



**“Les rencontres
Amériques latine, Caraïbe, Europe de la coopération transfrontière”**

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**Introduction into the practice
of the cross-border cooperation in Continental Europe**

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Slide 1

Greetings

Madame la Présidente,
Mesdames et Messieurs,
ladies and gentlemen,

thank you very much for your invitation and for the opportunity, to give an overview and a short report about our experiences in the cross border cooperation between Germany and the Netherlands in the northern part of the border between our countries.

About my person:

Slide 2

My main profession is “Landrat” of the Landkreis Leer.

“Landkreis” is the municipal level above the cities and villages, but below the states. We take part of the state lower Saxony in the Federal Republic of Germany.

The area of a “Landkreis” is similar to the area of a small Département in France.

Our area is about 1.100 sqkm.

Every 5 years the people elect the council of the Landkreis together with the councils in the cities and villages.

The people also elect directly every 8 years the Landrat and the mayors of the cities and villages.

They are the chiefs of their administration and also the political representatives of the Landkreis and respectively the cities and villages.

I am Landrat of the Landkreis Leer since 2001.

In the time before I was the vice chief of the administration of a city for 8 years and afterwards chief of the administration in another city for 4 years.

Slide 3

The Landkreis Leer has about 165.000 inhabitants.

The largest employees for our people are the Volkswagen-factory in Emden, the Meyer-Shipyard in Papenburg and the Enercon wind turbine factory in Aurich. They are all situated just outside of our district, but very important for us and the whole region.

Volkswagen builds the model "Passat" in Emden.

The Meyer-Shipyard builds various types of ships, but especially the largest cruise ships in the world.

Slide 4

On the world market for wind turbines Enercon is on the fifth position.

The Maritime Economics are very important for our region on both sides of the border.

Our district is the second largest location for shipping companies in Germany. The largest location is the City of Hamburg.

Slide 5:

For the economic development of our region the river Ems had a great importance. For the little harbours along the river and especially for the transfer of the vessels – also the large cruise ships – the river Ems is indispensable.

EDR/AEBR

The district of Leer was one of the founding members of the Ems-Dollart-Region (EDR), and the EDR was one of the founding members of the Association of European border Regions (AEBR).

Slide 6

Shortly after the Second World War, already in the 1950s, representatives of numerous European border areas got together in order to discuss the dismantling of border barriers and the possibilities for cross-border cooperation. This process had been developed parallel to the process of European integration.

The idea of setting up a European association, or “union for border regions”, was at first discussed in 1965 at the International Regional Planning Conference in Basel.

In 1971 10 border regions set up a Standing Conference of European Border Regions on 17-18 June 1971 at Anholt Castle.

The Conference chose to call itself the “Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)”.

Actually 96 members of the AEBR represent most European border areas.

But altogether different kinds of organisations are working in about 185 border and cross-border-regions in Europe.

Since 2001 I am member of the board of the EDR and since 2009

I am together with the mayor of the city of Coevorden, one of our Dutch members, Chairman of the Council and the board.

The office of the chairman rotates every 2 years between the German and the Dutch member, actually between the mayor of Coevorden and me.

Cross-border cooperation in the EDR

Slide 7

I want to tell you something about

- cross-border cooperation in our region
and the role of the Ems-Dollart Region
- cross border challenges and programmes
- our INTERREG-program
- two exemplary cross-border projects
- our tasks now and in the future.

Slide 8

Let me start with some general information about the Ems Dollard Region.

Actually, the Ems Dollard Region is one of five cross-border Euregions along the Dutch-German border and acts as an official public body.

The EDR was founded 1977 in Bunde (Germany) and Nieuweschans (The Netherlands).

As you can see,

Slide 9

the Ems Dollard Region is located in the northern part of the Netherlands and Germany. In this area we have about 2,8 million inhabitants.

We have a low population density on both sides of the border.

The region is one of the sparsely populated areas of both countries.

Slide 10

The EDR at present has 102 members, like municipalities, chambers of commerce, cities, counties or districts etc.

The EDR promotes cross-border cooperation between these members, which are located in the Dutch provinces of Groningen and Drenthe, the German Districts of Aurich, Emsland, Leer, Wittmund, Cloppenburg, Friesland and Ammerland.

Some more information about the area where the EDR is active:

The area from north to south is about 175 km long and from east to west about 210 km. In the north there is the North Sea with the Wadden Sea as well as the islands that also belong to the area.

Within the economy in the EDR agriculture and industry are important, especially the exploitation of natural gas, wind energy, biogas and the maritime economics.

It is characteristic for our region, that there are a lot of rather small companies in the EDR. 90 % of the companies have got less than 50 employees.

EDR: Organization – Main tasks of the office

Some details about the organization of the EDR:

Within the EDR we have a council, which is the highest authority in the organization.

