

**François Bausch**

Minister for Sustainable
Development and Infrastructure,
Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

Luxembourg's presidency of the EU Council has given high priority to cross-border cooperation. In the area of territorial cohesion, we have worked on the different tools available and needed to improve cohesion. Starting from the observation that there is often a cohesion deficit in border regions and that there are many legal and regulatory obstacles to the implementation of cross-border projects and strategies, the presidency initiated the political discussion on a legal tool that would give border regions the legal and regulatory provisions identified as necessary by the players on the ground, then validated by central governments. Regarding the general topic of small and medium-sized cities and urban areas promoted by the Italian-Latvian-Luxembourg trio of presidencies, it focused on cross-border networks of cities and urban areas. The conference that marked the 25th anniversary of the Interreg programmes addressed the intangible conditions needed for effective cooperation. For the first time, a General Affairs Council devoted to cohesion policy adopted "Council conclusions" relating to European cross-border cooperation. Moreover, at the instigation of the Luxembourg presidency, the Committee of the Regions adopted an opinion on the development of cross-border cooperation; and two sessions of the Open Days were devoted to the legal instrument proposed and to networks of cross-border urban areas respectively. Finally, the Luxembourg presidency discussed and had approved by the EU Council the macro-regional strategy for the Alps. The Grand Duchy thereby demonstrated its commitment to territorial cooperation, placed at the forefront of European integration!

The conclusions of Luxembourg's presidency in the area of cross-border cooperation



Within the framework of its presidency of the EU Council, on 26-27 November 2015, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg brought together the European ministers responsible for territorial cohesion and urban policy for an informal meeting in Luxembourg. The discussions fed into the conclusions of the Luxembourg presidency, which is proposing actions to facilitate cross-border cooperation within the EU. One of them, formulated with technical assistance from the MOT,¹ consists in putting in place a legal tool based on a European regulation. This tool would enable local authorities that are faced with a legal obstacle regarding a cross-border project to propose to their respective governments a legal framework that is specific² to the functioning of the project concerned. For example, in the case of the extension of a tramline on the other side of a border, the standards of one of the countries could be applied on both sides. In short, governments could

recognise the application of normative provisions from the law of a neighbouring country in order to facilitate the functioning of a specific cross-border project. This new form of mutual recognition would help with the implementation of cross-border projects and thereby benefit border populations. On 26 November, the ministers in charge of regional planning greeted this proposal favourably. On 27 November, the ministers responsible for urban policy notably discussed strategies to promote small and medium-sized towns, affirming the role of networks of cross-border towns and arguing for "polycentric development" in cross-border regions. The need to strengthen the knowledge base and evidence on cross-border regions was also underlined through support for the creation of observatories producing cross-border data [...].
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¹ To consult the study, [click here](#).

² Derived from the law of one or other of the parties.

EVENTS

Please note the date of the MOT's 2016 annual conference and general assembly, which will take place in Paris on 24-25 May 2016, at the Musée de l'Histoire de l'immigration around the "Frontières" ("Borders") exhibition.

Third AViTeM Meetings
"Sustainable Mediterranean cities and territories: capacity building and action", 19-20 January 2016 in Marseille

Seminar **"Unlocking the Potential of Mobile Health in Europe: Removing Barriers to the Empowerment of Citizens"**, 20 January 2016 in Brussels

4th edition of the Master-Class "Trans/frontiers and dialogue between disciplines": "The age of transitions to another generation of actors?", 26-28 January 2016 in Marseille

Centre for Cross Border Studies
2016 annual conference:
"Bordering Between Unions: What Does the UK Referendum on Europe Mean for Us?", 18-19 February 2016 in Armagh (United Kingdom)

[All the events](#)

Seminar on French-British cooperation



The Pas-de-Calais Department has solid relations with its British neighbours, which have resulted in many projects and the signature of a cooperation agreement with the County of Kent.

At a seminar co-hosted on 25-26 November 2015 by the Pas-de-Calais Department and the General Secretariat for Regional Affairs of the Nord-Pas-de-Calais Region, in which the MOT participated, the opportunities offered by this cross-border cooperation were reaffirmed and set out in detail.

The Prefect of the region recalled the key role played by cross-border cooperation in this territory marked by crossings and exchanges (British investment in the region, tourism, etc.). In particular, he mentioned the European Straits Initiative, led

by the Pas-de-Calais Department since 2010, which feeds into these exchanges the experience of 22 partners from 13 European countries.

