ANNUAL REPORT
2010
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ANNUAL REPORT 2010

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1 INTRODUCTION

While in border and cross-border regions the implementation of the funding programmes 2007-2013 ran at full speed in the year 2010, the activities of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) focused already on the future of the European regional and structural policy. As early as in 2008 the AEBR elaborated first position papers on the subject, being intensively discussed with representatives of the European Commission and the European Parliament on different occasions. The proposals of the AEBR referring to the funding period after 2013 met with high interest at European level, in particular as they are based on experiences of many years and valuable expertise of the AEBR and its members.

Following the election of the new European Parliament in summer 2009 and the nomination of the new Commission in the beginning of 2010 the AEBR got immediately in contact with the new chairwoman of the Committee on Regional Development in the European Parliament, Mrs Danuta Hübner and the new Commissioner for Regional Policy, Mr Johannes Hahn with the aim to maintain the constructive relations with the European institutions and to further extend the cooperation at the European level. In the meantime, several meetings with the representatives of the European institutions took place. Moreover, the new Commissioner for Regional Policy, Mr Johannes Hahn, accepted the invitation of the AEBR to participate as keynote speaker in the Annual Conference of the Association in the year 2010.

The Annual Conference of AEBR in 2010 took place on 21-23 October in Dundalk (Ireland). It focused on the currently very important topic: “Territorial cohesion in a post-crisis scenario. Contribution of cross-border cooperation.” The evidence that regions are not totally helpless in the face of the global economic and financial crisis, but have the potential to successfully implement own strategies addressing global challenges, provide not at least the outstanding projects that were presented and discussed on the occasion of the Annual Conference of the AEBR.

One example is the project “Target: Work” implemented by the Greek-Bulgarian Euroregion Nestos-Mesta that won in the year 2010 the AEBR award “Sail of Papenburg.” In the course of the project a mentoring programme was launched for people that would like to run own business. In this way, it was possible to promote the entrepreneurship in the region and to improve slightly the employment situation that worsened significantly in the course of the economic crisis.

Also the Øresund region submitted an interesting project for the AEBR award in 2010, which was granted a special prize. The above-mentioned project is actually a cross-border development strategy that has the aim to foster growth, employment and competitiveness in the Øresund region.

Extensive reports on the AEBR award and the Annual Conference 2010 were published as usual on the internet side of the AEBR (www.aebr.eu), which has been relaunched with the aim to improve the online communication with the members and partners of AEBR. It’s of particular importance for the Secretariat General that border and cross-border regions receive regularly relevant information referring to territorial cooperation and cohesion policy of the EU, and at the same time are better involved in the manifold activities of the AEBR. The positive feedback on the new webpage and the electronic Newsflash confirms that new communication initiatives go in the right direction. Now it is important that the new information tools are used by the members and partners of the AEBR better as before, in particular with the aim to share good examples and the best available experience on cross-border cooperation.

In any case, new tools are being explored in order to facilitate this exchange and make it commonly used by most AEBR members.

The experiences of others may be helpful for border regions while implementing own cross-border actions. Moreover, based on the experiences of its members the AEBR can elaborate its recommendations for the EU. The more regions are members of the AEBR, the greater influence the voice of border regions will exercise at European and national level. Accordingly, I would like to invite border and cross-border regions that have not joined the AEBR yet, to become member of this unique European network of border regions.

Martin Guillermo Ramirez
Secretary General
**MISSION**

Our mission is to act for the benefit of all European border and cross-border regions in order to highlight their particular problems, opportunities, tasks and projects.

We initiate, support and coordinate the cooperation of European border and cross-border regions throughout the continent and create networks for specific purposes to facilitate cooperation and the exchange of experiences.

We exchange know-how and information in order to formulate and coordinate our common interests and to offer adequate solutions for day-to-day border problems.

We represent the overall interests of our member regions towards national and international parliaments, bodies, authorities and other institutions.

We inform European political bodies and the public about cross-border issues and the special concerns of border regions and propose political lines of approach and action.

**ORGANISATION**

The organs of AEBR are: General Assembly, Executive Committee, Secretary General.

The **GENERAL ASSEMBLY** is the highest body. Functions: election of the president, the executive committee, admission and exclusion of members, determination of contribution fees.

The **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE** is elected for 2 years. It includes: the president and vice-presidents, the treasurer and at least twenty members representing border and cross-border regions, taking into account the regional balance.

The tasks of the Executive Committee are the passing of basic statements of AEBR, collaboration with European and national institutions, organizations and societies, as well as the appointment of the Secretary General.

The **PRESIDENT** is the most senior AEBR representative and represents it externally. He has the right to take decisions, in agreement with the Secretary General.

**ADDED VALUE**

Being a member of AEBR means:

Participating in the only Europe-wide network of border and cross-border regions;

Aspiring to common values, goals and strategies for cross-border cooperation and thereby playing an important part in the process of European unification;

Highlighting and clarifying the special problems and specific opportunities for border and cross-border regions at both the national and European levels;

Helping to solve cross-border problems and to implement joint Europe-wide and national actions;

Making the most of the advantages of a Europe-wide network offering services specifically geared towards border and cross-border regions;

Actively contributing towards a European policy that takes account of public interests and concerns, and helping to foster mutual understanding and tolerance and break down barriers between the peoples of Europe.

"The AEBR really represents the interests of border regions at European level, as all activities of the AEBR focus on cross-border cooperation. Certainly, there are also other organisations or public authorities engaged in cross-border cooperation but other tasks and objectives have more priority for them."

Harald Krebs, Executive Director, EUREGIO (DE/NL)
By the end of 2010, the AEBR had 93 members representing almost 200 border regions across Europe. After a high increase in the early 1990s in the course of the political upheaval in Central and Eastern Europe, the number of members has remained steady. The difference between the number of members and the number of border regions is due to the fact that, in many cases, cross-border regions comprise several national border regions. Furthermore, large-area cooperation structures as the Working Community of the Alps, Nordic Council of Ministers, Carpathian Euroregion, etc. include as members border regions from several states.

The membership structure reveals a balanced ratio of border / cross-border regions in both the "old" EU and the new member states. The AEBR has kept a strong position to extend its operations across the new EU external borders (including the neighbouring regions in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova and the neighbouring countries in the Mediterranean area). There is a strong movement to strengthen Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) in these countries, both at regional and national levels. The effects of globalisation, as well as other increasing challenges, spread CBC far beyond up to the Caucasus, in the Arctic, and as far as in the American continent and in Africa.

Some regions from the Russian Federation and neighbouring states outside the European Union have already been accepted as members of AEBR. In general, a larger working area extending in front of us, adds a new challenge to our meagre Secretariat.

The AEBR should analyze carefully its current work-load: the production of opinions and position papers, the follow-up of European, national and regional issues, the organization of events and the participation in projects; and cross this information with the organizational and financial reality of the Association, in particular its present level of staff and income.

In the past the revenue of AEBR from membership fees repeatedly didn’t reach the expected level. The payment of the membership contribution was in particular for small cross-border structures in underdeveloped areas an extraordinary high expenditure, which they hardly were able to pay. For that reason a special task force of AEBR elaborated a proposal for a new calculation tool. The new tool for the calculation of the membership fees ensures that the population and the economic situation of every member region is better taken into account while calculating the membership fee and at the same time the costs are better distributed between wealthy and poor member regions of AEBR.

Nevertheless, payment discipline is far from being established in some areas, challenging very much the implementation of the AEBR budget. In this sense, participation in projects and the elaboration of reports for third parties has become crucial to fully accomplish our tasks.

MEMBERS OF AEBR CAN BE:

AS FULL MEMBERS WITH A RIGHT TO VOTE:
- European border and cross-border regions in member states of the European Union or the Council of Europe,
- Full members can also be large-sized amalgamations of border regions within several countries provided not all their members join AEBR individually.

AS MEMBERS WITHOUT THE RIGHT TO VOTE:
- Members with observer status for 2 years can be border regions in which the representation is not defined clearly as yet,
- Associated members (particular cases),
- Honorary members must have won special recognition for AEBR.

AS ADVISORY MEMBERS:
- Advisory members can be persons, associations, institutions and institutes working in the field of cross-border co-operation.
4 GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND ANNUAL CONFERENCE

4.1 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly and Annual Conference of AEBR in the year 2010 took place on 21-23 October in Dundalk (East Border Region). More than 230 participants attended the conference that was very professionally prepared and organised by the East Border Region. This cross-border organisation along the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland was founded in the year 1976 with the aim to boost the economic development, to reduce unemployment and to improve the standard of living. An important role played in this context the INTERREG programme, from which alone in the funding period 2000-2006 more than 25 Million Euros were spent in the region for cross-border projects.

The agenda of the General Assembly included in particular the Annual Report 2009, Annual Accounts 2009, Budget 2011 and Supplementary Budget 2010. Moreover, on the occasion of the General Assembly of AEBR the new Executive Committee for the period 2011/2012 was elected.

Karl-Heinz Lambertz, Minister-President of the German-Speaking Community of Belgium, was unanimously re-elected President of AEBR. He said after the election that he was grateful for the trust that the member regions have put in.

Due to his long experience in the field of cross-border cooperation, Mr. Lambertz was the ideal candidate to fill the post of AEBR President. He is chair of the Working Group on Inter-regional Cooperation and General Reporter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CLRAE) on Cross-Border Cooperation. Since 2009, he has also been a member of the Bureau of the Committee of the Regions, and is active in the EDUC and ECOS commissions of the CoR.

Mr. Heider, who served as the organisation's first Vice-President for a long period, did not run again for the post due to retirement. The new 1st Vice-President of AEBR is Ms. Ann-Sofi Backgren, who had been holding the post of Vice-President for the Nordic members since the year 2002.

