

Exchanging views and experiences to shape the future

The current crisis across Europe has sparked criticisms, divisions and inconsistencies between countries, with significant impacts on the lives of people in border regions. However, the European Union – which is working to restart activity – is there to restore free movement in Europe, which is indispensable for the development of European citizenship. As a central part of the recovery, we need to rethink the challenges of the post-Covid period, such as education, agriculture, healthcare, trade, eco-friendly mobility and sustainable development. The areas to be addressed are numerous, and European citizens must more than ever be actors shaping their own future. Our role is to work to connect citizens to Europe through closer dialogue and increased territorial cooperation. The new challenges facing Europe are pushing us to determine, in consultation with one another, the direction of our forthcoming action plans. How can we achieve this by taking action at the local and cross-border level? We have already tried this out with the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis's three-part event "Europe, je t'aime, moi non plus ?" spread over more than a year. Nearly 300

citizens from the cross-border region took part in the three gatherings. The objective? To collate people's concerns in order to identify areas for reflection and joint action over the long term. This citizen-focused mobilisation drawing on our collective intelligence was a success, as it brought together the Eurometropolis's inhabitants around the future of Europe. They highlighted the need for a Europe that is more ecological, social, citizen-focused and closer to Europeans' current needs. The findings from the discussions will give us the substance and the energy to jointly set up the European Citizens' Space, which will provide the missing link between European institutions and citizens. We would like to share this experience with other EGTCs, notably by means of the "Governance" working group launched by the MOT (with the Eurometropolis as co-coordinator), and within the framework of the "Conference on the Future of Europe". The role of this European Citizens' Space that is taking shape is to forge lasting links between the EU and its citizens, to re-establish trust and to offer an example of collaboration that can be reproduced anywhere where several cultures exist side by side. [More info](#)



Loïc Delhuvenne

Director of the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis



Our European grouping of territorial cooperation is for the European citizens living along the border the closest institutional support to help with setting up European initiatives. Cross-border territories are "mini-Europe". The daily information put out by the EGTC during the health crisis has shown that the local level is an important component to help with daily life, and to champion and develop our European values. We are very pleased about the call for a European Cross-border Citizens' Alliance launched by the MOT, which signals the desire to work together across borders, from the local up to the European levels.

We are working on this every day with players on the ground, as European issues have their roots in our regions, our territories and at our local level. From the bottom up, so as not to lose a sense of people's realities and to stay in line with the needs of our inhabitants. The future of Europe will be underpinned, I am convinced, by enhanced solidarity between countries, increased sharing of good practices and a commitment to the European Green Deal. Conscious of the reforms that need to be made to our European Union, we are positioning ourselves more than ever as experienced observers and contributors to the future of European construction. With audacity and tenacity, the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis aims to build bridges and forge links, taking no account of physical and linguistic borders. Because we are all "one" in our European Union.

EVENTS

2020 MOT's general assembly and Conference: "Cross-border co-operation: impacts of Covid-19", 8-9 September 2020, in Colmar [FR] and Freiburg [DE], at the invitation of the Haut-Rhin Department.
[More info \[FR\]](#)

Regional conference "What prospects for Franco-Italian cross-border cooperation?", 17 September 2020 in Marseille. [More info \[FR\]](#)

18th European Week of Regions and Cities, 5-22 October, in Brussels. The MOT will help to run several workshops. [More info](#)



1st BORDERS FORUM, 9-10 November 2020, in Paris (see following page).

A publication by the MOT

The Covid-19 crisis on French borders

The MOT has published an analysis of the consequences for cross-border territories of the health crisis – the result of a call for experiences issued to all of its members.

Organised in three main parts, it aims to set out the impacts, difficulties and initiatives linked to the management of the Covid-19 health crisis in cross-border territories.

In the first part, it recalls the border control measures employed. In the second part, it provides an assessment of the impacts on workers, patients, residents, families, retailers and local authorities that move around within these areas.

The last section then sets out an analysis of inhabitants' perceptions with respect to the crisis and the lockdown, in a context in which the closing of borders resulted in increased constraints and discriminatory situations that were specific to these populations.

In addition to describing the impacts and experiences along borders, this summary details initiatives carried out by local authorities and



cross-border structures to address the crisis. These should be more widely communicated.

From the Franco-German crisis task force set up by the partners of the Cross-Border Cooperation Committee to the role played by EGTCs and Eurodistricts in maintaining as strong links as possible with inhabitants of cross-border living areas, by way of crisis operational management of facilities such as the Cerdanya Hospital, these experiences should enable us to jointly formulate an assessment of crisis management along our borders, and to draw conclusions from it to strengthen future cooperation initiatives.

This publication has also been sent in response to the call for contributions to "Covid-19 : pour un après soutenable" ("For a sustainable post-Covid-19") issued by France Stratégie.

