

Special Dossier

Cross-border issues in the run-up to the European elections

"Putting cross-border cooperation at the heart of political debate"



Michel Delebarre, President of MOT, Former French Minister of State, Senator and Mayor of Dunkirk, President of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform of the Committee of the Regions

"France has nearly 3000 km of borders. Ten million French people live in the vicinity of a neighbouring country and 360,000 people cross the border every day go to work on the other side.

The increasing opening-up of national borders is an opportunity. It gives rise to agglomeration economies within a cross-border territories; it encourages linguistic and cultural diversity. But, at the same time, imbalances emerge as the political, administrative and legal frameworks do not correspond to the reality of cross-border situations. Cross-border territories need to be supported by strong political will.

If all of Europe's territories are called upon to participate in the Europe 2020 Strategy, cross-border territories are even more so. Economically, they create wealth through the development of cross-border SMEs, clusters and research and innovation networks; socially, they are territories in which new cross-border labour markets are formed; and from an environmental point of view, they are spaces of joint responsibility.

Cooperation requires the involvement of all levels of government: local and regional authorities, which are the level closest to daily life, have a greater role; the

support of national governments is needed, which have to coordinate their strategies, legislation and financing tools across borders; and European policy across the board needs to take greater account of the challenges and potential in cross-border territories.

The economic crisis and public debt have created a disjunction between the political process and Europe's citizens. In cross-border territories, national and European policies converge; they constitute the most appropriate areas in which to experiment with cross-border services for the general public and businesses, and to foster a European citizenship that is enriched by the diversity of national and regional cultures.

Thus, at a time when many citizens are displaying disaffection with Europe, it is vital in the run-up to the European elections to reaffirm our commitment to cross-border territories."

"The European grouping - a tool for cross-border cooperation"



Alain Lamassoure, Vice-President of MOT, MEP

"Since 2006, nearly 50 European Groupings of Cross-Border Cooperation (EGTCs) have been created in the European Union. A third of them have a presence in France, such as the Aquitaine Euskadi EGTC, which was set up in 2011.

The EGTC is to territorial authorities what the status of "European company" is to commercial companies. It enables territorial authorities from different EU Member States to group together in a permanent manner in order to carry out cross-border projects, by virtue of having a fully-fledged legal personality and financial autonomy. This structure has proved to be extremely well-suited to the needs of the different cross-border players: it now concerns over 10 million French citizens across 20% of France's territory.

The projects carried out are very varied and have included, for example, the conversion of an old building into a cross-border snow-clearing centre on the Portalet Pass, and studies on the potential for the development of public transport in the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis. This status makes it possible to implement unprecedented joint policies, such as the binational hospital in Cerdanya, which provides joint hospital services in a French-Spanish area comprising 30,000 inhabitants.

The fact that it can have varied members only goes to strengthen its territorial basis. The West-Vlaanderen/Flandre-Dunkerque-Côte d'Opale EGTC is for example made up of 13 partner members that bring together more than 540 districts. Lastly, an EGTC can also take on the role of managing authority for European territorial cooperation programmes within the framework of cohesion policy for the 2014-2020 period. [...]" [Continued on page 2.](#)

EVENTS

The Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière is organising a European conference on “The integrated economic development of cross-border territories”, the 15th April 2014 in Paris.

[Click here to register!](#)

The MOT’s next Annual General Meeting and conference-debate, on the topic “Cross-border networks: mutualising services and experimenting with Europe on each border”, will take place on 18-19 June 2014 in Paris.

OTHER EVENTS

Conference on cross-border cooperation and regional integration in Africa: 31 March in Brussels, at the Committee of the Regions. [More info](#)

Cross-Channel Forum "Promoting Effective Governance of the Channel Ecosystem", 8 April 2014 in Southampton.

All the events

Three questions put to Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid, MEP

In November 2012, Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid set up, together with fellow MEP Gilles Pargneaux, a cross-border liaison group at the European Parliament aimed at raising the awareness of MEPs about cross-border issues.

