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The emergence of a metropolisation strategy for the Greater Region

URN: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0156-40970859>



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Page 125 to 140

In: Pallagst, Karina; Hartz, Andrea; Caesar, Beate (Eds.) (2022):

Border Futures – Zukunft Grenze – Avenir Frontière. The future viability of cross-border cooperation. Hannover. = Arbeitsberichte der ARL 33.

This paper is a translated version of the following publication: Schelkmann, Petra (2018): Die Metropolisierungsstrategie der Großregion im Entstehen.

In: Pallagst, Karina; Hartz, Andrea; Caesar, Beate (Hrsg.) (2018): Border Futures – Zukunft Grenze – Avenir Frontière. Zukunftsfähigkeit grenzüberschreitender Zusammenarbeit. Hannover, 115-129 = Arbeitsberichte der ARL 20.

The original version can be accessed here:

URN: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0156-4097085>

Typesetting and layout: ProLinguo GmbH

Translation and proofreading: ProLinguo GmbH

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THE EMERGENCE OF A METROPOLISATION STRATEGY FOR THE GREATER REGION

Contents

- 1 Introduction
 - 2 The ESPON project ‘Metroborder’ and the process toward a Cross-Border Polycentric Metropolitan Region (CBPMR) in the Greater Region
 - 3 Cornerstones of the resolutions to implement the CBPMR
 - 3.1 Berlin Declaration of 2011
 - 3.2 Conference of the Ministers of the Greater Region for ‘Spatial Planning and Transport’ 2013
 - 3.3 Regional conference of Rhineland-Palatinate on the ‘Metropolitan Strategy of the Greater Region’ 2014
 - 3.4 Conference of the Ministers of the Greater Region for ‘Spatial Planning and the Economy’ 2014
 - 3.5 Conference of the Ministers of the Greater Region for ‘Spatial Planning’ 2016
 - 4 Conclusions and outlook: The Spatial Development Strategy of the Greater Region as a steering instrument for the CBPMR process
- References

Abstract

This chapter describes the process by which a cross-border metropolitan region develops, using the example of the Greater Region. Between 2008 and 2010 the idea of a cross-border, polycentric metropolitan region in the Greater Region was investigated and further developed within the ESPON project ‘Metroborder’. In recent years, driven by policy declarations, strategic approaches for implementing this metropolitan region have been developed. A Spatial Development Strategy of the Greater Region with a focus on the metropolitan dimensions of the sub-regions provides the foundation for this. The issue of governance in relation to the cross-border interactional area (in the narrower conception of this area) is also discussed.

Keywords

Metropolitan border region – Greater Region – spatial development strategy – politics – state spatial planning – transport – cross-border cooperation

1 Introduction

With the discussion about the reorientation of the cohesion policy, the Territorial Agenda of the EU 2020, the Europe 2020 Strategy and in the course of incorporating the objective of territorial cohesion in the Treaty of Lisbon, the border regions have increasingly gained attention since the mid-2000s in the context of the emerging metropolisation debate (Böhme/Zillmer 2010). Metropolises and metropolitan areas play a key role in the implementation of the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy. A not inconsiderable part of the metropolitan functions and factors that are essential for the competitiveness of Europe are found in metropolitan areas. Metropolitan areas are driving forces for research and development, innovation and cutting-edge technology. They are centres of knowledge and creativity and often also trailblazers in the field of economic and social innovations. The establishment of the European metropolitan regions in Germany, in line with the resolution of the Conference of Ministers for Spatial Planning (*Ministerkonferenz für Raumordnung, MKRO*) of 2005 entitled ‘Evolution of guiding principles and action strategies for spatial planning policies’, proceeds along very heterogeneous lines. In addition to the material, organisational and structural differences, the spatial boundaries vary in particular. The associations and networks labelled ‘metropolitan region’ share a characteristic focus on maintaining and expanding their capabilities and competitiveness as powerful economic regions. At the same time, the strategy should have ‘*an internal as well as an external impact*’ (Grotheer 2011: 3).