[Download the publication \[FR\]. The map](#)

The "Espace Mont-Blanc" refines its strategy for adapting to climate change

Drawing on 29 years of cross-border cooperation, the "Espace Mont-Blanc" ("Mont-Blanc area") on the Franco-Italian-Swiss border is striving to adapt its territory by seeking joint responses to the impacts of climate change.

Climate change goes beyond geographical borders and requires a comprehensive and scientific approach to overcome the "criticalities" and arrive at joint responses. Although mitigation measures are coordinated at national and international level, adaptation measures are responses to local issues linked to the territory's cross-border location.

The visit to Chamonix by President Emmanuel Macron in February was a chance to highlight the rapid melting of the glaciers, and in particular of the Mer de Glace. This visit provided the opportunity for the French mayors in the Espace Mont-Blanc to co-sign a charter with the Minister of State for the Ecological and Inclusive Transition, Emmanuelle Wargon, for the protection of Mont-Blanc that sets forth good environmental practices for the territory. [The Charter \[FR\]](#) – [The Espace Mont-Blanc climate report \[FR\]](#).

The cross-border strategic project AdaPT Mont-Blanc also sets out planning and management tools for the territory.

Although the current health crisis has slowed cross-border exchanges, the Espace Mont-Blanc remains mobilised to implement the Strategy for the Future of the Mont-Blanc Mountain Range. A webinar to present the results of the European project AdaPT Mont-Blanc took place on 23 June 2020. A reporting event will also be held in 2021, to coincide with the 30th anniversary of the Espace Mont-Blanc.

[More info](#)

France-Switzerland: A Léman Coherence Strategy

Since 2008, the Léman Council has provided a Léman Coherence Transport Strategy. This initiative, which is led by the Canton of Valais, provides an overview for the whole of the Léman region. This perspective is designed to contribute to the coherence of public transport, road, rail, cycle and P&R projects, in a context of economic and demographic growth, with increasing needs in terms of transportation.

The Strategy, updated to go through to 2035, has just been published.

[More info](#)

European Cross-border Citizens' Alliance

At a time when Europe is at a turning point and is preparing to adopt political orientations for the 2021-27 period, the MOT, the AEBR and CESCI are launching a European Cross-border Citizens' Alliance.

They call on elected officials, local authorities, cross-border structures and (cross)border citizens to support this Alliance and to join them.

During the Covid-19 crisis, cross-border territories have been the best illustrations of the European Union's strengths and weaknesses. That is why this Alliance is arguing, on behalf of cross-border territories throughout Europe, that in the future European and national decisions should give more resources and powers to border territorial authorities in order to strengthen cooperation across borders. It is aimed at European and national authorities.

[More info](#)

The European Parliament calls for greater protection for cross-border and seasonal workers

Resolution adopted on 19 June.

[More info](#)



On 9-10 November 2020, the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT) is hosting in Paris the first edition of the BORDERS FORUM. This exceptional event will take place under the patronage of Mr Emmanuel Macron, President of the French Republic.

Its objective is simple: to create a forum for discussion and a far-reaching political sounding board to highlight territories that comprise 40% of Europe and more than 2 million European cross-border workers, including 400,000 coming from France. It will bring together local, national and European players involved in cross-border cooperation, will reaffirm their shared ambition and their place in political debate, and consolidate a European Cross-border Citizens' Alliance (see left).

The context is unique: at a time when Europe is celebrating the 30th anniversary of its Interreg cooperation programmes, and France and Germany have begun implementing the Aachen Treaty, the health crisis has put borders back at the centre of political debate – borders that were abruptly closed at the very heart of the Schengen Area.

So, cross-border territories more than ever on the front line? More than ever laboratories of European integration? These will be the questions that we will attempt to answer over the course of these two days.

We are proud to be organising this event in partnership with the European Commission and the European Committee of the Regions. We are also counting on the presence of French and other European ministers, the heads of cross-border structures, and high-profile private-sector decision-makers from large companies. Our German partners will also play a major part in this event, which will take place during their presidency of the EU.

The first day will be devoted to European borders and the tenth meeting of the EGTC Platform. The second day will be devoted to the cross-border territories along France's borders. [More info](#)

MOT – First meetings of the network's working groups

The MOT network's working groups met for the first time in the form of webinars on 12 June (the "Territorial Solidarity" group), 17 June (the "Cross-Border Governance" group) and 24 June (the "Metropolitan Cooperation" group). Their purpose is to share experiences along borders, to generate proposals for action, and to contribute to political reflections for the BORDERS FORUM to be held on 9-10 November. These first three sessions each brought together around 40 participants, and were co-facilitated with members of the network.

The webinar format provided an opportunity to enlarge the circle of discussion, with participants from the academic community, the political sphere, the voluntary sector and experts in border issues from cross-border areas.

The next meetings of these groups will take place on 8 September, at the time of the MOT's general assembly.

