

The Collectivity of Saint Martin: a Cross-border Catalyst

At once a Caribbean island, an overseas collectivity of the French Republic and an Outermost Region (OR) of the European Union, the Collectivity of Saint Martin has resolutely placed regional integration at the heart of its development strategy.

Daniel Gibbs

President of the Saint-Martin Territorial Council



The characteristics, both geographic and political, of our territory justify the necessity for strengthened cooperation. The Collectivity of Saint Martin's ambition is that, through strengthened regional cooperation, our territories become examples in the sectors where they possess "added value", in developing, for example, infrastructure, Research and Development (R&D) notably in terms of the circular economy, the blue economy, sustainable agriculture, renewable energies, digital technologies, and earthquake-resistant and hurricane-resistant materials... The challenge for the Collectivity of Saint Martin is to make a success of its sustainable and resilient reconstruction, to better reconcile the demands of developing the territory and the needs of its inhabitants, while making Saint Martin into a better place to live, with greater solidarity, and also becoming more influential and better integrated with the neighbouring islands and with the whole of the Caribbean. To this end, it will be sure to promote this ambition during its presidency of the Conference of Presidents of the ORs, which it recently assumed in November 2018 for a period of one year.

The island of Saint Martin enjoys a geostrategic position in the Antilles arc, at the intersection of international trade towards the Atlantic and the Pacific. It is a binational French-Dutch multiethnic, multilingual and multicultural island, with Saint Martin, an French overseas collectivity, in the north; and Sint Maarten, one of the four constituent countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, in the south.

By cooperating and by creating strategic partnerships, the Collectivity of Saint Martin aspires to play a central role in the sustainable economic development of its neighbourhood, the Leeward Islands, stretching from the Virgin Islands (USA) to Dominica.

Furthermore, the territory is subject to considerable natural risks, as seen with the devastation caused by Hurricane Irma, making

strengthening regional cooperation vital for better anticipation and more efficient reaction to this type of event. It is from this perspective that the Collectivity of Saint Martin is leading a cross-border project to install a weather radar system in Sint Maarten in order to cover the entire Leeward Islands zone, integrated within a radar network covering the whole of the Caribbean. Another example of cooperation, the project "Geothermal and Digital Interconnection Hub for the Leeward Islands" creates interconnected and resilient territories while promoting digital technologies and clean energies. The Collectivity of Saint Martin became a MOT member in 2018 in order to gain access to its resources and benefit from its expertise for the creation of a local cross-border political structure (EGTC) between Saint Martin and Sint Maarten.



Sint Maarten-Saint-Martin, zone de Cole Bay

EVENTS

MOT's annual conference: the programme is online

The MOT will hold its general assembly and annual conference on 20-21 March in Annemasse and Geneva, at the invitation of Annemasse Agglo and the Metropolitan Pole of the French Genevois, members of the MOT's network.

On the programme: the annual meetings of the MOT's bodies, a conference on the topic of cross-border investment and field visits: the construction site for the Léman Express rail link, the green pathway.

[Download the programme](#)

20th edition of the European Energy Transition Conference, 22-24 January in Dunkirk

Conference: "What challenges and projects for a Strasbourg-Karlsruhe cross-border metropolitan area and their Eurodistricts?", organised by ADEUS (Strasbourg Conurbation Development and Town Planning Agency), 27 February in Strasbourg

[All the events](#)

State Visit between France and Belgium: advances for cross-border matters



On the occasion of the French president Emmanuel Macron's visit to Belgium on 18 and 19 November, a declaration of intent on strengthening cooperation in matters of cross-border mobility and transport was signed by the two countries:

"Considering the common border between France and Belgium, 620 km long, crossed each day by 25,000 residents in France who travel to Belgium to work, and by 5,000 residents in Belgium coming to work in France; considering that the border area [...] is crossed by several strategic axes of the Trans-European Transport Network [...], and that the potential that is present on either side of the border remains considerable [...]", the two signatory governments wish

by this declaration: "to lay down the principles of bilateral cross-border cooperation in matters of transport, both at the national and local levels, to establish joint controls of road freight transport, to share and to exchange on the implementation of public policies pertaining to mobility, to study the possibility of joint actions, at both the European and international levels."