The management of metropolitan regions is, however, still predominantly driven and defined at the national level, and interactional areas of cross-border metropolitan regions rarely play a crucial role in national investment decisions, whether in regard to transport infrastructure or in the choice of locations. This has a negative impact in particular on the development of cross-border areas. Improving the perception of and strengthening the Greater Region as an economic location was therefore the driving motivation for the cross-border metropolisation strategy.

With the first action programme under the Territorial Agenda of 2007 and later as part of its Presidency of the Summit of the Greater Region (2008/2009, see Luxembourgian Presidency 2009), the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg placed the issue of the cross-border polycentric metropolitan areas on the European and cross-border agenda on an entirely practical level for the first time and launched the ‘Metroborder’ project, financed with EU funds (see also Andrea Hartz’s paper in this volume).

The resolution of the Conference of Ministers for Spatial Planning (*MKRO* 2016) on the revised ‘Concepts and Strategies for Spatial Development in Germany’ placed the spotlight on cross-border metropolitan border regions. The guiding principle of ‘enhancing competitiveness’, for example, acknowledged for the first time the existence and significance of metropolitan border regions alongside the existing national ‘European metropolitan regions’ as part of the concept of metropolitan areas and provided for specific approaches to action (*MKRO* 2016: 4 et seq.) (see also Andrea Hartz’s paper in this volume).

Their implementation reflects the same challenges, and the same aspects are or were discussed as in the debates on the national metropolitan regions. The principal point of discussion and criticism in the Greater Region was the question of how rural sub-regions could benefit to the same extent from the concept. This reflected and still reflects the concern that a cross-border metropolisation strategy would primarily further strengthen the ‘strong’ urbanised areas and that the ‘weak’ rather rural sub-regions would not benefit in the same way.

2 The ESPON project ‘Metroborder’ and the process toward a Cross-Border Polycentric Metropolitan Region (CBPMR) in the Greater Region

As part of the evolution of the European spatial development policy and with the embedding of the notion of territorial cohesion in the Treaty of Lisbon, the metropolisation process in the Greater Region was launched in the 2008–2010 period under the Luxembourgian Summit Presidency based on the ‘Metroborder’ study co-financed by the European ESPON programme (European Spatial Planning Observation Network) (see Andrea Hartz’s paper in this volume). Ever since, numerous resolutions have been passed by the Summit of the Greater Region¹ and by the Conferences of the Ministers of the Greater Region and political declarations have been made by various committees on its further elaboration.

The Metroborder study, which examined the Greater Region as part of a case study, confirmed that the Greater Region has the potential to develop a cross-border polycentric metropolitan region (CBPMR) in its cross-border core area around Arlon/Luxembourg, Saarbrücken/Sarreguemines, Metz, Nancy, Trier and Kaiserslautern (DATer 2010). This is based on the finding by the Metroborder study that the Greater Region has metropolitan qualities comparable to other national metropolitan regions. It is conditional, however, on the further development of the ‘critical mass’ of metropolitan functions.

The Metroborder study is based on the following understanding of a CBPMR:

‘[...] the Metroborder project considers CBPMR as political constructions based on cross-border agreements which consider the existence of national borders as a resource for increasing interactions at the local level and based on the embeddedness of the metropolitan centre(s) in global networks. Because CBPMRs are composed of several urban centres located on either side of a border, these regional political initiatives can mobilise different geographical scales in order to utilise the assets and complementarities of the morphological and functional polycentricity.’ (DATer 2010:13).

¹ The Summit of the Greater Region is the meeting of the executives of the partner regions in the Greater Region. Summit meetings have been held regularly since 1995. For further information, please see: <http://www.grossregion.net/Institutionen/Der-Gipfel-im-Detail/Gipfel2>.

