

The PAMINA Eurodistrict has become an EGTC

The ceremony to mark the setting-up of an EGTC for the PAMINA Eurodistrict on the Franco-German border took place on 11 January 2017 in Haguenau. This new status is being accompanied by changes in the structure's governance, the main aims of which for 2017 are set out here.



Rémi Bertrand

**President of the PAMINA
Eurodistrict EGTC**

After 30 years of cooperation in the PAMINA area and 14 years operating as a local grouping of cross-border cooperation (LGCC), the member local authorities agreed on the principle of turning it into an EGTC. The prefectural order of 15 December 2016 established the EGTC, with its headquarters in Lauterbourg, in France. Having been elected the EGTC's first president, I proposed changes to the current form of governance, emphasising the pooling of skills and resources, based on a rebalancing of the French side of the partnership, with groupings of municipalities bordering the German territory becoming members. Regarding the EGTC more generally, I wish to develop a common and united policy with respect to European issues. I think that by 2020 the European Commission will have to make choices and put forward solutions for cross-border territories. The main issue regarding cooperation is to ensure successful European integration in the immediate vicinity of national borders, and the EGTC is certainly the tool best-designed to address this challenge. Achieving this will be a long and hazardous process, but the PAMINA Eurodistrict fully intends to stay the course and to put in place the conditions needed to ensure that all citizens without discrimination have access to training, work, education, transport, housing, community life and leisure activities.



As well as the groupings of municipalities on the French side joining the EGTC, a "PAMINA Mobility Action Plan" is to be implemented, comprising a plan to create a cross-border tram-train network linking the Eurodistrict's three territories (Central Upper Rhine, Southern Palatinate and Northern Alsace) using existing tram and railway lines and ones that can be put back into service. This long-term project with high economic value added will require an expert assessment of its feasibility in 2017. The EGTC is also to step up its policy of pooling the skills of players in its territory through the signature of a partnership agreement with the Karlsruhe TechnologieRegion on the economy, innovation and science in the cross-border setting. This year should also see a cross-border

partnership around a geothermal project in the Canton of Wissembourg led by the Bas-Rhin Departmental Council; a cross-border partnership around a project to redevelop the former military base in Drachenbronn as a tourist attraction; and support for the creation of a "Franco-German experimental digital site" on a cross-border part of the French and German road network, to enable industry and research to carry out experiments in real-life traffic conditions. In 2017, reflections will also be initiated on the drawing-up of a "PAMINA Economic Action Plan", and networking at the level of the four Eurodistricts in the Upper Rhine and the SaarMoselle Eurodistrict, which together cover 90% of the Franco-German border, with a very high level of proximity vis-à-vis local citizens. [More info](#)

EVENTS

The programme and enrolment forms for the MOT's 20th General Assembly are online

15-16 March 2017 in Belval and Villerupt, at the invitation of the Alzette Belval EGTC
- 15 March 2017: MOT bodies in Belval
- 16 March 2017: field visits of Belval (Luxembourg) and Micheville (France), presentation of the Alzette Belval EGTC, Technicians' Platform

[Online programme and enrolment](#)

Conference "Cross-border crisis management and natural disasters", organised by the Committee of the Regions, in partnership with the MOT, 3 February 2017 in Brussels

Conference "Germany and the neighbouring regions – the road towards observation of the territory", 9-10 February 2017 in Berlin

Annual conference of the Centre for Cross Border Studies, 23-24 February 2017 in Armagh (Northern Ireland)

Franco-Swiss cross-border worker fair, 6-8 April 2017 in Annemasse

[All the events](#)

Franco-Swiss cooperation Good news for cross-border workers!

Michel Charrat, the President of the European Cross-Border Grouping and Treasurer of the MOT, gives us his analysis of the implementation of the vote in February 2014 in Switzerland, which was aimed at restricting the number of foreign workers.

"In Switzerland, direct democracy operates in all the cantons and at federal level. The referenda allow the sovereign people to express themselves on all the issues that concern them. But sometimes it happens that these sovereign citizens vote for a decision that turns out to be impossible to implement! The vote on 9 February 2014 aimed at restricting the number of foreigners in Switzerland and therefore putting a stop to the free movement of people is a fine example of this. For nearly three years, Switzerland and the EU have been conducting

tense negotiations on this subject.

Given that the Federal Government had three years in which to implement the referendum result, swift action was needed. Just before Christmas, the chambers of the Swiss parliament approved a bill that makes it possible to safeguard relations with the European Union – a bill which, it must be acknowledged, is very far from the spirit of this vote. It is no longer a question of quotas, but merely the obligation for Swiss companies to advertise their vacancies with the public employment agencies and to call unemployed candidates for interview. Companies however have no obligation to take on these job-seekers or to justify their choice of candidate. It is even stipulated that these provisions only apply when the unemployment rate is higher than the average, without it

being clear which average the legislation is referring to.

In short, Swiss pragmatism has prevailed once again in the implementation of a referendum result. The Government has performed a balancing act between a vote that was won by a hair's breadth (50.3%) and the consequences of a possible break with the European Union. A position that seems to satisfy all the parties – unless the UDC, the far-right party that launched the petition, is planning to initiate a referendum to oppose this implementation.

