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Why did you set up an EGTC? What are the main challenges, priorities and objectives of this new structure?

The EGTC represents a further stage in the cooperation between the Flandre-Dunkirk-Côte d'Opale region and Flandre occidentale. This cooperation, started in the 1980's, showed that we had complementarities, a large number of similarities and problems in common.

A common approach to these issues, dialogue and exchanges proved to be necessary to advance with truly sustainable development in the border region. As our concern is to build together a Europe that will be closer to its citizens, we have simply chosen to work on concrete issues by addressing matters which primarily concern the daily lives of our inhabitants.

In 2005 this approach was materialised through the formation of the informal cooperation platform and today through the EGTC. The main mission of our grouping is to simplify, promote and support efficient and coherent cross-border cooperation within its territory. It provides cooperation through its institutional, technical and financial strength. By bringing together the different authorities on both sides of the border – from the national level to the territorial level – it will become easier for projects really working across the border to emerge and be managed. The grouping will also be able to directly receive European funds for its projects. The region will clearly display its cross-border identity through the EGTC.

Can you give us some examples of cross-border projects that you would like to implement?

Among the projects for 2009, which are either directly run or supported by the EGTC, we have the Interreg IV projects on hospital cooperation, culture (4x4, Vis-à-vis), tourism ("enhancement of the Westkust Flandre Côte d'Opale coast"), rural life ("Lanscapes under transformation"), pedestrian connections, communication, but also the continuation of works on water management and the follow-up of the cross-border thematic groups, a reflection on carbon neutral activity areas or the extension of the Belgian tramway…

Launch of second Franco-Belgian EGTC

On 3 April 2009, the West Vlaanderen/Flandre-Dunkirk-Côte d'Opale European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) was officially launched in Bruges, Belgium. This new structure, consisting of thirteen partners*, is the result of a true cooperation policy between the Belgian province of Flandre occidentale and the French territory of Flandre-Dunkerque-Côte d'Opale.

Since the 1980's, these two territories have continually being moving closer together. In 2005, an important step was taken with the formation of the " West Vlaanderen / Flandre-Dunkerque-Côte Platform", the first stage in the creation of a structural framework for cooperation. Shortly after this, the partners decided to go even further by setting up an EGTC.

Within the framework of the Platform, a number of actions were encouraged in areas such as culture, economy, local trade, health (establishment of a cross-border PET-scan), employment and transport (introducing, for example, a cross-border public transport card). In addition to this, a socio-economic cross-border atlas has been published to help form coherent common policies.

Within this context, the EGTC not only meets the need to strengthen the working axes of the cross-border Platform and to start up new ones (notably in the field of communication, etc.), but also to show the European

authorities – at a time when talks are developing on the cohesion policy for 2014-2020 – that this territory wants to play a pioneer role in cross-border cooperation.

The EGTC acts with full respect for Franco-Belgian parity. This is the second EGTC formed on the French-Belgian border (after the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis in 2008) and is among the first in Europe.

* The French State, the Nord-Pas-de-Calais Region, Dunkirk Urban Community, the Departments of Nord and Pas-de-Calais, les Pays Moulins and Coeur de Flandre, the Urban Planning Agency Flandre Dunkirk, the Federal Belgian State, the Flemish Region, the Province of Flandre occidentale, the Intercommunality of Flandre occidentale and Resoc Westhoek.

City Twins General Assembly in Narva

The twin cities network City Twins held its General Assembly on 15 and 16 April at Narva in Estonia, "twin city" with the city of Ivangorod situated on the other side of the river Narva in Russia.

Partner of EUROMOT, European network of cross-border local authorities, City Twins is a network of twin cities involving Germany, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Sweden, Finland and Russia. Its General Assembly elected a new president: Tarmo Tammiste, mayor of Narva, and two vice-presidents : Irina Seliverstova, deputy mayor of Ivangorod and Martin Patzelt, mayor of Frankfurt (Oder). It was on the occasion of this General Assembly meeting that MOT presented the project "EUROpean MObility and employment in Transborder areas" (EUROMOT), submitted to the Interreg IVC programme in January 2009 and which will (should the project be approved) consist of eleven partners in Europe, including MOT and City Twins. The overall aim of this project is to optimise the local employment markets in cross-border areas.

The Narva-Ivangorod twin city

The twin city represents 78,000 inhabitants, 67,000 of which are on the Estonian side. Up to 1918, the two towns formed one and the same city. The west part (Narva) gained its independence at the end of the First World War before Estonia came under Soviet control in 1940. The former centre of Narva, completely destroyed in 1944, was then occupied by the Soviet authorities which administratively separated it from Ivangorod. It was only in 1991 that Estonia regained its independence before it joined the EU in 2004.

Today, 93% of Narva's inhabitants speak Russian. The very recent cross-border cooperation was triggered by the City Twins project and properly launched with a cooperation agreement signed in 2006. Cross-border governance is nowadays being slowly but surely organised and projects are being carried out in fields such as tourism, culture, education and economic development.

Extracts from contributions by MOT members

The green paper on territorial cohesion

The Walloon Region
"The aim of territorial cohesion should be taken more seriously in the definition and implementation of sectoral community policies with a recognised territorial impact and pertinence."

The Nord-Pas de Calais Region
"The Nord-Pas de Calais Region would like the European Union to give a strong sign of approval to the Territorial Cohesion Policy by mobilising a more ambitious budget for the next period of 2014-2020. This would enable community intervention in all the European regions."