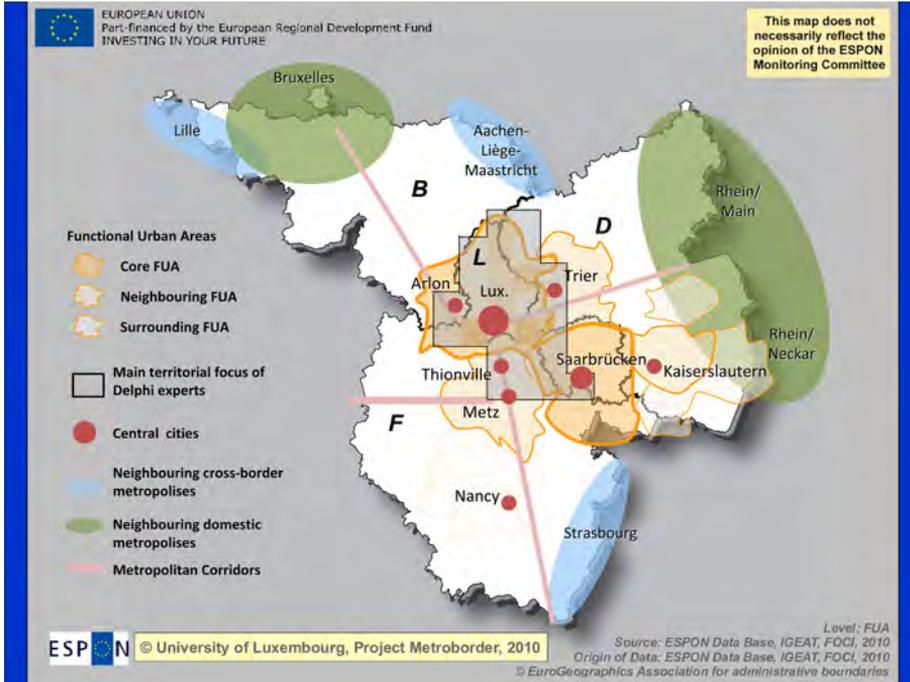


Fig. 1: A cross-border, polycentric metropolitan region in the Greater Region – schematic synthesis map of the findings of the Metroborder study /Source: DATer 2010: 19

Specifically, this means that CBPMR are ultimately spatial arrangements on either side of the border which can exploit the different characteristics and potentials on both sides of the border in a complementary fashion in the sense of a win-win situation. The success of these regions depends decisively on the will and strategies of the stakeholders to decisively cooperate within this multi-level governance structure. Practice has shown that an important factor in this regard is that all stakeholders involved have the same understanding and that the different areas and spatial categories do not consider the situation to amount to a virtual competition.

Based on the findings of the Metroborder study, the politically responsible parties have confirmed their political intention to further develop the Greater Region as a CBPMR in various Summit resolutions and declarations and to explore the areas and fields of action where closer cooperation appears necessary or useful, and whether or how the governance structures may have to be developed in future. The process was launched with the elaboration of the Spatial Development Strategy of the Greater Region: ‘The executives instruct the Coordinating Committee for Spatial Development (*Koordinierungsausschuss für Räumliche Entwicklung, KARE*) to continue the work on the elaboration of the Spatial Development Strategy of the Greater Region (*Raumentwicklungskonzept der Großregion, REKGR*) and to specifically take the metropolitan dimension into account in this regard’ (Lorraine Presidency 2013: 6).

