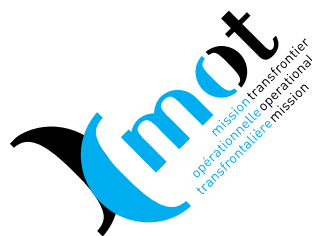


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# CROSS BORDER NEWS



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## Cooperation between the Finistère Department and Cornwall County Council

### Climate change doesn't care about borders and calls for greater solidarity!



**Frédérique Bonnard-  
Le Floch**

Councillor in charge of  
higher education, research  
and European affairs,  
Finistère Department

#### **The border is much more than a barrier – our sea is the Channel and the Atlantic**

For us, the sea is a purveyor of history and the future. The famous “Johnnies” – those travelling onion sellers who made the journey between Roscoff and Plymouth – embody the beginning of the development of the maritime trade. Later on, the founding of the company Brittany Ferries is a strong and concrete illustration of our desire to be in contact with one another. In normal times, 80% of Brittany Ferries passengers are British and 6,000 lorries cross between Roscoff and Plymouth every year. Another strong marker of these links is fishing, since 25% of France's catch of fresh fish comes from the Bigouden Country. Our relationships with our neighbours have built up over our long history through concrete initiatives that have established the habit of cooperating and working together. We have thus developed strong partnerships of which we are very proud, with Cornwall County Council over the past 30 years, and more recently with Alto Minho, in both cases represented in human terms by the presence of International Business Volunteers. Every year, we see cooperation success stories, like in September 2019, with the success of the SANA project, the first European disability sports event aimed at making outdoor water and land-based sports accessible to all. Brexit is an economic and human catastrophe for our territory, where, in some rural districts 15% of the population is British! In this new post-Brexit era, we are working with our neighbours to ensure that our shared territorial reality continues and is recognised.



The Finistère Department and Cornwall County Council have shared values and challenges: regional languages, a Celtic culture, and a strong relationship with the sea and the environment. Together they have put in place an action plan in order eventually to become carbon-neutral. Joint projects have been launched concerning low-carbon dairy farming, light pollution in regional parks and curbing coastal erosion. Since 1990, all the Interreg programme has made it possible to provide funding for the development of cross-border cooperation projects in Europe. By the start of this year, €14 million had been raised by these partners to carry out a project aimed at reducing plastic in the sea.

The implementation of concrete initiatives has created de facto solidarity and a joint voice with respect to the European Union.

- A discussion is under way about a “Brexit Adjustment Reserve”, a temporary fund to support the European territories most affected; and the European Commission has received submissions from departments that border the Channel to make proposals. The Finistère Department and Cornwall County Council are currently examining what non-EU funding might be available.
- Moreover, Brest has a role to play in improving the accessibility of Atlantic territories by establishing itself as the mainland port in the European Union closest Ireland. Discussions are under way to include the port of Brest-Roscoff into the central network as part of the upgrade of the Trans-European Transport Network, TEN-T. This remains a substantial obstacle to overcome as the high-speed rail-line stops in Rennes.

## Events

**"Cross-border rail connections: fostering cohesion between regions and their citizens"**, 10-11 June 2021, online, organised as part of the European Year of Rail, by the MOT and the PAMINA Eurodistrict, with the support of the European Committee of the Regions. [More info](#)

**Workshops on multilingualism and identity**, organised by the TEIN network, final roundtable, 22 April 2021, online

**Study day – "Trade and Borders"**, 1 April 2021, online

**Citizens' dialogue in the Eurodistrict: "Mobility, environment, culture, identity and multilingualism – without borders in Europe?"**, 13-22 April 2021, online  
[All the events](#)

## Brexit: the future of cooperation around the Channel at risk



Since it came into force on 31 January 2020, the effects of Brexit on the territories oriented towards the Channel are tangible. On both sides, the new procedures for exports are penalising small producers, the fishing and agri-business sectors, as well as the services sector (tourism and hospitality). The economic context linked to the double crisis (Covid and Brexit) is also putting many cross-Channel transport links at risk.

While it is still difficult to identify all of the consequences of Brexit, this strengthened border is prompting a shift in the geography of sea routes, which may turn out to be more or less advantageous depending

on the country. Ireland, for example, is benefiting from a reorientation and increase of traffic between its ports and continental Europe, with operators favouring longer and more expensive routes to stay within the EU: an opportunity to be seized by all of France's Atlantic regions.

While the EU is planning to put in place a Brexit Adjustment Reserve (BAR), a €5 billion compensation fund to mitigate, by 2023, the new costs and negative effects generated by compliance with the new procedures, France is contesting the calculation criteria chosen for the budget allocation, which principally takes account of macroeconomics flows between

Member States. The MOT notes that the "territorial" dimension is completely absent from this BAR, with border specificities only being taken into account regarding the question of "managing the new external border" (customs, phytosanitary checks, etc.).

