

# MUSEUMS OF THE GREATER REGION OF SAARLORLUXRHINELAND-PALATINATE AND WALLONIA

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## A networked Association

The Greater Region comprising Saarland, Lorraine, Luxembourg, Rhineland-Palatinate and Wallonia is an unwieldy name for an area which has been trying to cooperate in a way which is unique throughout Europe.

By the end of the sixties, four different nations - Belgium, Germany, France, and Luxembourg - and five different regions - Belgian Luxembourg, Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg, Lorraine, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland - agreed to intensify their cooperation and to form an integral whole by holding summit meetings, by organising a closer cooperation between parliamentarians, chambers of industry and commerce, chambers of handicrafts, universities, and small and medium-sized enterprises. All of this is being manifested by 85,000 commuters in the region every day. As a result, southwestern Germany, northeastern France, southeastern Belgium and the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg in the middle have grown together into an area with a population of 11.2 million and a per capita gross domestic product which is above the EU average, an area which is now trying to seize its opportunity at the centre of the European Union, in the middle of Euroland.

The concept of the so-called "Blue Banana" devised by Prognos-Institute in Basel at the end of the eighties, serves to describe the zones which experience the strongest growth in the European Union. The zone ranging from Mid-England to Tuscany just outside Rome and branching off to Paris and to Eastern and Central Europe and extending as far as the Mediterranean Coast includes those areas which are bound to experience the strongest growth in the near future.

*Illustration "Blue Banana" to be shown on overhead projector*

A look at this strange fruit shows that the Greater Region as it is interpreted by IRI, occupies a remarkable central position.

This has been reaffirmed in the North-South and East-West links referred to in a documentation of the third Summit Meeting.

*Follows presentation of North-South axis and East-West link*

From what has been said, we must conclude that the Greater Region will be well advised to intensify its cross-border cooperation for economic reasons and to take all economic, social and political measures necessary to turn the region into a competitive place in the heart of Euroland.

Yet, there is still another reason:

*Presentation of the Carolingian Empire after its partition into three kingdoms in 843.*

A look at the map of Europe after the partition of the Carolingian Empire into three kingdoms in 843 reveals the following:

The Lotharingian Middle Realm covered a zone which at the time was considered to be the prosperity axis of the empire. The Middle Realm extended from the North Sea harbours via Metz and Strasbourg to what is today Switzerland and went on to Lombardy, Piedmont and Tuscany. Contrary to the expectations of the contracting parties the Middle Realm did not turn out to be the peace-keeping link between the eastern and western empires but gave rise to many controversies, the bloodiest and most devastating of which ended on 8 May 1945.

When laying the transparency I showed earlier on top of this transparency it becomes evident that the prosperity axis of the 9<sup>th</sup> century noticeably overlaps with the zones which are expected to experience an intensive growth in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

So, when we are talking about cross-border cooperation along this axis which we refer to with this unwieldy name "Greater Region of SaarLorLux-Rhineland-Palatinate and Wallonia", there are not only economic but also historical reasons which come into play.

What is being tried here and elsewhere in terms of cross-border cooperation, for example between Baden-Wurtemberg and Alsace or in the Aachen, Maastricht and Liège region, is nothing else but an attempt to correct a fundamental error committed in the past with disastrous consequences and to achieve integration in a peaceful Europe.

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The Association established by IRI on 7 December 1998 in Trier is meant to be a cross-border cultural network comprising four nations. Its work will be primarily based on the Internet.

Museum networks which have already been in existence in the Greater Region will now cooperate across the borders. Small and medium-sized cultural institutions which have not yet been (sufficiently) networked in the region and beyond will be registered. The Association of Museums will then invite them to become part of a cross-border network.

By 14 June 1999, 151 out of 900 museums had joined the Association of "Museums located in the Greater Region of SaarLorLux-Rhineland-Palatinate and Wallonia".

A model project of cross-border cultural cooperation is being developed. The term "museum" will obviously not be defined in its narrow meaning to enable other cultural institutions such as memorial places and cultural foundations to participate.

