

## VIEWPOINT

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**What are your expectations following the France-Spain summit?**

Personally, I regret that the regions were the only French local authorities to have been invited to the France-Spain summit because, on the one hand, cross-border cooperation concerns many areas that far exceed the competences of the regional authorities and, on the other hand, it involves local cooperation, the objective of which, as the European Commission frequently restates, is the establishment of cross-border living areas. Cooperation programmes are thus implemented above all at local level and the departments, because of their action close to grass-roots level, have a full role to play. With regard to the Cerdagne cross-border hospital, the France-Spain summit is a step forward, since it is the first time that the French state has made a commitment to participate, alongside the Spanish state, in the provision of this facility. Until now progress was made on this project through the determination of Christian Bourquin, Chairman of the Pyrénées-Orientales department council, in close partnership with the regional hospital agency. These two institutions jointly managed and funded the preliminary studies. Let us hope that this agreement between states will enable the cross-border hospital to open its doors on schedule in 2008.

**What are the main cross-border projects that you are implementing with your Catalan partners?**

In addition to the individual cooperation actions that it is implementing within the framework of various projects and events (including the organization of business-to-business meetings, interchanges between protected natural marine areas, cultural exhibitions, and forecasting work with the INTERREG IIIA programme "Assessment of the social and economic impact of high-speed trains on the cross-border area"), in the near future the department council is going to sign a framework agreement with the Generalitat of Catalunya to formalize deep and lasting cooperation between these two institutions, in order to facilitate cross-border interchanges (for example, by setting up a joint service to help identify partners) and improve daily life for the inhabitants of the border areas. Each year an annual application agreement will define the concrete actions resulting from this cooperation. In 2006, these actions will include preliminary studies for the establishment of regular cross-border bus services between Perpignan, Figueres and Girona, discussions aimed at improving cross-border telecommunications, and cultural and linguistic actions (installation of bilingual signage, for example).

## Cooperation between France and Spain Summit meeting

*On 17 October, the heads of the Spanish and French governments, José Luis Zapatero and Dominique de Villepin, held a France-Spain summit on cross-border issues. Including for the first time the chairpersons of the seven French and Spanish regions along the border, this meeting was an opportunity to discuss concrete issues specific to this frontier.*

The discussions focused on trans-Pyrenean transport infrastructure, a strategic issue related in part to the mountainous geography of the area. The regions emphasized the fact that road and rail connections between the two countries were lagging behind, despite exponential traffic growth. A bilateral action plan was agreed in order to "adjust the balance between transport modes by favouring rail and sea" and "make the Pyrenees more permeable so as to facilitate the development of economic and cultural interchanges". The railway lines discussed included the Figueras-Perpignan-Montpellier and Bordeaux-Dax-Vitoria high-speed lines, as well as a "new high-capacity trans-Pyrenean link" for which the crossing point was not specified. The two countries also decided to relaunch the "motorways of the sea" project, with the signature of a declaration of intent providing for the establishment of a French-Spanish Intergovernmental Commission (IGC) on motorways of the sea, with tasks including definition of the financial commitment by the states.

Progress was also made concerning competitiveness centres, with the inclusion of Spanish partners in this project initiated as a French national programme, and in the health area, with the signature by the French and Spanish health ministers of a "declaration of



intent or protocol of agreement" indicating the joint political determination of the two states to establish the first European cross-border hospital. This hospital, which should open its doors in 2008, will be built on the Catalan side in Puigcerda. It has yet to obtain funding from the French side in order to be genuinely cross-border. Five firms of architects have already been selected following a competition for ideas held recently. The next step is to set up the new project management organization within the framework of a cooperation body which will develop the project, run a communication campaign in the area aimed at the populations and professionals and adjust the 2005-2006 action plan.

Many hopes were born at this summit meeting, including a new political impetus and acceleration of decision-making. The French prime minister also stated that he wanted to revive the Bayonne treaty follow-up committee, which would give new life to this agreement. As one of the obstacles on the border is related to the disparities in competences (decision-making and financing powers) between Spanish autonomous communities (broader competences) and French local authorities, it does seem important to bring together all the protagonists and levels of cooperation, a possibility for which provision is effectively made in the 1997 Treaty of Bayonne.

Saar - Lorraine

## Establishment of a cross-border slaughterhouse

*In June 2006, a cross-border slaughterhouse will be established between Saar and Lorraine. Located on the Sarreguemines food-processing industrial park, in Moselle, the slaughterhouse will be financed by French and German capital. The present slaughterhouse in the centre of Sarreguemines, now obsolescent, will be demolished.*

The new slaughterhouse will benefit from a strategic location. As there is no facility of this type on the Saar side, it will meet the needs of sector professionals located on both sides of the border. It has a dual vocation: processing of raw material from both countries, and also marketing of its products in France and in Germany.

With majority backing by French capital (85%), but also participation by two German meat-processing companies (15%), the project will

have required a total investment of 10 million euros. The facility will be managed by a private company, Abisa, set up for the purpose. No local authority is involved in the future management of the facility. The Communauté d'Agglomérations Sarreguemines Confluences (Sarreguemines Confluences Agglomeration Community) has invested 2 million euros in the creation and development of the site. 50 jobs should be created by the end of 2007.

Finally, it should be noted that the new slaughterhouse forms an integral part of the development of the entire cross-border area. Its purpose extends beyond that of a simple slaughterhouse, since it forms part of a broader cooperation perspective, that of the entire Saarbrücken - Moselle-East conurbation, which is one of the areas selected by the call for metropolitan cooperation issued by the DATAR in June 2004.



