

## Presidency of the Greater Region: Wallonia's objectives

Since 1 January 2015, Wallonia has had the honour and responsibility of chairing the Greater Region, a task that it is carrying out in close collaboration with its Belgian partners, the Wallonia-Brussels Federation and the German-Speaking Community. This mobilisation will be particularly focused around the presidency's theme: creativity and innovation. A theme that is highly relevant to the common challenges and opportunities it represents for all of the partner regions.

It is also a central thread of Wallonia's regional development strategy: the Marshall Plan 4.0.

Wallonia's objective during its presidency will be to produce and highlight the concrete benefits of this cross-border territory for both citizens and businesses.

In this context, it is planned to rapidly implement [the framework agreement on vocational training](#) concluded between Greater Region stakeholders in November

2014, with special emphasis on the development of vocational training in the careers of the future.

The presidency will also be an opportunity to publicise "success stories" and the creative innovative projects of INTERREG IV, without forgetting the numerous public events such as the "Greater Region Day" or the "Fair-Play Tour"\*. A cross-border gourmet walk allowing people to sample local gastronomic delicacies will also be initiated.

Lastly, Wallonia's presidency will be marked by the Greater Region's 20th anniversary, a festive occasion that will also be an opportunity for the greater-regional structure to reflect on its dynamics so as to optimise its functioning.

### More info

\*The Greater Region's "Fair-Play Tour", launched in 1999, brings together young people around sport once a year, with an itinerary of over 800 km across the cross-border territory. <http://fairplaytour.de>



**Paul Magnette**

**Minister-President of Wallonia**

"Wallonia is a border territory par excellence: its relations with its neighbours have always played a crucial role in its development. As a consequence, it is very actively involved in cross-border cooperation: from the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis to the Meuse-Rhine Euregio, by way of sustained collaboration with the French Champagne-Ardenne and Picardie regions, there is scarcely a part of our territory that is not transcended by a European partnership.

Among them is the Greater Region, which this year is celebrating its 20th anniversary and of which we are looking forward to holding the presidency for the next two years. In 2014, this greater-regional cooperation entered a new phase with the creation in Luxembourg of the EGTC for the Secretariat of the Greater Region Summit, which will make it possible to better coordinate the actions of its different bodies.

The EGTC will soon be relocated to the "Maison de la Grande Région" in Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg, which will bring together all of the Greater Region's bodies and networks. Citizens will then have a 'one-stop shop' to obtain answers to all their questions related to this territory. But this greater proximity to citizens must also be pursued through concrete actions that enhance their quality of life and thereby contribute to the project of European integration."



From left to right: Oliver Paasch, Minister-President of the German-Speaking Community; René Collin, Minister of Wallonia, Delegate to the Greater Region's representation and Sports Minister of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation; Paul Magnette, Minister-President of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation; Rudy Demotte, Minister-President of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation.

# EVENTS

## MOT's general assembly and annual conference

### "Territorial reforms: what impact for cross-border cooperation?"

in Chamonix on 17-18 June 2015, at the invitation of the "Conférence Transfrontalière Mont Blanc", a member of the MOT's network.

The pre-programme is online. [Click here](#) to download it.

**URBACT III Launch Event**, 16 March 2015 in Brussels

**European Cluster Days : "Le cluster, un moteur européen de croissance"**, 18-19 March 2015 in Strasbourg

**The French-Swiss Cross-Border Workers' Fair**, 26-27-28 March 2015 in Annemasse (France)

**Interreg V 2014-2020 France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen Launch Event**, 30-31 March 2015 in Mons (Belgium)

More info, all the events: [click here](#).

## Territorial reforms in France: what account is being taken of cross-border cooperation?

On 18 June 2014 in France, the draft legislation concerning the country's new territorial organisation (the NOTRe Act), which provides for a reorganisation of the competences of the territorial authorities at all levels, was submitted to the Senate.

In its role as a defender of the interests of cross-border territories, the MOT studied the draft legislation and thought about amendments that would enable better account to be taken of the specificities of border regions. One of the aims is that the territorial development plans and documents envisaged take account of the other side of the border.



At its first reading at the Senate, Michel Delebarre, Senator for the Nord Department and the MOT's president, submitted an amendment making it possible to add to the Regional Economic Innovation and Internationalisation Development Plan a cross-border component, drawn up in consultation with the territorial authorities of the neighbouring countries. It was adopted and forms part of the bill passed on 27 January 2015.

For the bill's first reading at the Assemblée nationale (on 3 February, with the final vote scheduled for 10 March

2015), the MOT has worked with Philip Cordery, the MP for French nationals in the Benelux and Chairman of the study group on cross-border areas and workers. Amendments will be submitted during the session in order to enable account to be taken of the cross-border dimension in the territorial development documents and cultural and sports policies.

Lastly, an amendment has been adopted that allows a French territorial authority, which is the manager of an investment operation co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), to only co-finance a minimum of 15% of the total

amount financed by public entities (compared with 20% currently). This will enable territorial authorities to take advantage, where this is possible, of the ERDF's maximum co-financing rate of 85%.

