

The Basque Eurocity sketched by its young inhabitants

Since September and until February 2015, young people from both sides of the Bidasoa River are working on the "Basque Eurocity of the future". At the instigation of Eusko Ikaskuntza (Society for Basque Studies), the Forum of Young People, supported by the Aquitaine-Euskadi Euroregion's common fund and the Basque Eurocity, is encouraging exchanges and cross-border relations by letting young people aged between 18 and 33 living in the Basque Eurocity area have their say. Since September 2014, around thirty young people from both sides of the border – students, young workers, adults and parents – have been dialoguing and elaborating a joint discourse/position on the "Eurocity of the 21st

century" that they wish for and that should serve them.

Thanks to the contribution of a scientific committee made up of researchers and experts on economic and social issues, the young people selected topics that are of concern to them: the media, identity and citizenship, cooperation in the area of schools and universities, cross-border employment, cultural cooperation, multilingualism, infrastructures and transport. The sessions, which are held in Donostia-San Sebastián or Bayonne, are an opportunity for the professionals and young people to exchange experiences. In early 2015, the latter group will meet to collectively draw up their proposals for "their" Eurocity of the 21st century. [More info](#)



Towards new interclustering projects in Aquitaine-Euskadi

The cross-border chamber of commerce for the Basque Country, BIHARTEAN, and the Euskadi Institute of Competitiveness, ORKESTRA, have for more than a year been implementing a cross-border interclustering initiative, recognised as a project of Euroregional interest by the Aquitaine-Euskadi EGTC*. The objective is to identify avenues of development between clusters on either side of the border, to structure and make permanent their collaboration and to contribute to the creation of a Euroregional cross-border economic territory. A survey of clusters in the two territories resulted

in desired convergence on three points: the exchange of good practices regarding the management of clusters, collaboration in the area of innovation and shared access to new markets and customers. An analysis of patents applications filed by companies and technology centres in the territory made it possible to bring out some convergent issues. On the basis of this work, a meeting entitled "Interclustering Act II", held on 25 November in Hendaye, was a chance to discuss:

- "geolocation and its multi-sectoral applications", bringing out ideas for

collaboration in the transportation of dangerous waste and the practice of water sports;

- "food/product processes", devoted to the packaging and customisation of new products focused, for example, on health or senior citizens;
- "new materials and new industrial processes".

The next stages concern the creation of pilot groups of clusters/firms/territories in order to formalise cross-border projects. [More info](#)

*Also in partnership with the Basque Government and the Aquitaine Region.

EVENTS

Event to note:

A conference entitled "What solutions for cross-border healthcare?" was organised at the Assemblée Nationale by Philip Cordery, Member of parliament for French residents in the Benelux and Chairman of the Parliamentary Group on Cross-Border Cooperation (FR), in partnership with the MOT. It aimed to enable experts and elected representatives to exchange views about solutions to be implemented in order to promote cross-border healthcare and hospital cooperation. More info in the next newsletter.

Other events:

Conference "Cross-border and medico-social cooperation: Taking stock - Challenges and perspectives", 11 December 2014 in Lille

Second cross-border conference on higher education, research and innovation in the French-Swiss Jura Arc, 12 December in Neuchâtel

Conference on the bases for cross-border policy in the area of human resources, 16 December 2014 in Waregem, Belgium

URBACT information day, 16 December 2014 Paris

Strategic plan of the Aquitaine-Euskadi Euroregion EGTC, 19 December 2014 in Hendaye

[All events](#)

The REGIO PAMINA Eurodistrict: a day devoted to cross-border employment

The cross-border labour market was the leitmotif of the event held on Thursday, 27 November 2014 by the REGIO PAMINA Eurodistrict and the social enterprise Neue Arbeit in Lauterbourg. Around 60 French and German players from the political sphere, administration and economy came together to take part in two roundtables on this topic.