3 Cornerstones of the resolutions to implement the CBPMR

Following the policy resolution of the Summit of the Greater Region on the Metro-border study seeking to emphasise the metropolitan characteristics of the Greater Region more clearly, various summits and responsible stakeholders have adopted the following Position Papers and resolutions on the development of a metropolisation strategy for the Greater Region (cf. Gerd-Rainer Damm's paper in this volume):

The ministers for spatial planning and responsible parties from the partner regions in the Greater Region adopted the following declarations and resolutions in Luxembourg on 15 July 2010:

- > The polycentricity of the Greater Region depends to a considerable extent on the economic strength of Luxembourg and on the socio-economic interactions of the Saarbrücken-Moselle-Est hub.
- > Recognition of a cross-border dynamic depends to a considerable extent on a high degree of mobility of employees as well as on cross-border and interregional cooperation.
- > A Spatial Development Strategy of the Greater Region (*Raumentwicklungskonzept der Großregion, REKGR*) is to be elaborated to establish a CBPMR.
- > The development of multi-level governance can only be meaningfully pursued together with regional and local stakeholders and in collaboration with stakeholders from the economy, science and civil society (principle of shared responsibility).
- > The Coordinating Committee for Spatial Development (the working level of the representatives of the executive for spatial planning in the Greater Region, *KARE* in short) has been commissioned, together with the CBPMR committee, to elaborate a joint declaration on CBPMR. The purpose of this declaration is to express the intention of the Greater Region to pursue 'enhanced cooperation' with the European institutions and thus to also contribute towards the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy (Conference of the Ministers of the Greater Region for 'Space' 2010). This was further detailed as part of an informal meeting of the executives of the Summit of the Greater Region on 7 July 2011 in Berlin by means of the Berlin Declaration.

3.1 Berlin Declaration of 2011

With the Berlin Declaration of 7 July 2011 (2010 Summit of the Greater Region), the recommendations of the Conference of the Ministers for 'Space' were politically validated and further specified. They confirmed their expectation to jointly develop the Greater Region into a European metropolitan region. At the same time, they emphasised that the special contribution of the border regions to Europe would have to be expressed in the shaping of the European regional policy.

'The Greater Region is aware of its capabilities, which were confirmed in the METROBORDER study and which enabled it to form a metropolitan region. This is possible subject to the proviso that these forces are bundled by unifying all stakeholders and regions behind a strategy that is consistent with the priorities of the European Union and with the prerequisites and cooperation paths that were created as part of the seminar on 31 May 2011 in Lorraine.

The members of the Summit of the Greater Region are convinced of the necessity to raise the profile of the Greater Region and its European competitiveness in Europe and to give it the recognition it deserves.

As a pioneer in cross-border territorial cohesion policy, the Greater Region, as with other cross-border regions, will contribute to the consolidation of the European space, by offering itself as a political laboratory to the European Union and serving as a contact point for the next funding period of the cohesion policy.

The objective of the integrated development of the cooperation area within a process of bundling the metropolitan functions at the level of the region concerned is confirmed. At the same time, the cooperation area is to be developed proportionately and the economic attractiveness of the region and its attractiveness for residential purposes is to be maintained; the primary concern is to create a space with a high living standard, which offers citizens all services they expect at the various stages of life.

The members of the Summit of the Greater Region reiterate their political intention to consolidate the territorial and social cohesion of a progressive Greater Region in accordance with the Treaty of Lisbon.

It is the declared aim of the Greater Region to develop into a European metropolitan region.

The European Commission is invited to promote and support increased cooperation, using technical and financial means, in line with the objective of growth and stability.'

For the implementation of this ambitious project, the 12th Summit defined the following four guiding principles for the development of the CBPMR on 24 January 2011 in Völklingen (Saarland Presidency 2010):

- > Economy: towards a competitive and sustainable economic area
- > People: towards living conditions that facilitate everyday life
- > Space: towards an attractive, balanced environment
- > Governance: towards an area with shared political responsibilities

Further political resolutions and statements followed as part of meetings of relevant ministers and the subsequent Summits of the Greater Region.