We await impatiently the federal implementing ordinance to see whether these intentions really translate into the implementation. But all in all, it's pretty good news for cross-border workers."

[More info \[FR\]](#)



Kussbus - an innovative transport service aimed at cross-border workers in the Greater Region

Kussbus is a Luxembourg start-up which has just launched an innovative home-work shuttle service in the Luxembourg-France-Belgium-Germany border territory. The aim is to improve the daily traffic between these four countries, where there is a very high number of journeys made by cross-border workers. Starting from the observation that 80% of these cross-border workers prefer to go to work by car and mostly

travel alone, Kussbus is offering an alternative to the train and cross-border bus services in the form of a door-to-door shuttle service and real-time tracking via an app. "It takes time to set up this kind of ambitious service. The first test journeys will take place in June-July 2017. And the shuttles should be up and running by September," explains Nicolas Back, Kussbus's co-founder.

[More info](#)

A Franco-Swiss "Community of Knowledge"



At a meeting in Belfort on 1 December 2016, a framework agreement bringing together seven universities in the Franco-Swiss Jura Arc was signed, putting in place a "Community of Knowledge". This agreement signals the

partners' desire to expand their cooperation, focusing particularly on the funding of grants for students who wish to study on the other side of the border.

[More info \[FR\]](#)

A parliamentary report addresses the issue of French disabled people in Belgium

A report by the Senate released on 14 December 2016 sets out proposals to improve the care given to French disabled people in Belgian institutions: "The problem of French disabled people going to be looked after in Belgium cannot be separated from the difficulties encountered by players in the disability world in France," the report states.

[More info \[FR\]](#)

Studies produced by the MOT in 2016

The MOT assists players involved in cross-border cooperation through studies and expert assignments. In 2016, it carried out or began work on the following 12 studies:



Final meeting of the Cross-Border Review group of experts

The MOT took part in the fourth and final meeting of Cross-Border Review experts that took place on 15 December in Brussels. The final study, which includes a series of recommendations, is scheduled to be published in early 2017. This work will lead to a communication by the Commission expected in September 2017 on the measures to be taken to better identify and overcome the obstacles to cross-border cooperation in Europe. An initial study entitled "Collecting solid evidence to assess the needs to be addressed by Interreg cross-border cooperation programmes" has already been published, and a database analysing 237 cross-border obstacles has been made available online.

[More info](#)

At regional and local level:

- **Winter boat services between Corsica and Sardinia:** technical and legal assistance to Corsica's territorial authority regarding the introduction of winter cargo and passenger boat services between Corsica and Sardinia.
- **Territorial development plan for the Greater Region:** assistance in drawing up the plan for the Greater Region summit
- **Setting-up of an "eco-bonus" transport project on France's border with Luxembourg:** assistance to the EGIS engineering group in setting up an "eco-bonus" project aimed at promoting eco-friendly transport around the Franco-Luxembourg border.
- **Management and operation of a ferryboat service between Saint Laurent du Maroni (French Guiana) and Albina (Suriname):** study for the territorial authority of French Guiana on the legal aspects of the management and operation of the ferry.
- **Cross-border cooperation plan**

for the Lille European Metropolis: assistance to the Lille European Metropolis in drawing up its cross-border cooperation plan.

• **Setting-up of the European grouping of territorial cooperation of the Bouches de Bonifacio International Marine Park:** technical assistance in setting up the EGTC.

• **Policy paper on the value added of cross-border cooperation:** drafting of a policy paper for the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, commissioned by the Greater Region, aimed at setting out the benefits of cross-border cooperation.

• **Economic intervention strategy for the Saint-Louis and Three Borders Area:** study carried out with the consultancy firm Acadie in order to draw up an appropriate economic intervention strategy for the cross-border territory.

At national level:

• **The cross-border issues facing metropolises:** support for the General Commission for Territorial

Equality (CGET, France) through studying the cross-border positioning of three metropolises (Strasbourg, Lille and Nice) in the "MAPTAM Act".

• **Cross-border issues in mountain areas in mainland France:** study for the CGET in relation to the "Mountain Act" (France).

At international level:

Cross-border co-operation in Central Africa: study for the International Association of Francophone Mayors (AIMF) aimed at formulating an assessment of and argument for expanding cooperation in Central Africa.

• **ECOWAS programme to fund cross-border cooperation projects:** study on the creation of an ECOWAS programme designed to fund cross-border cooperation projects in West African countries, based on the Interreg model.

