Dear Members and Friends of AEBR,

A challenging 2014 is coming to its end. We would like to thank you on this occasion for the close cooperation and all the exchanges that took place to improve the conditions for cross-border cooperation in Europe, and its full exploitation at all levels.

A new Commission has begun to work under the leadership of Jean-Claude Juncker, and a new period of Structural Funds is on its way towards 2020 with a set of ambitious goals in order to guarantee the prosperity of the EU and its neighbouring countries.

In 2015 the new CBC Operational Programmes should start their implementation under the main objectives of “Growth and Employment”. High rates of youth unemployment must be reverted in many EU countries, while a new paradigm has to be developed in our continent in order to improve the competitiveness of European enterprises in the global economy. Public services should be guaranteed, while several conflicts close to the EU external borders and legions of migrants trying to arrive to the EU will draw the attention of a European public opinion which is showing a feeling of exhaustion with the European project, with the risk of populist solutions which may undermine a long-lasting integration process. Citizens living in European border regions face their own local challenges, their European impact and the need to adapt to a mutating global environment.

On the other hand, several integration processes are using European expertise in CBC to promote their development from the bottom in other continents, which may turn this cooperation global, drawing the attention of several international institutions.

In this framework, our Association faces a major challenge to keep its operation in a context of lack of resources and a growing demand of participation in an increasing number of fields. We hope to count on your participation and collaboration in order to increase the opportunities for our main target: the citizens living in border areas.

Wishing you a successful and healthy New Year 2015!

Martin Guillermo Ramírez, Secretary General of AEBR

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XXXII Plenary Session of the Working Community of the Pyrenees, 5-6 November 2014
The Working Community of the Pyrenees held its XXXII Plenary Session on 5 and 6 November 2014 in Andorra. Main topic of this session was “Frontera: Territorio de Oportunidades” (*Border: Territory for Opportunities*).
AEBR Secretary General Martin Guillermo Ramírez was invited to take the floor in the plenary session. He thanked for having been invited and explained the long way from initial CBC actions until now, very close to commemorate 25 years of Interreg. It has not been easy, particularly when decentralised CBC sometimes clash with the traditional concept of sovereignty and obsolete national views about the border. On the other hand, even in a United Europe still exist many obstacles for mobility across borders: small transport links, taxation, social security issues, recognition of diplomas, etc. In border areas, a Common Market is growing, but a Single Market is far from having been achieved. CB regions are laboratories of European integration, and their cooperation provide a solid base for the construction of the European House.
The full article is available online in:

Mediterranean Cooperation Days, 10 - 12 November 2014 in Rome: AEBR Secretary General Martin Guillermo Ramírez moderated the first discussion group “Towards a Transformation Agenda of Universal Values”.
Jointly organized by the Lazio Region, the CPMR Inter-Mediterranean Commission and PLATFORMA, with key collaboration and contribution of the EU Med programme projects COASTGAP and COM&CAP MarInA-Med, the *Mediterranean Cooperation Days* were held from 10 to 12 November 2014 in Rome.
AEBR Secretary General Martin Guillermo Ramírez moderated the first discussion group “Towards a Transformation Agenda of Universal Values” at 10h15 on Monday, 10 November. Guest speakers in this session were Grammenos Mastrojeni, Coordinator for Environmental Issues, Academic Cooperation, and Territorial Cooperation, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Davor Stier, Member of the European Parliament, Rapporteur Post-2015 agenda, and Carlo Rossi, Regio Lazio, Head of the area in charge of decentralised cooperation.
The discussion concentrated on three main points:
1. The key political vectors for Sustainable Development for the Med area (economic, social and environmental dimensions) in the horizon of 2030 from the perspective of the EU, the regional governments and the local governments.
2. The roles LRAs are having in enhancing these political vectors.
3. Key obstacles LRAs are facing in these roles and how the EU can help remove these obstacles and empower and facilitate such roles.
The full article about this event is available online:
EVENTS OF AEBR / WITH AEBR INVOLVEMENT

21 November 2014, Hondarribia (Basque Country): seminar “Significance of Cross-Border Cooperation in the European Integration Process: Current Situation and Perspectives for the Future” (original title: Significado de la cooperación transfronteriza en el proceso de integración europeo: situación actual y perspectivas de futuro), with participation of AEBR SG Martín Guillermo Ramírez, and Jens Gabbe, Chair of the AEBR Advisory Council. AEBR Secretary General Martín Guillermo Ramírez took part in the first round table dealing with the policy of cross-border cooperation (CBC) in the EU, which was moderated by Izaskun Bilbao, Member of the European Parliament and former President of the Basque Parliament. Mr. Guillermo spoke on that occasion about the vision of cross-border cooperation and the Cohesion Policy of the European Commission, emphasising challenges and opportunities in this field within the European integration process, and the need of strengthening decentralization and subsidiarity, focusing bottom-up approaches when dealing with cross-border cooperation. Jens Gabbe, chair of the AEBR Advisory Council, had the opportunity to present the cross-border cooperation in the EUREGIO at the German-Dutch border. He informed about the history, experiences and key elements of good cross-border cooperation.