3.2 Conference of the Ministers of the Greater Region for ‘Spatial Planning and Transport’ 2013

Based on the results of the Metroborder study, under the Lorraine Summit Presidency, the approach of an integrated development strategy for the Greater Region with a bundling of the metropolitan functions was further implemented; this was confirmed by the Berlin Declaration of 7 July 2011. With the Coordinating Committee for Spatial Development (*KARE*) of the Greater Region in charge, two position papers on the question of the centrality and transport infrastructure of the Greater Region were elaborated and validated by the ministers responsible for spatial planning and transport and the specialist, responsible parties of the Greater Region (i.e. in Lorraine, by the Prefect at the time), and by the respective Presidents of the General Councils and/or of the Regional Council. Particular attention was paid to the metropolitan qualities (Conference of the Ministers of the Greater Region for ‘Spatial Planning and Transport’ 2013a and b).

The following working documents were adopted by the Conference of the Ministers of the Greater Region on 17 January 2013 in Luxembourg:

- > Spatial Development Strategy of the Greater Region – Section 1: The metropolitan dimension of the Greater Region.
- > Priority transport projects for the metropolitan development of the Greater Region.

Working paper: ‘The metropolitan dimension of the Greater Region’

(cf. Conference of the Ministers of the Greater Region for ‘Spatial Planning and Transport’ 2013a)

The working paper, which examined the spatial and structural starting points, represented a first building block for the Spatial Development Strategy of the Greater Region. The ‘Greater Region perspective’ was important from the outset, i.e. the question of which central places are significant for the further development of the Greater Region as a functional interactional area from a cross-border viewpoint, e.g. in connection with the provision of public services. In the foreground was the question of how the different spatio-structural and planning situations in the sub-regions of the Greater Region could lead to a first comparative (pragmatic) view, which would make it possible to define the framework for further metropolisation process. The paper ultimately proposes to focus on two levels of centrality, the higher-order centres and middle-order centres as development hubs of a cross-border dimension.

The paper contains the mandate to develop the actual ‘CBPMR area,’ i.e. the central cross-border interactional area with a metropolitan dimension in accordance with the qualities defined in the Metroborder study (cf. *DATer* 2010) around Arlon/Luxembourg, Metz, Nancy, Saarbrücken/Sarreguemines, Trier and Kaiserslautern. In addition, it also contains work assignments and supplemental explanations on the cooperation with the rather ‘peripheral’ sub-regions of the Greater Region with metropolitan potential. These are, however, focused rather on metropolises or national

European metropolitan regions outside the Greater Region. For Rhineland-Palatinate, these are the European metropolitan regions of Rhine-Ruhr, Rhine-Main and Rhine-Neckar, and for Belgium, it concerns northern Wallonia around Brussels. In these cases, the challenge is to identify complementary interests in the sense of urban-rural partnerships.

The map ‘The metropolitan dimension of the Greater Region’ (Fig. 2) visualises the aforementioned areas according to their centrality classification.