[More info](#)

The seminar was an opportunity to present to central government officials in the region and regional public structures the outlook for the coming years: how can cross-border cooperation evolve? What projects can be implemented? Two European cross-border cooperation programmes give financial support to projects; above all, they provide opportunities for innovation, adaptation of public policy and the construction of long-term partnerships.

The seminar was followed by a visit on the ground that introduced participants to the Landscapes and Nature for All

(LNA) project devoted to the preservation of the environment and raising public awareness. It has resulted in the creation of a network of nature parks on either side of the Pas-de-Calais Strait, with the sea dividing very similar geological structures and landscapes.

Another project that was presented was the Cross-Border Observatory to Optimise Public Service Delivery, which has developed a new method for analysing the needs of users in order to adapt public services and increase their accessibility. Concrete results produced by the project: the Bougeco.com transport platform and the Public Services Centre in Fauquembergues which houses different public services on the same site, along the lines of Kent's "Gateways".

[More info](#)

Greater Geneva in lycées' school programme



The local development council of the French Geneva area has presented a new edition of the educational material on Greater Geneva, which is entitled "Greater Geneva, our daily territory" and aimed at students in the penultimate year of lycée as part of the geography syllabus.

Building on the positive response from students and their teachers in 2012, this second edition, which is accompanied by a teacher's book and a

book of exercises, was distributed in 15 lycées within the zone of the French Geneva area Regional Cooperation Assembly at the start of the 2015 autumn term. A total of 85 teachers and 94 classes comprising 3100 students are concerned.

"For this project [Greater Geneva] to succeed, it is crucial that the inhabitants on either side of the border understand the issues at stake and appropriate them. And among the inhabitants no population is more important than young people. For the school students of today are the citizens of the future. It is therefore vital to get them interested in these subjects, which are essential for the harmonious and effective development of our beautiful region", emphasised Gabriel Doublet, Vice-President of the Regional Cooperation Assembly at a meeting of school students and elected representatives on 13 November 2015.

[More info](#)

The "Learn do share" day of the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis

On 26 November in Kortrijk, a day based around the theme of innovation and the concept of "Learn do share" was held by the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis. Nearly 120 people reflected together on how to develop the Eurometropolis and be involved in it. In addition to the pooling of experiences and grassroots initiatives, a manifesto detailing the shared ideas and ambitions for the society of the future was published.

[More info](#)

NEWS IN FRANCE

2015 regional elections in France: an update on the territorial reform and cross-border cooperation

Following the regional elections and the reform which reduced the number of regions in mainland France from 22 to 13, the MOT has published a note (in French) on [the new French regions and the territorial reform: what will be the impact on cross-border cooperation?](#). Nine of the 13 new regions in mainland France are border regions and are involved in a territorial cooperation programme (Interreg A): Alsace-Champagne-Ardenne-Lorraine, Aquitaine-Limousin-Poitou-Charentes, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, Languedoc-Roussillon-Midi-Pyrénées, Nord-Pas-de-Calais-Picardie, Corsica, Normandy and Brittany.

EUROPE NEWS

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The conclusions of Luxembourg's presidency in the area of cross-border cooperation

[...] The Luxembourg presidency also welcomed the European Commission's initiative in the area of cross-border statistics, which aims to coordinate the work with Member States, calling for greater involvement on their side. The MOT is itself very involved in this domain alongside the General Commission for Territorial Equality (CGET) and its European partners.

In addition, the refugee crisis in Europe was addressed on 26 November, first of all to emphasise the role played by cities and the need to adapt European urban policy, but also in the EU General Affairs Council,¹ which discussed the possibility of using Interreg to respond to the challenge of their integration. The European Commissioner responsible for

regional policy, Corina Crețu, raised the possibility of adapting the content of certain cooperation programmes.

For the first time, the General Affairs Council discussed cross-border cooperation extensively. Beyond the refugee crisis, it welcomed Luxembourg's initiative that made it possible to address the issues relating to cross-border cooperation at this level and to highlight the beneficial role played by Interreg over the past 25 years in strengthening regional integration and its value added in socio-economic, environmental, cultural, institutional and political terms, and the positive effect it has had particularly in the outermost and least populated regions. The Commission's initiative to work on the obstacles to cross-border

cooperation was welcomed and the coordination between Member States in the area of cross-border statistical observation warmly encouraged, with the Commission and Member States invited to work on a pragmatic approach, focused on results, for European territorial cooperation programmes.

¹ Which brings together the 28 ministers of European affairs and which prepares the European Council, made up of heads of state and government.