The morning's discussion was focused on the ending and assessment of the cross-border ESF project PAMI45+NA (Baden-Württemberg ESF). It highlighted the innovative nature of the project, which aimed to promote the integration into the labour force of older workers (45+) at a cross-border level. This age group tends to be forgotten in the face of the massive problem of youth unemployment, when in fact it constitutes an important component for a balanced labour market.

The discussions in the afternoon were introduced with a presentation of the employment situation in the territories of the Upper

Rhine and the REGIO PAMINA Eurodistrict. In it, the latter's director, Patrice Harster, affirmed the need for coherent collaboration between the different territorial levels (Europe, Upper Rhine, Eurodistricts). The roundtable, with representatives of these different levels, enabled a discussion of the obstacles to and prospects for a cross-border labour market. A representative from the European Commission, and Karl-Heinz Lambertz, the President of the AEBR and member of the Committee of the Regions, made contributions.

The coordination of activities at the cross-border level and the coherent use

of funds, particularly from Europe, thus emerged as major elements to strengthen cooperation.

The importance of the REGIO PAMINA Eurodistrict's work was affirmed and it was encouraged to continue with it.

In conclusion, Martine Calderoli-Lotz, Vice-President of the Conseil régional of Alsace, underscored the predominant role of the territorial level, which is able to carry out "tailor-made" actions that complement those at regional level.

[More info](#)

A difficult year for Greater Geneva

This year of 2014 has been a difficult one for "Greater Geneva". An opinion poll organised by the Geneva daily, the Tribune de Genève, among its readers shows that they remain "sceptical regarding the way in which the region is developing". But they state that they are "in favour of Geneva contributing to the financing of infrastructures on French soil". Echoing/following on from the two worrying Swiss votes this year – the "yes" at national level to the initiative "against mass immigration" that provides for the introduction of quotas for cross-border workers, then the "no" of the people of Geneva to a SFr 3 million contribution to

finance a car park on French soil – the president of the Conseil d'Etat, François Longchamp, who is also the chairman of the Greater Geneva LGTC, emphasised in the same newspaper: "We must now reassess the priorities. [...] The LGTC is going to focus on what the citizens want most: transport and planning. [...] We need to be much more transparent. To show what is being constructed. [...] A region that needs 100,000 people to run its economy, services, etc. should be aware that it needs political structures for dialogue, transport structures to move around and of course economic stability."

Experiment in Alsace and Lorraine?

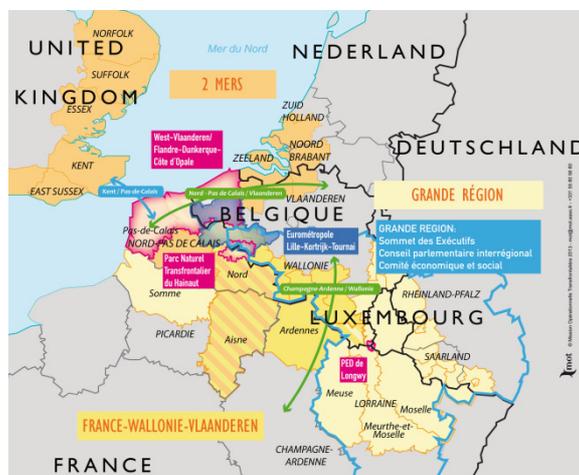
"During a visit to Lorraine on 24 November, the French President, François Hollande, proposed an 'experiment' with the carbon tax in Alsace and Lorraine, two regions that are in favour of the measure, which has been abandoned at national level. 'I know what these two regions have to put up with with the heavy goods traffic from abroad. There is therefore a discussion [...]. An experiment can be envisaged if their elected representatives decide they want it and if it is compatible with our European commitments'. [...] The experiment with the carbon tax could therefore start in the East of France, where it has long



been called for. Faced with additional North-South traffic passing through it after the introduction of a similar tax in neighbouring Germany, Alsace argued as early as 2005 for an experiment with a tax on heavy goods vehicles on its territory." Sources: Localtis, Républiqueain lorrain and Est républicain.