What actions have been carried out by the cross-border liaison group at the European Parliament?

The cross-border liaison group is an entirely new working group at the European Parliament – it is a cross-party group that looks specifically at the issue of borders and cross-border cooperation. Gilles Pargneaux and I had noticed that, although borders are at the heart of the European project, no one was looking at them as a specific area of focus. The aim of this group is to bring together and raise the awareness of our colleagues about the concrete issues that arise at each European border, in order to share the successes, find solutions to difficulties and move Europe forward for those who live in it on a daily basis. We have held several meetings since the start of 2013, which have addressed the deepening of the internal

market, giving stimulus to cross-border work, the increase in Interreg funding, and cross-border reconciliation in Ireland.

What are your current cross-border concerns?

The vote in Switzerland and the revision of the Posted Workers Directive have highlighted the issue of cross-border work. The economic crisis, rising unemployment and the unsuitability of European rules have reawakened the fear of the Polish plumber. The latter may have different faces: the Romanian lorry driver or, where I live in Perpignan, the Spanish labourer. With the Swiss vote, the shock is all the greater since for the first time we are becoming aware of the fact that there are seconded French workers in the EU. So cross-border work is currently the biggest topic for us to address.

How are you promoting the cross-border dimension in the campaign for the European elections?

Cross-border cooperation is difficult to promote, especially in a period of crisis, as it is complex and emotive. The national administrative culture finds it difficult to accept change, openness and ad hoc solutions, which makes any attempt to simplify the rules futile. In particular, the border is imagined as being the last defence in the face of the crisis, economic ultra-liberalism, globalisation and its “unfair competition”. Cross-border cooperation is no longer seen as an asset but rather a threat. So we need to rethink the concept of borders in the European election campaign to turn them into a source of potential growth and cooperation.



Continued from page 1.

"[...] In the 2014-2020 period, EGTCs will therefore play a key role in the use of the €11.7 billion budget allocated to cross-border cooperation.

With the original procedure for setting up an EGTC having proved to be too unwieldy, the regulation governing it was revised last year. The new status, which will enter into force in June 2014, broadens the remit of EGTCs while at the same time making the way in which they operate more flexible. Thus, the EGTC is constructing Europe in concrete terms, from the grassroots up. National borders, which once were battlefields, have today become the leading focuses for joint work between our reconciled peoples."

A transport map covering the North of France and West Flanders

The West-Vlaanderen/Flandre-Dunkerque-Côte d'Opale EGTC has just published a cross-border public transport map. Aimed at local inhabitants and tourists, but also at elected representatives as a tool to help decision-making in the area of transportation, it shows the train, bus and tram networks from the South of the Pas-de-Calais department up to the border with the Netherlands, including the Lille conurbation and Belgium as far as Tournai. It comes with a booklet that gives practical information in four languages. [More info](#)



Cross-border workshops in Alsace

The Alsace Region has launched a forward-looking discussion entitled “Alsace 2030” in order to define the major development issues for its territory. This process, which brings together the Government, regional and local authorities, the voluntary sector, civil society and economic players, will by the summer of 2014 result in a document that sets out strategic orientations. The cross-border aspect is being discussed both in the series of workshops entitled “Territorial and European Cooperation”, but also in the sectoral workshops. [More info](#)

Consultation on the ESPON programme 2020

The ESPON programme 2020 is currently being drawn up.

The 32 participating countries, in collaboration with the programme's Managing Authority and Coordination Unit, have drawn up a draft cooperation programme.

Consultation on this document is currently taking place – from 4 March to 2 April 2014 – in order to gather feedback on this draft programme. The MOT will take part in the consultation.

[Consult the online questionnaire by clicking here.](#)



New issue of the MOT Guides on the "Observation of cross-border territories"

The MOT has published the 9th issue of its thematic guides on the "Observation of cross-border territories".

