

## SECTORS OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION

The common activities linked to the automotive industry and more generally to the Greater Region's industrial past have generated several interregional cooperation projects, with support from the INTERREG programme.

- **The IntermatGR project** (2013-2014) aims at creating a cross-border cluster in the materials and processes sector, and plans in a first stage to map each region's skills and to identify potential areas of cooperation in order to foster technology transfer. However, such a project requires overcoming a recurrent difficulty in the Greater Region – that of the asymmetry of competences. The cluster policy is thus shared between national government, the regions and municipalities in France and Germany, while it is overseen by the Wallonia Region and the Luxembourg Government.

The issue of access to financing and support for business innovation at the interregional level are also the subject of growing coordination in the Greater Region.

- Led by the Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce and Luxinnovation, the National Agency for Innovation and Research, the **project Seed4Start**<sup>23</sup> (2011-2015) puts in touch businesses that are seeking venture capital and investors, while the innovation pathways 1,2,3 GO (created in 2000) support young entrepreneurs in the drawing-up and implementation of business plans.

In spite of the "Luxembourg-centrism" of these initiatives, which are aimed primarily at facilitating the access of businesses to the Luxembourg market, we can highlight the prior existence, since the end of the 1990s, of a trinational (FR-BE-LUX) venture capital fund, EUREFI, designed to provide financial support and fiscal engineering to businesses wishing to set up in the territory of the European Development Pole (EDP) and/or extend their activity to the cross-border area.

## LABOUR MARKET

Unemployment rates vary greatly across the Greater Region. While Luxembourg, Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland posted a relatively low annual rate in 2012 (5.1%, 4% and 6.4% respectively), the situation is much more worrying in Lorraine (12.2%) and Wallonia (10%),<sup>24</sup> with these two regions being the worst affected in France and Belgium. Cross-border employment, primarily in Luxembourg, is therefore a lifeline for the populations of Lorraine and Wallonia. In 2012, the Grand Duchy received nearly 143,000 cross-border workers, a number which, in spite of a temporary slowdown due to the economic crisis, is steadily increasing. Financial and business services, the retail sector, the medical sector and industry, principally, employ around 76,000 people from Lorraine, 32,000 from Wallonia, 27,000 from Rhineland-Palatinate and 8,000 from Saarland.<sup>25</sup> Cross-border workers also commute from Lorraine to Saarland. The Greater Region is thus one of the European regions where labour mobility is the highest.

- With respect to education, the **University of the Greater Region**, which has been co-financed by the INTERREG IV Greater Region programme, brings together the universities in the interregional territory and enables young people to follow cross-border courses. However, command of German is in decline in Lorraine and understanding Luxembourgish has become a precious asset with the growth of support services to individuals in the Grand Duchy. Following the signature of the framework agreement on cross-border apprenticeships in the Upper Rhine, the Greater Region stakeholders have also committed to ensuring greater mobility for apprentices, with the signature on 20 June 2014 of an agreement between Saarland and Lorraine, which is due to be progressively extended to include the other greater-regional entities.



<sup>23</sup> For more information, see the Project Factsheet.

<sup>24</sup> Source: Eurostat, 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Source: *Statistiques en bref 2013*, published by the Greater Region's statistical offices, January 2013.