Another thorny issue concerns the future of territorial cooperation programmes for the 2021-2027 period, following the disappearance of Interreg France-United Kingdom, the cross-border programme along France's borders with the largest budget. In the future, the main European programme remaining available to British partners will be "Horizon Europe" (R&D).

[Read the whole article](#)

## Border closure: a very difficult situation in Moselle

On 28 February, Germany took the decision to restrict crossings at its border for people coming from the Moselle, describing the department as "a zone in which Covid-19 is circulating". Since then, the 16,000 cross-border workers concerned have had to present a negative PCR test obtained within 48 hours for each entry into German territory. For the region's inhabitants this decision is a major shock. It has disrupted both economic activity and the daily lives of local inhabitants: increased journey times, overflowing test centres, elderly people isolated, children missing school, suspension of public transport – the difficulties created are numerous. For some people, this decision has put the clock back many years, to a time they hoped never to live through again. The President of the SaarMoselle Eurodistrict, Gilbert Schuh, and his first Vice-President, Uwe Conradt, have asked that "in spite of the stricter entry conditions, all of the border crossing-points remain open". They do not want "systematic border checks with presentation of negative tests".

Visiting Sarreguemines on 5 March, the French Secretary of State Clément Beaune announced that they "were looking for solutions with the Germans", and that a discussion had been started with Germany in order to fully restore the meaning of the term "cross-border" that normally describes life in the region.

[Read the whole article](#)

## French award for Saarland's "France Strategy"

On 3 February 2021, Saarland's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Peter Strobel, went to Paris to receive the "Prix coup de cœur 2021" awarded by the magazine "Acteurs Publics". This prize rewards Saarland, often called the "most European" of the German Länder, for its "France Strategy". Over the past few years, the Land has had to undergo far-reaching economic restructuring to become an attractive region. It has embarked on an active strategy to strengthen Franco-German relations and economic and cultural ties with its French neighbours, notably by developing bilingualism.

[More info](#)

## Greater Region: interactive cross-border map showing air quality

The Greater Region's Geographical Information System and ATMO Grand Est have joined forces in order to develop an interactive map that makes it possible to check air quality across the whole of the cross-border territory of the Greater Region. Hour by hour, 98 air quality stations analyse and record air quality live. Available in three languages, the tool has been developed under the aegis of the "Environment" working group of the Greater Region Summit. It is the first stage in the run-up to more ambitious projects.

[More info](#)

## Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on cross-border public services

In February 2021, the European Committee of the Regions published an opinion entitled "Cross-Border Public Services in Europe", for which the rapporteur is Pavel Branda (ECR/CZ), Deputy Mayor of Rádlo (Czech Republic).

In the opinion he highlights the advantages of providing public services across borders and urges for a stronger legal framework, permanent structures such as cross-border contact points as well as financial support through the REACT-EU initiative.

The opinion supports the planned European Cross-Border Mechanism (ECBM), proposed by the European Commission in 2018.

[More info](#)

## Taking account of border towns in the national programme "Small Towns of Tomorrow"

In October 2020, the MOT was tasked by the National Agency for Territorial Cohesion and the Banque des Territoires as an "action partner" in the national programme "Small Towns of Tomorrow".

Targeting around 1,500 municipalities, the programme notably includes a number of small urban centres located near to France's borders and facing economic and demographic difficulties. The border exacerbates these difficulties in that it deprives inhabitants of 360° access to mobility, healthcare and employment; by contrast, opening up the border constitutes an asset.

In this context, the MOT's work has highlighted several

emblematic examples of cross-border cooperation initiatives that have made it possible to overcome certain difficulties. This work has given rise to the publication of a booklet entitled "Small Towns on Borders" and eight project factsheets covering various topics such as setting up a youth employment network in the Pyrenees, opening an information centre for cross-border inhabitants and the creation of a Franco-Belgian healthcare hub. These publications will be added to as the programme progresses. The cross-border dimension is a cross-cutting lever of development for the territories concerned. Each town can therefore be involved in different

projects, as a partner contributing to their implementation, or as a beneficiary of their impact with respect to the strengthening of its role as a hub. Each of the cross-border projects arises from a particular issue or territorial context, and leads to collaboration with partners on the other side of the border aimed at developing joint solutions. The MOT, with its strong expertise in this area, is ready to assist these small urban centres within the framework of the programme, and to support them in the development of cross-border projects contributing to their regeneration.