[More info about the studies carried out by the MOT.](#)

[Reserved access \(studies available for download by members\)](#)

Third meeting of the intergovernmental group on innovative solutions to cross-border obstacles

The third meeting of the intergovernmental group initiated by Luxembourg and France took place on 14 December 2016 in Brussels. The discussions focused on the drafting of a final report that will set out the outline of the new European legal tool – the European Cross-Border Convention (ECBC) – proposed by the group and designed to help overcome cross-border obstacles. This report will feed into the Commission's work on the preparation of a communication due in September on the issue of obstacles, which will

propose new European initiatives. The report will also discuss the elaboration of a methodology for identifying and overcoming obstacles, as well as a toolkit (including the legal tool). It will stress the need for effective and coordinated national approaches, with those adopted by Germany, France and Hungary having been presented at the meeting on 14 December. [All of the documents relating to the meeting](#) are available on the MOT's website, with the MOT providing the technical secretariat for the group.

Two calls for projects: "Urban Innovative Actions" and URBACT "good practices"

"Urban Innovative Actions" (UIA) is an initiative by the European Commission aimed at enabling urban authorities to try out innovative initiatives to address the urban challenges – potentially including cross-border ones – that they face. The Hauts-de-France Region is the managing authority for this programme. A call for projects, with a budget of €50 million, is currently open until mid-April. [More info](#)

URBACT has also launched a call for projects aimed at identifying and promoting good practices in cities – including cross-border ones. This call for projects will close on 31 March 2017. In a second phase, the good practices selected will be transferred at European level within the framework of the URBACT Transfer Networks. [More info](#)

PRESS REVIEW

▲ Cross-border teleworking between Luxembourg and Lorraine is on its way

Correspondances Lorraines, 16 December

"Working in Luxembourg without leaving Lorraine would in part solve the transport problems. Cross-border teleworking is still impeded by technical and legal obstacles, but dedicated sites are emerging in Thionville, Piennes and Villerupt."

▲ Philippe Richert: "The cross-border dimension is in the Grand Est Region's DNA"

DNA, 14 January

"The Grand Est Region's cross-border policies are going to be 'stepped up', Regional President Richert announced when he presented his New Year's wishes to the diplomatic and consular corps."

▲ The tram to Kehl inaugurated by Hollande and Merkel

L'Alsace, 17 January

"'2017 will be a year filled with exceptional events,' declared the Mayor of Strasbourg, Roland Ries (Socialist Party), when he presented his New Year's wishes yesterday. [...] The first event – whose date has not been specified – is the inauguration of the cross-border tram to Kehl, which will begin operating on 29-30 April. But President François Hollande and Chancellor Angela Merkel will make the first official crossing of the Rhine at the end of February."

▲ Brussels wants to make Switzerland pay for unemployed cross-border workers

La Tribune de Genève, 19 Dec.

"The European Commission wants to change the benefits system for cross-border workers who lose their jobs. It has proposed [...] that the member state in which they worked during the previous 12 months should be responsible for paying their unemployment benefit. For Switzerland, which hosts over 314,000 cross-border workers, this could generate extra costs running to hundreds of millions..."

▲ The Geneva University Hospitals recruit two-thirds of their nurses in France and this will continue

La Tribune de Genève, 18 January

"A study shows the strong pull of the canton, which is happy to find trained staff in France."

▲ Crossing the border will become more difficult for French minors

La Tribune de Genève, 7 Jan.

"Fearing the departure of young people to fight in war zones, France is reintroducing 'authorisations to leave the country'. As of 15 January, any minor domiciled in France – whether foreign or not – who leaves the country without being accompanied by their parents, will have to be in possession of an authorisation signed by their legal guardians."

▲ First steps in Ajaccio of a start-up accelerator

Corse Matin, 18 January

"The first steering committee meeting of a cross-border structure aimed at boosting young innovative businesses took place yesterday at the Palais des congrès. Players from Corsica, Sardinia, Genoa and the Var Department gathered under the aegis of the CCI2A."

▲ The cross-border campus is taking shape at Fort Socoa

Sud Ouest, 23 December

"The Southern Basque Country Conurbation and Bordeaux and the Basque Country Universities have approved the plan to set up the "Ocean Innovation Campus". Even the greatest sceptics have to face the facts: the plan to create a cross-border university centre focusing on maritime issues really is taking shape at Fort Socoa."

▲ The Basque Country becomes a territorial institution

Le Monde, 30 December

"On 1 January 2017, 158 municipalities [of France] will be grouped together within a single entity."

[Consult all of the press articles*](#).
Reserved for members – in French.
* Each month, the MOT posts online around 100 articles about cross-border cooperation.

Cross-border Co-operation and Policy Networks in West Africa

West African Studies, OECD, Sahel and West Africa Club, 2017

"This publication examines how policy actors involved in cross-border co-operation contribute to the regional integration process in West Africa. It uses a pioneering methodology to visualise the formal and informal relationships between actors involved in cross-border policy networks, showing that borders have notable and diverse impacts on exchanges of information and the relative power of networks. The report then analyses a range of regional indicators of co-operation potential, visually demonstrating that borders can also affect the ability of sub-regions within West Africa to develop cross-border initiatives in a number of ways. [...]". [More info](#)



This publication is available in the MOT's document portal [FR].

Specialising in cross-border cooperation, the portal provides more than 4,000 document references. [More info](#)

NB: the downloading of online documents is reserved for MOT members and, on request, students and researchers.

CROSS-BORDER NEWS

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