[More info – recordings of the three sessions available online](#)

MOT study The Sud Region prepares the future of its Interreg programmes

MOT study –A year ago, the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region commissioned the MOT to carry out a capitalisation study that gave a voice to regional players involved in ALCOTRA and MARITTIMO projects by means of a broad consultation process. A summary of this work can now be consulted online. This document summarises the main issues with respect to cross-border partnerships, types of projects, and areas of cooperation for the forthcoming Franco-Italian Interreg programming period.

[More info](#)

Contribution from the MOT Towards a coordination mechanism on the Franco-Italian-Monaco border?

The MOT has contributed to the production of a report together with Professor Philippe Weckel and Robert Botteghi, within the framework of the territorial diplomacy (DITER) programme, of the University of the Côte d'Azur. It is the fruit of an action-research project in partnership with and funded by the Sud Region and the Nice-Côte d'Azur Metropolis, in collaboration with the Martinique CNFPT, the Tuscany Region, the municipality of Breil-sur-Roya, the Corsica territorial authority and the Agency for Sustainable Mediterranean City and Territories (AVITEM). [More info](#)

PRESS REVIEW

How the Covid-19 pandemic has shaken things up in Europe

Le Monde, 19 June

"While, in world geopolitics, the crisis has amplified major pre-existing trends without fundamentally changing the status quo, it is different for the EU, which could emerge from it transformed."

Call 'to never close the borders again'

DNA, 15 June

"The closing of borders due to the pandemic was a severe blow. It is a reminder for all of us of how intertwined our daily relations are. And it should also be a sign: we should make our voices heard even more loudly in our respective capitals."

Overhauling cross-border cooperation

DNA, 20 June

"The Covid-19 crisis has reinforced the far-reaching transformation underway of cross-border cooperation between public bodies, particularly in the Upper Rhine region, which is a pioneer in this field. The lessons from this need to be drawn, both in terms of how we think about this policy and the ways in which it is implemented. Fundamental changes can be seen on two levels."

A more decentralised approach post-Covid?

Les Echos, 3 July - Article by Jean Rottner, President of the Grand Est Region – "In 2020 – the coronavirus crisis has shown once again – there is an urgent need to complete the process of decentralisation started 40 years ago. [...] I'm calling for the implementation of genuine territorial differentiation that can also be applied at the cross-border and European level."

Hydrogen plays border-hopping in Moselle

Le Moniteur, 22 June

"The gas carrier GRTgaz is leading, together with a German partner, the pioneering project of a cross-border hydrogen transportation network by linking up two 'national' pipelines. Between the Grand Est Region, Saarland in Germany and Luxembourg, hydrogen will be ignoring physical borders."

'For a single healthcare area'

L'Ami Hebdo, 28 June

"Fewer than 200 days before the establishment of the European Territorial Authority of Alsace, the President of the Haut-Rhin Departmental Council, Brigitte Klinkert, takes stock of the crisis [...]. The new body will notably be an opportunity for close cross-border cooperation in the area of healthcare."

The lessons from the closing of the border have been drawn'

Le Dauphiné libéré, 27 June

"Ignazio Cassis, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Swiss Confederation, and Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne, French Minister of State for European Affairs, were in Thônex-Vallard on Friday, 26 June to discuss the good cooperation between the two countries during the health crisis."

A plea for more cross-border cooperation

Nice Matin, 24 June

"A university research project draws the lessons from the management of the health crisis in order to lay the foundations for genuine collaboration between France and Italy, both in difficult times and in normal daily life."

In the Basque Country, the border comes back to life

Sud Ouest, 22 June

"After three months of closure, free movement has resumed. Inhabitants of the cross-border area can live again. A report on the bridge that links Hendaye to Irún."

Thematic issue: "Borders and cross-border labor markets : Opportunities and challenges"

Edited by Isabelle Pigeron-Piroth (University of Luxembourg) and Rachid Belkacem (University of Lorraine), the latest thematic issue published by the UniGR-Center for Border Studies provides an analysis of cross-border employment and related issues. Comprising seven chapters contributed by ten authors, it has a preface by Jean Peyrony, the MOT's Director-General.

Download the publication:
<http://www.granderegion.net/content/download/4484/70230>

This publication is available in the MOT's documentary portal. Specialising in cross-border cooperation, this contains over 4,000 documents and documentary references. [More info \[FR\]](#)



BORDERS IN PERSPECTIVE
UniGR-CBS Thematic Issue 3/2020

BORDERS AND CROSS-BORDER LABOR MARKETS: Opportunities and Challenges

UNIVERSITY OF LORRAINE & UNIVERSITY OF LUXEMBOURG
Rachid Belkacem, Isabelle Pigeron-Piroth (Eds.)

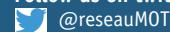
CROSS-BORDER NEWS

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Production: Domitille Ayral
Photos: All rights reserved.

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