



Jacques Houbart

MOT Director-General from 1997 to 2009



The MOT was established to help local and regional authorities and decentralised departments of the states to accomplish their cross-border projects. The intention was to provide cutting-edge expertise to project lead partners, to network experience and know-how, and to conduct research based on practices in order to provide innovative solutions to the problems encountered on both sides of borders. The objective was also to reduce the legal and regulatory obstacles and organize an interface between the local, national and European authorities so that the needs in the field would be given proper consideration.

Twelve years later, these objectives are still valid - cross-border affairs are still a struggle! The 55 members of our network can bear witness to this today: they have to fight to identify the right contacts on the other side of the border, generate new development opportunities, define joint projects and implement them.

In this period of European elections, it can be affirmed that cross-border matters are a very practical way of grasping Europe: encouraging the convergence of national, regional and European policies on a defined cross-border territory, backed by elected representatives, in order to define action programmes that meet the needs of the inhabitants seems to us to be a very good method for building Europe.

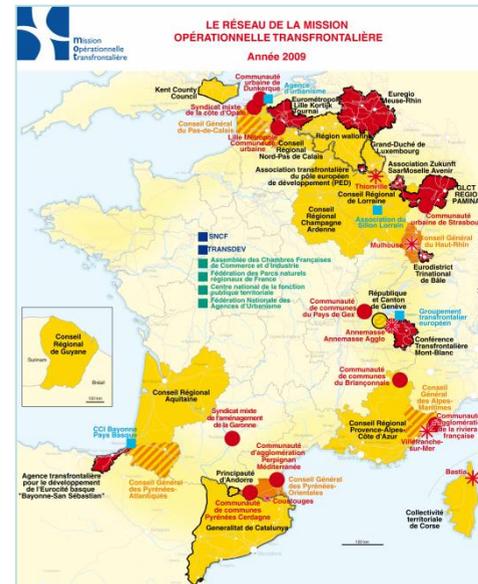
All of this is, of course, possible only through the involvement of men and women of conviction. Everything is more complex and more difficult in cross-border matters. It is therefore necessary to be able to rely over the long term on strong political determination rooted in cross-border realities and on militant and technically proficient operational teams. I have had the good fortune to be able to benefit from such support and I am personally very grateful to all those with whom I have been able to share this great adventure of the MOT, now with a European outlook through EUROMOT, on the eve of my departure from the MOT towards new adventures.

The MOT: twelve years of assistance to cross-border territories



The MOT was established in 1997, on the initiative of the DATAR (French spatial planning and regional action agency) in liaison with the Caisse des Dépôts, with the aim of "providing operational assistance to project lead partners and more generally to cross-border territories". Applications from six pilot sites were accepted: Lille Métropole, Strasbourg-Kehl, Saint-Louis-Basle-Mulhouse, the Franco-Geneva space, Menton-Ventimiglia and Bayonne-San Sebastian. Becoming an association in January 1998, the MOT network has expanded and now counts 55 members from eleven countries in Europe. Their diversity (states, local and regional authorities, cross-border structures, businesses, networks, associations, etc.) is particularly characteristic of the scales and of the entities involved in cross-border territory projects.

Since its establishment the MOT has become involved in all fields of cross-border activities,



including transport, urban planning, housing, health, employment/training, and natural spaces. It also assists the participants in the legal arrangements for their territory project and, increasingly today, in the establishment of their European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC).

The MOT network, consolidated on the French borders, is now positioning itself at European level with the formation in 2007 of EUROMOT, a European network of cross-border local authorities. European activities have since developed, for example with the URBACT "EGTC" ("Expertising Governance for Trans-frontier Conurbations", <http://urbact.eu/egtc>) project, which networks six cross-border conurbations in Europe (MOT is lead partner). A new Interreg IVC project was also submitted in January 2009 on the topics of employment and training in cross-border living areas.

Operational and financial guide

After the launching of the first European Interreg programmes some twenty years ago, the participants in cross-border cooperation very soon realized the value of these programmes when forming or strengthening partnerships with their neighbours and generating new development opportunities for themselves. However, all too often projects remained at the study or strategy definition stage. One thing that was lacking was a legal instrument enabling the implementation of joint action programmes. Today the European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) meets a large part of this need.

Partners, including those on either side of French borders, thus have a legal framework

for their cross-border operational arrangements and for the management of European (Interreg) co-funding. They nevertheless have a need for information about technical procedures not related to these two areas, such as issuing cross-border calls for bids, making joint investments or cross-border payments.

To meet this need, in 2008 the Caisse des Dépôts commissioned from the MOT the production of a "Practical operational and financial guide", a practical tool for participants in cross-border cooperation intended to facilitate the working and the management of their projects, through cross-border cooperation agreements or joint structures. It is initially issued for consultation within the MOT network.



“Members’ space” and new version for the MOT website

The website Internet www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu has been given a new look, in a new version that has just been posted on line. Two major new features: an enriched “general public” version and a new space reserved for members.