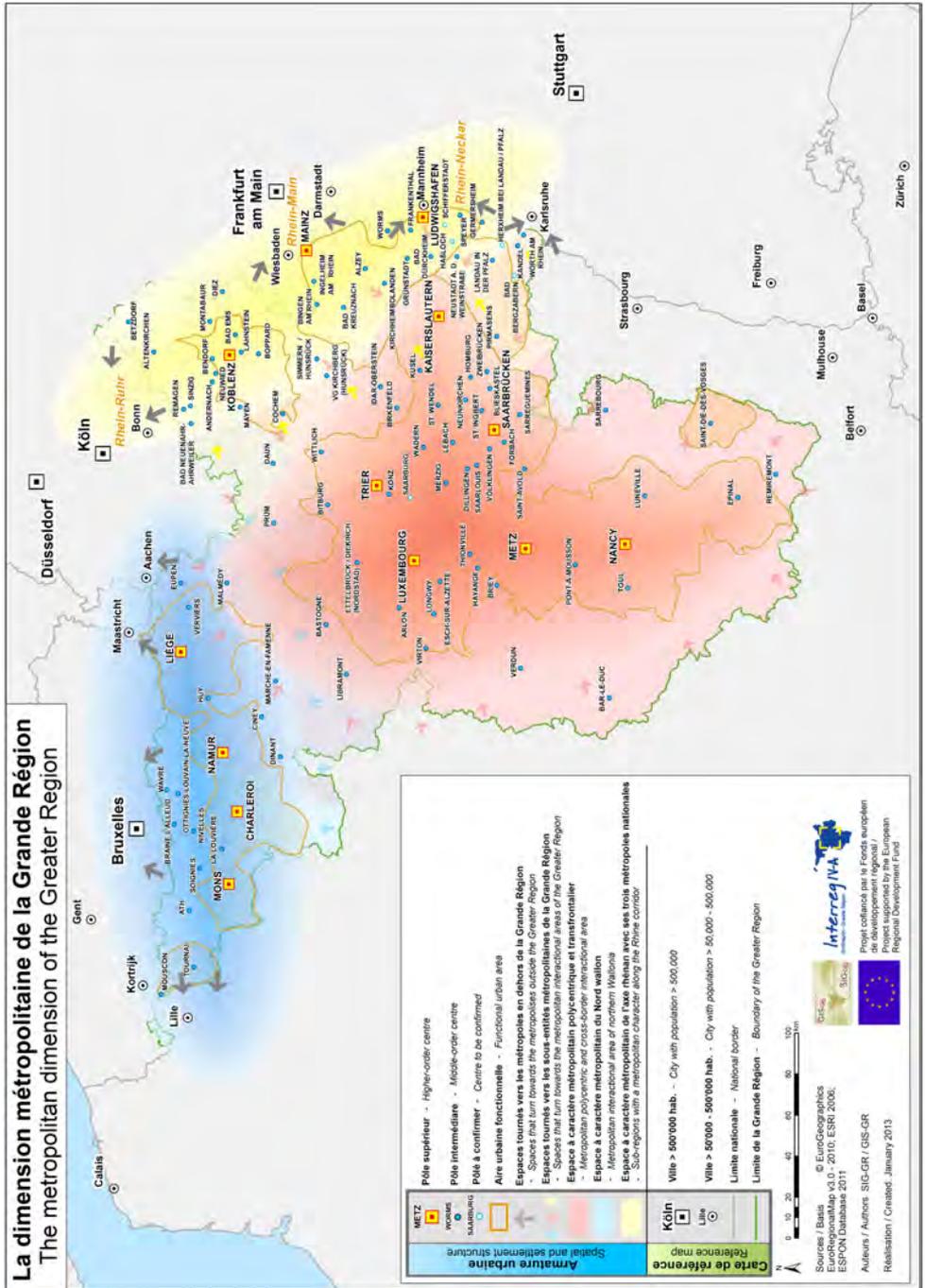


Fig. 2: The metropolitan dimension of the Greater Region /Source: Conference of the Ministers of the Greater Region for ‘Spatial Planning and Transport’ 2013: 8

Working paper: ‘Priority transport projects for the metropolitan development of the Greater Region’

An important objective to promote the competitiveness of the Greater Region and to enhance its metropolitan potential is the expansion of high-capacity transport for people and goods within the Greater Region and to the neighbouring areas of the Greater Region and its links to international transport. Especially in view of the high volume of commuters, mobility within the Greater Region is an important field of action and a foundation for its future development. Priority fields of action concern eliminating or reducing infrastructural bottlenecks, improving the quality of transport connections within the Greater Region and advancing multi-modality. Moreover, good international links to the surrounding metropolises and metropolitan regions and other long-distance connections are fundamental prerequisites for the development of the core area of the Greater Region into a polycentric metropolitan region.

Based on the above findings, the Coordinating Committee on Spatial Development of the Greater Region compiled a list of the priority projects for the various transport modes in collaboration with the Summit’s Transport Working Group, the Transport Working Group of the Economic and Social Committee of the Greater Region (cf. Gerd-Rainer Damm’s paper in this volume) and the experts from the administrations and institutions of the various partner regions. The focus was primarily on infrastructure; the papers were last updated in 2013. Figure 3 visualises the projects defined as a priority.

