

Adoption of the Communication “Boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions”

On 20 and 21 September 2017 in Brussels, a conference was held to mark the adoption of the Communication entitled “Boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions”. Opened by Commissioner Cretu and the President of the Committee of the Regions, Karl-Heinz Lambertz, the conference brought together 200 participants, including numerous representatives of cross-border territories, of states, and services of the Commission concerned with cooperation (in addition to DG REGIO, the directorates in charge of employment, education, the internal market, communications networks, content and technologies, health, transport,...)*. While cross-border territories represent 40% of the territory of the European Union, they are confronted with numerous

challenges. Access to public services such as hospitals and universities is often lacking in border regions. People, businesses and public authorities in border regions are confronted with specific difficulties as a result of the different administrative and legal systems. In order to remedy these difficulties, which cannot be dealt with through subsidies like Interreg, the Communication proposes a series of new concrete actions to help border regions to cooperate, to reduce obstacles, and to allow citizens and cross-border players to exploit the potential of these regions. [Continued on page 3.](#)

* More info :

<https://livestream.com/accounts/17747386/events/7721791>



Speech by the President of the French Republic at the Conference of the Territories on 17 July 2017

Towards a differentiation of public action in French territories

Over the course of the first meeting of the Conference of the Territories (a new platform for exchange, consultation and decision-making headed by the French prime minister), Emmanuel Macron presented the new differentiation of public action, a vector for a new equality of opportunity for the territories. This differentiated action will first of all enable consultation in advance of each reform with the local and regional authorities concerned, and allow players to focus on specific priorities

according to the territory. Local experimentation will need to be amplified and the principle according to which local experiments must be either generalised to the entire French territory, or abandoned, will be discarded. A draft law on administrative simplification and the ‘right to make a mistake’ will be presented, giving French prefects the power to make local adaptations to regulations. This power to adapt legal norms to local realities could be transferred to the regional councils that desire

it, with new delegations of authority. Such is the wish of the French overseas local and regional authorities in particular, in light of their specific constitutional status. At the European level, the French head of state argues for a stop to the over-transposition of EU norms, as well as a systematic evaluation, in cross-border regions in particular, of norms in force in France’s neighbouring countries, in order to assess the effectiveness of France’s own norms.

[More info](#)

EVENTS

Save the date :

20th anniversary of the MOT

"Building cross-border territories: Europe for citizens"

30 November and 1st December 2017 in Brussels

[Programme and registration](#)

20th Event in the network with "20 years of the MOT" label

10th anniversary of Forum Transfrontalier Arc jurassien, 21 October 2017 in Russey (France)

38th Meeting of the French Urban Planning Agencies: Building the Europe of Places and Connections, from 8 to 10 November 2017 in Strasbourg

[More info](#)

Workshop of DG Regio for Spanish, Portuguese, French and Italian Regions on the Commission's Communication on "Cross-Border Obstacles", 25 October 2017 in Merida (Spain)

AEBR General Assembly, from 26 to 27 October 2017 in Badajoz (Spain)

Castle Talks on cross-border cooperation, 9 and 10 November 2017 in Strasbourg

[All events](#)

Greater Geneva: 3 major infrastructure projects co-financed by the Swiss Confederation

On 19 June 2017, new conventions were signed between the President of the Council of State of the Republic and Canton of Geneva, François Longchamp, and the President of the Agglomeration community of Annemasse, Christian Dupessey, enabling the Swiss Confederation's participation in the financing of 3 Greater Geneva flagship projects, at a level of 26 million euros.

Two years after the entry into service of the bus rapid transit service in the Annemasse agglomeration, these new conventions show the interest for Switzerland in associating with French and EU co-financers for the realisation of transport infrastructure within French territory.

- [The extension of the Geneva-Annemasse cross-border tramway](#)

The arrival of the tramway will enable a direct service between Annemasse and Geneva from city centre to city centre, in a complementary manner to the Léman Express commuter rail service. The first stretch of 2.1 km is accompanied by a



redevelopment of public spaces, enabling easier access to shops and services and facilitating journeys by bike and on foot, as well as increasing the amount of green spaces.

