



## “25 years of Interreg”

**15-16 September 2015**

**Maison du Savoir  
Esch-Belval  
Luxembourg**

**15th September 13.30**

### **Welcome Speech Minister Bausch**

(Minister for Sustainable Development and Infrastructure, Luxembourg)

Dear Commissioner Crețu,  
dear participants of this conference,  
dear Interreg friends,

it is my great pleasure to welcome you all here in Esch Beval in the Maison du Savoir of the University of Luxembourg today in order to celebrate 25 years of Interreg.

My warm welcome also goes to all participants who follow us via web streaming.

These days are quite remarkable, because of the celebration of a longstanding Interreg cooperation across Europe and its borders – worth a silver wedding.

It did not need much persuasion to celebrate 25 years of Interreg under the Luxembourg EU-Council Presidency.

As a small country and a founding member of the European Union, cooperation across national borders has always been a central and even vital aspect for Luxembourg.

I am very happy to see, that so many friends of Interreg from all over Europe and beyond have come to Belval, which is located just a stone's throw away from the French border.

This area of ore mining and steel-production in the South of Luxembourg was the source of Luxembourg's first major wave of economic development at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Later on, In the difficult times after the disastrous event of the Second World War, Luxembourg engaged in 1951 (in cooperation with France, Belgium , the Netherlands, West-Germany and Italy for the European Coal and Steel Community.

This community was established in Luxembourg in order to rebuild our economies and to secure peace and this can be considered as the birth of the European Union.

After the decline of the ore and steel industry in the 1970s Luxembourg has developed the financial sector.

Today Luxembourg is again in the middle of another transition towards a more knowledge-based economy.

In fact the Luxembourg University, the Luxembourg Research Institutions and the Start-up Center have settled here in the old industrial heartland, based on a

decision to develop Belval as a sort of counterweight to the fast growing City of Luxembourg.

Again we find intense cross-border cooperation as in this territory the French-Luxembourgish EGTC Alzette-Belval was created in 2012 (two thousand and ten) in order to support the cross-border development of this area.

Furthermore these days are also remarkable because of the inauguration of the location, where this celebration is taking place.

Indeed, where you are sitting now, the University of Luxembourg was been welcoming its students yesterday for the very first time at the new Campus Belval.

6300 ( six thousand three hundred) students are enrolled at the Luxembourg University of which 55 (fifty five) percent are originating from 110 (one hundred and ten) countries - so you might very well hear your mother tongues around here these days – also from the side of the students.

And here we are today with a European Union of 28 (twenty eight) countries and 276 ( two hundred and seventy six) NUTS 2 regions, rich in diversity and we are also here with our non- EU neighbours and with our global partners.

We are facing huge challenges, such as migration, climate change and financial and economic crisis, which need a better shared understanding, share interpretation and policy coordination in particular in cross-border areas.

In the nineties we had reacted upon serious flood events with an Intereg programme, which was specifically dedicated to the flood protection and management of the catchment area of the rivers Rhine and Meuse. Today we

see that our citizens are again agitated and in fear of a flood. But this time it is thousands of desperate children, women and men, who flow into the European territory in order to stay alive.

We got stuck in discussing quota and last week in his speech on the State of the Union the President of the European Commission called for Solidarity and Union. What he did not mention is, that a Union and “being united” does not come by itself. No, it is an active process and certainly cooperation is at the center of it.

I would very much like to see, that today's challenges do not separate us, but that we all realize, like for the coal and steel union, that we are more successful if we cooperate. For this we need a shared vision and a shared purpose and the tools to implement it. And here as we will see, Interreg is playing an important role already now in our daily business.

Cooperation with so many diverse partners can be complex and difficult.

Interreg has successfully helped to build up cooperation and partnerships. This is hard work and sometimes it is a pleasure – and like for silver wedding couples, there is a risk of lack of excitement and passion, of taking things for granted, of getting bored or even impatient with each other, especially concerning weaknesses.

There are well-established therapies for this, where it is about looking back at the good times and achievements of the past, trying out new things, being creative and planning together for a promising future.

I would like to thank all of you, who have been contributing over the years to evolve and to use Interreg to its best.



We deserve now to look back at our achievements, to get inspired and to plan together for a promising future across borders, while fueling our passion for cooperation.

And for this conference of today and tomorrow it might interest you, that the key points of our discussions will inform the General Affairs Council, which will be held on 18<sup>th</sup> November this year.

This conference would not have been possible without intense and good cooperation and I would like to thank the European Commission and the Interact programme for having organized this event together with the Luxembourgish EU-Council Presidency.

I would like to thank the Fonds Belval and the University of Luxembourg for sharing their new location with us and I would like to thank all the contributors of today and tomorrow and all of you, who made the effort to come to the South of Luxembourg.

Let's celebrate 25 years of Interreg!