

## Luxembourg: New Mobility Strategy for *La Grande Région*

### Background

The necessity to elaborate a mobility strategy for *La Grande Région* stems from the increase of cultural cooperations in this area composed of neighbouring regions (Luxemburg, Rhineland-Palatinat, Saarland, Wallonia with its French and German-speaking Communities and Lorraine) and from the fact that Luxemburg is such a small country that artists need to promote their creations abroad in order to be recognised. Furthermore the European capital of Culture (ECOC) awarded in 2007 to Luxemburg and *la Grande Région* has stimulated the cross-border cooperation and was an incentive to find a sustainable strategy after 2007.

133 cross-border projects took place during the ECOC 2007, especially in the field of dance, theatre and contemporary art, like: the exhibition On/Off between three museums in Luxemburg, Metz und Saarbrücken on the themes of light and darkness; the festival “Total Theatre” those national productions were presented in each area of the Grande Région; The expositions “Best of Nature” that presented the natural richness of the Grande Region or the illuminated spectacle, The “*Citadelles de feu*”, that promoted the common patrimony inherited from *Vauban*. The festival “Passage” launched by the *Manufacture Theatre* in Nancy had a cross-border dimension in 2007 thanks to cooperation with the *Grand Théâtre du Luxembourg* but this experience won't be revived in 2009 due to the weight of such a project and to the lack of political support in French.

Another aim of this concept was the mobility of the audiences inside the *Grande Region*. But the final report on the ECOC and the research led by the *Institut Pierre Werner* show that despite the vast publicity on the ECOC and the strong interest for large-scale exhibitions, travelling in the *Grande Région* for cultural reasons still remains difficult for people. A set of elements can explain this difficulty: people who daily cross the border to work do not like to travel during the weekend to attend a spectacle (to overcome this impediment several institutions in Luxemburg offer cultural activities at 6 p.m, like “Jazz after work” in Abbey Neumünster or “Happy Hours Theatre” at the Capucins Theatre); people have a symbolic representation of the space inside it they use to move and it is difficult to let them go farer except for exceptional exhibitions, concerts or popular parties (like the opening and closing evenings of the ECOC 2007); the lack of public transport after 10 p.m between the different areas inside the *Grande Région* (especially between Luxemburg and *la Lorraine* and between Luxemburg and Saarbrücken). Despite these impediments, people have taken advantage of the ECOC to discover the cultural institutions of their own region.

In the wake of 2007, the five ministers of Culture have founded a cross-border association with the aim of elaborating a strategy in the field of culture, promoting and facilitating cultural exchanges, strengthening knowledge on the *Grande Région* and encouraging artists' and audiences' mobility.

### How it works

The five areas of the Grande Région, which will be equal partners, founded this association “Cultural Space Grande Région” on the 18th July 2008 and the presidency will be lead by one of the regions each year.

The global budget for three years is estimated at 1,8 million EUR, one half paid by the regions and the other one by the Interreg IV Programme (a project has been submitted). Each region brings a financial contribution related to its own budget but Luxemburg normally invests more than the others with 100 000 EUR in 2008. The main difficulty will be the same as in 2007 due to the principle of territoriality. In fact the five regions did not manage to create common cultural funds.

Endeavours are made to encourage crossborder cooperation especially in the field of theatre, contemporary dance and live music. The scheme will cover all the territory of the *Grande Région* but of course national law concerning the status of the artists and the cultural professionals will still be available.

For example, in Luxemburg there are no conditions as to nationality neither in order to obtain the different status nor in order to obtain financial aids to the mobility. The artists living or working mainly in Luxemburg can receive a scholarship for further training courses or for creations as soon as their projects improve Luxemburg cultural life and have a European aspect. Concerning cross-border projects they have also to valorise the common heritage or identity of the *Grande Région*.

This new scheme in relation to the Association *Cultural space- La Grande Région* should facilitate the mobility of the artists and the cultural professional. Three main programmes concerning cultural mobility are foreseen in this scheme: 1) providing information related to the different legal systems in the *Grande Région*, elaborating a handbook of cultural cooperation in the *Grande Région*, 2) centralising the supplies for European financial supports and for mobility grants, 3) educating and professionalizing artists and cultural professionals through training and residencies in the *Grande Région* and exchanges of administrative professionals in order to understand how the neighbours do.

The association will aim also to overcome one of the failures of the ECOC 2007 by more federating the museums inside the *Grande Région*.

Concerning artists from outside the *Grande Région* and especially outside EU agreements are elaborated according to national legislation. In light of the dance festival *Le Transfrontalier*, the Luxemburg Choreographic Centre offers its studio to the Croatian dancers and deals with accommodation and *per diem* but the Croatian partner pays for fees and travel (and the same principle applies when Luxemburg dancers are residents in Croatia).

## **Results**

All the researches and even the final report on the ECOC underline the sentence pronounced by the Coordinator General of 2007, Robert Garcia: "*The Year 2007 will begin in 2008!*". In fact, the attempt to promote the *Grande Région* and to give it a cultural identity was a challenge for several years. The ECOC was just the first step and a lot of endeavours should be done to make the "*Grande Région closer to the citizens*" as Jean-Claude Juncker, the Prime Minister of the Grand-Duchy of Luxemburg, said when he has taken the presidency of the *Grande Région* in January 2008.

In the cultural field, artists are asking for a range of schemes that could facilitate their mobility: indeed, if there were 133 cross-border projects among the 500 projects in relation to the ECOC 2007, that proves that such a type of cooperation is possible. But all the artists and cultural professionals deplore time and energy wasted to implement mobility. Hence they expect a harmonisation of fiscal and administrative rules, the status of European association, the suppression of the territoriality principle for financial supports and at least more information on the different national systems. To sum up, on the one hand, they critic the current system that oblige them to play with several rules and on another hand they are afraid for bureaucratic trend in case of harmonisation. Hence the mobility strategy in the *Grande Région* could prevent the artists from giving up developing cross-border projects.

The main difficulty concerning a new mobility strategy that the *Grande Région* could face is the lack of political willingness in each region. In fact if Luxemburg is aware of the necessity to cooperate with its neighbours even in the cultural field, it is not necessary the case in other areas. Progress has however been made in Lorraine where specific funds are attributed to cross-border cultural projects.

## **Sources**

RICHARDS Greg, *Luxembourg and Greater Region, Europe Capital of Culture 2007, Final Report*, June 2008. Available on [http://www.mcesr.public.lu/presse/annee\\_culturelle\\_2007/index.html](http://www.mcesr.public.lu/presse/annee_culturelle_2007/index.html)

Legal basis: *Loi modifiée du 30 juillet 1999 concernant a) le statut de l'artiste professionnel indépendant et l'intermittent du spectacle, b) la promotion de la création artistique* : [http://www.mcesr.public.lu/culture/soutien\\_activites\\_culturelles/statut\\_artiste/index.html](http://www.mcesr.public.lu/culture/soutien_activites_culturelles/statut_artiste/index.html)

*Demande de bourse d'aide à la création, au perfectionnement et au recyclage artistiques* : [http://www.mcesr.public.lu/culture/soutien\\_activites\\_culturelles/aides\\_financieres/index.html](http://www.mcesr.public.lu/culture/soutien_activites_culturelles/aides_financieres/index.html)

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