The declaration notably identifies very precise objectives in matters of local railway cooperation to propose an offering that meets the needs of cross-border mobilities.

Another important development: an item devoted to governance establishes a "Franco-Belgian Mobilities Committee (COFRABELM)".

It will meet twice a year to follow the progress of projects, analyse obstacles to be removed with a view to proposing solutions, and organise the exchange of good practice around national public policy pertaining to mobility.

The bilateral exchanges have also led to progress on the Seine-Nord canal project, which is intended to link the waterways network of all northern Europe to that of France, with a tripartite convention signed on the "Cross-border Lys Valley".

Download [in French]:

- [the declaration of intent](#)
- [the "Cross-border Lys Valley" convention](#)

IN BRIEF

Outcomes of the cross-border citizen consultations

The MOT, and the Jacques Delors Institute have in a 50-page document compiled a summary of the five cross-border citizen consultations that they held with local partners.

[More info](#)

A Pyrenean climate strategy

The members of the Working Community of the Pyrenees have formalised an innovative new instrument for cross-border cooperation and development, named "Pyrenean Strategy". Its priorities include the preservation of the Pyrenees' biodiversity, the adaptation of territories to global warming, combating



desertification, and access to mobility.

[More info](#)

The French departments' Cooperation Atlas

The Assembly of French Departments (ADF) has published an atlas of departments' European and international cooperation actions. It notably details the collaborations pertaining to cross-border cooperation. The publication was realised in partnership with the Delegation for External Action of Territorial Authorities of the French Ministry for Europe and International Affairs, and the Banque des Territoires. [More info](#)

MOT Network Day

On 21 November 2018, the MOT network gathered for a day of discussions in Paris on the premises of the CGET. The steering committee and the board were presided over by the new president of the MOT, Robert Herrmann, president of the Strasbourg Eurométropole. With around thirty members, the participants developed a common position for the network for the 2021-2027 EU programming period. They also discussed the results of the cross-border citizen consultations and expressed a need for sharing experience accumulated on three topics central to their preoccupations: mobility, the different scales of cross-border cooperation, health, etc.

[More info \(members only\)](#)



The MOT network's contribution on the 2021-2027 programming period



On 29 May 2018, the European Commission published five proposals concerning the future 2021-2027 cohesion policy, of which two directly concern cross-border matters: the European Territorial Cooperation (Interreg) Regulation and a new Regulation creating a "mechanism to resolve legal and administrative obstacles in a cross-border context" (ECBM).

The MOT, in conjunction with its network members, is adopting a position on these proposals, with the publishing of its contribution to the debate on cross-border cooperation issues. This contribution completes the position presented in the brochure "[Cross-border territories: Europe's laboratory](#)" published in November 2017, on the

occasion of the MOT's 20th anniversary.

The MOT fully supports the more territorial and citizen-oriented approach of the new regulations as well as the impetus provided for resolving obstacles to cooperation, in particular:

- **the new ECBM regulation**, a veritable revolution in the field of cross-border cooperation, as well as the establishing of national contact points,
- **the introduction of the new specific objective of "better Interreg governance"**, which will mandatorily take up 15% of the funding of each programme,
- **the inclusion for the first time of funds for small projects**, made available to civil society, in order to develop small-scale projects.

However, the MOT opposes:

- **the integration of cross-border cooperation on maritime borders** - previously an integral part of the cross-border strand of Interreg - within the larger "transnational and maritime cooperation" strand, and therefore argues for cross-border maritime cooperation being maintained within Strand A, and thus for its specificity to be recognised,
- **the calculation method for allocating funding as a function of the population situated within 25 km of the border**, and stresses the importance of mountainous, rural and coastal border areas, often characterised by sparse population density and a need for innovative solutions.

[Download the contribution \[FR\]](#)

National Seminar on European Territorial Cooperation in Besançon

The CGET and the "Régions de France" association held, with the Bourgogne-Franche-Comté Regional Council, a national seminar on European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), on 4 December in Besançon. It brought together around a hundred participants and enabled clarification of the stakes of the negotiation, while reaffirming a strong French ambition, shared by both the French State and the Regions. The Commission's representative underlined

that beyond the financing of projects, Interreg programmes were intended to support cross-border strategies, such as that of the CTJ, and be mobilised to remove obstacles; the new priority "Interreg Governance" must contribute to this, for example via the funding of pilot projects. The president of the MOT, Robert Herrmann, participated in one of the three round tables.

