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## AEBR's Award for projects of cross-border cooperation "Sail of Papenburg" 2019

Within this year's competition for the cross-border cooperation award "Sail of Papenburg", the jury selected the project *Nortear* presented by the EGTC Galicia - Norte de Portugal as winner. Euregio, Bothnian Arc and the EGTC Euroregion Pyrenees Mediterranean have been awarded as well. The bestowal of the award took place in coincidence with the General Assembly and the Annual Conference of the Association of European Border Regions, hosted by the Euroregion Elbe-Labe in Dresden, Germany.

AEBR's members and guests came together on Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> of October 2019 in the building *Kraftwerk Mitte* in Dresden's city centre to conclude three days of AEBR's events and to honour outstanding endeavours to promote cross-border cooperation.

Since 2002, AEBR carries forward the initiative of the Ems Dollart Region and bestows annually the Cross Border Award „Sail of Papenburg“, the only Europe-wide tendered prize for cooperation across national borders. The theme of the call for application for the award for 2019 was "cross-border culture, building trust across boundaries".

Cross-border practitioners, local authorities and actors involved in cooperation implementing projects to foster culture in a cross-border context from all over Europe applied, demonstrating the vivid engagement shown by many actors to support ties between bordering regions through culture. This year, AEBR has received twenty applications.

AEBR's President Ann-Sofie Backgren, Bernhard Bramlage, former district administrator in Leer (Ems Dollart Region, Germany) and the Minister President of Saxony, Michael Kretschmer, delivered the awards to the representatives of the winning regions during a cheerful ceremony introduced by Minister President Kretschmer, the Mayor of Dresden Dirk Hilbert and AEBR's President Ms Backgren.

The project which best met the criteria of this year's edition is *Nortear*, an initiative of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) Galicia - Norte de Portugal. The project has allowed for the joint management of policies and initiatives in the cultural sector between the two regions across Spain and Portugal. It proved to be a successful instrument to instigate exchanges amongst local actors and programmes. Since 2015 many events in the fields of dance, music and literature took place consistently all across the cross-border region. Xosé Lago, Director of the EGTC Galicia - Norte de Portugal, proudly received the award.

The second place was conferred to EUREGIO, the oldest euroregion in Europe which includes an urban-rural area on the border between Germany and The Netherlands, for the successful implementation of the project *taNDem*. This initiative aims to create a platform to promote cultural exchanges between artists from the cross-border area. The jury appreciated especially the effort to foster understanding for the culture of the neighbour, but also its success in meeting the interest in the local art scene. The award was delivered to Christoph Almering, director of EUREGIO.

Bothnian Arc's project *Roots and Wings for Growth* received the third prize thanks to the implemented strategy to strengthen cross-border in the region spanning from Oulu in Finland to Luleå in Sweden. Education, promotion of youth employment and cultural cooperation are the main objectives that the projects want to achieve to spur economic and social development in this cross-border area, while promoting collaboration among educational institutions, associations and societies. The jury reckons this endeavour as solid, broadly supported by the municipalities involved and well structured. AEBR's President Ms Backgren, Mr Bramlage and Mr Kretschmer handed over the award to Heikki Aalto, CEO of Bothnian Arc.

The EGTC Euroregion Pyrenees Mediterranean (EPM) has been awarded with a special prize for the project *Euroregion's Cultural Fund*. Already since 2010 the Euroregion has developed a vision for a cultural project with a strong European perspective. Over 500 participating sponsors have been involved in a cross-border strategy and 50 projects in the cultural field have been implemented on the basis of a common cultural history. The jury is pleased to specially honour such a long-term plan to foster cross-border cooperation. João Lobo represented the EGTC Euroregion Pyrenees Mediterranean and received the award in the course of the ceremony.

These projects contribute to the overall development of the cross-border area where they have been implemented, and especially in the cultural context. In particular, they have been praised for the role model they play for other regions to learn from their experiments. As Bernhard Bramlage remarked in the laudation accompanying the bestowal, encounters of people are fundamental to make cross-border cooperation possible. "Almost all of us have experienced that the regular meeting of people is an indispensable basis for cross-border cooperation to succeed in demanding projects. Cross-border cooperation and encounters, especially in the cultural field, form an important foundation. Especially at difficult beginnings, thanks to cooperation in the fields of culture it has been possible to build trust. Many border regions are separated by political borders, but they can start cooperate in other fields starting from a common cultural ground", avowed Mr Bramlage. Beyond recognition, the award also aims to motivate border and cross-border regions to actively contribute to a better understanding and better relations at the borders between nations throughout Europe. In this light, the award prizes particularly measures which show a strong added value of promoting European integration and the borders, as well as clear replicability.

AEBR thanks the Land of Saxony, the City of Dresden, the centre *Kraftwerk Mitte* in Dresden and the *Kraftwerk Big Band*, as well as all the applicants to the cross-border award "Sail of Papenburg" for their contribution to make visible an excellent series of cross-border cultural projects.

On 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> June 1971, ten European border and cross-border regions set up a Standing Conference of European Border Regions at the Anholt Castle (EUREGIO, Westphalia)