After a second reading at the Senate and the Assemblée nationale, the NOTRe Act is due to be adopted before the summer.

The consequences of the reform of territorial public action for cross-border cooperation will be the subject of [the MOT's panel discussion on 17 June 2015](#). [More info on the NOTRe Act \[FR\]](#).

## A strategic plan for the Aquitaine-Euskadi Euroregion



On 19 December 2014 in Hendaye, the 2014-2020 strategic plan for the Aquitaine-Euskadi Euroregion EGTC was presented. This document, which is in line with European priorities and those of the two regions, was drafted within the framework of an open consultation that involved a survey of cooperation players, targeted interviews, thematic

working groups and two public consultations. The plan comprises two parts: an assessment and a Euroregional strategy divided into four work areas\* and around 40 actions.

\* Euroregional citizenship / the knowledge economy, innovation and business competitiveness / sustainable territory / open governance.

[More info](#)

## An EGC for Greater Geneva?

Etienne Blanc, MP for the Ain Department and first Vice-President of the French Geneva area Regional Cooperation Assembly (ARC), submitted an amendment to the "NOTRe" draft legislation (in France) to enable border metropolitan conurbations of member countries of the Council of Europe, such as the Swiss Confederation, to participate in a Euroregional Cooperation Grouping (EGC). This amendment, which has been adopted by the Assemblée Nationale's Law Commission, will be included in the legislation.

This development marks an important step for Greater Geneva and the organisation of its cross-border governance. [More info](#)

## French-Belgian-Luxembourg cross-border healthcare: "new developments for patients"

View the question put by the MP Philip Cordery\* on 13 January 2015 at the Assemblée Nationale to Marisol Touraine, French Minister of Social Affairs, Health and Women's Rights, about cross-border healthcare, and her reply.

\* MP for French nationals in the Benelux and Chairman of the study group "Cross-Border Areas and Workers" at the Assemblée Nationale.

[See the video](#)

[Latest news on health](#)

## Findings of the EUBORDERREGIONS project on the EU's external borders

This European research project\*, led by the University of Eastern Finland, held its final conference on 20-21 February 2015 in Istanbul. This event was an opportunity to present the findings and the studies carried out during the four-year research project, the aim of which was to analyse regional development at Europe's external borders through cross-border cooperation policies and practices.

The project's website has put online eleven case studies on the following borders: Norway-Russia, Norway-Sweden, Finland-Russia, Estonia-Russia, Poland-Ukraine, Hungary-Ukraine, Moldova-Romania, Bulgaria-Turkey, Greece-Turkey, Spain-Morocco and Italy-Tunisia.

\* Financed by the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Development.

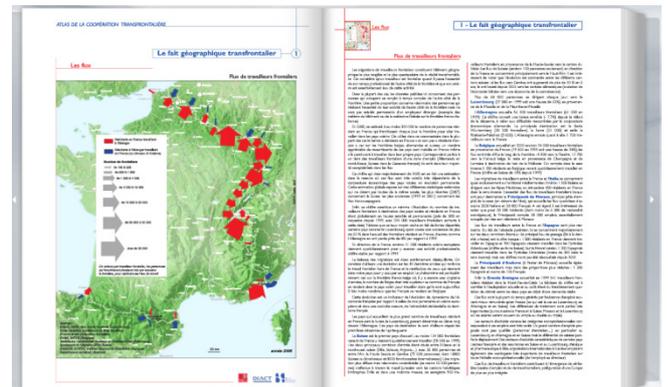
[More info](#)

## The MOT has put online 150 maps to illustrate cross-border cooperation

Since the overhaul of the MOT's website in November 2013, nearly 150 maps illustrating the intensity of cross-border relations along France's borders have been put online. Presentation of the latest additions.

• A first set of maps relating to cross-border governance shows the agreements, governance tools and cooperation programmes in place along each of France's borders:

Example of the France-Germany map:

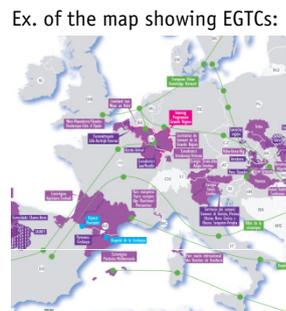


• A second set relates to legal tools:

Example of the map showing cross-border structures, with topics of cooperation identified:



Other maps show cross-border structures according to their type (EGTCs, LGCCs, Consorcios, etc.):



Lastly, a set of maps for each of France's borders has also been produced:

Example of the France-Spain map:



• **Online catalogue of the Atlas**  
In addition, the MOT has posted online a "catalogue" version of its Atlas published in 2007 (in French only). This contains around 100 maps and comments on major topics such as worker flows and employment at the borders, healthcare, conurbations and natural spaces, transport, etc.

[Online Atlas \(in French\)](#)  
[All the cartographic resources](#)

## Meeting between Michel Delebarre and Harlem Désir



The MOT's President, Michel Delebarre, met Harlem Désir, Secretary of State for European Affairs, on 29 January 2015 in Paris, in order to discuss cross-border cooperation with respect to areas such as jobs, higher education, the environment and healthcare. The Secretary of State stressed his particular interest in cross-border issues and the work carried out by the MOT which, thanks to its network of members,

makes possible a direct connection between central government and the territories concerned. One of the areas of work with the staff of his private office relates to the identification of model events and projects to enable them to follow experiences on the ground.

