

The MOT's 20th general assembly in Belval

At the invitation of the Alzette-Belval EGTC*, a member of the MOT's network, 120 people gathered on 15-16 March on the occasion of the MOT's general assembly, in Belval and Villerupt, on the Franco-Luxembourg border. The Secretary of State, Christian Eckert, who is in charge of the budget and public accounts in France, underscored the "usefulness of the MOT's work, both in terms of the cross-border projects carried out and in giving back collective confidence to our fellow citizens": "concrete achievements are a matter of credibility for public action; they must counter the anti-European discourse."

The field visits organised following the meetings of the MOT's governing bodies gave an example of these "concrete achievements" of cross-border cooperation that should always be celebrated more. The participants were able

to visit the former industrial site of Belval, where the University of Luxembourg has moved to, and the site of Micheville on the French side, which has been converted into housing and an arts centre, testifying to the major transformation the area is undergoing. Facilitated by the Alzette-Belval EGTC, the cross-border structure that brings together all of the French and Luxembourg partners, the cooperation concerns the redevelopment of the blast furnaces and the former mining facilities, and the creation of a genuine cross-border Franco-Luxembourg conurbation. Moreover, the latter is a candidate to be European capital of culture in 2022, illustrating the progress already made and the desire for a common future on both sides. [More info](#)

* Represented by Marie-Josée Vidal, Government Advisor of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.



Meetings of the MOT's bodies and the Technicians' Platform

In the presence of Michel Delebarre, the MOT's President, Senator of the Nord Department and former Minister of State, and Philip Cordery, MP, Chairman of the study group "cross-border workers and areas" and Vice-President of the MOT, and many elected representatives, the meetings of the board and the general assembly were an opportunity to present the activities of the association, discuss the work programme and approve the activity and financial reports. Two new representatives were elected to the board and the bureau: Robert Herrmann,

President of the Strasbourg-Mulhouse-Colmar Metropolitan Hub, elected vice-president of the MOT, and Arnaud Daoudal, representative of the Caisse des Dépôts, elected as the new Secretary. The meeting of the Technicians' Platform, which was a chance for interactive discussions with members of the network, highlighted the latter's involvement in preparing for the MOT's 20th anniversary and the conference planned in the autumn. A second meeting of the working group on the subject is scheduled to take place in May. The platform also allowed participants to discuss

the network's expectations following the publication in November 2016 of the "diplomacy and territories" white paper by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the need for better coordination between ministries and government departments regarding the monitoring of cross-border issues. Lastly, the meeting was an opportunity to sound out the network about its expectations in terms of the MOT's European activities. [More info](#)

EVENTS

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

Interregional information seminar on the third call for projects under the Interreg Alpine Space programme, 11 April 2017 in Grenoble

Conference "Cross-border working in Luxembourg: development, challenges and perspectives", 25 April 2017 in Luxembourg

Interreg annual meeting 2017, organised by the European Commission (DG REGIO), 26-27 April 2017 in Malta

TRION Climate project (FR/DE/CH): 2nd trilateral meeting "Energy performance in companies", 16 May 2017 in Weil am Rhein

ESPON seminar "Revealing territorial potentials and shaping new policies - Contribution to the post-2020 Cohesion policy debate", 24-25 May 2017 in Valetta (Malta)

[All the events](#)

Field visits: the MOT's network in Alzette-Belval

The field visits offered for the first time to participants in the MOT's 2017 general assembly, to Belval and Villerupt, proved to be a moment of very fruitful exchanges.

Daniel Codello, Vice-President of the Alzette-Belval EGTC and Alderman of Esch-sur-Alzette, welcomed the participants on the site of AGORA, the company in charge of the redevelopment of the Belval brownfield where the blast furnaces were, stating that "those who believed in it were right to do so". Yves Biwer, AGORA's administrative director, explained the history and stages involved in the redevelopment of the site since 1997, the year in which the blast furnaces stopped operating, before taking the participants to Belval Park and to the edge of a newly built quarter. The 120-hectare site presented has so far had 40% of its area redeveloped and work is due to continue on its development until 2027.

On the French side, only a few minutes from Belval, Alain Casoni, the Mayor of Villerupt, a

member of the Alzette-Belval EGTC, presented the site as "a place of mingling and immigration, steeped in the values of solidarity, social progress and dignity, built on a unique past and looking forward to a common future".

Jean-Christophe Courtin, Director-General of the Alzette-Belval public development office, presented, for the French part neighbouring Belval, the redevelopment of the 45-hectare site in Micheville, declaring that "cross-border cooperation is inevitable because the proximity of the sites makes it a single conurbation".