The 13th Summit of the Greater Region adopted additional resolutions on the further development of the CBPMR on 24 January 2013 in Pont-à-Mousson, under the Lorraine Presidency. They primarily focused on questions of governance and cooperation within the structures of the Summit of the Greater Region and the definition of cornerstones for its strategic and substantive orientation. In this context, the Lorraine Presidency presented an internal, informal working paper (Lorraine Regional Council 2012) together with the ‘Strategic Framework’. In line with the Metroborder study, the paper proposes to further develop the themes of ‘economic/business metropolis’, ‘European laboratory’, ‘mobile and accessible region’ as well as civic engagement, along with issues relating to governance and consistency with European funding programmes (Lorraine Presidency 2013: 19).

In the reporting period, the work for the permanent establishment of a geographic information system for the Greater Region (*geografisches Informationssystem für die Großregion, GIS-GR*), as an important tool for cross-border spatial planning and spatial development in the Greater Region, was completed. The roll-out phase from April 2010 to March 2013 was co-financed through the European INTERREG IV A ‘Greater Region’ programme. The *GIS-GR* is currently operated under the auspices of the Coordinating Committee on Spatial Development without INTERREG funding (Lorraine Presidency 2013: 19).

3.3 Regional conference of Rhineland-Palatinate on the ‘Metropolitan Strategy of the Greater Region’ 2014

At a regional conference on 28 April 2014, the federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate presented the current status of the discussion on CBPMR within the Greater Region within the narrower interactional area of Rhineland-Palatinate and discussed the opportunities and obstacles for increased cross-border cooperation for Rhineland-Palatinate with the municipal and regional levels. An important aspect of this conference was to identify perspectives and courses of action for the increased participation of local stakeholders, to transparently shape the metropolitan process in the Greater Region and to discuss its further implementation in Rhineland-Palatinate.

3.4 Conference of the Ministers of the Greater Region for ‘Spatial Planning and the Economy’

The Conference of the Ministers for ‘Spatial Planning and the Economy’ on 17 November 2014 in Trier was convened on the occasion of the completion of the preliminary study for the elaboration of the economic section of the Spatial Development Strategy for the Greater Region (*REKGR*), which was then under preparation. The objective of the preliminary study was to present quantitative and qualitative economic data and information to resolve the question of whether – and which – fields or potential fields of action were suitable for strengthening the Greater Region as an ‘integrated economic area’ through improved cross-border economic cooperation, to benefit the economic performance of the individual sub-regions and to improve the visibility of the Greater Region in external relations (Conference of the Ministers of the Greater Region for ‘Spatial Planning and the Economy’ 2014).

As a result, the following insights and recommendations were adopted:

- > The spatial configuration of the Greater Region is extremely heterogeneous for historical reasons.
- > Due to the different economic dynamics in the sub-regions, the identification of common focal points is deemed to be difficult.
- > Despite the very disparate economic structure and the fact that the chief economic sectors differ between the partner regions, synergies can still be realised through better coordination of the economic policies between the sub-regions in the Greater Region.

It was further recommended that the Greater Region should derive a joint cross-border innovation and economic development strategy based on the existing strategies in the sub-regions and create the corresponding operational structures for its implementation.

To permit the Greater Region to develop into a ‘more closely integrated economic area’, greater identification of citizens with the Greater Region border area was

deemed necessary (Conference of the Ministers of the Greater Region for ‘Spatial Planning and the Economy’ 2014).

Rhineland-Palatinate held the rotating Presidency of the 14th Summit for the 2013/2014 period. The title of the Rhineland-Palatinate working programme of the Presidency Summit was ‘The labour market in the Greater Region. Common challenges and cross-border responses.’ The focus was on the challenges for the labour market in the Greater Region as a consequence of demographic change and on the further implementation of the CBPMR process. The 14th Summit on 4 December 2014 in Trier confirmed the work on the Spatial Development Strategy of the Greater Region and assessed it as an important strategic approach also to strengthen the metropolitanisation process. The resolutions of the Conference of the Ministers for ‘Spatial Planning and the Economy’ were taken into account, and the need ‘to complete this analysis with a view to drawing up the economic development strategy for the Greater Region’ was emphasised (State Chancellery of Rhineland-Palatinate [*Staatskanzlei Rheinland-Pfalz*] 2014: 12).