Harlem Désir notably spoke about the "Erasmus +" cooperation project between Lorraine and Saarland in the area of apprenticeship, as well

as the university cooperation project Eurocampus in the Upper Rhine. He also announced the holding of a French-German conference in July, at which cross-border territories – "Europe's laboratories" – will feature prominently.

[#EuropeConcrète](#)

# PRESS REVIEW

## There are more and more cross-border workers

AFP, 13 February

"The number of cross-border 'commuters' who live in France and work in a neighbouring country increased by 42% in 12 years, to more than 350,000 people in 2011, according to a study by INSEE published on Friday."

## A 'coordinator' to adapt government departments to the new map of the regions

Localtis, 29 January

"A decree published in the Journal officiel of 27 January has created the post of 'national coordinator' charged with preparing 'the reform of the decentralised departments of the State following the adoption of the legislation on the demarcation of the regions'. Appointed for two years to work alongside the government's secretary general, he will be assisted by a 'interministerial coordination task force'."

## Metropolis: 'We already involve our Belgian neighbours in our projects'

La Voix du Nord, 9 February

"LMCU\*, MEL\*\* – what are the differences and benefits for our fellow citizens? 'Along with Strasbourg, Lille will be the only 'European metropolis' in France. We already involve our Belgian neighbours in our projects, in our territorial development. For example, their point of view will be taken into account regarding the suburban rail network between Lille and the mining towns. The link with Kortrijk is at stake. We can go much further.'"

\*Lille Métropole Communauté Urbaine

\*\*Métropole Européenne de Lille

## Swiss firms want to lower the wages of cross-border workers

Le Monde, 29 January

"On 15 January, the boss of Volailles Importation, a company based near Geneva, sent its cross-border employees a strange letter. As soon as the Swiss franc-euro exchange rate has stabilised, he wrote, 'we reserve the right (...) to lower wages.'"

## Switzerland pays €3.3 million for the Annemasse BHNS\*

Le Messenger, 5 February

"For Christian Dupessey, the President of the Annemasse conurbation, there is no other word: it's an 'event'. On 17 February, he will sign with François Longchamp, the President of Geneva's Conseil d'Etat, the agreement on the payment of the federal contribution."

\* Bus à Haut Niveau de Service (High-Level Service Bus)

## Nice-Cuneo: a renaissance in 2020?

TBCA, 30 January

"Patience... With an allocation of €91 in the State-region plan contract for 2015-2020, once renovated, the rail-line will open up a direct train-link between Nice and Turin."

## The Department has just started a bus service between Bayonne and Irun

Sud Ouest, 9 February

"Is the regular train-link between Bayonne and San Sebastian a real project or science-fiction? While it is pondering this question, the Pyrénées-Atlantiques Department decided to launch its new bus service, "Euskadi Express", between Bayonne and Irun. 'The procedures for putting in place this cross-border bus service are much simpler' [...] This alternative solution is above all less expensive: €2 per kilometre as opposed to €15 for the train."

## A sticker stigmatises businesses that employ cross-border workers

Le Matin, 8 February

"Ticino - the municipality of Claro is selling to local bosses a sticker that indicates their percentage of resident employees. Only 20% and it's general opprobrium, 80% and it's seen as wonderful. In a canton affected by unemployment and wage dumping, the issue of cross-border workers is highly sensitive. 'It's apartheid,' the Italians protest."

## Electricity: the European exchange area extends to Italy and Slovenia

AFP, 10 February

"The French and Italian electricity markets will be connected from the end of February as part of the extension of the European area of cross-border electricity exchanges, which will also be joined by Slovenia..."

## How international borders affect local public transport:

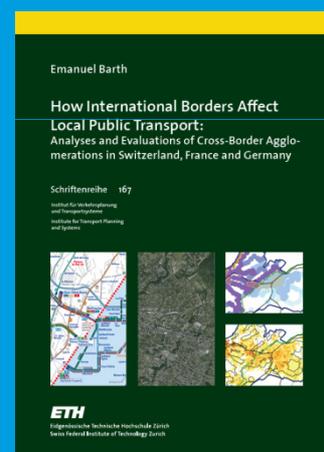
### Analyses and evaluations of cross-border agglomerations in Switzerland, France and Germany

This study focuses on various effects of international borders on local public transport: How does it impact demand, service offer as well as framework conditions? These questions are dealt with on the basis of four exemplary cross-border agglomerations: Geneva, Basel, Strasbourg and Lille. The analyses are based on a combination of data collected and standardised from various sources and of empirically collected data. The analyses reveal new conclusions from which a series of recommendations could be derived.

The study is published in English, with abstracts in French and German.

Author: Emanuel Barth – Publisher: ETH

[Order a hard copy](#) – [Download the study in PDF format.](#)



## CROSS-BORDER NEWS

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