- [Development of the public spaces of the new Annemasse railway station linked to the Léman Express](#)

Directly linked to the CEVA rail link project (Cornavin, Eaux-Vives, Annemasse), this project aims to facilitate access to trains from all modes of transport (buses, intercity coaches, cars, bicycles, pedestrians) and forms part of the planned new railway station in Annemasse. Indeed, with the entry into service of the Léman Express, no less than 4 million travellers per year are expected, thus changing the status of the station within the cross-border conurbation

- [The Greater Geneva greenway](#)

While this development allows the creation of a continuous French-Swiss railway service from Annemasse to Geneva, the goal is also to introduce a "green component" within the dense urban landscape. Positioned over the underground tunnels of the CEVA railway project, this 900m stretch is a key element of the urban Greenway project on the French side of the border. The total cost of the operation is evaluated at 5.7 million euros, to which the Swiss Confederation is contributing 210,000 CHF*. [More info](#)

* About 191 000€



Guide for cross-border cooperation in the field of the environment

Within the context of the regional accord for the application of the Espoo Convention (1991) in a tri-national framework, the French-German-Swiss Upper Rhine Conference has published a guide to procedures for cross-border consultations concerning projects, plans and programmes with significant impact on the environment. This publication presents, in the case of procedures for consultation of a neighbouring country, all the measures, regulatory and optional, for civil and administrative participation. This undertaking demonstrates the presence of a long-established tradition of mutual consultation and exchange between the different players on projects having an impact at the cross-border level. [More info](#)



Ratification by the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and France of the framework agreement on cross-border health cooperation

Good quality healthcare for the populations of the French-Luxembourgish border regions, made more accessible, more rapid and closer to home - this is the objective of the framework agreement on health cooperation ratified by Luxembourg and France. This agreement will allow any resident of Luxembourg or of the Grand Est region in France to access healthcare in France or in Luxembourg, but also concerns cooperation in emergency medical care, thus facilitating the organisation of emergency aid and the medical transport of patients with the involvement of emergency services from the neighbouring country. [More info](#)

2017 project files

Every year, the MOT publishes a dossier highlighting exemplary cross-border projects along French borders.

The aim is to illustrate the role of cross-border cooperation and its impact on the daily lives of inhabitants of border territories.

The projects span a range of different thematic areas: employment, the economy, innovation, public services, health, social inclusion, security, urban and spatial planning, transport, sustainable development, the environment, natural spaces, education, culture and tourism.

[More info \[FR\]](#)



Continued from page 1.

The resolution of border problems is a complex process requiring the involvement of different types of players. While the impact of obstacles is felt locally, the solutions are rarely found at this level, and require a coordination of players at the level of national governments and administrations.

The Communication underlines the manner in which the EU and the Member States can reduce the complexity, the duration and the costs of cross-border interaction, and promotes the mutualisation of services along internal borders. By way of examples and good practice, the document gives an overview of the measures being implemented by the European Commission, the national institutions and cross-border players.

Among these examples, the "European Cross-Border Convention" (ECBC) tool, proposed by the Intergovernmental Working Group on innovative solutions to cross-border obstacles following the Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of the European Union, will be taken into consideration by the Commission.



The Communication also contributes to the reflection process initiated with the White Paper on the future of Europe, by publishing recommendations that facilitate cooperation and help citizens and businesses in border areas to exploit the full potential of these regions.

It proposes an ensemble of actions aimed at tackling certain legal and administrative barriers that currently prevent closer cooperation and interaction. A **"Border Focal Point"** will be created within the Commission. To encourage regular dialogue on cross-border issues and to ensure the sharing of good practice, the creation of an **online professional network** spanning the EU, will provide national and regional authorities with advice for tackling legal and administrative

obstacles on borders. **A call for pilot projects** will be launched before the end of 2017 for public authorities that wish to overcome border problems of a legal nature. The reduction of cross-border obstacles contributes to both the socio-economic development and the integration of border regions.

The Communication is accompanied by a working document that presents the key concepts and the process of the "Cross-Border Review", in which the MOT has been directly involved. This document provides additional information on the difficulties encountered by EU border regions and their societal impact, and adds to the actions proposed in the Communication with other analyses and concrete examples. [More info](#)

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on people-to-people and small-scale projects

People-to-people (P2P) projects are small-scale projects, accessible to a wide range of beneficiaries, oriented towards the promotion of contact and exchanges between people from either side of the border.

Their main goal is to finance initiatives in numerous fields of cross-border cooperation having an impact at the local level, with a view to supporting the main thematic objectives of the EU programmes.

This Opinion of the Committee of the Regions emphasises the great added value of P2P projects and suggests decentralised management

of these programmes as well as a simplification of procedures.

The anchoring of these projects in the regulations governing the EU's support of cross-border cooperation, as legitimate tools for cooperation programmes, is also presented as a central element.

The objective is to increase the visibility of the results and the advantages of these projects considered as the most tangible examples of the specific advantages and added value that the EU brings to citizens in their daily lives.

[More info](#)

"What governance for geographic information?"

In association with the Grand Est regional council, the AFIGEO (French Association for Geographic Information) and the CNIG (French National Council for Geographic Information) took the INSPIRE European Conference of 4 and 5 September as an opportunity to bring together French-speaking players of the profession in the context of a "Francophone conference on geographic information". This event was organised around workshops, round

tables, and conferences.