More info:

[The Luxembourg Presidency conclusions \(Territorial cohesion and Urban policy\)](#)

[More info on the Luxembourg presidency's website](#)

[More info on the MOT's work in the area of observation](#)



"A world without borders - Refugees, cooperation and territories"

A seminar entitled "A world without borders - Refugees, cooperation and territories" was held within the framework of the ESPON 2020 programme, in cooperation with the Luxembourg presidency of the EU Council, on 8-9 December 2015 in Luxembourg.

The discussions focused on the territorial dimension of the refugee issue in Europe, as well as on cross-border cooperation and the EU's macro-regional strategies.

A roundtable bringing together representatives of the Committee of the Regions, the European Commission, the Luxembourg presidency, the ESPON programme, the MOT, the Centre for Cross Border Studies and Eurostat was devoted to future support for the cross-border cooperation programme, notably in the area of observation of cross-border territories.

[More info](#)



Seminar for government departments in Toulouse

At the instigation of the Midi-Pyrénées General Secretariat for Regional Affairs, a working seminar aimed at the government offices in the regions bordering Spain and Andorra was held on 25 November 2015 in Toulouse to discuss practices and consider new modes of organisation designed to remove the obstacles to French-Spanish-Andorran cooperation. The MOT notably presented the pioneering work on the French-Belgian border regarding the identification and resolution of obstacles, which is intended to be transposed to other borders.

PRESS REVIEW

France's new regions from a European perspective

Policy paper, Jacques Delors Institute, Marjorie Jouen, December 2015

"Mainly motivated by national considerations, the creation of the new 'super-regions' has sometimes been justified by external and European arguments, such as reaching a critical size in terms of international competition, and comparison with the neighbouring German, Italian and Spanish regions, etc. Is there any truth in this and what challenges will these new regions have to rise to?"

Regional Policy: with all 2014-2020 programmes now adopted, the focus is on implementation

InfoRegion News, 3 December

"The Commission adopted a new Regional Policy programme..."

New swimming pool in Poperinghe: Belgian elected representatives await French visitors

L'Indicateur Flandres Vallée de la Lys, 2 December

"With this huge 11 million euro project, the Belgian municipality is expecting to double, or even treble, the use made of the pool. Thanks notably to its French customers..."

Cross-border forum: living together in harmony

Le Républicain lorrain, 13 December

"The Luxembourg and French sporting associations met one another at the first cross-border forum organised by the Alzette-Belval European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC), in the foyer of Villerupt town hall."

Living in a Euroregion: the example of the southern Upper Rhine region

Population&Avenir, n.724, Sept-Oct 2015

"Many people live near to an international border. [...] How can one live well in a cross-border area? The example of the southern Upper Rhine region [...] is regarded as being a model of a cross-border 'Euregio', with more than half a century of cooperation behind it."

Towards the first European university

Newspress, 11 December

"Creation in the Upper Rhine of the first 'European grouping of territorial cooperation' run solely by universities. On 9 December 2015, the universities of Basel, Freiburg im Breisgau, Haute-Alsace and Strasbourg, and the Karlsruher Institut für Technologie, signed the founding documents of the trinational European Campus."

Transport: the fight against traffic jams continues

Le Messager, 3 December

"550,000 journeys per day across the canton's borders. Priority is still given to individual car use. And traffic jams are very much in evidence in the morning and evening."

Greater Geneva: what does the new joint political declaration reveal?

Le Messager, 3 December

"[Following the latest meeting of the Greater Geneva LGCC] the French and the Swiss have set out their new orientations [...]. The idea of relaunching 'an umpteenth and unlikely border conurbation fund was unanimously ruled out', reports the Haute-Savoie Conseil Départemental, which is in favour of a 'concrete and pragmatic approach' in which priority will be given to the funding of major transport infrastructures."

Alcotra 2014-2020: five projects approved

Le Dauphiné libéré, 3 December

"Five Haute-Savoie projects were presented within the framework of the 2014-2020 France-Italy cross-border cooperation programme Alcotra, and all five were approved."

40 years of cross-border cooperation in the Upper Rhine

The Joint Secretariat of the Upper Rhine Conference and the journalist Reinhard Reck have produced a booklet to mark the 40th anniversary of the French-German-Swiss intergovernmental commission. The booklet presents the evolution, diversity and dynamism of cross-border cooperation in the Upper Rhine since the Bonn Agreement signed in 1975. The highlights of this cross-border cooperation are commented on by well-known personalities, active participants and observers from past and present.

Joint Secretariat of the Upper Rhine Conference ; Reinhard Reck, 2015 45 pages – in French and German.

To download the document: [click here](#).



CROSS-BORDER NEWS

Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière
38 rue des Bourdonnais
75001 Paris France
Tel: +33 (0)1 55 80 56 80

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