As André Rossinot* points out in his editorial: "European policies are still in many ways out of phase with the cross-border experience and contribute to a feeling of distance or even lack of understanding between the European Union and its citizens. It is urgent to change approach by encouraging the development of shared cross-border observation in order to obtain better knowledge and understanding of today's territorial realities."

Indeed, "Europe is a daily reality for many citizens who, with a great sense of freedom, put it into practice in the cross-border territories. At a time when populism in various forms and the temptation to reject Europe are on the rise, it is up to us collectively to mobilise ourselves, to defend our ideal while reinventing it."

The 20-page brochure that has just been published by the MOT highlights the issues facing and expectations of partners with regard to this crucial topic of the observation of cross-border territories. Three levels of issues are highlighted:

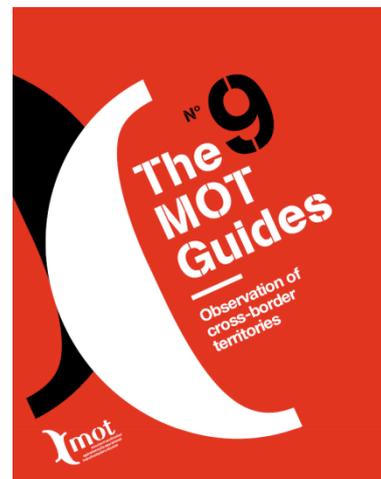
- First of all, at local level the purpose of cooperation is to develop services for the benefit of the cross-border populations; observation is a prerequisite, as for

any type of territory, for political action in order to provide a common understanding of the issues.

- The observation of cross-border regions is a major aspect of spatial planning at national level and its development requires coordinated work at this level, with the involvement of the partners and governments in the countries across the border.

- Finally, the cross-border territories, laboratories of European integration, are at the heart of European community policies: the EU 2020 strategy, the single market, territorial cohesion. The European Union must consequently pay greater attention to them!

The brochure highlights these aspects; it also addresses the



following issues:

- What is cross-border statistical observation?
- Development of observation procedures on French borders
- In France, an experimental approach at national level
- The political aspects of observation, with the points of view of the DATAR (France) and Luxembourg.
- Four experiences on the ground concerning the Lille metropolitan area, the France-Vaud-Geneva space, the Upper Rhine and the Öresund region.

[To download the brochure: in English – in French.](#)

* Mayor of Nancy, President of the Communauté urbaine du Grand Nancy, Vice-president of the MOT.

Inforegio Panorama

The latest issue of the DG REGIO's magazine Panorama, which is devoted to the reformed cohesion policy for the 2014-2020 period, has come out. It analyses in detail the implications of this policy for all of the stakeholders.

[More info](#)

A new Benelux convention

With the launch of the Dutch presidency of the Benelux Union, a new "Benelux Convention on Cross-Border and Interterritorial Cooperation" was signed on 20 February in The Hague.

In 2014, the Dutch presidency will emphasise three priority areas: cross-border labour mobility, transport and logistics, and fraud prevention. In this regard, the desire to develop an Internet portal aimed at cross-border

workers, as well as measures to improve road traffic and to jointly combat fraud and social dumping have been set out.

Among the new elements in the new convention, which "renews and strengthens the 1986 convention", is the expansion of cooperation with Germany, France and the United Kingdom. [More info](#)

The MOT on France Inter

On Monday 3 March, Olivier Denert, the MOT's Secretary General, took part in the programme "Service Public" on the radio station France Inter, presented by Guillaume Erner, on the topic "Jeux sans frontières. The situation of people living in border areas today". [To listen to the programme, click here.](#)

PRESS REVIEW

European funds will be better targeted

Acteurs publics, 18 February

"The European Commission's new requirements for the allocation of structural funds impose extremely strict governance on regions based on a very detailed strategic view of their assets. The problem is that the mechanism is very complex..."