[More info](#)

Publication of the study: "Border Region Data Collection"

Following the Communication "Boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions", DG REGIO launched a pilot project focusing on the collection and availability of data necessary for studying cross-border territories. The study, carried out by eight national statistical institutes, including the French INSEE, has just been published. It focuses on indicators for analysis of the labour market. The results are promising and invite further research. [More info](#)

European Entrepreneurial Region (EER) Award

The European Entrepreneurial Region Award rewards EU regions showing excellence and innovation in strategy on entrepreneurial policy. It is open "to all EU territories of Member States, including communities and city's as well as cross-border territories with legal personality such as EGTCs and Euroregions".

Applications for the 2020 award must be submitted by 27 March 2019.

[More info](#)

PRESS REVIEW

▲ Important agreement for border firefighters imminent

Nord Eclair, 22 November

"A framework agreement should be signed before the end of the year between Belgium and France to allow firefighters close to the border to intervene in the neighbouring country. The goal is to formalise existing practices in the case of major disasters and to extend the field of interventions to common risks."

▲ Equitable redistribution of taxes: "We are studying the areas under high cross-border employment pressure"

Le Quotidien, 23 November

"Karl-Heinz Lambertz, vice president of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, is preparing a report on the 'equitable redistribution of taxes paid by transfrontier workers'. An issue that evidently concerns Luxembourg. He explains the objectives."

▲ The SRADDET: "A Crazy Amount of Work"

La Semaine de Nancy, 6 Dec.

"The Regional Plan for Spatial Planning, Sustainable Development and Territorial Equality (SRADDET) was presented on Friday 30 November in Metz. Frank Leroy, vice president in charge of territorial cohesion in the Grand Est region, explains the three years of work which have been necessary for the development of this foundational planning document for the Region."

▲ Cross-border employment: Grand Est wants to increase its lead

Capital.fr, 4 December

"It's the French region with the most cross-border workers. French citizens gain in spending power, which drives business in the Grand Est region. [...] It appears necessary to better spread activity across both sides of the border, to avoid having activity on one side and commuter towns on the other."

▲ A quadripartite convention for bilingualism

L'Alsace, 6 December

"The State, the region and the Haut-Rhin and Bas-Rhin departments signed an agreement this Wednesday aiming to expand the teaching of the regional languages, German and Alsatian."

▲ Official Inauguration of the Belfort -Delle SNCF Trainline

France Bleu, 6 December

"The Belfort-Delle line was officially inaugurated this Thursday 6 December 2018. It is reopening after more than 25 years of debate and work."

▲ Greater Geneva a little less overheated

Le Dauphiné libéré, 5 December

"After the overheating of the 2000s, the beginnings of a cool down? We aren't quite there yet, but the latest study of the Cross-border Statistical Observatory published on Friday hints at a certain slowdown in the expansion of a territory that has gained close to 300,000 residents in 20 years."

▲ Promoting Tourism thanks to Strengthened French-Italian Cooperation

Le Dauphiné libéré, 30 November

"Encouraging tourism in the Hautes-Alpes while simplifying accessibility to a geographically constrained territory. Such are the stakes of an issue that brought together several representatives of the development agency [...], the ski resorts [...]."

▲ Figueres-Perpignan: the Cycle Track that Erases the Border

L'Indépendant, 1 December

"Catalonia and Pyrénées-Orientales are launching close to 200 km of cycle tracks."

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

"The Return of Frontiers", a documentary broadcast on Arte

Documentary by Simon Brunel and Nicolas Pannetier, 53 min, broadcast on Arte on 16 November 2018 at 10:20am.

"With the arrival of refugees, frontiers that were previously breaking down are now back in full force in Europe. A decade before, Schengen had allowed people to move freely across the continent without passports. But the barriers are back."

[More info](#) – [Watch the documentary](#) [English]



Le retour des frontières | ARTE

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