

English Translation of M. Belliard representative of the Alsace Region in Kursk

The Alsace Region (France) has a special geographical location due to its common border with Germany and Switzerland. A turbulent history resulted from this proximity; the territory has alternatively belonged to France and Germany, its inhabitants, the Alsacians changed 4 times nationality between 1870 and 1945. To this extent, the region went through events typical for a cross border regions. As a result, Alsace became a member of the Association of European Borders Regions (AEBR) right from its foundation in 1971.

At that time, Alsace was not as developed as today. The Region is now endowed with a legislative assembly benefiting from broad competences in education (high schools, apprenticeship, professional training), its economy as well as railway transport of passengers or spatial planning are well developed. The Region was only a devolved territory of the State before gradually becoming a genuine public body with its own competences which got broader with the establishment of regional council in 1972 and the direct elections of regional councillors from 1986.

Since the Alsace Region has been a member of the AEBR, its partnerships have constantly developed. The activity of the AEBR is unique as it gathers almost all the cross border region in Europe and represents an effective lobby to the European Institutions. The Association continues to implement concrete projects. Alsace manages the ULYSSES project launched by the AEBR in the framework of the European programme ESPON (a projects which aims at a improving the knowledge of European cross border regions through a multi themes territorial analysis).

Considering both the perspectives of lobbying and projects implementation, the Alsace Region considers the AEBR as a real asset for its visibility at the European level and for the development of its territory.

The Region which has been cooperating for a long time with its German and Swiss neighbouring regions in the framework of the "Superior Rhine" (trinational territory including the west part of Baden-Württemberg, the south west part of the Rhineland-Palatinate and the five cantons north west Switzerland) and endeavoured to implement cross border projects in various areas (spatial planning, road or railway infrastructures but also in science, culture, etc.). Since the end of the 80s, the Superior Rhine has benefited from the territorial cohesion tool INTERREG A thanks to which cross border projects were supported. Thus, more than 300 projects came into being in the Superior Rhine. For the period 2007-2015, the Superior Rhine territory has even received its own funding of 7,752 billion Euros (since 2007 71 projects has been implemented).

The Alsace Region is also trying to increase its visibility at a European level. In this perspective, it has established with its neighbours of the Superior Rhine « the Trinational Metropolitan Region of the Superior Rhine » (TMR). The TMR aims at building a network between the actors of the political, economical, scientific fields and the civil society. The TMR adopted in 2010 a "join strategy for the implementation of the Trinational Region of the Superior Rhine" which meets the objectives of the Agenda 21 and of the Europe 2020. As exposed in the strategy: *"while strengthening our strengths (Stärken stärken), we have to work for a territorial cohesion within the Superior Rhine, defined by harmony and solidarity of the European regions. This area is willing to become an experimental laboratory for the EU's policy and an important spokesperson to the European Commission."*

To conclude, the Alsace Region is happy to continue its membership of the AEBR that we consider at the same time as a catalyser of border and cross border initiatives which result in concrete cross border projects and European spokesperson for its member regions.