The Association of Museums promotes the interests of museums in the Greater Region by

- establishing regional and supra-regional contacts between museums with similar or different orientations, in particular between small and medium-sized museums and cultural institutions,
- developing a cooperation forum by organising conferences, expert committees, fairs, touring exhibitions, etc.
- eliminating linguistic barriers and comprehension problems in the Greater Region by providing written and spoken information in several languages (publications, assistance in providing guided tours for visitors in several languages, press conferences, information, Internet)
- addressing specific groups of persons, such as senior citizens, pupils and young adults (activities and media used will be geared to different target groups)
- increasing the number of visitors in the different museums by improving public-relations work, increasing the number of tourists in the Greater Region (culture trails),
- mobilising hotels and restaurants which are located near museums and mobilising other members of the Association.

## Culture and Museums create and safeguard jobs

- The Association wants to contribute to a better development of the tourist potential in the Greater Region, thus helping to create and preserve jobs. The aim is to interest an increasing number of people in visiting museums. This applies to all museums irrespective of their size, orientation, and geographic location in the Greater Region.
- Visitors to museums will be informed about similar or other exhibitions in other museums in the region with special emphasis being placed on the members of the Association.
- The Association aims to increase the tourists' length of stay in the Greater Region from 1 ½ or 1 ¾ days at present to 2-3 days. Its public-relations work will therefore also include service sectors which are important to tourists, such as hotels and restaurants located near museums.

The network will be based on the information and data system of the Association which will provide information about affiliated museums over the Internet.

At a price of 50 Euro the data of the museums can be entered on the IRI website.

IRI will be in charge of the management and administration of the Association and, in doing so, will ensure the permanent operation of the Association. The advisory board will decide about the programme and work of the administrative office.

Other museums are invited to join the Association.

## Programme of the Association

The Association of "Museums of the Greater Region of SaarLorLux-Rhineland-Palatinate and Wallonia" elected from among its members an advisory board which is to develop the aims and the future programme in cooperation with IRI, which is in charge of the management and administration.

The rules of procedure lay down the aims, the working methods, the modalities of membership, the general assembly, and the work of the advisory board, the functions of the office, which is in charge of management and administration, and finances.

- Based on the specification sheets which the Association will receive from the museums, a data pool containing the most important information about the relevant museums, such as key data (name, address, telephone and fax number, E-mail, and Internet address, logo), programmes and services will be developed.
- The advisory board and IRI will establish contacts with the different ministries, the regional administrations and the EU Commission with the aim of lobbying for a broader political support at the regional, national and European level.

The First Conference of the Museums was held in Luxembourg on 8 October 1999.

The Association plans to organise a presentation in Nancy in April 2000 (and a "museum fair" in Ottweiler, Saarland in 2001).

IRI, in association with the advisory board, will set up and facilitate various workshops consisting of representatives of different museums with the aim of preparing the different activities planned (topics, basis of discussions, speakers, etc.)

These activities will be made public in a journal to be published regularly. In addition, there will be press conferences and press releases. To achieve the widest circulation possible, the different publications will be issued in the different languages of the Greater Region.

Members of the Association's Advisory Board:

Bernd Blumenthal, Volkskunde- und Freilichtmuseum Roscheider Hof, Konz (Germany)

Mireille-Bénédicte Bouvet, Service régional de l'inventaire de Lorraine, Nancy (France)

Constantin Chariot, Musées Gaumais, Virton (Belgium)

Magdeleine Clermont-Joly, Musée de l'histoire du fer, Jarville-La-Malgrange (France)

Hans-Peter Kuhnen, Dr., Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Trier (Germany)

Rainer Raber, Saarländischer Museumsverband, Ottweiler (Germany)

Helge Rieder, Prof., Fachhochschule Trier, Trier (Germany)

Werner Steinmetz, Saarländisches Uhrenmuseum, Püttlingen/Köllerbach (Germany)

Danièle Wagener, Musée d'histoire de la Ville de Luxembourg, Luxembourg (Luxemburg)

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