## The new 2007-2013 programme and "European territorial cooperation"

### Legislative proposals by the European Commission for the reform of the 2007-2013 cohesion policy

On 14 July 2004, the European Commission, on the basis of the third report on cohesion, adopted legislative proposals for the reform of the 2007-2013 cohesion policy, including a general regulation on the three sources of funding of structural actions (ERDF, ESF, cohesion fund), a regulation for each of these sources and a final regulation on the European Grouping of Cross-border Cooperation (EGCC). The new cohesion policy will be reorganized around the following three objectives: Convergence, Regional competitiveness and employment, and European territorial cooperation.

#### Objective 3: European territorial cooperation (ERDF)

The aim of objective 3 is to strengthen cross-border cooperation, transnational cooperation, and cooperation and interchange networks. The resources defined in the legislative proposals total 13.2 billion euros (3.94% of the total cohesion policy budget), with 47.73% for cross-border cooperation (35.61% for internal borders and 12.12% for external borders), 47.73% for transnational cooperation and 4.54% for the networks.

These amounts are still subject to negotiation. At the European Council meeting on 16 and 17 June 2005 (Luxembourg), a revised version of the negotiating box was submitted, but was not agreed on by the member states. The amount proposed for objective 3 was 7.5 billion euros (with 77% for cross-border cooperation, 19% for transnational cooperation and 4% for the networks).

#### The Community Strategic Guidelines (CSG) 2007-2013 - A cohesion policy in support of growth and jobs

On 5 July 2005, the European Commission presented its communication on the community strategic guidelines for cohesion 2007-2013. These guidelines will set the priorities for the new programme of the cohesion policy, while aligning it with the Lisbon agenda for growth and jobs. Three main priorities have been defined for intervention by the structural funds: "Making Europe and its regions more attractive places to invest and work", "Improving knowledge and innovation for growth" and "More and better jobs".

#### Taking account of the territorial dimension of cohesion policy

The guidelines pay particular attention to the territorial dimension of cohesion policy, including the strengthening of cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation. The aim is to concentrate cooperation more on the growth and job creation objectives, and to support actions that contribute to economic and social integration (especially where there are wide cross-border disparities), but also to improve the existing transport and communication infrastructure. The areas of transport, water management and environmental protection, for example, are "clear examples of challenges requiring a focused and integrated approach that goes beyond national boundaries".

The strategic guidelines will be adopted by the European Council and the Parliament after the adoption of the legislative texts for the cohesion policy. Before this, an agreement on the financial perspectives 2007-2013 will be necessary. In the absence of this agreement at the last European Council meeting, the adoption of the strategic guidelines enables national and regional authorities to pursue the preparation of their future programmes and establish their own strategic priorities through national strategic reference frameworks.

#### ■ Establishment of the Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict

The agreement establishing the Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict was signed on 17 October 2005 at Strasbourg city hall by the chairman of the Strasbourg urban community and the mayors of Strasbourg, on the French side, and of Kehl, Lahr, Offenburg, Achern and Oberkirch on the German side. This text stipulates the establishment of a council, the members of which, representatives of the participating local authorities, will meet twice a year to deal with the issues of daily life in this cross-border area of almost 900,000 inhabitants.

#### ■ 8th European conference of local public enterprises

**Date:** 29 November 2005

**Location:** Brussels, European Economic and Social Committee

**Topic:** Serving the public: the contribution of local public enterprises

**Further information:**

<http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org>

### SPOTLIGHT ON A SITE

#### [www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org](http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org) in English!

An English version of the cross-border cooperation resource site published by the MOT has been available since October 2005. Its contents include a database of cross-border projects, a resource centre and news. German, Spanish and Italian versions will be posted on line in the near future.

### In the press in September

#### ■ Transcended biotechnologies, *La Libre Belgique*, 21 September

"The Transcend programme will enable Euregio scientists to collaborate on concrete products" [...] "[This] project aims to identify, in Euregio university laboratories and businesses, projects combining seven sectors with biotechnologies or life sciences..."

#### ■ Integrating healthcare, *La Libre Belgique*, 28 September

"A study puts forward 13 recommendations for the health system [in the Saar-Lorraine-Luxembourg 'Grande Région'] for... 2020..."

#### ■ Projects sprouting in Belval, *Le Quotidien*, 6 September

"The Belval-Ouest industrial brownfield site, located between Esch-sur-Alzette and Sanem, will be busy in 2006. A series of works programmes will occupy the site next year, including the start of construction of residential areas..."

#### ■ Innovative cross-border cooperation to protect water resources, *Le Dauphiné Libéré*, 22 September

"The Pays de Gex municipality community and Geneva have formed a local cross-border cooperation grouping. Its purpose is to build and jointly operate a tunnel for the transfer of waste water..."

#### ■ Pyrenean communities form a Consorcio to manage a common future, *Le Journal du Pays Basque*, 17 September

"In Barcelona, the chairmen of the three regions on the northern side of the Pyrenees and the four autonomous communities on the southern side have signed the agreement clearing the way for the formation of the Consorcio of the Pyrenees..."

#### ■ The University of Pau and the pays de l'Adour and the Public University of the Basque Autonomous Community have signed an agreement recognizing a course leading to a joint degree, *Le Journal du Pays Basque*, 27 September

#### ■ Ten universities on the two sides have studied the Pyrenees together, *L'Indépendant*, 29 September

"Scientists from ten universities on both sides of the Pyrenees, from the Basque country to Catalonia, have published their first joint work on the exploitation of the natural resources of the range..."