MOT study on French-Belgian cross-border cooperation

As 2014 draws to a close, the technical work to update the report of the French-Belgian parliamentary working group (GTPFB*), initiated by the prefecture of the Nord-Pas de Calais Region, is being finalised. This initiative has benefited from the support and expertise of the MOT.



The Committee of the Regions stresses the need to speed up implementation of partnership agreements and operational programmes

"Following the General Affairs Council, Michel Lebrun, the President of the Committee of the Regions, saluted the efforts made by the European Council and the European Commission to speed up the adoption and implementation of partnership agreements and operational programmes within the framework of cohesion policy. However, Mr Lebrun said that he was worried by the changes that might be made to the funds allocated by the EU to cohesion policy for the 2014-2020 period – funding that could be linked to the financing of the European Commission's future €300 billion investment programme."

Source: Committee of the Regions.

[More info](#)

The updating process of the GTPFB's work aims to re-examine the obstacles to cooperation and to propose new action plans to overcome them.

This process has mobilised the political and technical representatives of the French authorities of the Nord-Pas de Calais Region and all levels of government in Belgium in order to work collectively to remove these obstacles.

Thus, with support from the MOT, a written consultation, targeted interviews and four working groups with the competent institutions have been organised. Grouped around four thematic areas (territorial

development, transport and the environment; healthcare; the economy, jobs, education and professional training; and civil security), the working groups met for an initial session in July and a second one in October-November. The discussions helped to make progress with understanding what the obstacles are, defining common objectives and proposing the solutions to be implemented.

This initiative, which is unique along France's borders, has also been followed at national level, by the French embassy in Brussels and France's General Commission for Territorial Equality, and by Belgium's

General Consul in Lille.

The approach of identifying obstacles and solutions seen in this French-Belgian initiative is a positive example to be transposed to other borders in order to improve cooperation and provide better services to citizens living in cross-border regions.

*In 2005, a French-Belgian parliamentary working group (Groupe de travail parlementaire franco-belge - GTPFB) was set up in order to identify obstacles to cross-border cooperation along the French-Belgian border and to come up with concrete solutions. [More info](#)

2 Seas Programme

The event to launch the 2 Seas operational programme (France-United Kingdom) was held on 20-21 November 2014 in Saint André lez Lille and brought together more than 620 participants. It made it possible to define the programme's framework for intervention, to foster its appropriation by the participants, to explain the orientations chosen and the expected results, and to provide a first forum for exchanges to encourage the setting up of partnerships. [More info](#)

35th national meeting of urban planning public agencies

At this meeting entitled "The search for the territorial common good", held on 17-18 November 2014 in Paris, a workshop was devoted to an international topic: "Sustainable metropolises in the European and international urban agenda", in which the MOT took part.

[Publication on the meeting's topic.](#)

[More info](#)

Conference in Russia

Jean Peyrony, the MOT's Director General, took part in the 10th conference entitled "Cross-border cooperation: Russian Federation, European Union and Norway", which took place in St Petersburg on 14 November 2014. The event brought together nearly 200 participants representing the different territorial levels of Russia and the Baltic area (governments and regional organisations such as the Nordic Council, the Council of Baltic Sea States and the Union of the Baltic

Cities), the different cross-border cooperation programmes in these territories, the AEBR and the CPMR.

The day was an opportunity to present these different programmes and to debate the need to progress towards a more strategic and integrated vision of cooperation, while at the same time affirming the importance of supporting dialogue and cooperation with countries that border the European Union, like Russia. [More info](#)

PRESS REVIEW

▲ Power shortages: the Netherlands to the rescue

L'Echo Belgique, 2 December

"The Netherlands are going to help Belgium avoid a blackout this winter. Our neighbours have sufficient production capacity, thanks in particular to coal-fuelled power stations."

▲ The Belgians and French join forces to combat flooding

L'indicateur, 3 December

"Water does not recognise borders. The partners in the Cresety (creation of ecological sites in the Yser cross-border basin) have understood this. [...] '34% of the water that flows into the sea at Nieuwpoort comes from France'".