Lastly, there was a presentation of the Alzette-Belval EGTC. Set up in order to provide a permanent tool to strengthen the cross-border partnership, its mission is to facilitate and increase cooperation between



players in the territory from both the public and private sectors. It encompasses eight French municipalities and four Luxembourg ones and positions itself as a place of territorial governance to ensure the coherence of strategic actions, but also as a development tool to foster local projects. Its actions are focused on informing citizens, communicating local expectations to the French and Luxembourg authorities (for example in the fields of healthcare, transport and vocational training), and the implementation of civic projects in areas such as school exchanges and cross-border sporting events, etc. The exchanges were concluded by Véronique Guillotin, Vice-President of the Grand Est Region. [More information and the presentations online.](#)

Three associations defending the rights of cross-border workers bring an action before the European Commission

Income from household wealth (capital gains on property, real estate income, etc.) received in France is subject to social security deductions. However, the European Court of Justice confirmed in 2015 that people who are affiliated to the social security system of another country should not be taxed to fund the French social security system. Having been contacted by thousands of French, German and Swiss taxpayers who had social security contributions deducted in

2016 from their income received in France, three independent associations decided to join forces to bring an action against France before the European Commission. The European Consumers Centre, the European Cross-Border Grouping and the Committee for the Defence of Cross-Border Workers in the Moselle accuse the French authorities of trying to get round the European Court of Justice's decision. [More info](#)

Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict

An interactive map for better services for citizens



In February, the Strasbourg-Ortenau put in place an online geographic information system (GIS) that provides citizens with information about daily life in the cross-border territory (schools, markets, charging points for electric cars, etc.). The tool also allows people to get to know the Eurodistrict and neighbouring country better.

[More info](#)

Pamina Eurodistrict

An online game to get to know the neighbouring country and the territory's rich heritage

The Pamina Eurodistrict is launching a digital version of a board game called "Le Passe-partout" ("The Master Key") to help schoolchildren learn about the rich cultural heritage of the Franco-German territory and encourage bilingualism. "In two or three years time, it will be possible to move on from the Pamina Eurodistrict to finding out about other Eurodistricts in the Upper Rhine thanks to the score one has accumulated." [More info](#)

EUROPE NEWS

5th meeting of the EP Working Group on Cross- Border Cooperation

On 1 March 2017 in Brussels, Anne Sander, MEP and vice-president of the MOT, hosted the 5th meeting of the EP Working Group on Cross-Border Cooperation. After the digital age, healthcare, Schengen and employment, the topic this time was the institutional initiatives underway at European level to remove obstacles to cross-border cooperation. Jean Peyrony, the MOT's Director-General, presented the new legal tool (the "European Cross-Border Convention") proposed by the intergovernmental working group (see opposite).

[Minutes of the meeting \[FR\]](#)

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on "missing links"

At its plenary session in February, the Committee of the Regions adopted an opinion entitled "Missing transport links in border regions". The document highlights the lack of funding and the need, against a backdrop of growing mobility, to harmonise standards in order to develop transport infrastructures in cross-border territories. [More info](#)

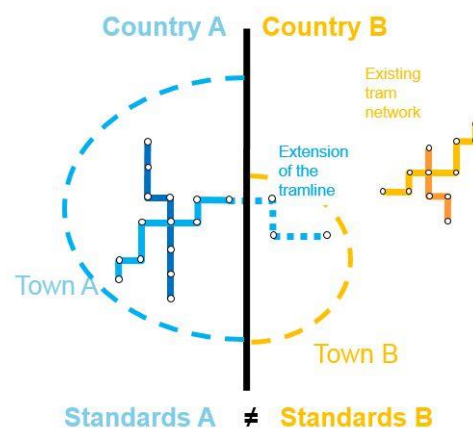
NETWORK NEWS

The proposals of the intergovernmental group on cross-border obstacles

On 16 February 2017 in Brussels, the fourth meeting of the intergovernmental working group on innovative solutions to obstacles to cross-border cooperation was held. Noting the benefits of cross-border cooperation, but also the persistence of many obstacles, in 2015 the Luxembourg presidency of the EU Council proposed the development of a new European legal tool, the "European Cross-Border Convention" (ECBC); for its part, the European Commission launched the "Cross-Border Review".

In May 2016 in Amsterdam, the directors-general for territorial cohesion gave a mandate to a working group, co-chaired by Luxembourg and France, and for which the MOT provides the secretariat, to investigate the potential of such a legal tool. The working group discussed the progress made in terms of listing the obstacles to cooperation, and then the institutional, financial, legal and administrative tools that exist at the European, bi/multilateral and national levels, the inadequacy of which was noted. It then drew up proposals that will be presented to the meeting of directors-general in Malta on 3 April 2017, and communicated to the European Commission. The latter is working on a Communication, which will be published on 6 September 2017.

The Cross-Border Convention would enable a country to apply, in the context of a cross-border project or service of general interest, the domestic law of a neighbouring country within a determined area along the border. It is in no way intended to replace other existing tools, nor to create a new mode of regulation that would make it possible to circumvent ordinary legislative procedure; the objective is rather to put in place a process involving the identification of an obstacle by local players and of a solution, in the form of an ECBC, with the countries concerned being able to accept the solution or to propose a different one (for example an intergovernmental agreement). This process can be illustrated by the example of an extension in a cross-border conurbation of a tramline from Country A to Country B (see



Example of an ECBC: extension of a tramline

illustration). Since domestic standards in these two countries are different, it is proposed to Country B to accept the application of Country A's standards, solely for this specific cross-border tramline.