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
"Territorial cohesion requires the development of strategies and multi-level governance in order to guarantee an efficient and effective use of available potential.[...] Special attention should be given to improving territorial integration and to developing cooperation between regions beyond their borders, i.e., to developing and strengthening cross-border cooperation."

The Champagne-Ardenne Region
"It would seem judicious that the new phase of implementing a EU territorial policy take into consideration in particular cross-border issues. With the Schengen zone, cross-border mobility is growing on a daily basis in a number of areas. […] It is important to reflect on the harmonisation of rules and regulations, in particular structural ones, between States."

The Generalitat de Catalunya
"The participation of towns, supra-municipal authorities, regions and all stakeholders with a vested interest (NGOs, etc) would allow for policies to be adjusted to the different socio-economic contexts and contexts of governance."

The Collectivité Territoriale of Corsica
"The Collectivité Territoriale of Corsica underlines the important role of territorial cooperation which offers considerable opportunities to insular regions to facilitate their connectivity and their territorial integration and to favour their economic development. It is also of the opinion that the 150 km limit criterion for access to the status of cross-border territorial cooperation must be eliminated."

The Euregion Meuse-Rhine
"In the context of territorial cohesion policy, the European Commission can stimulate the development of border regions by initiating experiments in cross-border multilevel governance, using a number of European border areas as pilots."

The Trinational Eurodistrict Basel
"Regions along the border, which are often underdeveloped, need to be seen as having development potential for the future. [...] It would appear advisable to take greater account of the repercussions of border situations within the framework of EU policies. In this conjunction, the respective regions, in collaboration with national states, need to ascertain whether the distortions caused by the competitive situation can be alleviated - in order to continue realising integrated metropolitan regional development."

The Eurometropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai
"It should be possible for the territorial cohesion policy to include a specific part relating to cross-border governance. [...] In order to ensure the development of new forms of governance, it is also important in our opinion to support the mobility and training of elected representatives and officers of local and regional authorities in order to encourage the formation of a cross-border culture and new competencies. This is all the more necessary as EGTCs are structures under public law."

The Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurosdistrict
"Legal instruments or provisions permitting a genuine transfer of skills, which the current forms of cooperation groupings (EGTC, LCCG) enable only partially, would give a new dimension to the pioneering vocation of the Eurodistrict. A reflection on the legal environment of such initiatives would result in cross-border experiments in areas contributing to the rationalisation of public expenditure and the improvement of the quality of the lives of its citizens."

The Alps-Mediterranean Euroregion
"At the time when the [five] regions [of the Alps Mediterranean Euroregion] are at the final stages in the establishment of an EGTC (European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation) […], they have to point out the absence of a European budgetary instrument which would allow for the development of truly structural actions to be carried out at this level of decision making."

The Regio Pamina Eurodistrict
"In relation to the metropolitan region of the upper Rhine, the smallest scale of Eurodistricts offers specific advantages within the context of territorial cohesion and the importance of regional governance."

The full list of contributions can be downloaded at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/consultation/terco/contrib_en.htm

Network's yearly event

The **Annual General Meeting of MOT** will be held on Thursday 11 June at the Château Royal de Collioure (Pyrénées-Orientales in France). On Wednesday 10 June a **Conference-debate*** will be organized in Figueres (Spain) on: **"Local cross-border cooperation in the future European territorial cohesion policy"**. *Further information: www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu/en*

* Languages: en, fr, cat

Frankfurt/Slubice

From 4 to 6 June 2009 Slubice (Poland) will host the **"Conference on the future of Frankfurt-Slubice 2020"**. Organised within the framework of the Urbact "EGTC" project, this event will bring together most elected representatives and professionals from the cross-border German-Polish conurbation and will be open to the public. The debates will address the drafting of the local cross-border action plan 2010-2020.

Health

On 23rd April, MEP's adopted **a draft law stipulating the rights to reimbursement of patients receiving care abroad**. EU countries however can opt for a preliminary authorisation system for the reimbursement of "hospital" care. Such a system may be set up if the financial equilibrium of the social security of a country might be affected.

Press Review

■ **Informal meeting of ministers responsible for regional affairs**, Europa - Rapid, 22 April
"On 23 and 24 April, the European Commissioner for Regional Policy, Ms Danuta Hübner, will address the ministers responsible for regional affairs at an informal meeting at Mariánské Lázně (Czech Republic). [...] The commissioner will present a discussion paper which summarises her proposal to strengthen the cohesion policy and will address the initial results of public consultation on the green paper…"

■ **The Fehmarn German-Danish bridge: green light by the Danish Parliament**, European bulletin of Monitor, 27 April
"After the agreement by the German Bundesrat in February, on 26 March the Danish Parliament ratified the treaty signed in September by Denmark and Germany for the construction of a huge road and rail bridge linking the two countries over the Fehmarn strait in the Baltic sea …"

■ **Eurodistrict on track**, Strasbourg supplement - Special Ries testbed, Le Point, 23 April
"There is still little artificial construction, cross-border cooperation is taking shape…"

■ **For a better cross-border policy**, Le Dauphiné libéré, 17 April
"Last week the mayors of Valdigne, as well as their French and Swiss colleagues took part in a meeting at La Salle, which marked the onset of the operational phase of l'Espace Mont-Blanc. The mayor of Chamonix, Mr. Eric Fournier, was also present. The goal of the meeting was the signing of the agreement concerning the cooperation in the ICP, the Integrated Cross-border Plan…"

■ **Corsica and Italy together for disadvantaged groups**, Corse Matin, 23 April
"A partnership has just been sealed between Corsica and three Italian regions with the aim of integrating disadvantaged groups into professional life…"