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The discussions in progress on the future of the cohesion policy have foregrounded the importance of obtaining the points of view of local stakeholders.

In this context, the seventh edition of the OPEN DAYS, European week of regions and cities, which recently ended in Brussels was a great success, with more than 6000 participants from all over Europe and close to 125 seminars, workshops and debates. These included nine workshops devoted directly to cross-border cooperation or to the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), which is evidence of the strong interest of European regions and cities in this topic.

In order for the process of European integration to be shared and supported by the citizens to an even greater extent, it has to bring about practical responses and in visible results. In the cross-border territories, services to the citizens are in fact a very good example of this, as the presentations at our workshop showed (see article on this page) in areas such as transport, health, training or issues of fiscal solidarity.

Nevertheless, practical actions in a bi- or even tri-national context are still complex undertakings today.

Our workshop attempted to show how local cross-border territories can benefit from the process of European integration and what common answers can be provided in order to meet these needs in terms of services to the citizens. The examples presented raised key questions: How can common services be funded on a long-term basis and how can the results of projects be sustained? How can the citizens be involved in this process?

The accounts also showed that the determination of the local stakeholders to move forward in this direction is very strong and that appropriate means must be identified at Community level to meet their needs.

OPEN DAYS 2009

The EUROMOT workshop on cross-border territories

From 5 to 8 October 2009, the seventh edition of the OPEN DAYS was held in Brussels. This event, organised each year by the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions, is the annual meeting point for regions and cities in Europe.

The EUROMOT workshop, chaired by José Palma-Andres (see interview on this page), was held on 5 October on the topic "Local cross-border territories at the service of citizens". Four presentations were made to illustrate this issue:

- Public transport was initially presented as a major factor of economic integration in cross-border territories, but their development must still be widely promoted, because it continues to encounter many difficulties (for example for joint financing of operation or construction of lines or for railway interoperability).
- The presentation by the Ister-Granum EGTC on the border between Hungary and Slovakia highlighted an innovative project funding experiment: a solidarity fund, constituted by a percentage of the tax receipts on the Hungarian side, has been set up to finance investment projects on the other side, in Slovakia, in areas such as schools, culture or education.
- The experience of the city twin Frankfurt (Oder)/Slubice (Germany/Poland) is an



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excellent example of the pooling of networks at the service of the whole population. In June 2009, a conference on the joint future of the city twin provided an opportunity to involve the citizens and civil society in the construction of a "common vision", which forms the basis of a 2010-2020 cross-border local action plan (prepared as part of the URBACT "EGTC" project, www.urbact.eu/egtc).

• Lastly, the example of the Ireland/Northern Ireland border has shown that one of the major hindrances to cooperation, in a sensitive political context, is the difficulty of institutionalising cooperation, even though many individual projects are implemented in areas such as health, training, planning, and informing the citizens.

Cross-border seminar on sport

The tenth cross-border seminar on sports cooperation was organised by the Euroréseau du sport on 9 and 10 October 2009 in Hendaye, on the French-Spanish border.

Forty-six persons took part in the discussions and in the presentations of good practices, which covered topics such as "The cross-border association model applied to the world of sport".

The Euroréseau du sport, with its registered office in San Sebastian, Spain, is a standing working group formed by several organisations* aiming to develop sports cooperation between the French, Spanish and Portuguese cross-border regions. It has the following objectives:

- identify the regions and gather information on cross-border cooperation on sport;
- analyse the problems and the obstacles encountered by the citizens of the cross-

border regions in accessing all types of sporting discipline and provide solutions to these problems;

- promote sports cooperation activities between the cross-border regions of the European Union;
- encourage the integration of the activities of the Euroréseau du sport into the programmes specific to the various Euroregions;
- put forward recommendations to the national and Community bodies for them to become more directly involved in these issues, etc.

In this context, the MOT has launched a consultation of its members and of its EUROMOT network to collect other examples in Europe of cross-border exchanges in the area of sports cooperation.

* Fourteen partners: local authorities, associations and sports clubs; the cross-border Consorcio Bidasoa-Xingudi is a member. Further information at www.eurored-deporte.net

In brief

Trinational Eurodistrict Basel - Projects in preparation

The Management Committee of the Trinational Eurodistrict Basel (TEB) met on 25 September 2009 in Saint-Louis. The items on the agenda included the improvement of the cross-border fare structure, the "IBA Basel 2020" international exhibition project and the presentation of a geoportal project.



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Improvement of cross-border cooperation on fares

Financial support from the Interreg Upper Rhine programme has boosted the implementation of this project, launched in 2008 at the initiative of the TEB and backed by the existing transport operators. The results of an initial interim study have also just been communicated: it analysed the cross-border fare provision and proposed ideas for optimising the project. The present fare provision is satisfactory for monthly or annual season tickets (RegioCardPlus) and for the one-day trinational tickets (TicketTriRegio), and visibly meets a market demand. Among several proposals, the study recommends the improvement and extension of trinational fare solutions for single ticket sales. After examining and assessing these proposals, the project leaders want to implement some of them rapidly. The partners also want to see the cross-border transport tickets become more popular. This objective is pursued by an Interreg project currently in progress, which plans targeted communication and marketing actions in 2010 to make the cross-border fare range better known, and will make timetable information available on-line.