In each country, the process would be overseen by a national "coordination point" charged with ensuring that the competent authority can rule on the proposed ECBC, and with maintaining a national database, which in turn would be linked to a European database. A multi-level European platform, supplied with information by existing organisations such as the MOT, CESCO and the AEBR, etc., would make it possible to act on each border, foster exchanges between them, assist at national and European levels, and facilitate coordination between countries.

[More info](#)

The MOT presents concrete projects to high-school students in Athis-Mons

On 28 February, the MOT made a presentation at the Ministry of Territorial Development, to students from the European section of the Lycée Marcel Pagnol in Athis-Mons, as part of a day devoted to finding out about Franco-German cooperation organised by the Franco-German Office for Youth. The MOT presented to the students examples of projects (the Strasbourg/Kehl tramline, cross-border co-working, Franco-German creches), emphasising the importance of mobility and language learning.



The new members

The annual meeting of the network on 15 March in Belval gave the MOT's new members the opportunity to speak, and these new members were presented to all of the participants:

- The Cerdanya Hospital EGTC
- The CRD EURES/Frontaliers Lorraine
- The Ardennes Metropolis
- GFGZ (company for the promotion of cross-border cooperation projects aimed at civil society on the German-Swiss border)

[The presentations \[FR\]](#) – [The map](#)

PRESS REVIEW

Christian Eckert: "Borders, what borders?"

Le Quotidien, 16 March

"The French Secretary of State, Christian Eckert, stressed the 'concrete achievements' that are the guarantee of 'Europe's credibility'. The French Secretary of State, Christian Eckert, was the guest of honour of the Mission opérationnelle transfrontalière (MOT). What a closing speech! The MOT was meeting in Belval: 20 years of collaboration along all of Europe's borders."

In Longwy, an Eldorado so near and yet so far

Le Monde, 18 March

"Aurore Collignon is a bank employee in Luxembourg. Aurore Collignon can testify: 'Leaving at 6 in the morning and then at 5 in the afternoon is hell.' Aurore lives in Longwy, in the Meurthe-et-Moselle Department, and works in the area of Kirchberg, in Luxembourg City, about 40 km away."

People in the Haut-Rhin more drawn to Switzerland

20 Minutes, 15 March

"People in the Haut-Rhin Department are more attracted to the Swiss labour market than the German one, the public employment agency Pôle emploi has found after surveying job-seekers in the Department: 11% say they are ready to go and work in Switzerland, compared with 4% for Germany."

"Wave of populist anti-cross-border worker feeling" in Switzerland

Le Rép. lorrain, 20 March

"What are relations like between the Swiss and cross-border workers? In Luxembourg, there are sometimes frictions with the French... Michel Charrat: 'Our relations with the Swiss are more difficult than in the past. It's paradoxical: it's easier to work in Switzerland now (there are bilateral agreements), and there are also more cross-border workers...'"

The SNCF and the CFF set up a joint company

Le Dauphiné libéré, 12 March

"The legal framework for the future cross-border regional rail link is being defined. The heads of the SNCF and the CFF (the Swiss railways) signed a contract on Thursday in Paris concerning the operation of the future."

A European "B to B" network to facilitate producers' exports

Corse Matin, 22 March

"Within the framework of a call for projects under Interreg 2014-2020 won by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Bastia and the Haute-Corse Department, a new initiative has been carried out in partnership with Tuscany, Sardinia and the Var Department."

Briançon and Suse Hospitals are working towards closer ties

Le Dauphiné libéré, 9 March

"The handshake is firm and there are smiles on their faces. The director of the Southern Alps hospitals and the director-general in Piedmont yesterday took another step towards closer ties across the border [...]. At the centre of all of this is health – optimal healthcare for the people of Briançon and their Italian counterparts."

Navarra officially joins the Aquitaine/Euskadi Euroregion

AFP, 6 March

"On Monday, the autonomous region of Navarra [...] officially joined the Aquitaine/Euskadi (Spanish Basque Country) Euroregion, an area of cross-border cooperation that now encompasses nearly 9 million inhabitants."

The inauguration of the bridge in five acts

France-Guyane, 20 March

"Saturday, 18 March 2017, midday. The much-anticipated inauguration of the bridge over the Oyapock took place in the presence of officials from both countries (above all Brazil, with 180 people); and under the gaze of the cameras of nearly 80 journalists (55 just from Brazil)..."

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

White Paper on the future of Europe

Reflections and scenarios for the EU27 in 2025

The White Paper published by the European Commission on 1 March 2017 sets out five scenarios, each giving an idea of how the EU might look in 2025 depending on the choices that Europe will make.

- Scenario 1: Carrying on;
- Scenario 2: Nothing but the single market;
- Scenario 3: Those who want more do more;
- Scenario 4: Doing less more efficiently;
- Scenario 5: Doing much more together.

The issue of the status of borders and crossing them is mentioned in each of the scenarios. [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](#)



CROSS-BORDER NEWS

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