

English translation

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a board member of the Euroregion Rhein-Waal, I am delighted to pronounce a short welcoming word in the occasion of the celebration cession of the AEBR. Kursk is 2000 km, as the crow flies, from the German-Dutch border, thus, it's a small word. This illustrates what follows: this summer, a big sowing machine of the German company Lemken, from the town of Alpen in the Euroregion Rhein-Waal, has taken care of almost 1500 ha of Agropromkomlektazia-Kursk's land. Global trade links people and enterprises. This example and our cross border cooperation perfectly illustrate this connection.

For 40 years, the AEBR has been founded, I would like to warmly congratulate the organisation on the occasion of this celebration. The Euroregion Rhein-Waal is a member of the first hour; indeed, on the 4th May 1971 the Founding Assembly of the Association Euroregion Rhein-Waal took place. Consequently we are also celebrating our 40th anniversary this year.

In 1963, a conference - in which the possibility of a new transport link between the Randstad (NL) and the Ruhrregion (DE) was evoked - took place. The politicians of both German and Dutch border regions acknowledged the need for contact and agreed on a continuation for the project. This link and contact - today we would rather speak about network - led to the foundation of the Euroregion Rhein-Waal, in 1971.

The year 1993 made an important step in the history of the Euroregion Rhein-Waal with the obtention of a public law status. This status lies in a treaty, the Treaty of Anholt which was signed in 1991. It established the prerequisite of a cross border cooperation to obtain a public law status. The Euroregion Rhein-Waal was the first Eureregion to use this Treaty. The Treaty of Anholt is a forerunner of the European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation

(EGTC). It was and is very helpful for young border regions which have no such structures to organise cross border cooperation at their disposal.

From this moment, things have evolved, regional but also European developments have contributed to the growth of the Euroregion Rhein-Waal. European integration is one of the most important political conquests from the 20th and 21st centuries. It guarantees a long-term peace, freedom and political stability on our continent. The Euroregion Rhein-Waal longs with the motto “cooperation without borders” for giving a face to the German-Dutch border region.

Thanks to the support of its members, the Euroregion Rhein-Waal has been able in 40 years to gather, as members, 56 Dutch and German municipalities, administrative districts, industry and trade chambers and the Rhineland Regional Council. The 3,7 million inhabitants continues to grow. It contributes to the improvement of the citizens' living conditions in the border region.

In the framework of the grant programme INTERREGIV A, several projects in economic field, technology and innovation, sustainable regional development and social integration have been supported. Consequently, diverse cross border bus connections have been founded thanks to the INTERREG Programme, as well as the cross border use of the rescue helicopters of Nijmegen was allowed thanks to the programme.

The European integration and the abolition of the European internal borders has led within the Euroregion Rhein-Waal to cross border living- and job related influx. 15.000 people daily travel to the job across the open border. This open border does not mean that all the legal differences disappeared. The Euroregion organizes monthly consultation hours for the commuters so as them to be able to ask about taxation and health insurance issues. The Euroregio-JobRoboter.com is an online search engine which offers job vacancies on both sides of the border. It is a means to make the cross border job market more transparent. This project has also been initiated by the Euroregion. About 2.5 million people are using this website each year, looking

for matching job vacancies.

Even if the employment sector and the tasks package have these last 40 years somewhat broaden, the Euroregion Rhein-Waal has stayed loyal to its initial idealistic beliefs. Cross border cooperation has brought an essential and important added value to the social and economic fields.

To finish, I would like to take advantage of this occasion to warmly thank the AEBR, to greet the association for its anniversary and to formulate the wish that in the coming years, it continues to represent successfully the interests of border regions and to offer a Platform for the regions to exchange reflections. You and us have to work together in this perspective, I am sure that we will succeed.

Thank you for your attention.