All other Vice-Presidents were elected as nominated: Maria Dolores Pallero Espadero (First Vice-President and Spokesperson of the Regional Government of Extremadura, Spain), Marc De Buck (Deputy of the Province of East Flanders, Belgium), Kyriakos Charakidis (Euroregion Nestos-Mesta, Greece/Bulgaria), Bernhard Bramlage (Ems Dollart Region, DE/NL), Gabriele Lackner-Strauss (President of Euregio Bayerischer Wald / Böhmerwald, Germany/Austria/Czech Republic), François Maïtia (Vice-President of Région Midi-Pyrénées, France), Dieter Fries (President of Euroregion Spree-Neisse-Bober, Germany/Poland), Zbigniew Kulik (Euroregion Neisse-Nysa-Nisa, Poland/Czech Republic/Germany).

Another new post to be filled was the one of the AEBR Treasurer. Günter Alsmeier, President of the EUREGIO Council (DE/NL) has succeeded Frans Willemse, who filled this position for the past 8 years.

Jens Gabbe was reconfirmed as chairman of the Advisory Committee of AEBR. Dr. Reinhold Kolck, Vice-President of AEBR since the year 2002, stepped down in 2010, but will continue his good relationship with AEBR as Vice-Chairman of the AEBR Advisory Committee.
4.2 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

THE CASE OF THE HOST

The topic of the Annual Conference in the year 2010 was: „Territorial cohesion in a post-crisis scenario. Contribution of cross-border cooperation.“ In the beginning of the conference on 21st October the representatives of the host region Councillor John V. Farrelly, Tom McCall and Pamela Arthurs, as well as the chairman of the institution responsible for the implementation of the INTERREG IVA Programme between Ireland and Northern Ireland, Pat Colgan presented the results of cross-border cooperation in the East Border Region. Many initiatives and projects have been implemented already with support from the INTERREG Programme, which make an important contribution to sustainable development on both sides of the border. The added value of cross-border cooperation in the East Border Region is visible in many areas. For example, the cross-border cooperation has had a positive impact on tourism in the region, as it has been possible to develop new cross-border services and offers.

Also representatives from other border regions confirmed on the occasion of the conference, that in particular in the tourism sector cross-border cooperation provides different development opportunities. Herbert Unnasch as representative of the Euregio Bayerischer Wald – Böhmenvald (DE/AT/CZ) and Jan Oostenbrink representing the EUREGIO (DE/NL) presented during the conference two cross-border tourism projects that have been implemented in their regions. Both projects focus on a cross-border information and marketing campaign, which has the aim to further improve in a sustainable way the quality and attractiveness of tourism offers in the corresponding border areas.

Before closing the first session Mr Andy Pollak held a speech on the subject: „A research centre for North-South cooperation in Ireland.“ After his presentation three workshops organised by the Task Forces of AEBR took place that dealt with cross-border health (under the chairmanship of Mr Erik Jacob, Regio Basilienis), with external borders (under the chairmanship of Mr Johannes Moisio, South Karelia) and with languages in border areas (under the chairmanship of Mr Ruud Halink, Talenacademie Nederland).

OFFICIAL OPENING

Several high-ranking representatives of the European, national and regional level participated in the official opening of the conference on 22nd October. Main speakers during the opening session were: Councillor John Farrelly, President of the East Border Region, Pat Colgan, Chief Executive of the Special European Union Programmes Body, Günther Krug, Vice-President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, Karl-Heinz Lambertz, President of AEBR and Minister President of the German-speaking Community of Belgium, as well as Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for Regional Policy in the European Commission.

Commissioner Hahn underlined in his contribution, among others, the role of the Association of European Border Regions at European level. He described the AEBR as major contributor of ideas for the improvement of cohesion policy, and in particular of territorial cooperation. “Thanks to your longstanding experience in cross-border cooperation and your proactive engagement, you are an indispensable partner for us. So, I can assure you that your views will be reflected to great extent in the reform”, confirmed EU Commissioner Hahn on the occasion of the Annual Conference of AEBR in Dundalk.

„European Territorial Co-operation needs to be more firmly embedded in strategic frameworks at all levels, be they European, national or regional.

We need to pay more attention to the role European Territorial Cooperation can play and integrate this dimension into all strategic planning.

This is the only way to ensure coherence and complementarity between ETC and other policies and programmes, and to avoid an inefficient fragmentation of funding.

Johannes Hahn, EU Commissioner for Regional Policy

Source: European Commission
PLENARY SESSION I: NEW CHALLENGES
The first Political Round Table under the chairmanship of Ann-Sofi Backgren, the 1st Vice-President of AEBR dealt with the subject: „New challenges for cross-border cooperation in a post-crisis scenario.“ Mr Colin Wolfe, Head of the Unit REGIO E1 in the DG REGIO participated in the Round Table as keynote speaker. In his contribution he invited border regions to present the added value of territorial cooperation at all political levels. „Territorial Cooperation has proven to be a key instrument of regional policy at EU level allowing for a more strategic approach and a higher level of coherence. (...) I encourage AEBR to mobilise the regions to actively participate in the discussions of the future Cohesion Policy and to further publicise the results of well succeeded cross-border initiatives.“

Mercedes Bresso, the President of the Committee of the Regions, was unfortunately not able to attend the conference of AEBR. However, she addressed the participants of the AEBR event in a video message, in which she presented briefly the proposals of the Committee of the Regions referring to the future of the European cohesion and regional policy. In her contribution she underlined the importance of cross-border cooperation within the objective 3: “Territorial cooperation” and confirmed that the added value of cross-border cooperation is undeniable. The video message of Mrs Bresso is available on the internet (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VU7Oly9dHOE).

Jean-Marie Belliard as representative of the region Alsace (FR), Bent Larsen as representative of the Øresundskomiteen (DK) and Maria Dolores Pallero Espadero, 1st Vice-President and Spokesperson of the Regional Government of Extremadura presented in their contributions several initiatives and projects that have gained particular importance in the last economic crisis.

In the final session, which was chaired by Martin Guillermo Ramírez, the Secretary General of AEBR, Lisbeth Greve Harbo representing Nordregio, Inci Tunc, Mayor of the Turkish municipality Kavakli and Olivier Rérolle, Secretary General of EURISY discussed such subjects as cross-border cooperation in the Nordic countries and at the external borders, as well as the potentials of new technologies in the territorial cooperation.

Before closing the conference the Euroregion Yaroslavna (RU/UA) and the municipality of Kursk (RU) invited the participants of the AEBR event to the next Annual Conference taking place on 22-24 September 2011 in Kursk.
**FINAL DECLARATION**

The results of the Annual Conference 2010 were included in the final declaration. It took into account the manifold global challenges underlined during the different sessions, in particular, the contribution of cross-border cooperation to territorial cohesion.

Subsidiarity, Decentralisation, Multi-level Governance, etc., are key concepts, and all analyses made in the last years by the European institutions, and also by independent research centres, show the contribution of territorial cohesion (and the programmes to implement it) to the European project from many points of view. The three strands (cross-border, transnational, interregional) should be kept while stressing their mutual complementarity. A wider concept of European Cohesion should still consider EU neighbouring countries as object of this cohesion and deepen the implementation of effective CBC initiatives at all external borders of the Union, but in particular with potential accession candidates. They also aspire to their development quota, and European support to these processes is a matter of common sense. The Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership have to keep on including decentralized territorial cooperation elements where DG Regio should receive a more relevant role in synchronising cross-border programmes.

The participation of local and regional actors has been decisive to generate capacities and mobilize wills, paving the way to a multi-level governance process to coordinate efforts in order to reduce European regional disparities and to be more efficient. In this same sense, CBC programmes should be managed by the border regions in partnership with national governments, with a more clear focus of programmes on CBC to produce common added value.

The Commission’s proposal to establish a common strategic framework involving all Structural Funds could be interesting to develop the EU 2020 Strategy, but it should guarantee local and regional participation in the elaboration of such a framework, while taking into account their developmental interests, stressing particularly Territorial Cooperation within Cohesion Policy (and financing).

The approach of future cross-border programmes have to be backed in a more analytical way, so that CBC problems and developments can be better defined. The participation of universities and research centres in the ULYSSES project will strengthen this process and may offer new tools to define future CBC strategies.
4.3 BESTOWAL OF THE AE BR AWARD 2010

The AE BR Award “Sail of Papenburg”, donated by the Ems Dollart Region, was bestowed for the first time on the occasion of the Annual Conference 2002 in the city of Papenburg. In line with the motto of the Annual Conference 2010 “Territorial cohesion in a post-crisis scenario. Contribution of cross-border cooperation” the award 2010 was bestowed to the Euroregion Nestos-Mesta (GR/BG) for the project „Target: Work.“ A special prize was bestowed in 2010 to the Öresund region (DK/SE) that participated in the competition for the AE BR award 2010 with its cross-border development strategy for the Öresund region - ØRUS. The chairman of the jury, Mr Reinhold Kolck presented officially the winners of the award on the occasion of the AE BR Annual Conference in Dundalk. Together with the AE BR President, Mr Karl-Heinz Lambertz he handed over both prizes to the awarded regions.

The winner certificate was handed over during the opening of the AE BR Annual Conference on 23rd October 2010 by the EU Commissioner for Regional Policy, Mr Johannes Hahn to the initiator of the project „Target: Work“, Mr Alkis Papademetriou.

WINNER OF THE AE BR AWARD 2010:
EUROREGION NESTOS-MESTA (GR/BG)

PROJECT „TARGET: WORK“
IMPLEMENTATION: 2008-2010

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:
- Improving the economic situation in the Euroregion Nestos-Mesta strongly hit by the current economic crisis;
- Using the potentials of cross-border cooperation while combating unemployment in the region;
- Promoting the entrepreneurship in the region.