▲ German Länder worried about the future of cross-border cooperation

Acteurs publics, 26 November

"Annegret Kramp Karrenbauer, Minister-President of Saarland, was in Paris yesterday to meet with senators. With the re-demarcation of the French regions due to be validated by parliamentarians by the end of the year, German political leaders came to meet French senators to stress the need to preserve the cross-border links and exchanges built up with the neighbouring Länder."

▲ Double taxation of pensioners: an outcome likely in 2016

DNA, 30 November

"There has just been a new development issue of the double taxation of pensioners in Alsace's border region. France and Germany have agreed on a joint text which is due to be signed shortly."

▲ INSEE forecasts a fall in the active population in the Upper Rhine by 2030

DNA, 29 November

"The ageing of the population will result in a fall in the active population in the Upper Rhine by 2030. This is the conclusion of a study by [France's] National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies published yesterday (INSEE Analyses Alsace No. 7)."

▲ Upper Rhine Conference

Newspress, 4 December

"The review of France's presidency of the Upper Rhine Conference [...] has shown the progress made on the major areas of concern for the populations of the three countries that border the river."

▲ A metropolitan centre for the French part of Greater Geneva

Le Messenger, 21 November

"Etienne Blanc, Jean Denais, Jean-Jack Queyranne and Christian Dupessey have set out the details of the partnership between the Regional Cooperation Assembly (ARC) and the Rhône-Alpes Region which will monitor the territory's demographic and economic development. At a time when the Rhône-Alpes Region has confirmed its desire to make the French part of Greater Geneva its fourth conurbation, the latter is going to establish itself as a metropolitan centre on an equal footing with Geneva itself."

▲ Greater Geneva gives itself new impetus 'thanks to' fake residents

Le Dauphiné libéré, 4 December

"Ten days ago [...], François Longchamp, President of the Conseil d'État, and I reached an agreement for our two countries to exchange statistical data," explains Christian Monteil. [...] The idea? To make second-home residents who do not generate the 'Geneva financial compensation' become true residents. To this end, the French and Swiss administrations are going to cross-check their information, as well as with the municipalities."

▲ Sustainable development: the cross-border project is progressing

Le Dauphiné libéré, 29 novembre

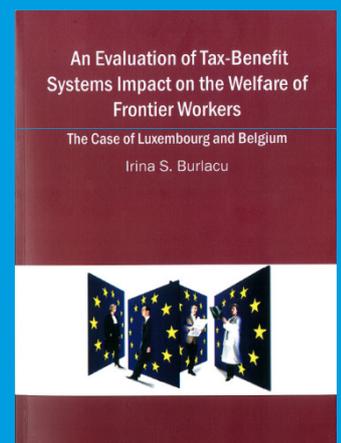
"They are putting in place an educational programme from primary school to high school. Since 2013, the town of Embrun and Turin Province have been involved in a cross-border project entitled 'Comenius Regio' on the theme of sustainable development."

An Evaluation of Tax-Benefit Systems Impact on the Welfare of Frontier Workers. The Case of Luxembourg and Belgium

"The thesis is about the differences in social security systems and taxes in the European Union's context (looking at the selected country cases) and how these affect the income of individuals who reside in one country, but commute daily or weekly to another country for work, while keeping their residence place constant (called 'frontier workers'). To some extent, the study can also be related to the broader topic of free movement for work, touching upon questions like: how do different systems affect earners who work or have worked in different countries throughout their careers (e.g. researchers) and how does that impact their income."

Thesis, Irina S. Burlacu, Maastricht Graduate School of Governance, 2014

[More info](#)



CROSS-BORDER NEWS

Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière
38 rue des Bourdonnais
75001 Paris France
Tel: +33 (0)1 55 80 56 80
www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu

Director of publication: Jean Peyrony
Production: Domitille Ayrat

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