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What are the issues and difficulties associated with border workers between France and Switzerland?

Our territory is emblematic of these questions, and it is in order to share this unique experience at European level that we have just joined the MOT's network. There are 220,000 French border workers in Switzerland. These flows have increased considerably with the free movement of persons in Europe and the bilateral agreements with Switzerland. Today we find ourselves in a single employment area but with employment legislations which are inappropriate and not harmonised. The protection of border workers is in practice a legal void which has generated very difficult situations for them. As there is no body with real responsibility for these questions, border workers have had to form their own associations, and that is how the GTE was born, 45 years ago now!

Since then substantial progress has been made in areas such as health insurance, and taxation (CGS-CRDS). Today we are working on various issues: non-taxation of the second pillar by Switzerland (the consequence of which would be double taxation relating to retirement pensions), the possibility for border workers to pay contributions to the optional AVS (retirement and survivors insurance) in Switzerland, the continuation of the retrocession of border worker unemployment insurance contributions to the French Unedic after 2009, and the harmonisation of hospital rates.

Our objective is to establish a real status for border workers. A France-Vaud-Geneva cross-border conurbation is under construction and this must not take place without its inhabitants and thus its workers. Even though there are many levels of competence between the EU, the state and the local authorities, the issue of the workers is at the heart of the territorial project and linked directly with flagship areas such as transport and housing. Social cohesion and territorial cohesion must be achieved together! Over the cross-border conurbation as a whole, during the next 15 to 20 years an increase of 100,000 jobs and 200,000 inhabitants is forecast! There is therefore a genuine urgency to deal with these questions!

The Groupement transfrontalier européen

An association at the service of border workers

The Groupement transfrontalier européen (GTE) was founded in 1963, at a time when working in Switzerland meant a lack of social security, health insurance and retirement scheme coverage. A complete void which led some border workers to set up an association to try and find solutions to their problems and to work and live with the same rights and duties as their neighbours and colleagues.

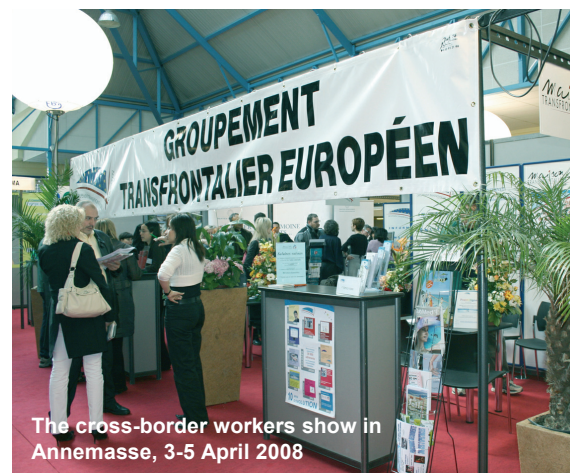
The objective of the GTE, a non-profit association, is to represent and defend the cross-border populations between France and Switzerland. The GTE covers an area extending from the Rhône-Alpes region to Alsace via Franche-Comté.

Services

Their association can provide members with all the information they need on their specific status and with legal, social security and tax assistance. Members benefit from collective and individual legal defence. Thanks to the on-line employment service, they can submit their CVs and browse through job vacancies at Swiss companies. They receive five issues a year of "Frontalier magazine" and a monthly newsletter, "Front@ligne".

Structure

The Groupement transfrontalier européen is managed by a president, vice-presidents, an executive office and an administrative committee. All its members are border worker volunteers. They are assisted by an organisation of salaried personnel including eight reception advisors, five lawyers specialized in international law and three social workers.



The cross-border workers show in Annemasse, 3-5 April 2008

Cross-border cooperation

The GTE is a member of the Comité régional franco-genevois, the Conseil du Léman and the Conférence transjurassienne. It is participating in the construction of a cross-border policy between the French and Swiss institutional and socio-economic partners, encouraging the development of the border regions. For example, it has published a cross-border guide with support from the Conseil du Léman.

In 2008 the Groupement transfrontalier européen has 30,000 members. Today it is fighting for non-taxation of the second pillar by Switzerland, optional AVS* for Swiss residents in France and the border workers excluded from it, equity in hospital rates in Geneva and transport improvements.

* Retirement and survivors insurance

First policy committee meeting for EUROMOT

The first policy committee meeting of EUROMOT, the European network of cross-border local authorities, took place in Lille on 11 April 2008, attended by its president Pierre Mauroy, also president of the MOT, its secretary Alain Lamassoure, MOT vice-president, Michel Delebarre, president of the Dunkerque urban community and first vice-president of the Committee of the Regions, and two representatives of the City Twins and Eixo Atlántico** networks.*

EUROMOT, formed by the MOT, Eixo Atlántico and City Twins, was established on 8 November 2007 at the Lille European conference "Cross-border territories: Day-to-day Europe". The objective is to form a strong European network bringing together the cross-border local authorities in Europe in order to:

- discuss their practices and organise the transfer of know-how,

- ensure that cross-border cooperation is taken into account more effectively in national and European policies.

On 11 April two approaches were emphasised for EUROMOT:

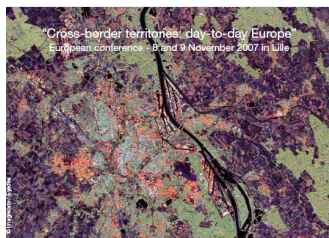
- a "citizen" approach aiming to facilitate the life of people who cross borders,
- a "territorial" approach aiming to encourage the establishment of European groupings of territorial cooperation (EGTC) and network them.