ACTIVITIES:
- Launching of a mentoring scheme focusing in particular on people interested in becoming entrepreneurs;
- Enhancing the cooperation between the Chambers of Industry and Commerce in Drama and the enterprises on the Greek and Bulgarian side of the border.

WINNER OF A SPECIAL PRIZE IN 2010: ÖRESUNDKOMITEE (DK/SE)

ØRUS – CROSS-BORDER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

OBJECTIVES:
- Improving the competitiveness of the region;
- The Öresund region should become by 2020 one of the most attractive and climate-smart regions in Europe by maximising the benefits of integration and cross-border dynamics.

CONTENTS OF THE STRATEGY:
The strategy covers four areas of development:
- Knowledge and innovation,
- Culture and events,
- A diverse, yet cohesive labour market,
- Accessibility and mobility.

In these specific areas cross-border solutions of development exceed the national or regional solutions in functionality and added value.
5 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

In the year 2010 four meetings of the AEBR Executive Committee took place: on 19th February 2010 in Oulu, Tornealsrådet / Bothnian Arc (FI), on 28th May 2010 in Evora, Alentejo (PT), on 17th September 2010 in Udine, Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia (IT) and on 22nd October 2010 in Dundalk, East Border Region (IRL).

Throughout 2010 the Executive Committee dealt in particular with the following topics: European cohesion and structural policy, strategy of the European Commission „EU 2020“, cooperation with European institutions, European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), cross-border healthcare, transeuropean transport policy, cross-border rural areas, Eastern Partnership and cross-border cooperation at the external borders of the EU, as well as cross-border cooperation in rural, mountainous and maritime areas.

Extensive reports were given on these topics. The Executive Committee discussed them and elaborated special recommendations and remarks concerning cross-border cooperation. On that basis, the Association worked out sets of arguments and requests for European and national institutions. AEBR members received written information about these recommendations as well as on the reactions of the European and national levels (successes or failures of interventions).

Furthermore, the Executive Committee also treated organisational and internal issues, such as AEBR events (special fora), work contents, financial matters, advisory committee, task forces on health and external borders, and future perspectives of the AEBR. In line with the General Assembly decisions, it has been repeatedly stressed by the Executive Committee that AEBR should remain an autonomous organisation, both in terms of funding and contents. In order to ensure the continuity of the AEBR work in the future, it is particularly important that the necessary financial and human resources are available and that the AEBR does not lose its current status as a highly appreciated partner at the European level.

The AEBR defends the interests of all European border and cross-border regions. Thanks to the Association’s efforts the subject “Cross-Border Cooperation” does not loose its relevance and it is regularly on the agenda of the European institutions. It is a growing priority in Brussels. The AEBR brings together partners from different border regions, which can exchange their experiences and information and can learn from each other. It acts as mediator in conflict situations and promotes quick and easy solutions when border problems arise.

The AEBR gathered most cross-border initiatives until 1990. Then, many new cross-border structures in Central and Eastern Europe were created after the fall of the Iron Curtain, and the AEBR was the first organisation asked for professional support and expertise. Now it is time to develop a strategy for the future of the Association that enables the Association to remain attractive for its members also in the future. The Executive Committee elaborated in 2010 concrete proposals and new concepts addressing this challenge, opening a debate amongst AEBR members that would eventually lead in 2011 to the elaboration of a road map for the Association in the coming years.
This report shows how cohesion policy has had a major impact on the European economy, reducing economic differences and promoting environmental and social development. To ensure more value for money, we need to make the policy even more effective, in delivering concrete and measurable result. We need to spend more intelligently, focus on the EU's top priorities and add visible value to what national and regional authorities are already doing."

Johannes Hahn, EU Commissioner for Regional Policy on the occasion of the presentation of the Fifth Cohesion Report

Source: European Commission
6.2 STRATEGY „EUROPE 2020“

On 3rd March 2010 the European Commission presented officially the strategy „Europe 2020“ that is supposed to be a new long-term economic strategy replacing the Lisbon Agenda. The new strategy is based on following three priorities:

- Smart growth through the development of knowledge and innovation;
- Sustainable growth promoting green and resource efficient economy;
- Inclusive growth contributing to social and territorial cohesion.

The AEBR has elaborated an opinion on the strategy „Europe 2020“ that was forwarded to the European Commission. Besides, the association participated in the consultation of the Committee of the Regions on this subject. Main recommendations of the AEBR as regards the implementation of the strategy are as follows:

If European municipalities and regions could place their potentialities in the “Europe 2020 Strategy”, this should be seen clearly in line with the principle of subsidiarity. With the “EU Territorial Agenda” and the “Leipzig Charter for Sustainable Urban Development”, the responsible European ministers jointly with the European Commission, have already provided the route to follow.

An enlarged EU needs territorial cohesion and a consistent implementation of the bottom-up principle with due regard to subsidiarity and partnership, and participation of all actors. The regional and local authorities have to play a key role, also in designing and implementing “flagship initiatives”.

One European task is to ensure its cohesion and regional policy to define strategic guidelines and secure the strategic coherence of programmes. All other important matters should be realised by the regional and/or local level in partnership with the national and European levels and the social partners.

Within territorial cooperation, cross-border cooperation should obtain first political priority further on, and remain a political objective, which should be strengthened.

Cross-border cooperation is mostly affected by territorial cohesion. If there is no cohesion along the European borders then it would be very difficult to realise European integration and territorial cohesion as a whole.

Cross-Border cooperation can sustainably foster the main objectives of the “Europe 2020 Strategy” through a qualitative “jump” because their potentialities have not been exploited by far. It is about cross-border research, development & innovation, healthcare or regional transport networks. The enlargement of the Schengen area to the EU old external and new internal borders creates even new requirements, and they should be taken into account.

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Progress towards the realisation of the priorities of the strategy „Europe 2020“ is to be measured against five headline targets defined by the European Council:

- 75 % of the population of the EU aged 20-64 should be employed;
- 3 % of the EU’s GDP should be invested in research and development;
- The „20/20/20“ climate / energy targets should be met;
- The share of early school leavers should be under 10 % and at least 40 % of the younger population should have completed tertiary education;
- The number of people on the verge of poverty should go back by 20 million.

Source: European Commission
6.3 EUROPEAN GROUPING FOR TERRITORIAL COOPERATION (EGTC)

The AEBR Secretariat General is actively involved in the activities of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) focusing on the European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation and pays much attention to all actions and decisions referring to EGTC launched at European and national level. The Advisory Committee of AEBR has continuously updated the available information on EGTC and has used the first experiences in implementing the new legal instrument of the EU in its comments and opinions.

In spring 2010 the Committee of the Regions launched a consultation on the EGTC regulation. Based on the results of the consultation the Committee of the Regions elaborated an own-initiative opinion that was approved in January 2011. The aim of the consultation and the opinion was to examine the applicability of the EGTC and to present new perspectives for the revision of the EGTC regulation. Ca. 90 organisations participated in this consultation, here in particular most of the existing European Groupings for Territorial Cooperation. The AEBR Secretariat General submitted also an own contribution including concrete proposals for the improvement of the regulation. In its contribution the AEBR underlined in particular following aspects:

- An EGTC is only reasonable, if it can operate under public law;
- An EGTC must have own staff. Problems only occur when staff is delegated by the public sector;
- In the future, third countries must be able to cooperate with only one EU-member state (e.g. today it is not possible to establish an EGTC between Germany/Switzerland or Sweden/Norway);
- The EU-regulation for the EGTC was elaborated inter alia because of the differences in national regulations. According to the EU-regulation they have to be adapted that way that an EGTC is able to function;

- An EGTC is hardly suitable for interregional and transnational programmes (too heavy legal instrument).

Several important EGTC events took place in 2010 attended by AEBR representatives. Within the Spanish Presidency of the Council a summit on EGTC took place on 2-3 May 2010 in Cáceres / Spain. Together with its member region Extremadura the AEBR was involved in the organisation of this meeting. The Secretary General and representatives of several member regions of AEBR were invited to make their contributions. More than 120 representatives of national governments, European institutions, border and cross-border regions, as well as some EGTC participated in the summit in Cáceres. The discussion focused on the future of territorial, particularly cross-border, cooperation, on the role of EGTC and last but not least on the new perspectives provided by the strategy “Europe 2020.”

A workshop on EGTC was organised on the occasion of the Open Days 2010 by the Committee of the Regions. It dealt with the revision of the legal foundations of EGTC. Among the main speakers were in particular: Mercedes Bresso, President of the Committee of the Regions, Karl-Heinz Lambertz, Minister-President of the German-speaking Community of Belgium and AEBR President, Jesús Gamallo Aller, Director General of Foreign and European Affairs of Galicia, Jan Olbrycht, member of the European Parliament and others. Other activities and seminars took place in 2010, particularly a Conference on EGTCs for Euroregions in Bielsko-Biała on 8th November.