The MOT moderated a workshop entitled "Cross-border territories: how is geographic information used at different levels?" during which it was able to highlight its experience in matters of cross-border observation, and to present new tools, such as the GéoRhena geoportal or the Greater Region GIS, which tend to be developed in cross-border areas. [More info](#)

PRESS REVIEW

■ The EIB encourages a France-Italy electricity interconnection

Euractiv, 17 August

The European Investment Bank will allocate 130 million euros towards the financing of additional electrical cables in the Alps. The exchange capacity between France and Italy will increase by 40% with this project, also allowing an increase in competitiveness of the electricity market, in accordance with the general European strategy.

■ A “start-up” competition for the benefit of the cross-border territory

Nord Éclair, 9 September

Thanks to the involvement of the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis, the operation will benefit the whole of the cross-border area. The idea consists of inviting 20 start-ups to present innovative and digital projects in four fields: intelligent transport systems, the mobility of connected objects, the intelligent environment, and the management of big data.

■ Free public transport for student cross-border commuters

La Meuse, 3 August

Since Tuesday 1 August, Luxembourg students, and students living on the other side of the border while studying in Luxembourg, and who are “eligible for Luxembourg student financial aid”, can use Luxembourg public transport free of charge.

■ “Culture is a fundamental dimension of the French-German relationship”

Correspondances Lorraines, 13 September

Catherine Trautmann has never waned in her passion for culture and her confidence in the Franco-German relationship. [...] Cooperation between neighbours helps intensify cooperation at the European level [...]. The Rhine Foundation for Culture has since 2012 been supporting the Interreg project ‘Szenik’, which indexes all the cultural players in the border area.

■ “It’s never too early to become bilingual”

Dernières Nouvelles d’Alsace, 30 August

In order to highlight French-German cooperation, the mayor of Breisach spoke to give an overview of the initiatives that have been implemented in the Upper Rhine region. “It is not only friendships that hold us together, but real projects”, affirmed Oliver Rein, taking the example of the Grüne Straße, the Green Route that crosses nearly 250 km on either side of the Rhine.

■ “Voisins solidaires” meeting

La Tribune de Genève, 12 May

“In order to develop together the social, ecological and solidarity economy of our border region, Voisins solidaires [Neighbours in solidarity] offers the chance for associations in the south of the Upper Rhine region to meet each other”, explains Vincent Goulet, of the association ‘Maison de la citoyenneté mondiale’.

■ European Energy Transition Conference, late January in Geneva

Enviscope.com, 14 August

The 2018 edition of the European Energy Transition Conference will, for the organisers, mark a turning point in the organisation of the event. First held in 1999 in Dunkirk, this annual meeting [...] leaves France for the first time, relocating to the cross-border territory of Greater Geneva.

■ Launch in Ajaccio of the cross-border project Fr.I.net

Alta Frequenza, 31 July

Fr.I.net is a skills centre whose objective is to provide specialised services at high added value to local businesses in the tourism and sailing sectors.

■ Navarre joins the cross-border chamber of commerce

Sud Ouest, 13 September

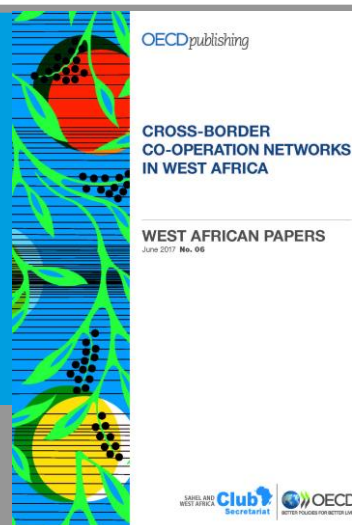
Bihartean, the body that brings together the Bayonne Basque Country Chamber of Commerce and Industry and its equivalent in Gipuzkoa, has finished its seventh year. It is now beginning a new cycle in an environment that has grown to include Navarre, which joined the Euroregion several months ago. The economy of this cross-border cooperation now weighs in at 3 million inhabitants and more than 1.3 million jobs.

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

Cross-border co-operation networks in West Africa report

Long seen as artificial barriers inherited from decolonisation, West African borders now lie at the heart of policies designed to encourage regional trade and combat political instability. This rediscovery of the peripheries of the nation state has fostered a proliferation of institutional initiatives that aim to cultivate co-operation between countries, regions and municipalities while ensuring the protection and promoting the interests and rights of the people living in border regions. Despite these regional initiatives, the effective functioning of cross-border co-operation still remains largely unknown across West Africa. The purpose of this paper is to fill that gap. [Download the report.](#)

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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