The full article about this event is available online:

Rome, 4-5 December 2014: ESPON Seminar "Territories Acting for Economic Growth: Using territorial evidence to meet challenges towards 2020"

On invitation of the ESPON 2013 Programme, Jens Gabbe, Chair of the AEBR Advisory Committee, took actively part on behalf of AEBR in the ESPON seminar “Territories Acting for Economic Growth: Using territorial evidence to meet challenges towards 2020", which was held on 4 and 5 December 2014 in Rome. Mr. Gabbe presented the ESPON Ulysses Project by highlighting conclusions and recommendations, e.g. on how targeted research projects could be managed in a better way and, on the other hand, how border and cross-border regions could put decentralised development strategies into practice. The benefit of the project for all involved partners was evident: almost all regional specific assessments and data fact sheets were taken into account in the development of the new INTERREG A programmes or new projects. Four stakeholders even elaborated their own development strategies, based on the recommendations of the Handbook on decentralised development strategies, which is also a result of the ULYSSES project.

The full article with more information, also about ULYSSES, is online available:
9 December 2014, Brussels: Event “CoR platforms and networks facing the future”
AEBR Secretary General Martín Guillermo Ramírez actively contributed to the workshop “CoR platforms and networks facing the future”. He focused on the developments of the EGTC platform and how this platform may contribute to the CoR consultative works highlighting cross-border issues. He reminded that Europe should not only grow upstairs, but also downstairs through subsidiarity in order to get closer to citizens, and demanded a stronger coordination of institutions, platforms, networks and associations in order to be more efficient and visible, getting a stronger impact.
A more detailed report about this CoR event is available online:

Seminar on "Free movement of Labour in Cross-Border Regions - New Possibilities and Risks" held on 16 December 2014 in Hamar/Norway + Launch of ComUnYouth website
The seminar on "Free movement of Labour in Cross-Border Regions - New Possibilities and Risks", held on 16 November 2014 in Hamar/Norway within the framework of the project ComUnYouth (Combating Unemployment among Youth), addressed questions such as: What are the main obstacles for the free movement of labour? Is the free movement a risk or possibility? How can cross border regions work together in order to lift the existing obstacles for mutual benefit? Is the free movement across the border a possibility of keeping the youth in the region? AEBR Secretary General Martín Guillermo Ramírez took actively part in the deliberations:

Brussels, 16 December 2014: CoR event “The future of Cohesion Policy beyond 2020 – First seminar: Key questions and challenges”
Jens Gabbe, Chair of the AEBR Advisory Committee, took part in the discussions on the future of cohesion policy:

AEBR GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2014

Presentations, Final Declaration, Resolution on German Toll Plans, AEBR Award 2014 Winner Project - All info now available for download via one link:
WINNER OF THE “SAIL OF PAPENBURG 2014”

Topic of the AEBR Award 2014 was “Innovation and Research - Cross-Border Regional Development through Public-Private Partnership”. Johannes Hahn, EU Commissioner for Regional Policy, was patron of the Sail of Papenburg 2014. In total, 9 applications were submitted from different European border and cross-border regions. The international jury finally decided to award the „SME Crossborder Cluster Stimulation Programme (GCS)” of Euregio Meuse-Rhine, because this project shows outstanding initiatives for cross-border development through public-private partnerships, which can be an example for other cross-border regions in Europe. The award was handed over on the occasion of the AEBR Annual Conference on 12 September 2014 in Rzeszów/Poland.

Some key facts about „SME Crossborder Cluster Stimulation Programme (GCS)“:

→ The GCS cross-border cluster stimulation programme is the extension of the Top-Technology Cluster initiative (TTC). TTC is a joint cross border initiative to support technology-oriented companies, especially SMEs, to find the right partners and to establish sustainable business cooperation across the borders.
→ GCS finances cross-border open innovation projects between technology-oriented small and medium-sized enterprises in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine area since 2011.
→ Innovation projects are understood as cooperative projects of SMEs (as defined in the EU recommendation 2003/361) in the field of industrial research and experimental development.
→ The Business Development Support track aims at supporting the development of concrete demand driven innovation projects that can lead to added value through organising in-depth interviews, structured generation of ideas and pooling of business innovation experts and specialists.
→ The fund is aimed at SMEs in the fields of health/life sciences, high-tech systems as well as advanced materials/chemistry. Knowledge institutions and large companies can also participate.
→ In the past period GCS has supported 22 projects with €4.7 million. Total project costs were €13.2 million. 87 parties participated in these projects.

### FUTURE EVENTS OF AEBR & AEBR MEMBERS

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**Editor of the AEBR Newsflash:**

Martín Guillermo-Ramirez, AEBR Secretary General

Coordination:

Cordula Pandary, AEBR Office Coordinator

AEBR – AGEG – ARFE

Enscheder Str. 362

D-48599 Gronau (Germany)

Tel.: +49 (0)2562 70219

Fax: +49 (0)2562 70259

info@aebr.eu

www.aebr.eu

[http://twitter.com/#!/SocialNetAEBR](http://twitter.com/#!/SocialNetAEBR)

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**If you wish to announce events or publish news from your region in the AEBR website and/or newsletter, please get in touch with the AEBR Head Office by contacting c.pandary@aebr.eu.**

Thank you!

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**The “Association of European Border Regions” (AEBR) is the oldest independent association of regions in Europe, founded in 1971, and the only one dealing with Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC). AEBR has more than forty years of extensive theoretical and practical experience in all aspects related to CBC, but also in the fields of inter-regional and transnational cooperation.**

With its 100 members (European border and cross-border regions), the AEBR is a forum for cross-border cooperation and makes the voice of the border and cross-border regions heard at European level.

Euroregions, border and cross-border regions or organisations interested in receiving information about the conditions of an AEBR membership are invited to contact the AEBR Head Office.

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