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FOLLOWING NEW EGTC WERE FOUNDED IN 2010:

- 02/2010: Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau (France and Germany)
  [www.eurodistrict.eu](http://www.eurodistrict.eu)

- 03/2010: ZASNET (Portugal and Spain)

- 04/2010: GECT – INTERREG – Programme Grande Région (France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg)

- 04/2010: Cerdanya Cross-Border Hospital (Spain and France)

- 05/2010: Eurodistrict Saar Moselle (France and Germany)

- 06/2010: ABAÚJ – ABAÚJiban (Hungary and Slovak Republic)
  [http://www.abauj.info/](http://www.abauj.info/)

- 12/2010: Pons Danubii (Hungary and Slovak Republic)
  [www.ponsdanubii.eu](http://www.ponsdanubii.eu)
6.4 EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

Eastern Partnership was also in 2010 repeatedly on the agenda of the EU. This initiative, started by the European Union in March 2009, has the aim to enhance the cooperation with national states from Eastern Europe and Southern Caucasus that in the course of the EU enlargements moved closer to the Union. Concretely, the cooperation with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine should be strengthened and the political, economic and social reforms in these countries supported. The progress in implementing the objectives of the Eastern Partnership was discussed on the occasion of several conferences and working meetings that took place in 2010 at European level.

On 24th May 2010 an informal meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs from the Eastern Partnership states and the European Union took place that was organised on the initiative of Poland and the Spanish Council Presidency in Sopot (Poland). One year after the adoption of the new initiative Ministers of Foreign Affairs from 33 states as well as the EU Commissioners responsible for the Enlargement and the European Neighbourhood Policy discussed the progress in implementing the Eastern Partnership, and exchanged views on current and upcoming actions and projects launched within this initiative.

On 18th and 19th November 2010 the second meeting of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum took place in Berlin. The aim of the Civil Society Forum launched in May 2009 is to strengthen the role of civil society organisations in partner countries in the political reform process. More than 200 participants from the partner countries and the European Union exchanged in Berlin views on such subjects as democracy and human rights, market economy and sustainability. Moreover, non-governmental organisations from different countries had the opportunity to get to know other civil society stakeholders and to enter into dialogue with national governments.

On 13th December 2010 a second official Eastern Partnership Foreign Ministers meeting took place in Brussels. The meeting focused in particular on the progress in implementing the new initiative, as well as the future priorities of the Eastern Partnership. In this context, in particular, the role of the civil society in implementing the Eastern Partnership should be strengthened and the mobility of students, researchers, teachers and entrepreneurs should be facilitated.

The AEBR has already elaborated some documents and proposals dealing with these subjects that are regularly used in discussions at European level. The association attended also important international conferences in 2010. For example on 8-10 September 2010 a representative of the AEBR participated in a conference in Uzhgorod (Ukraine) and on 21-22 September 2010 in St. Petersburg (Russia). The European Neighbourhood Policy inclusively the Eastern Partnership and the cooperation with Russia is also main topic of the AEBR Annual Conference in 2011 taking place in Kursk.

Following webpages offer latest and highly interesting information on Eastern Partnership:

www.easternpartnership.org,
http://eeas.europa.eu/eastern/index_en.htm,
6.5 LANGUAGES IN BORDER AREAS

On 10th June 2010 a meeting of the AEBR representatives with the Directorate General EDUC of the European Commission took place in order to demonstrate the importance of the language of the neighbouring country in border areas and to discuss the possibilities to support financially language projects in border regions. Moreover, on the occasion of the Annual Conference in Dundalk in October 2010 a workshop on this subject took place under the chairmanship of Ruud Halink (Talenakademie, NL) and Martín Guillermo Ramírez, Secretary General of AEBR. This workshop offered the opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences and to develop new activities.

With support of the Region Friuli Venezia Giulia a conference with the title „Languages and European Integration. The role of border regions“ took place on 16th September 2010 in Udine. About 50 participants attended the conference, who share the opinion that the knowledge of the language of the neighbouring country plays an important role in cross-border cooperation. There are many complex examples in Europe, but probably Friuli is one of the most genuine to illustrate the need to be aware of these circumstances, protecting minority languages and promoting its use in civil services, cultural activities and the media. In Friuli Venezia Giulia Italian, Friulian, Slovenian and German are spoken.

The particular role of languages in cross-border cooperation, with different approaches per region and language, has moved the AEBR and strategic partners like the Talenakademie (NL) to propose European institutions and border regions the setting up of a Platform Languages and Borders leading to a “community of practice” to:

- Disseminate good practices;
- Organize workshops on “hot” topics;
- Prepare study visits;
- Propose new projects;
- Advise interest groupings.

To the end, the promoters of this Platform had already made lobby at the EU Parliament and the EU Commission in order to gain resources to:

- Promote languages in border areas (by devoting a particular entry in the EU Budget to this purpose);
- Consider neighbouring languages as priority in the Life-Long Learning Strategy for 2011;
- Activate the Platform in the Internet;
- Keep regular exchange with DG Education and Culture;
- In very few years, a European Border Languages’ Year should be declared.

Impressions from the workshop on languages in border areas that took place on the occasion of the Annual Conference of AEBR in Dundalk. Ruud Halink (photo on the left) and Martín Guillermo Ramírez (photo on the right) chaired the meeting.
6.6 RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION

An important objective of the EU is to create a European research area - perfectly developed, functioning and working in networks. Borders would then hardly play a role in research and higher education, in particular as regards the employment of staff and resources and the mutual acknowledgment of curricula.

In order to develop in the areas of research, development, innovation and education a “European Research Area” parallel to the Single European Market, the EU-commission has to take advantage of supportive measures. Based on the “Bologna Process” with an optional commitment of all 46 signatory states, it has been created a frame of qualifications by the EU, which is supported by important individual programmes like Comenius (pupil and research institutions), Erasmus (higher education), Grundtvig (adult education), Jean Monnet (European integration in university sector) and a cross cutting programme (sectoral programmes exceeding themes). It is also important to mention the “7th EU-Research-framework programme”, which is supported by the Eurydice, the “Education information network” and the “supporting programme for competitive capacity and innovation”. Within the territorial cooperation, especially the INTERREG-A-programmes with main focus on “cross border cooperation” in research and development can be used.

Global, European interregional and transnational cooperation of universities/research centres is something natural today. Between neighbouring regions along a border, however, a closer cooperation in research and development depends still on some coincidences, even if it’s not a single phenomenon any longer:

- In particular areas of specialisation with vast capacities, cooperation across the border becomes a natural consequence and even a necessity for universities and research centres on both sides of the border.
- In other cross-border areas that don’t have the necessary potential or have facilities only on one side of the border the administration at regional level or the respective Euroregion has to provide strong support and very often even to initialise the cooperation process.

The AEBR promotes the exchange of experiences on cross-border cooperation in research, development and innovation. On invitation of the region Galicia two AEBR forums on this subject were organised in the years 2009 and 2011. Besides, a Task Force on this issue should be installed within the AEBR.

In June 2011 the Secretary General of AEBR, Martín Guillermo Ramírez participated in the conference „Universities 2020“ that was organised in the scope of the Spanish Council Presidency in Salamanca. The conference focused on the role of the universities in the strategy “Europe 2020”, on the links between tertiary education and innovation, as well as on the contribution of universities to social and economic development in modern knowledge society. More than 130 experts attended the conference that had the aim to bring together political representatives, researchers and entrepreneurs, to elaborate concrete recommendations for the European education and research policy, as well as to develop new ideas promoting innovation.
6.7 TRANSEUROPEAN TRANSPORT POLICY

Right from its foundation (1971), the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) took a very close interest in issues related to transport policy in border regions. Many border areas have suffered for decades from their peripheral location (national, sometimes even European) resulting from missing transport infrastructure. Only with a truly integration of Europe ensuring unity in diversity the previous peripheral situation of many border regions can be transformed into a more favourable central location within Europe. Border regions at the external borders of the EU can be released from their isolation through improved connections. Border and cross-border regions gain thereby the function of bridges and become touchstones of European integration.

In cooperation with the Region Aragon, the AEBR organized the first political forum on cross-border transport networks in Zaragoza in September 2008. The results of the forum were used in several working documents of the AEBR including in particular the opinion of the AEBR on the Green Paper of the European Commission: „TEN-T: A policy review. Towards a better integrated transeuropean transport network at the service of the common transport policy.“ As regards the future transport policy of the EU the AEBR has included in its opinion following requirements:

- „Outline Plans“ (network schemes for all kind of transport) should preferably be developed by the EU (in cooperation with the member states), as in this way also the national transport policies can be better coordinated;

- A long-term network planning helps to improve the connection between border and peripheral regions and central areas of the EU, so that they can more efficiently tackle new challenges (climate change, energy supply, need of new infrastructures, connections at the new borders, etc.);

- Priority projects within these “Outline Plans“ and long-term network planning should generate a European added value;

- As the needs of international infrastructures have to be better taken into account, an isolated national planning is rather obsolete. Changes of political priorities in a member state may not cause that investments in an international corridor are hindered or measures in the neighbouring country have to be postponed.

On 4-5 February 2010 the second AEBR forum “Transport as an instrument for territorial cohesion and cooperation” took place in Huesca (Spain). It was organised together with the region Aragón and the Transpyrenean Foundation. More than 150 participants attended this conference. Mr. Javier Velasco Rodríguez, Minister of the Presidency in the Regional Government of Aragón, opened this forum.
Cross-Border Cooperation climbs in the Global Agenda. The African Union’s Ministers in charge of Border issues have approved on 25th March 2010 in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) to further develop the African Union Border Programme (AUBP) with the support of the GTZ, the German Cooperation Agency, until 2012.

In Latin America, a strong process to coordinate multiple Cross-Border efforts takes place with the participation of public, private and non-profit stakeholders. On 10th-14th March 2010, Florianópolis (Brazil) hosted the II Fair on Regional Development, stressing the added value of CBC. In Posadas (Misiones, Argentina), a Seminar on “Proposals for Border and Productive Integration in MERCOSUR” was organized by the Province of Misiones, MERCOSUR’s Productive Integration Grouping, Extremadura’s Centre for Studies and Cooperation with Latin America (CEXECI) and the AEBR.