Alzette-Belval unveils its projects for the next 20 years

Le Moniteur, 7 March

"The first Chairman of the Alzette-Belval Public Development Agency (Etablissement public d'aménagement – EPA), Michel Dinet, completed his term with the delivery in less than 12 months of a strategic and operational project. The Operation of National Interest launched in 2010 is to allocate €300 million to the redevelopment of eight municipalities in Moselle and Meurthe-et-Moselle that border Luxembourg in order to include them in the major urban project for the Luxembourg region..."

Saarland, a German region that is banking on French

Libération, 14 February

"In Saarbrücken, road signs will soon be in French and German. This region in the West of Germany, which borders Lorraine, Moselle and Luxembourg, has just decided to become bilingual by 2043."

Towards a cross-border campus in the Basel region?

24 Heures, 28 February

"Although Switzerland will no longer take part in Erasmus after the vote on immigration, the higher education institutions in the Upper Rhine wish to step up their academic exchanges and create a 'European Campus'."

Cross-border workers win a round against the Vaud taxman

24 Heures, 1 March

"After Paris's intervention, the canton is abandoning the double taxation of around 100 French commuters. But fundamentally, nothing has been settled. For Jean-François Besson, Secretary General of the European Cross-Border Grouping, it is obvious: 'The letter that Pierre Moscovici sent to Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf on 28 November was decisive'."

Cross-border workers at the heart of the campaign

La Tribune de Genève, 4 March

"Cross-border workers have become the main issue in the elections on both sides of the border', says Michel Charrat, Chairman of the European Cross-Border Grouping. 'This is not surprising given their number and economic weight.'"

Biodiversity corridors at the heart of the development of Greater Geneva

La Voix de l'Ain, 7 March

"The Swiss 'No' vote on 9 February is certainly still fresh in people's minds. But it has not dampened the enthusiasm of elected representatives on either side of the border for the construction of Greater Geneva. [...] The signature of the contract for biodiversity corridors between Vesancy and Versoix last week in Versoix by high-ranking border region elected representatives..."

The Eraikinn project identifies its strengths

Sud Ouest, 18 February

"The first meeting of the cross-border Eraikinn project in 2014, organised by Indar développement, the Bayonne chamber of commerce and industry, and joined by the Bihartean cross-border chamber of commerce and industry, was held on Thursday 13 February [...]. [It is a] flagship project whose objectives are the economic development of Basse Navarre, the identification of economic complementarities between the two territories, and supporting businesses..."

The UPPA: the most Spanish of French universities

L'Étudiant, 25 February

"Thanks to its UPPAss mobility programme, the University of Pau and Pays-de-l'Adour is bringing France and Spain a little closer together. Students that cross the Pyrenees have access to double degrees and CV booster courses."

Proceedings of the Lorraine Corridor metropolitan conferences

The Development and Planning Agency for the Nancy Urban Area has published the proceedings of three of the Lorraine Corridor metropolitan conferences that were held in 2013:

- "What is our shared vision of mobility issues in the metropolitan area?", Epinal, 4 July
- "How to promote the economic dynamics of the Lorraine Corridor?", Nancy, 18 Sept.
- "What are the major metropolitan issues across the Greater Region?", Metz, 15 October

The "metropolitan conference" is the body for participatory discussion in the Lorraine Corridor's Metropolitan Centre, which was officially inaugurated in 2011 by the towns and conurbations of Thionville, Metz, Nancy and Epinal. It aims to discuss, debate and put forward new ideas in order to contribute to the construction of the metropolitan area within a shared vision.

The third conference, which addressed the cross-border dimension, aimed to elucidate what is "taking shape" at the Lorraine Region's borders.

[More info about the Lorraine Corridor's Metropolitan Centre.](#) (Documents in French)



CROSS-BORDER NEWS

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Director of publication: Jean Peyrony
Production: Domitille Ayrat

Photos: PPE-Parlement européen
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