Every member has two representatives in the Council, and every member has one vote. I told you, that the Council's chairmanship rotates every 2 years between the German and the Dutch member.

The council meets 2 or 3 times a year.

The Council elects the 16 members of the board, 8 from the Netherlands and 8 from Germany.

In the meeting of the board every member talks in his language. Most times it is not necessary to translate.

The EDR has an common office with 15 Dutch and German employees in Nieuweschans in the Netherlands directly to the border to Germany. We have two office managers, one from the Netherlands and one from Germany.

One of them is responsible for the Management of the programs of the EC, especially for the advice during the application process for an INTERREG – project.

Sometimes the office helps to find partners for cross-border projects on the other side of the border.

Other focal points are cross-border projects for youth and sport, cultural and tourism projects in the EDR.

Networking is very important for the both directors of the office, but also for the members of the board. Very often they can help with their personal contacts.

An important task for the office is the EURES Cross border Info point, which deals with social security, taxes and the labour market for those people, who want to work in the neighbouring country.

The office organizes meetings with experts from the ministries of both countries for the people.

This project is very successful.

The EDR has its own financial resources, to carry out a part of its activities. The financial base of the EDR comprises the members' contributions.

In stimulating cross-border cooperation the EDR also receives financial support from the Dutch provinces of Groningen and Drenthe together with project-based subsidies from the state of Lower Saxony.

INTERREG

Slide 11

One of the main tasks of the EDR is the management of programs of the INTERREG initiative.

Priorities of the programs were

- Economy, technology and innovation
- Strengthening of sustainable regional development
- Integration and society

Criteria for an INTERREG-project

Interreg-projects should have certain cross border values:

- They have to improve cross border cooperation.
- They have to improve the labor market and the economic structure of the region.
- They have to be focused on the people in the region.
- Projects should offer equal opportunities for men and women.
- Because of the great importance of the cross border character, all these projects have to be developed and completed by one Dutch and one German partner.
- Because we had to deal with 3 law systems (Dutch, German Republic, Niedersachsen)

In the period 1991 – 2006 the EDR finished INTERREG-projects with a total invest of 200 Mio. € and a contribution of the EU of 72 Mio. €.

In the period 2007 – 2013 the EDR finished INTERREG-projects with a total invest of 295 Mio. € and a contribution of the EU of 138 Mio. €.

Slide 12

Themes of the projects were ... (Slide 12)

Cross-border projects were ... (Slide 12)

Exemplary projects

Slide 13

Young Ems-Dollart-Philharmony:

On this sheet you can see some quite different exemplary projects, which were implemented in the last INTERREG-program-period.

Two of these projects I will explain very short:

The Young Ems-Dollart-Philharmony is a very important cultural project.

70 or 80 young talented musicians in the age of 14-21 years from both sides of the border have the chance, to play in this orchestra.

They play on a high level with international conductors and talented young soloists.

They met together one or two times a year for 10 days to study and exercise the program for the concerts of the orchestra.

And during the year the people on both sides of the border can listen to their concerts.

You can see and listen the enthusiasm of these young people from Netherland and Germany.

You can find the Young Ems Dollart-Philharmonie also on youtube.

Slide 14

MariTim:

MariTIM is the abbreviation of

“Maritime Technologies and Innovations – Model Region Germany/The Netherlands”

Content of this project is:

“research and development of new propulsion technologies for the ships of tomorrow.”

The duration of this project is 2011 – 2014 with a budget of 9 Mio. €.

Slide 15

The target of this project is the reduction of the CO²-emission of the shipping and the engines of the ships.

Responsible for this project is the Maritime Competence Center in our district, but the project was designed by a lot of projectpartners in both countries.

The total project consists of several smaller and larger projects.

Slide 16

Stakeholders of the project MariTIM are ... (Slide 16).

35 German and Dutch partners are engaged in this project.

Slide 17

Slide 18

The EDR or the Maritime Competence Center do not finance the investment for the engines or the ships, but they coordinate and pay together with the partners for the research, the development and the exchange of experience.

We were overwhelmed by the interest for this project by the maritime economics.

The targets of this project are concrete:

Slide 19

Slide 20

Slide 21

Future Challenges in the EDR

At the end I finally want to tell you about the future challenges in the EDR: (read Slide 22)

Slide 22

For the next period of the INTERREG-program (INTERREG V) we produced a paper, which contains the important subjects.

It is the strategy north 2014 – 2020.

In the context of the strategy we define the challenges of the future:

Slide 23 (read Slide 23)

From challenges we develop aims.

These aims will be converted in the following economic fields, which are very important for the EDR.

Slide 24 (read Slide 24)

Slide 25

Thank you for your attention.