The AEBR, as many other European regional Associations, has to be aware of the process of globalization. Even if we do not pay attention to the global dimension of territorial cooperation in general, and cross-border cooperation in particular, other partners within and outside Europe come to us, demanding a stronger involvement of the Association in current debates and processes to strengthen cross-border cooperation in different parts of the world, namely Latin America and the African continent. As founding member the AEBR is, in particular, involved in the activities of the network PLATFORMA. The network was founded in the year 2008 under the European Commission NSA-LA (Non State Actors – Local Authorities) call for proposals. The main objectives of PLATFORMA are:

- Better acknowledgement of the action of local and regional authorities (LRA) in development cooperation.
- Set up of a solid dialogue between European LRA and EU institutions in charge of Development Policy.
- Promotion of an efficient decentralized cooperation.

Detailed information on PLATFORMA is available on the internet under the following link: www.platforma-dev.eu. Several important events took place in the year 2010 within the PLATFORMA network:

- March 2010, Bucharest, Romania: Seminar on the role of local and regional authorities in Central and Eastern Europe in the development cooperation,
- May 2010, La Rabida, Spain: Conference on climate change and development cooperation,
- December 2010, Brussels, Belgium: Seminar on the occasion of the European Development Days dealing with the efficiency of the aid from the perspective of the regional and local authorities.

Another structure, the Forum of Global Associations of Regions (FOGAR), was constituted in 2007, and the AEBR was one of the founder organizations, together with the CPMR. In the year 2010 the AEBR participated in different activities launched by the forum. In particular, the III Assembly of World Regions in Manabi (Ecuador) in July. Here, the association was represented by several members, in particular from the Basque Country, Catalonia and the region Aquitaine.

Detailed information on the activities of FOGAR can be found on the internet under the following link: www.fogar.org.

ARLEM, the Euro-Mediterranean Local and Regional Assembly, was officially constituted in Barcelona on 21st January, with the aim of strengthening the cooperation amongst sub-national authorities between the shores of the Mediterranean.
7 TASK FORCES OF AEBR

7.1 TASK FORCE ON CROSS-BORDER HEALTHCARE

The Task Force on cross-border healthcare was founded on the occasion of the Annual Conference of AEBR in Lappeenranta (Finland) in 2007. The Executive Director of REGIO BASILIENSIS, Mr Eric Jakob coordinates this Task Force since 2009 with the aim to improve the exchange of experiences between border regions in the field of cross-border healthcare and to initiate joint projects and other activities. Besides, that Task Force elaborates joint opinions and position papers on cross-border healthcare and to initiate joint projects and other activities. Besides, that Task Force elaborates joint opinions and position papers on cross-border healthcare that the AEBR uses for its lobbying at the European and national level.

The activities of the AEBR Task Force on cross-border health included in 2010 in particular:

- Implementation of the project dealing with cross-border healthcare EUREGIO II: "Healthcare in cross-border regions from the patients’ perspective" that is based on the experiences of the project EUREGIO I finalised in May 2007. The aim of the project is to stimulate and promote cross-border healthcare in border regions, by fostering the usability of various existing instruments and methods, and analyse further needs and gaps.

- Elaboration of a new project application within INTERREG IVC focusing on cross-border innovation and knowledge dissemination in healthcare.

- Working meeting of the Task Force on 13th April 2010 in Essen, Germany (see the photo below), and a workshop on the occasion of the AEBR Annual Conference on 21st October 2010 in Dundalk, Ireland. Both meetings focused in particular on the EU directive on cross-border healthcare, the cooperation between European Patients Empowerment for Customised Solutions (EPECS) and the AEBR, the implementation of the EUREGIO II project as well as the elaboration of new initiatives and project ideas.

- In October 2010, the AEBR agreed with the patients organization EPECS (European Patients’ Empowerment for Customized Solutions) to establish regular contacts and prepare joint proposals, position papers and projects for the benefit of European patients, particularly in border areas.

- The AEBR participated in several meetings that were organised by European institutions (mainly by the Committee of the Regions) and other organisations dealing with health. The association took also part in different discussions and exchanges on cross-border healthcare.

- In December 2010 a compromise was reached with regard to the draft directive on the patients’ rights in cross-border healthcare. Thanks to this compromise, the directive was approved in spring 2011 by the European Parliament and the Council. The AEBR followed the discussions on the draft directive and provided up-dated information on the directive to its member regions.

![Image of the AEBR Task Force meeting](image-url)
Cross-border cooperation at the external borders of the Union is also claiming for more attention of AEBR. In this sense, a Task Force was created in Lappeenranta (2007) to coordinate AEBR’s and its members’ activities focusing on external borders. The TF has divided its geographical area into three main sub-areas: North-West External Borders, Eastern External Borders and Mediterranean and Black Sea.

Related themes are also dealt with by AEBR members, as they constitute main topics in certain border areas: migration policy, as an authentic European issue and not only a national priority; intercultural dialogue; and maritime cooperation and safety. Several seminars have been planned and organised already by this Task Force coordinated by Mr. Johannes Moisio (Region of South Karelia).

Following main activities took place in 2010:

On 18th February 2010 a working meeting of the Task Force took place in Oulu, as well as a seminar dealing with the subject: Cross-border responses to current challenges of the regional development in Europe.

On 27th May 2010 a working meeting of the Task Force was organised in Sevilla (Andalucia, Spain). The meeting focused on cross-border cooperation in the Mediterranean area, in particular with Morocco.

From 19th to 23rd July 2010 the second AEBR summer seminar for youth took place. The seminar was organised by the Task Force in cooperation with the region Friuli Venezia Giulia in Trieste. Ten applicants were selected by the TFEB jury. They came from different European countries: Belgium, Russia, Slovenia, Moldova, Ukraine, Romania and Italy. The youngest participant was 22 years of age, the oldest 27 years. The aims of this seminar are manifold: To disseminate information on study possibilities abroad in other border regions, to present the principles of cross-border cooperation in European, regional, and local policies, and to encourage the universities in the external borders to be more international and to provide international studies (see the photo below on the right).

In cooperation with the representatives of Ukrainian and Russian border regions further meeting of the Task Force as well as a seminar on logistical challenges in border regions was organised on 9th September 2010 in Kharkiv (Ukraine).

On the occasion of the AEBR Annual Conference on 21st October 2010 in Dundalk, Ireland a workshop of the Task Force was organised that was headed by Johannes Moisio (see the photo below on the left).
7.3 TASK FORCE ON STRATEGIC ISSUES

The AEBR Executive Committee has discussed on many occasions the future strategy of the AEBR and its sustainability. Firstly, it is important to ensure the availability of adequate financial resources in the middle and long term. Without them, the Association will not be able to cope with increasing complexity and the growing number of topics to be covered. Secondly, the Association has to develop new methodologies in order to gain new members and to provide tailored services to current members.

In its meeting in Burg in June 2009 the AEBR Executive Committee founded a new Task Force in order to look for adequate solutions as regards the future of the AEBR from the financial and strategic perspectives. The mission of the Task Force is to elaborate effective proposals and concepts ensuring adequate funding in the future and improving further on the image of the AEBR as a highly profiled European regional organisation.

The question of financial security was the priority for the Task Force in 2009. With support of the Austrian side of the Euroregion Bayerischer Wald-Böhmischer Wald a workshop on this subject moderated by an external consultant was organised in Linz during the summer.

As a result of this workshop a new tool for the calculation of the membership fees was elaborated. This new tool is more transparent and takes better into account the varying financial possibilities of every member region. The new fees for cross-border structures take into account the population and the GDP (in average of the EU-27), while border regions keep a flat rate. The General Assembly approved the new contributions’ structure on the occasion of its meeting in Dundalk in October 2010. For the first time the contributions were calculated in accordance with this new tool in the year 2011.

Regarding the strategic approach of the AEBR, it was urgent to improve the communication with the members. On the occasion of the Annual Conference of the AEBR in Ghent a workshop was organized with members interested in the subject, thus providing a good opportunity to present proposals for a better communication strategy of the AEBR. As first step towards a better communication strategy a new medium – the electronic Newsflash of AEBR – was launched. At the same time, the Secretariat General has worked on a better image and an increased awareness for AEBR activities. Concrete measures and concepts in this context have been elaborated and implemented in 2010. They include in particular the finalization of the new AEBR website offering a more attractive layout and very interesting information.

In order to improve the communication with its members, since November 2009 the AEBR has published monthly an electronic Newsflash. Also the new homepage of the AEBR finalized in autumn 2010 offers more possibilities for the exchange of experiences and opinions.
8 OTHER EVENTS

In cooperation with its members and other partners the AEBR organises regularly conferences and seminars dealing with specific subjects that are of particular importance for European border and cross-border regions. Quite often, the AEBR participates also in events of other organisations and institutions. It’s hardly possible to mention all these events in the Annual Report. Several important conferences and seminars that were organised in cooperation with the member regions of AEBR in the year 2010 have been already mentioned on previous pages. Information on further events can be found below:

8-9 APRIL 2010: INTERNATIONAL SELF-GOVERNMENT FORUM IN SZCZECIN (POLAND)

On 8-9 April 2010 the International Self-Government Forum took place in Szczecin. The forum focused on the topic: „Importance of the territorial self-government for the regional development in Poland, Germany and the Ukraine.” On behalf of the AEBR Mr Jens Gabbe, Chairman of the AEBR Advisory Committee attended the conference. He participated in the discussion on the possibilities of Euroregions to deal with current challenges and needs of border areas in Poland, Germany and the Ukraine. The invitation to participate in the discussion on 9th April received also representatives of several border regions: Piotr Krzyżan-tek, President of the Polish side of the Euroregion Pomerania, Czesław Fiedorowicz, President of the Convention of the Polish side of the Euroregion Sprewa-Nysa-Bóbr, Kmit Mykola, Chairman of the Regional State Administration of the Oblast Lviv and Peter Heise, Executive Director of the Local Community of the Euroregion Pomerania. As special guest of the forum, Mrs Danuta Hübner, the chairwoman of the Committee on Regional Development in the European Parliament, delivered a speech on the challenges of the multi-level governance in Europe.