A "Manifesto for cross-border cooperation in Europe", the first EUROMOT publication following the Lille conference, was also adopted (see below).

* Network of twin cities with Germany, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Sweden, Finland and Russia.

** Network of border cities involving North-Portugal and Galicia in Spain.

Further information: www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu



Manifesto for cross-border cooperation in Europe



The Manifesto for cross-border cooperation in Europe

The first EUROMOT publication, the "Manifesto for cross-border cooperation in Europe", puts forward concrete recommendations for advancing cross-border cooperation in Europe. These recommendations are going to be submitted officially to National and European authorities. They were produced by the 12 workshops of the Lille European conference "Cross-border territories: day-to-day Europe" (8 and 9 November 2007).*

Twelve emblematic recommendations

- **Cross-border territories:** encourage the establishment and networking of local statistical monitoring bodies on the scale of the cross-border territory.
- **Cross-border conurbations:** make cross-border conurbations places of convergence of national and European

- **Cross-border rural and natural territories:** organise the governance of cross-border rural territories and natural spaces to manage biodiversity and natural resources on the cross-border scale and to develop human activities, in particular by pooling public services.
- **Maritime cooperation:** develop assistance for the definition and implementation of joint local maritime cooperation projects.
- **Economic development:** encourage the setting-up of cross-border development agencies involving local authorities, businesses and research centres.
- **Employment and training:** develop the EURES-T system (involving employers, trade unions and public employment services) on all internal borders of the EU to facilitate worker mobility and encourage the development of businesses in cross-border living areas.
- **Health:** contribute to the emergence of true cross-border health communities linked with cross-border territory projects.
- **Environment:** encourage joint management of the cross-border environment with regard to pollution, waste, and prevention of natural and technological risks (flooding, fire, water quality, etc.).
- **Public transport:** organise dialogue and cross-border governance of local cross-border transport, and create an awareness of its issues and the necessity for funding at local, national and European levels.
- **Culture and territorial integration:** encourage the emergence of lean cross-border cultural cooperation platforms able to bring together local authorities and the actors concerned to implement cultural action programmes, components of the territory project in their own right.
- **Legal instruments of cooperation:** develop operational assistance for the setting-up of cross-border projects and in particular for the governance structures of cross-border territory projects, and network their users to encourage exchange of good practices and transfer of know-how.
- **Training in cross-border professions:** promote the establishment and development of training and consultancy bodies such as "Euro Institutes"; network them to introduce a "EUROMOT" label certifying the quality of training courses in and on cross-border topics.

This document is published in French, English and German at www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu

* The workshops were prepared over a period of one year by specialised working groups on each topic, including representatives of territorial authorities, regional, national and European administrations, companies and civil society, as well as university experts, from all over Europe.

AGM of MOT

The Annual General Meeting of MOT will be held on 29 May in Sarreguemines (FR), on the invitation of Zukunft SaarMoselle Avenir Association. On that occasion, a **conference-debate on the future development of EUROMOT** is being organised on 28 May in Saarbrücken (DE).

Further information at : www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu

■ Conference in Slovenia on the future of the cohesion policy in Europe

In the context of the Slovenian presidency of the EU, a conference on the future of the cohesion policy was held in Maribor on 6 and 7 April 2008. Ivan Zagar, Slovenian minister for local authorities, and Danuta Hübner, European commissioner for regional policy, presented a very positive assessment of the cohesion policy. The policy not only reduces development disparities between territories but also reinforces the competitiveness of the EU as a whole. In the context of enlargement, globalisation and new demographic and climatic factors, the necessity of maintaining a strong cohesion policy was thus affirmed clearly.

Press review

■ European alliance for electricity transmission, *La Tribune*, 28 March

"The first European electricity exchange, involving France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Germany, is going to set up a joint company enabling it to act as a single electricity transmission system operator on the European market. This new entity, the CASC (Capacity Allocation Service Company), will be established officially 'within the next few days'. It will be operational in November 2008 at the latest..."

■ New cross-border healthcare proposal, *Euractiv*, 2 April

"During his hearing by the European Parliament, Androula Vassiliou, the Cypriot appointed to succeed health commissioner Markos Kyprianou, promised that a controversial proposal on cross-border medical care will be presented in June..."

■ The worst has yet to come for European postal services, *Le Monde*, 9 April

"Europe has too many postal services. Instead of each country protecting its own national champion, three of four postal giants could emerge to provide a better service for the continent. The April 1 announcement of the decision by Sweden and Denmark to merge their postal services, the first large-scale cross-border marriage of public services, is a small step in this direction. But the governments continue to resist the rationalisation of mail services in Europe..."

■ Cross-border cooperation for watercourse quality, *Le Républicain lorrain*, 3 April

"For the needs of the European Union water framework directive, data on watercourse quality must be harmonised. This work has been completed on the Bisten and the Rosselle which, no great surprise, are not in a very good state..."

■ The conurbation removes the obstacle to the cross-border tramway, *Le Moniteur*, 4 April

"Weil-am-Rhein, the German suburb of Basle, has said yes to the first extension of the conurbation's tramway..."

■ Geneva chooses an RER to close its public transport gap, *Le Temps*, 31 March

"The memorandum of understanding on the cross-border project was signed on Saturday. It is the natural extension of the CEVA..."