[More info – the publications \[FR\]](#)



## Launch of the REGIOSTARS Awards: get working on your cross-border projects!

Regiostars awards are the yearly competition organised by DG REGIO since 2008: it has become the Europe's label of excellence for EU-funded projects, which demonstrate innovative and inclusive approaches to regional development. The TOPIC OF THE YEAR: "Enhancing green mobility in the regions: European Year of Rail 2021". The on-line application platform is open from 9 February until 9 May 2021. [More info](#)

## Recovery and Ecological Transition Contracts: the cross-border dimension taken into account

The Recovery and Ecological Transition Contracts (CRTE), announced by Jean Castex on 15 July 2020, set out "a new framework for dialogue with territories". Incorporating "concrete action plans", they are designed to be comprehensive in order to "restart activity in line with the ecological transition". A circular concerning their drafting was sent to France's prefects on 20 November 2020. To the question "Is it

possible to take account of the issues and specificities of border territories in the CRTE?", the website of the National Agency for Territorial Cohesion gives a very clear answer: "Yes, the border dimension may be taken into account in the light of the geographical location of the territories concerned, which constitute living areas that often support cross-border exchanges. [...]" [More info](#)

## European consultation on the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T)

The European Commission has launched a new public consultation on the TEN-T guidelines with respect to transport infrastructure. This consultation is taking place within the framework of the impact assessment that will support an initiative to revise the TEN-T regulation, planned for September. The consultation is open until 5 May 2021. [More info](#)



# PRESS REVIEW

## Conference on the Future of Europe: the three EU bodies kick it off

Localtis, 11 March

"By a joint declaration signed on 10 March 2021, the Presidents of the Commission, the Parliament and the Council invited the citizens of the 27 Member States to give their views about the direction they wish the European Union to go in, the policies conducted in all areas, and the 'EU's degree of ambition'."

## The European Commission adopts its new strategy on adaptation to climate change

Localtis, 2 March

"Noting the unavoidable nature of climate change, the Commission has just adopted a new strategy aimed at better adapting the EU to it."

## A priority for the Ardennes Department Council

L'Union, 9 March

"The Ardennes Department Council has made preventing 'forced' transfers to Belgium one of its priorities. This topic has even been the subject of a factsheet in the Ardennes Pact that has been approved by the Government. As the body that funds support for disabled people, the Department is working to increase its capacity to accommodate people in its territory."

## The Hauts-de-France Region prepares to transfer patients to Belgium

Nord Eclair, 10 March

"The Hauts-de-France regional health agency has confirmed that it 'is currently working to organise transfers of critical care patients to Belgian healthcare facilities'. These patients will be transferred to border area hospitals that are 'French hospitals' usual partners within the framework of cross-border agreements'."

## Agreement on homeworking for cross-border workers extended

Républicain lorrain, 10 March

"Once again, the tax agreement with Luxembourg has been extended. French cross-border workers will be able to continue to work remotely without any impact until 30 June 2021."

## Cross-border workers: elected representatives write to Merkel and Macron

Républicain lorrain, 12 March

"Elected representatives from East Moselle and Saarland have written to Angela Merkel and Emmanuel Macron to ask that the two heads of state grant an easing of the measures imposed on cross-border workers."

## Clément Beaune: 'We are looking for solutions with the German'

Est républicain, 5 March -

"Daily life is cross-border in nature. I note that the word 'border' no longer has much meaning. But it might take one on again if we are not careful. I'm intending to use my visit to Sarreguemines to facilitate and promote our dialogue with Germany. We won't solve anything by being at loggerheads."

## Changing daily life in Greater Geneva with the Forum d'agglo

Dauphiné libéré, 17 March

"The Forum d'agglo has launched a call for applications until 15 April. This body that represents civil society in the cross-border Greater Geneva area has made possible the return of RTS to our screens, better cycle paths and improved air quality..."

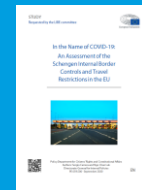
## 'The crisis has strengthened the relationship between France and Spain'

Sud Ouest, 15 March

"Spain's ambassador to France, José Manuel Albares, explains the issues at stake at the Franco-Spanish summit in Montauban – the only one in the five-year presidential term – that today is bringing together Emmanuel Macron and his counterpart, Pedro Sánchez."

## The MOT's documentary portal: latest publications

- **In the name of COVID-19 : An assessment of the Schengen internal border controls and travel restrictions in the EU**, European Parliament, September 2020
- **The role of open borders and cross-border cooperation in regional growth across Europe**, Kadir Babosca, Taylor & Francis, November 2020
- **Géopolitique des frontières (The Geopolitics of Borders)**, Anne-Laure Amilhat-Szary, Le Cavalier Bleu, November 2020 – In [FR]
- **How to cross borders to protect our populations? Conclusions of the Covid and Healthcare Congress**, Haut-Rhin and Bas-Rhin Department Councils, November 2020 – In [FR]
- **Baltic borders during Corona – a story of unintended geopolitics**, Thomas Lunden, balticworlds.com, December 2020



Find all of the publications on cross-border cooperation listed in the MOT's documentary portal – in French.

## CROSS-BORDER NEWS

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