Prior to the forum an official meeting of the AEBR representative, Mr Jens Gabbe, with the Marshall of the West Pomeranian Voivodeship, Mr Władysław Husejko, took place. „As regards the funding programmes of the European Union I see today, unfortunately, a negative tendency. I could observe a far-reaching centralisation of the decision-making. But the contrary, the decentralisation, should be the aim. The programmes should take better into account regional needs and the decisions should be taken at regional level” – stressed Jens Gabbe on the occasion of his meeting with Marshall Husejko.

Source: West Pomeranian Voivodeship (www.wzp.pl)
3 MAY 2010: SUMMIT „EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION: EGTC AND CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION“ IN CÁCERES (SPAIN)

Some 120 representatives from national governments, European institutions, border and cross-border regions and EGTCs participated in this summit, which was organised in the scope of the Spanish Presidency.

The President of the Junta de Extremadura, Guillermo Fernández Vara, and the Spanish Vice-President and Minister of Territorial Cooperation, Manuel Chaves González, opened the Summit that was attended by many important politicians from different European countries. Mr. Bernard Soulage, Vice-president of Rhône-Alps introduced the topic with a keynote speech on the different branches and scopes of territorial cooperation. Several EGTCs, border regions and other cross-border structures debated on the current momentum of territorial cooperation in general and cross-border cooperation in particular, the role of EGTCs, the perspectives for future European cohesion policy as well as the perspectives opened by the European Strategy EU2020.

8-10 SEPTEMBER 2010: INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE „SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE CARPATHIANS AND OTHER MOUNTAIN REGIONS IN EUROPE“ IN UZHGOROD (UKRAINE)

Some 180 politicians, entrepreneurs and researchers from 18 different countries participated in the conference. The President of the Ukraine, the Ukrainian Government and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe took over the patronage of the conference. The Secretary General of AEBR, Martín Guillermo Ramírez was invited to participate in two sessions as speaker. The debates focused on the future development of the Carpathians and other mountain regions in Europe that are confronted with manifold economic, social and ecological challenges. Very often, the actions of the countries concerned can be effective only if they are coordinated and jointly implemented across the borders. At the end of the conference a resolution was elaborated including concrete proposals for the future cooperation of the Carpathian countries. Here, the implementation of new cross-border projects and programmes has priority in order to develop a sustainable perspective for the Carpathians and to improve the disaster prevention.

Source: Transcarpathian Regional Council (http://zakarpat-rada.gov.ua)
8-11 SEPTEMBER 2010: XX ECONOMIC FORUM IN KRYNICA (POLAND)

From 8th to 11th September 2010 the XX International Economic Forum took place in Krynica (Poland). In the opening session on 8th September participated the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, the President of the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek and the Polish President, Bronisław Komorowski. The opening session focused on the subject: „Europe after the Lisbon Treaty – a strategy for the future.”

The programme of the forum in Krynica included two plenary sessions, more than 100 debates, various presentations and speeches, and a rich cultural programme. The Economic Forum met with great interest. According to the estimations of the host organisation some 2000 participants came in the four days to Krynica. The discussions dealt particularly with following subjects: the economic development after the crisis, European integration 20 years after the fall of the iron curtain in Central and Eastern Europe, current challenges for the European health systems, the future of the European energy, environment and rural policy, the relations of the European Union with its neighbours, the role of non-governmental organisations in modern societies etc. The Secretary General of AEBR, Martín Guillermo Ramírez, participated on 10th September in a public debate. It dealt in particular with the impact of the regional policy on the modern knowledge-based economy. Here, the focus was placed on the opportunities and the responsibilities of the regional and national level as regards the promotion of knowledge-based economy.

It was agreed with the host organisation that the AEBR will organise an own debate on the occasion of the next forum taking place in 2011.

Source: Fundacja Instytut Studiów Wschodnich

On 21st and 22nd September 2010 an international conference dealing with cross-border cooperation in the Russian Federation, the European Union and Norway took place in Saint Petersburg. Viktor Basargin, the Minister for Regional Development of the Russian Federation opened officially the conference. In his speech he ensured the audience that the cross-border cooperation with the neighbouring countries of the Russian Federation has a high priority. On the occasion of the conference important documents were exchanged between the representatives of the Russian Federation and the European Union that are of substantial importance for the necessary agreements on the funding and implementation of cross-border programmes within the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Policy.

Together with representatives of the governments of Russia, Finland and Norway as well as the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Secretary General of AEBR Martín Guillermo Ramírez participated in the first round table. It dealt with the subject: “Promotion of a joint strategy for cross-border cooperation in Northern Europe.”

18-19 OCTOBER 2010: CONGRESS “BRINGING DOWN THE BORDERS: ON THE WAY TOWARDS A TERRITORIAL COHESION IN EUROPE?” IN STRASBOURG (FRANCE)

The seminar was organised by the Euro-Institute in Kehl and the University of Strasbourg. It was the last of a series of six conferences dealing with different aspects of cross-border cooperation. The President of AEBR and Minister-President of the German-speaking Community of Belgium, Karl-Heinz Lambertz, was invited to deliver a speech on the second day of the congress. In the discussions of working groups participated mainly researchers from several European universities, and also representatives of some Euroregions. The debates in working groups focused on following subjects:

- Cross-border cooperation together with citizens and for citizens;
- The contribution of cross-border cooperation to regional cooperation and the European integration;
- Governance and networking of cross-border areas;
- Cross-border regions as model of territorial cohesion.
9 CURRENT PROJECTS

9.1 EUREGIO II

The project EUREGIO II: „Solutions for improving healthcare cooperation in border regions“ was approved by the European Commission within the Health Programme in 2008 with a project duration from 1st December 2008 to 30th November 2011 (grant agreement No 2007118). It draws on the experiences of the project EUREGIO I finalised in May 2007. It focuses, however, not on the collection of information on cross-border activities (this was the main focus of EUREGIO I), but deals rather with the needs of patients in border regions and the possibilities to improve cross-border cooperation in healthcare.

As final result of the project a handbook with important guidelines for an effective use of INTERREG funds in health projects should be elaborated. Besides, guidelines on the use of health technology assessment (HTA) in a cross-border environment should be developed within the project, as well as legal issues related to personal protection data across borders should be examined.

In the year 2011, the project partners concentrated on the implementation of all working packages. Particular attention was paid to the elaboration of the handbook and the guidelines on the use of HTA. Two project meetings took place in 2011.

On 19th and 20th May 2010 a project meeting in Cologne (Germany) took place. In cooperation with the German Institute for Medical Documentation and Information (DIMDI) a workshop was organised that focused on the application of HTA-solutions at local level. On the second day an exchange on the project progress took place. Moreover, there was a possibility to clarify questions referring to the administrative and financial management of the project.

On 22nd and 23rd November 2010 the fourth meeting of the project partners took place. This time the meeting was organised in Vienna (Austria). On the first day a workshop focusing on the planned handbook took place. The workshop offered the opportunity to present best practice examples and interesting results that should be included in the final version of the handbook. The meeting had also the aim to discuss the progress in implementing the project and to exchange views on the developments at European level as regards the funding of cross-border health projects and other initiatives.

Detailed information on the meetings and other project documents are available on the website of the project coordinator (University of Maastricht): http://inthealth.eu/research/euregio-ii. Particularly worth to mention is the EUREGIO II blog that can be found on this website. It offers border and cross-border regions the possibility to exchange opinions on the opportunities and challenges of cross-border cooperation in healthcare.
9.2 ULYSSES

On the occasion of an ESPON Seminar in May 2007 in Bonn (Germany) the AEBR elaborated first ideas for a project dealing with „cross-border development strategies“. ESPON showed much interest in this project idea. Therefore, the AEBR elaborated a first project concept. On 1-2 August 2007 the project was discussed by the AEBR Advisory Committee directly with the Director Peter Mehlbye. The project proposal was further developed and finalised in 2008, being submitted to ESPON for approval.

By launching this innovative experimental project idea that makes use of applied research results from ESPON as a yardstick for cross-border spatial development planning, the involved stakeholders had aimed at achieving the following objectives:

To raise general awareness amongst involved stakeholders on the basic function and the practical utility of decentralised cross-border spatial development planning; and to promote a more widespread use of ESPON research results for elaborating high-quality cross-border spatial development concepts

To elaborate multi-thematic territorial analyses for a certain number of cross-border areas, making use of available ESPON applied research results and other local analyses and data.

To promote the exchange of experience and best practice in the field of cross-border spatial development also by using cross-border strategies for preparing future INTERREG Programmes.

To promote further application of targeted research results in the selected CBC areas; and to review the general usefulness of applied research results produced by the ESPON Programme in the context of cross-border spatial development planning.

Several changes in the procedures have caused a great delay in the process to develop this project. However, due to the high involvement of several AEBR members, as well as the re-confirmed interest by ESPON, it was possible to submit a revised project application for approval in autumn 2009. On the occasion of a meeting of the project partners on 3rd July 2009 that was attended also by Mr Mehlbye last details and the necessary further steps were discussed. The project was approved in the beginning of 2010. On the occasion of the AEBR Annual Conference in Ireland on 20th October 2010 the first project meeting took place. It provided the opportunity to discuss with the project partners all activities and to present the added value of the project for the involved regions.