International architecture exhibition project - "IBA Basel 2020"

For more than four years now the TEB has been preparing the first trinational and cross-border architecture exhibition, "IBA Basel 2020". Funding, which secures the trinational backing of the project, has been obtained for the next three years. Sources include the local authorities of the three countries, European Interreg IVA funds and grants requested from the Swiss federal state. The international exhibition has the following objectives:

- show how the authorities of the trinational urban region can collaborate more closely in order to grow together in a sustainable manner, without losing their identity and cultural diversity,
- give the urban region high visibility for its population, as the exhibition enables inhabitants and members of civil society to reflect on a common vision of the cross-border territory,
- define priorities to improve the effects of the present cross-border undertaking, its financing and its projects,
- increase the international influence of the region by setting up a joint platform and joint marketing for approved projects,
- generate added value for the authorities and the project leaders by speeding up the implementation of exemplary and sustainable projects of excellence.

Cross-border geoportal project

This project, currently in preparation, also appeared on the agenda of the Committee meeting of 25 September. It is an Internet-based geographical information system which would enable the geographical data of the Eurodistrict partners to be displayed on a single map and combined interactively according to the needs. The principle is to network the existing geographical information for the Eurodistrict partners that have cross-border interests and to bring together base maps covering the whole of the territory.

Further information at www.eurodistrictbasel.eu

Cross-border cooperation: Michel Delebarre speaks at the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CLRA) of the Council of Europe

Michel Delebarre, as president of EUROMOT and 1st vice-president of the Committee of the Regions, addressed the plenary assembly of the CLRA in Strasbourg on 13 October 2009. The Congress adopted a resolution and a recommendation reaffirming cross-border cooperation as one of its priorities over the next ten years. This debate falls within the framework of the adoption by the Council of Europe of the 3rd protocol to the Madrid Convention of the Council of Europe introducing Euroregional Cooperation Groupings (ECG), on the occasion of the ministerial meeting in Utrecht next November. www.cor.europa.eu

Commission seminar on the green paper on territorial cohesion

On 25 September 2009 the European Commission organised a seminar attended by experts, in which the MOT participated, in order to continue the discussions on the green paper on territorial cohesion.

The CEVA in question in Geneva

The CEVA (Cornavin-Eaux-Vives-Annemasse), cross-border regional express rail service, which should be introduced in 2016, is subject in Switzerland to a referendum on 29 November. Many authorities and associations, including the Groupement Transfrontalier Européen (GTE), have taken action to support this large-scale project intended to accommodate the large volume of border journeys between Geneva and Annemasse.

URBACT EGTC events



- URBACT annual conference, 24 and 25 November in Stockholm
- EGTC project thematic seminar "Involvement civil society within cross-border conurbations", 11 February in Lille
- European conference "City Lab" on metropolitan governance 12 February in Lille - www.urbact.eu/egtc

Press review

- **"The Committee of the Regions imposes its demand for a specific European strategy for the Danube"**, Committee of the Regions, 16 October
"Meeting in plenary session of the Committee of the Regions in Brussels, the elected representatives of the EU regions and municipalities today emphasised the special strategic importance of the Danube region and were pleased that preparation of a European strategy for the Danube is planned..."
- **Grande Région: the regional nature park network**, *L'Est Républicain*, 3 October
"A convention has been signed between the nine regional nature parks making up the network..."
- **Esch-Belval, an 'operation of national interest'**, *Le Républicain Lorrain*, 9 October
"The development of the Belval site, on the French side of the derelict industrial areas of Esch-sur-Alzette, was yesterday propelled to the rank of a 'priority' by Nicolas Sarkozy, who asked spatial planning minister Michel Mercier to raise its status to 'operation of national interest'..."
- **The mayor of Annemasse brings an action for xenophobic remarks and incitation to hatred**, *Le Point*, 14 October
"Targeted by an advertisement for the UDC, the Genevan right-wing populist party, Annemasse municipal council has decided to bring an action for xenophobic remarks and incitation to hatred. In question, an advertising insert published in the La Tribune de Genève which called readers to vote last Sunday in the election of members of the Grand Conseil, the parliament of the Canton of Geneva. A sample: 'The CEVA? A new means of transport for the Annemasse trash! Expel foreign criminals! Don't give them yet another access to Geneva. Vote UDC...'"
- **Nice-Cuneo non-stop no more**, *Var Matin*, 4 October
"From 13 December, travellers on the Nice-Breil-Cuneo line, via Sospel and Tende, will have to change at Breil..."

