussels, Open Days
- 13-15 October. Strasbourg, 17th Plenary Session of the Congress of European Local and Regional Powers
- 15-16 October. Odessa, Conference on "CBC and Euroregional Development"
- 19-20 October. St. Petersburg, VIII Annual Forum: Strategic Planning in the Regions and Cities of Russia
- 21-22 October. Naples, European TEN-T Days
- 22-24 October. Stockholm, European Development Days
- 27 October. Brussels, CoR-Associations Secretaries General meeting
- 12-13 November. Kiev, EURISY Conference "Ukraine-EU Cooperation in Space Sector"
- 26-28 November. Lodz, European Public Health Association Annual Conference
- 28-29 January 2010: 6th Seminar Kehl Institute, Basel
- 11-12 March 2010. Bucarest Seminar Seminar of the European Platform of LRADC
- May 2010. Sevilla, Mini-Conference Platform LRADC



Guest of this issue:

Mr Hans-Günther Clev Director General of the *Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière*



Cooperation is not primarily a question of cooperation structures, but of humans pursuing a common goal, a common project, while also showing a sound mass of confidence in one another. This applies to actors in the border regions as well as to those leading cooperation networks.

Therefore, while assuming the function of Director General of *Mission Opérationnelle Transfontalière* (MOT) and corresponding functions in the Euromot network, it has been one of my utmost concerns to strengthen the cooperation between our organisations and to use the clear complementarities to the benefit of our members and the joint objectives apart from the strategic alliance, which was concluded at the end of the year 2007.

Even though the involved parties have different focal points as regards activities and specialisation, they are in the end committed to the same matter: Facilitating, promoting and supporting cooperation at European borders, as this demonstrates the state of the European process of integration as well as how the European activities and policies are reaching the citizens.

The fact that some members of our organisations are represented in both networks also underlines this complementarity. What would therefore be more obvious than increasing the cooperation so that the members of both organisations could profit from the potentials of both networks?

With regard to the dialog with states as well as with European institutions, the following applies: one big flame is rather noticed than many small ones. There is a list of advantages, to which many examples could be added.

What are the expectations that cross-border cooperation is facing? The tenor is loud and clear: concrete and citizen-friendly actions! Here it concerns the extension of a tramline across the border, and there the construction of a cross-border hospital, or the joint use of infrastructures.

The growing concreteness and complexity of such projects call for profound knowledge of the system that both partners are using as well as knowledge about cases in Europe, where similar projects have already been given some thoughts to. On the other hand, support is needed with regard to calls, financial management etc., which cannot be rendered without specialised expertise. And, finally, problems come up that seem to be insolvable under the prevailing circumstances, so that a intervention is needed with the relevant state, the EU Commission, the European Parliament, or other European institutions. The latter cooperation is also significant in order to give a strong voice to the needs of border regions in the debates of future EU policy and programmes, needs that result from the project practice as well as from the necessary positioning of these European regions in the global competitive environment.

These as well as other causes where reason enough for advancing the cooperation between AEBR and MOT, even though there are still some questions; questions, which we can solve promptly with consent, because there is just as little reasonable alternative to faithful cooperation as to the European Integration process. After all, it could not be imparted to anybody that structures promoting cooperation could not cooperate with one another!

The talks that have taken place between the leaders of both structures up to now raise hope that not only a high degree of consent could be reached, but also substantial steps forward be taken.

Paris, September 2009



AEBR General Assembly and Annual Conference 2009 In Ghent (Euregio Scheldemond) on 5-7 November 2009

The AEBR General Assembly and Annual Conference 2009, which will be held in Ghent/Belgium from 5 – 7 November 2009 will deal with **"Cross-Border Cooperation after 2013: Regional answers to current European challenges"**. The Euregio Scheldemond will be the host of this year's conference. High-ranking representatives from European institutions and from all European regions will discuss this issue with a special focus on the upcoming changes in 2011 and the importance of cross-border cooperation after 2013.

Please look at the programme and register on www.aebr.eu, or contact with the AEBR office

Recent AEBR contributions to important EU dossiers:

- Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion
- The Barca Report
- Improvement of Interreg procedures
- Improvement of the EGTC Regulation
- CoR White Paper on Multilevel Governance
- Draft Directive on Cross-Border Health and Patients' Rights
- Green Paper on Trans-European Transport Network Policy (TEN-T)
- Eastern European Partnership



See AEBR online Forum



AEBR Cross-Border Award "Sail of Papenburg" 2009 Call was open until 30th September

The AEBR Award "Sail of Papenburg", endowed by the Ems Dollart Region in 2002, will be bestowed also in the year 2009. The motto for this year's award is **"Cross Border Cooperation after 2013. Regional answers on current European challenges"**.

Awarded shall be one or more outstanding activities in a **border or cross-border region**. This year's motto is very much related to the main subject of the AEBR Annual Conference that takes place on 5/6 November 2009 in Gent (BE), where the winner of the AEBR Cross Border Award "Sail of Papenburg 2009" will be presented and awarded the prize.

The **application form** and the **criteria for bestowing the award** were informed in due time to AEBR members and friends, and 8 high quality applications arrived on time. Now it is Jury's task to decide who will win the Sail of Papenburg.