The project has a duration of 18 months. The following partners participate in the ULYSSES project: region Alsace (FR) as Lead Partner, REGIO BASILIENSIS (CH), Regionalverband Mittlerer Oberrhein (DE), Regionalverband Südlaher Oberrhein (DE), EUREGIO (DE/NL), Prefecture Drama-Kavala-Xanthi (GR), region North Karelia (FI), region Navarra (ES), region Alentejo (PT), region Extremadura (ES), Öresundskomiteen (DK/SE), Euroregion Duna-Körös-Maros-Tisza (HU/RO/RS), city of Szczecin (PL), EuRegio Salzburg – Berchtesgadener Land – Traunstein (DE/AT), Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia (IT), Working Community of the Pyrenees (ES/FR), Euroregion Nemunas (LT), Ems Dollart Region (DE/NL). The AEBR has the function of Help Desk in this project.

Source: www.espon.eu
9.3 SCULTBORD

The project SCULTBORD is implemented in the scope of the GRUNDTVIG programme. It started on 1st August 2010 and will be finished on 31st July 2012. SCULTBORD is the abbreviation of: Spreading CULTure on BORDER Regions.

The GRUNDTVIG Programme has the aim to enhance the knowledge and skills of adult employees. Here, an important instrument is the exchange of experiences in specific fields with people from other European countries. In case of the SCULTBORD project the main subject is the promotion of cultural activities in border regions and the maintenance of the cultural heritage. The project partners participate in different workshops dealing with these aspects that offer many possibilities to exchange experiences and ideas. Following project partners participate in the SCULTBORD project: the region of Extremadura (ES), the municipality Kavala (GR), the Association of European Border Regions, the Euroregion Danube-Kris-Mures-Tisa (RO/HU/Serbia), Fundação Eugénio de Almeida (PT) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Blagoevgrad (BG).

The first project meeting took place on 18th November 2010 in Badajoz (Spain). The first workshop in the scope of the project was organised by the Eugénio de Almeida Foundation on 19th November 2010 in Evora (see the photo below). The workshop was opened by the Secretary General of the foundation, Mrs. Maria do Céu Ramos with a short presentation of the Eugénio de Almeida foundation and their projects regarding the role of heritage and cultural issues for social cohesion.

Mr. António Camões Gouveia, director of the Evora museum and second speaker of the workshop, held a short presentation on culture issues and his experiences.

Mr. Rui Horta, director of the Espaco do Tempo, situated in Montemor-o-Novo, about 35 km from Evora, shared with the participants as well his experiences and views on international culture, especially on theatrical issues and arts organisations.
9.4 STUDY ON CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION IN LATIN AMERICA

The AEBR participated in a tender of the EU Commission for the elaboration of a study dealing with challenges and opportunities of cross-border cooperation in Latin America. After having won the tender the AEBR signed in November 2009 the project contract with the European Commission. Its value amounted to 60,000 Euro. The project was finalised in October 2010.

As main project result the AEBR presented to the European Commission a study including concrete project proposals, an action plan as well as a road map for the improvement of cross-border cooperation in selected regions in Latin America. The study focused on the area Paraguay-Brazil-Argentina-Uruguay. Cross-border cooperation is perceived in these countries as a peace-building element and a strategic factor for sound and sustainable development processes. Within MERCOSUR, an instrument for territorial cooperation and for the elaboration of integrated territorial concepts is available. The cross-border cooperation gains in the above-mentioned four countries in importance, even if in most cases it is launched on an informal basis. While explaining the involvement of DG REGIO it must be mentioned that the EU has learnt in the course of the implementation of the Copenhagen agenda that the dialogue on global challenges requires regular contacts with other continents. The European Parliament has reserved some funds in order to support these developments.

Following elements are of major importance for the success of cross-border cooperation in Latin America:

- a step by step development (first the tasks, then the structure);
- the strengthening of regional and local tasks and responsibilities;
- a strategic/programmatic approach;
- real joint projects;
- a permanent working structure per cross-border area as the main player (informal, later formal).

Taking into account the EU experience and the exchanges with Latin American experts, it has been concluded in the study that:

Cross-border cooperation can create sustainable added value and contribute to Latin American integration. In order to succeed, however, the existing barriers and prejudices have to be overcome.

Decentralised cross-border cooperation at regional/local level in partnership with national governments and supra-national organisations is the most suitable instrument to pave the way for a new quality of borders as meeting places offering a wide range of opportunities.

After the AEBR won the tender for the elaboration of the study on Latin America the European Commission invited the association to participate in another call referring to cross-border cooperation in West Africa. The AEBR got also in this case the project contract that was signed with the European Commission on 22nd November 2010. The value of the contract for the elaboration of a study on cross-border cooperation in West Africa amounts to 60,000 Euro as well.
10 CONTACTS WITH EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS

10.1 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The relations with the European Parliament were intensified, above all through its Committee on Regional Development, where many members keep good contact with the AEBR. By this, European Cohesion and Regional policies have received a stronger focus on Cross-Border Cooperation.

The members of the European Parliament use occasionally the expertise of AEBR in their opinions and working documents. On particular occasions the AEBR is also invited to hearings in the European Parliament, mainly when they deal with cohesion and regional policy. On 15th September 2010 the Secretary General of AEBR, Martín Guillermo Ramírez participated in a public hearing on European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (see the photo below) that was organised by the Group of the European People’s Party (EPP Group) in the European Parliament. The aim of the hearing was to exchange opinions of public authorities and non-governmental organisations on the new legal instrument of the European Union. Besides, representatives of several existing EGTC reported on their experiences while running an EGTC and presented concrete proposals for improvements in the respective EU regulation. Jan Olbrycht, member of the European Parliament, took over the moderation of the hearing.

On 30th November 2010 the Committee on Regional Development organised a hearing on the future of territorial cooperation. The Secretary General of AEBR, Martín Guillermo Ramírez and Prof. Charles Ricq (European Observation Center of Regions, Geneva) were invited to the hearing as speakers. On the occasion of the hearing, that was moderated by the chairwoman of the Committee on Regional Development, Mrs Danuta Hübner, a working document of the Parliament with the title: „Objective 3: a challenge for territorial cooperation – the future agenda for cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation” was discussed. This paper was elaborated by the member of the European Parliament, Mrs Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid.

Speakers that participated in the hearing of the Group of the European People’s Party on EGTC (from the left): Michael Schneider (Chairman of the EPP-group in the Committee of the Regions), Jan Olbrycht (MEP, Poland), László Surjan (MEP, Hungary) and Martin Guillermo Ramirez, Secretary General of AEBR (Source: European Parliament, Group of the European People’s Party)
10.2 EUROPEAN COMMISSION

As regards the contacts to the European Commission the AEBR cooperates very close with the Directorate General on Regional Policy and there, in particular, with the Director General Dirk Ahner. The AEBR was also regularly in contact with the Commissioner in office responsible for Regional Policy. After the Polish Interim Commissioner, Paweł Samecki, the Austrian politician Johannes Hahn took over the function of the Commissioner for Regional Policy in January 2010. Some representatives of the AEBR met Mr Hahn on 14th April 2010 in Brussels (see the photo below). The meeting focused on the future of European Cohesion Policy and its focus after 2013. Furthermore, the question was addressed in how far regions could be involved in the implementation of the EU 2020 strategy. The cooperation with the Belgian government in the scope of the EU Council Presidency in the second half of the year 2010 was also part of the agenda. The AEBR President, Karl-Heinz Lambertz, who participated in the meeting, felt very positive about the meeting. “I am confident that Commissioner Hahn will be a strong partner in the representation of the interests of border regions”, concluded Mr Lambertz after the meeting with the new EU Commissioner for Regional Policy.

The AEBR takes regularly part in the Structured Dialogue of representatives of the European regional organisations with the European Commission that is organised with support of the Committee of the Regions (CoR). The Committee of the Regions organised on 29th June 2010 a meeting of the European regional organisations with the President of the European Commission Manuel Durão Barroso. The AEBR was invited to this meeting as well. Together with the presidents of other organisations the AEBR President, Karl-Heinz Lambertz discussed with the Commission’s President Barroso and the President of the Committee of the Regions Mercedes Bresso about the future of the cohesion policy and its role in the strategy “Europe 2020.”
10.3 COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

As regards the cooperation with the Committee of the Regions (CoR) throughout the whole year 2010 the Secretary General of AEBR was in close contact with the Secretary General of the CoR Gerhard Stahl. This relationship is also facilitated by the regular meetings of the Secretaries General of European regional organisations that are coordinated by the Committee of the Regions. The Commission usually takes part, coordinating in particular the Structured Dialogue and other related activities like the Open Days. The cooperation with the Committee of the Regions in the year 2010 focused on following subjects: budget of the EU and the future of regional policy, the 5th Cohesion Report of the European Commission, Multi-level Governance and the new strategy Europe 2020. The cooperation with the CoR is based on the joint action programme that was signed by the CoR and the AEBR in the year 2008. The action programme was revised the last time in the year 2009.

The AEBR also takes part regularly in the CoR consultations in issues of interest for border and cross-border regions. In 2010, the Association contributed to consultations on the EU2020, the 5th Cohesion Report, future EGTC regulation, amelioration of INTERREG, and European Health, amongst other.