3.5 2016 Conference of the Ministers for ‘Spatial Planning’

At the Conference of the Ministers of the Greater Region for ‘Spatial Planning’ on 23 November 2016 in Namur a progress report was provided about the ongoing work. In so doing, the Spatial Development Strategy of the Greater Region (*REKGR*) was emphasised as the foundation for the strategic orientation for the work of the Summit. The Spatial Development Strategy will be completed as part an Interreg project (*‘REKGR’*) and is co-financed by the Greater Region Interreg VA programme in the 2018–2022 period. It will also include the elaboration of a specific action programme (Conference of the Ministers of the Greater Region for ‘Spatial Planning’ 2016).

The overall process is organised in accordance with multi-level governance. This means that the narrower cross-border interactional area of metropolitan significance at the core of the Greater Region, which is defined by the metropolitan dimension and the economic dynamic and prosperity of Luxembourg, is to be developed, while the diversity and heterogeneity of the entire territory of the Greater Region must be taken into account as well. This creates a connection between the metropolitan interactional areas and adequate integration in the European space and in the European networks.

Issues that should be addressed with priority are:

- > the demographic development dynamics and their impacts on important territorial and municipal fields of action, such as the provision of public services
- > mobility
- > economic development (including the tourism sector, education and training)
- > the environment, energy and climate protection

The Spatial Development Strategy will be completed as part of the 'REKGR' Interreg A project through a broad-based, participatory process with the involvement of the municipal level, relevant stakeholders and experts. This serves to ensure that all areas and regions are included and that any underlying conflicts or residual reservations about any competition between the 'urban' defined metropolitan areas and the more rural spaces and areas can be eliminated.

The results of the Conference of the Ministers were confirmed on 20 December 2016 in Arlon by the Summit of the Executive of the Greater Region under the Walloon Summit Presidency.

4 Conclusions and outlook: The Spatial Development Strategy of the Greater Region as a steering instrument for the CBPMR process

Previous experience gained in the process, which has now been running for an extended period, shows that processes and political decisions, such as the conscious focus on the metropolitan potential and the related strategy to strengthen the area as a whole together with all its sub-regions, cannot be implemented ad hoc; a thorough and complex process of discussions and decision-making, which must evolve slowly, is needed. This is all the more significant in cross-border cooperation areas which have different planning systems and administrative cultures. The decision to steer the CBPMR process in the Greater Region through a cross-border spatial development strategy is the result of this discussion process and now a decision, which is supported by all parties.

Based on the subsections of the future Spatial Development Strategy of the Greater Region (*REKGR*) adopted by the Summit of the Greater Region on the fields of action of 'centrality and metropolitan potential', 'priority transport projects' and the preliminary assessment on the economy, the subsections of the Spatial Development Strategy have in the meantime undergone monitoring. The actual Spatial Development Strategy of the Greater Region is to be completed by the end of 2022.

Other areas with a metropolitan character that are not in direct vicinity of the border but which are part of the Greater Region are to be included alongside the actual core space, the 'cross-border interactional area of metropolitan character'. These are the national European metropolitan regions in Germany along the Rhine corridor (Rhine-Ruhr, Rhine-Main and Rhine-Neckar) and northern Wallonia. The Spatial Development Strategy of the Greater Region should reflect the development framework for the further development of the Greater Region as a whole. Greater attention is also to be given to the topic of urban-rural partnerships, and the municipal level and other relevant stakeholders are to be more closely involved. This aims to overcome existing reservations about competition between different spatial categories (metropolitan areas versus rural areas).

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