This article describes the main content and the new features, section by section.

GTE general assembly



The *Groupement transfrontalier européen* (GTE), MOT member, held its General Assembly on 24 April 2009 in Archamps (Franco-Swiss border). There are now **more than 135,000 Swiss and French border workers**. However, on 1 June 2009 the Swiss Confederation will stop retroceding to Unedic the share of the **unemployment insurance contributions** collected on its territory which until then went to France. On this point **Michel Charrat, GTE president, took up a firm position**: “Our position on this issue has not changed and it is above all ethical [...] We do not want to depend on a benefit system that we do not finance and be a burden on the contributors of the state where we reside”. The GTE has asked the French government to put pressure on Switzerland so that these payments be continued as permitted by Community legislation.

Strasbourg/Kehl

The **city councils of Strasbourg and Kehl held a session together** in Strasbourg on 5 May, for **the first time since 1998**: “This was not a meeting of a joint city council, which has no legal existence” but rather a “meeting of the members of the city councils of Strasbourg and Kehl”, stated the mayor of Strasbourg, Roland Ries.

The “General public” site

- **“Conurbations”**: On the French and English versions of the site, a map of Europe gives access to some thirty detailed presentations of cross-border conurbations and Eurodistricts. On the French version, each presentation has links to other data on the site relevant to the territory: documents, maps, project sheets, newsletter articles, links, etc.
- **“Themes”**: The standout topics of cross-border cooperation are presented on the French, English, and German versions of the site, with practical recommendations for each topic. The French version again has links to other data on the site (projects, documents, maps, articles, etc.).
- **“Projects”**: Available in French and in English, this section consists of a database containing nearly 200 cross-border projects. Any project lead partner can submit a project directly on the site.
- **“Publications”**: This section provides access to the documentary and legal resources available for the general public. A collection of nearly 150 maps is available in the French version.
- **“EU programmes” (French version)**: A database lists the Interreg III and IV programmes dedicated to cross-border cooperation on the French borders.
- **“The MOT”**: This section includes a presentation of the MOT (activities, publications, seminars, etc.) and of each member (in French), and information about the launching of the EUROMOT network.
- **“Newsletter”**: This section presents the latest publications and news. Members can submit their cross-border events and news. The newsletter “Cross-border news” provides information every month on major cross-border cooperation events; each issue is published in French and in English, and also in a third language (German, Spanish, Italian, or Dutch).
- **“Links”**: A database of web links.

The “Members’ space”

This new space, now available in French, is intended to encourage exchanges within the MOT network. Each member can post on line any announcement or event that it wants to communicate to the whole network. Specific resources for members only are also available:

- **“The association”**: All the information and documents relating to the annual general meetings, board of administration meetings and the annual reports can be downloaded from this section.
- **“Press review”**: The twice-monthly press reviews of cross-border cooperation news go electronic! All the articles will be archived on the site and accessible by a search engine (by word in the title or body of the article, publication name, topic, territory, year of publication).
- **“The network”**: Information about each member: structure, issues, cross-border projects, contact details, etc.
- **“Seminars”**: Members have access to MOT seminar documents including PowerPoint presentations.
- **“Resources”**: In addition to the “general public” resources of the site, this section includes data reserved for members such as a legal toolbox (consisting of “border data sheets” and “tool data sheets”) and recent MOT studies.

Press review

- **The University of the Grande Région is born**, *Le Républicain lorrain*, 3 May
“The University of the Grande Région (UGR) has been launched. The inaugural conference took place this week in Saarbrücken and was attended by seven university partners from Kaiserslautern, Liège, Luxembourg, Nancy, Saarbrücken, Trier and Metz. ‘The structures set up as part of the project will facilitate medium-term cross-border cooperation in all areas’, declared Bernard Rentier, rector of the University of Liège...”
- **The European funds go on line**, *Le Républicain lorrain*, 9 May
“The prefecture of the [Lorraine] region is launching today, Europe day, a website devoted entirely to European funding...”
- **Tourism: the Upper Rhine looking for a common brand**, *Les Echos*, 6 May
“With support from Brussels, the Baden region, Alsace and the Basle region in Switzerland are going to pool their efforts to set up joint tourism promotion...”
- **‘Fast’ construction for the cross-border RER**, *20 Minutes*, 25 April
“The French and Swiss partners of the future France-Vaud-Genève RER regional express network (RER fv) decided on Saturday in Geneva ‘on fast construction’ of the project, i.e. by 2016 as planned until now...”
- **Pyénées-Orientales - The VHV will cross the Pyrenees in a tunnel**, *Le Moniteur*, 8 May
“The future very-high-voltage power line (VHV) between France and Spain, burial of which was decided by an intergovernmental agreement on 27 June 2008, will cross the Pyrenees in an 8 km tunnel parallel to that of the Perpignan-Figueras high-speed rail line...”