Photo: Commission’s President Barroso and the President of the CoR Bresso with the AEBR President Karl-Heinz Lambertz (Source: Committee of the Regions)

10.4 COUNCIL OF EUROPE. CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

The cooperation of European border regions with the Council of Europe dates back to the 1960s and remains quite intensive. The AEBR has a consultative status within the Council of Europe and observer status within the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. This status gives AEBR the right to take part in the works of the Congress, submit memoranda and comment on issues discussed in plenary sessions. The AEBR regularly takes part in events organized by the Council and the Congress. Due to the fact that the Secretary General himself cannot attend the numerous meetings organized by the Council and the Congress, some representatives of the region Alsace and Prof. Charles Ricq (COEUR) represent the AEBR at some of these appointments.

AEBR cooperation with the Congress focuses on the exchange of information, participation in the activities organized by both organizations and the preparation of joint actions. Some specific points refer to the increasing relevance of CBC outside the borders of the EU. The cooperation with the Congress in this field is very important, as the emerging CBC structures in this area need specific assistance by different actors. AEBR could also attract new member regions from this area. Constructive relationship of AEBR with the Russian Federation, Ukraine and other countries as regards the development of CBC initiatives and structures in their border areas is very much appreciated by the Council of Europe

The AEBR has also observer status in the ad-hoc Working Group of the Congress on Inter-regional Cooperation launched in 2008, which is responsible to follow the Congress’ inter-regional and transfrontier cooperation activities. Dr. Karl-Heinz Lambertz, Minister-President of the German-speaking Community of Belgium and President of the AEBR, is the chairman of this working group.

The AEBR follows actively the deliberations of this working group and takes good note of its recommendations and proposals, while making contributions regularly, particularly to Mr. Lambertz’s report on “Border regions as laboratories and motors for development on the European continent.”

In 2010, Mr. Andreas Kiefer (AT) has been nominated Secretary General of the Congress, after a long and successful period under Mr. Ulrich Bohner (DE), who took regularly part in AEBR meetings. Mr. Kiefer will certainly do so as well.

On 18th March 2010 the AEBR and the Congress signed a cooperation agreement. The aim of this agreement is to bundle strengths and to use the achieved synergies for the benefit of European regions.
11 COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

11.1 THE EUROPEAN REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS

In 2010 the AEBR kept its relationship with other important European regional and local associations as in the past. Regular contacts with the Assembly of European Regions (AER), the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR), the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), the network of EU regions with legislative power (RegLeg), the Association Européenne des Elus de Montaigne (AEM), the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE) and Eurocities. In some cases, common activities have been organized and a stronger effort to coordinate actions is in process.

11.2 NEW CROSS-BORDER STRUCTURES

On the occasion of a meeting held in Faro on 5 May 2010, Mr. José Antonio Griñán, President of the Spanish Region of Andalucía, Mr. Joao Varejao Faria, President of the Portuguese Region of Algarve, and Mr. Joao de Deus Cordovil, President of the Portuguese Region of Alentejo, signed the convention for the creation of the new Spanish/Portuguese Euroregion “AAA”. The cooperation in the scope of the new Euroregion has the aim to improve the competitiveness and the employment situation in the involved regions. Following subjects are of major importance for the cooperation in the Euroregion: spatial development, healthcare, protection of the environment, development cooperation as well as economic and social integration. As the regions Andalucía and Alentejo are members of the AEBR, the new cross-border structure is involved in the activities of the association and there is much exchange between both organisations.

11.3 NEW (AND OLD) RELATIONSHIPS

It was possible in 2010 to further improve the cooperation between the AEBR and such organisations as the MOT. The cooperation with NEEBOR seems to have slowed down in the last years. Occasionally, there is some exchange with NEEBOR through the AEBR Task Force on external borders, though in 2011 a new input has been given to this relationship, mainly due to the strong involvement of the Finnish members of the AEBR.

New cooperation fields are being explored with the Euro-Institut Kehl. The AEBR President, Karl-Heinz Lambertz, signed in March 2010 on behalf of the AEBR a cooperation agreement with the Euro-Institut Kehl. This agreement has primarily the aim to improve the exchange of information and knowledge. Moreover, support should be provided in case that the partner organisation is preparing a conference or other event dealing with cross-border cooperation.

Regular contacts are established with thematic organizations like EURISY (European association to promote the use of space technologies for development and growth) or Intermodes (the international convention for intermodality in passenger transport). The cooperation between the AEBR and the above-mentioned organisations focuses in particular on the exchange of information. Besides, the AEBR distributes interesting news and event announcements of EURISY and Intermodes among its members and friends using the association’s media.

The AEBR is also in contact with some international organizations, such as the OECD and UN agencies; and with integration systems like the African Union, the Central American Integration System or the Mercosur.
12 AEBR ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND THE SECRETARIAT

AEBR ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The AEBR Secretariat General is supported in particular by the AEBR Advisory Committee that from 2006/2007 meets regularly again, usually twice a year. After Dr. Freiherr von Malchus passed away in 2008, the Executive Committee of the AEBR decided during its meeting in Salamanca in autumn 2009 to nominate Mr Jens Gabbe for the function of the new chairman of the Advisory Committee. In the meeting of the General Assembly in October 2010 the former Vice-President of AEBR, Mr Reinhold Kolck was nominated for the function of the Vice-Chairman of the Advisory Committee.

The Chairman of the Advisory Committee nominates the members of the Committee. Due to financial reasons, the Committee consists of a small permanent circle of recognised “border experts” with Europe-wide knowledge, proved scientific activities and evaluation experiences. Along with the chairman and the vice-chairman following experts worked in the Advisory Committee in the year 2010: Jacques Robert, Thomas Stumm, Haris Martinos, Christian Haefliger, Welf Selke, Pavel Branda, as well as one representative of the European Commission (DG REGIO) and the Committee of the Regions (that paid their travel costs by themselves). In particular cases further experts are invited to the meetings.

In the year 2010 two meetings of the Advisory Committee took place. On invitation of the Committee of the Regions the first meeting took place on 11th and 12th January 2010 in Brussels. The second meeting was organised on 4th and 5th June 2010 in Berlin. Main subjects discussed during the meetings were: current developments at European level as regards the future of territorial, and in particular the cross-border cooperation. The Advisory Committee dealt also with opinions on important political issues as well as with running and planned projects of the AEBR. Details on the activities of the AEBR Advisory Committee are included in the chart below.

The activities of the Advisory Committee in 2010 included in particular the debate and preparation of the following outputs:

- Evaluation of the applications for the AEBR award “Sail of Papenburg” 2010
- Assistance in implementing the ULYSSES project launched in the scope of the ESPON Programme
- Elaboration of contents and applications for the projects CROSS-ADD and PROMETEUS in the scope of the INTERREG IVB programme
- Support in preparing the study on the perspectives of cross-border cooperation in Latin America that was elaborated for the European Commission by the AEBR in the year 2010
- Support in preparing the study on the perspectives of cross-border cooperation in West Africa for the European Commission
- Elaboration of an opinion on the 5th Cohesion Report of the European Commission
- Elaboration of proposals for improvement referring to the conceptualisation of the INTERREG Programmes after 2013
- Elaboration of an opinion for the Committee of the Regions referring to the regulation on the European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation
- Elaboration of an opinion on the strategy „Europe 2020” for the Committee of the Regions
- Participation in the meeting of the AEBR with the EU Commissioner for Regional Policy Johannes Hahn and with representatives of the DG REGIO
- Preparation of the final declaration of the AEBR Annual Conference 2010.
SECRETARIAT GENERAL

The Executive Committee of the AEBR is regularly informed about the developments in the Secretariat General. At the end of the year 2010 following persons worked for the AEBR in the office in Gronau (Germany):

- Martín Guillermo Ramírez (Secretary General)
- Cordula Pandary (Office Coordination)
- Marie-Lou Perou (Administration and communication)
- Nadja Ait Laouad (Administration and communication)
- Petra Doods (Finances and staff)
- Bianca Gabbe (Advisory Committee and projects).

Support was provided also by an additional employee, Anna Winkler that was on maternity leave in the year 2010 and worked a few hours weekly for the AEBR as teleworker. Since March 2011 she has worked again in the office in Gronau. Occasionally, students of different fields of study interested in cross-border cooperation and European issues absolve a traineeship at the AEBR.

The EUREGIO continuously supports the General Secretariat with human and material resources. Moreover, in the year 2010 the AEBR could also use the material and human resources of the representation of the region Extremadura in Brussels. In this way the AEBR could participate in more meetings and events in Brussels.

The public relations of the AEBR are still difficult, because there is no AEBR communication officer at the moment. European-wide public relations are nearly impossible on a regular basis. The website www.aebr.eu, as well as the electronic Newsflash sent since November 2009 monthly to members and friends of the AEBR facilitate these public relations. The Newsflash has a more compact layout than the previous newsletter of the AEBR and provides a good overview of important developments within the AEBR and at the European level. By using the AEBR Newsflash also the members of the AEBR have the possibility to present important news from border and cross-border regions to the public. Several member regions of the AEBR have followed already the request of the Secretariat General and have presented their region in the Newsflash. Also in the future it can be always used by the members to publish interesting information from border and cross-border regions.

The AEBR members can also use the website of the AEBR as information medium. The website was completely redesigned in order to offer more possibilities for communication and exchange of information. Some internet fora have been already launched in 2009. Moreover, since 2009 the documents for the meetings of the Executive Committee and the General Assembly are also available online. In autumn 2010 the new AEBR website has been activated.

Contacts with the press take place on particular occasions and with support of AEBR members. Usually, the AEBR Annual Conferences offer the best occasion to organise a press conference. The Secretariat General intensified in 2010 its efforts to improve the communication with the members of the AEBR and other partners.

We would like to thank all persons, AEBR members and partners, institutions, organizations and other entities that have cooperated, supported and got somehow involved in our activities. Without their active involvement it would have not been possible to develop our plans and achieve our objectives.

AEBR Team
Gronau, July 2011