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# Espaces transfrontaliers

Cross-border areas



The letter of the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière

## For a Europe closer to the citizens



**Pierre Mauroy,**  
Former Prime  
Minister of France,  
Chairman of the MOT

In a Europe seeking its bearings and good governance in order to face the challenges generated by globalisation, it is useful to fall back on the fundamental meaning of European construction promoted by its founding fathers: to make Europe an integrated space of prosperity and peace for all its citizens. Europe is still too often perceived as an aggregation of nation-states which has difficulty implementing common policies capable of dealing with today's issues, and meanwhile interferes in a nitpicking way in people's daily lives. It is understandable why for some citizens, when asked, that is not the Europe they want!

Europe must therefore be brought closer to its citizens, and cross-border cooperation is an extraordinary opportunity for local authorities to accomplish this by setting up cross-border territorial projects and providing concrete responses to the needs of the population, facilitating the birth of genuine European citizenship. This is the underlying purpose of my commitment as chairman of the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT). Now the states and the European Union must be persuaded to give strong support to this movement in the future. That is what we shall be trying to do at our conference in Lille on 8 and 9 November 2007, to which I invite you today.

## The creation of EUROMOT

On 8 November 2007 in Lille, during the European conference "Cross-border territories: day-to-day Europe", the MOT (Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière), Eixo Atlantico<sup>1</sup> and the City Twins<sup>2</sup> network are due to sign a cooperation agreement marking their joint decision to establish a European network of cross-border local authorities: EUROMOT.



Tornio/Haparanda, twin towns belonging to the City Twins network, on the border between Finland and Sweden.

### A political message to bear

The cross-border territories, living areas which generate substantial flows every day, are fertile ground for convergence of national policies and apprenticeship in "European citizenship". They are also powerful vectors of integration of internal borders and pacification of the external borders of Europe. In order to encourage their development in an integrated territorial approach, it is important that the states and the European Union reinforce their policies concerning these territories.

### EUROMOT

Capitalisation and sharing of practices between local authorities are also fundamental for supporting the territories involved in cross-border cooperation. In this context, the objective of EUROMOT is to form a strong European network to bring the local authorities together and collaborate more effectively

with national and European institutions. Its planned activities include operational assistance for projects, studies, training and research on cross-border cooperation, networking and acting as a political and technical interface from the local level to the European level.

### Strategic alliance with AEBR

A strategic alliance will also be signed on 8 November 2007 between the MOT in the perspective of EUROMOT and the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR). This alliance aims to cover the different geographical scales (local and regional) in order to have more effective influence on national and Community orientations in cross-border cooperation. ■

1. Eixo Atlantico: network of border cities involving northern Portugal and Galicia in Spain.

2. City Twins: network of twin towns involving Germany, Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, Sweden, Finland and Russia (Interreg IIC project).

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## 2007-2013 European programming period

# New developments in cross-border cooperation

**At the end of September 2007 the European Commission adopted the first cross-border programmes for 2007-2013. They concern Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Italy, the United Kingdom and Ireland<sup>1</sup>. A total of some fifty cross-border programmes must be validated by the Commission before the new programming period is effectively launched.**

**Inventory of the advances and new developments for cross-border cooperation in the 2007-2013 European programming period.**



*The Frankfurt (Oder)/Slubice cross-border conurbation, on the border between Germany and Poland*

### Territorial cooperation, an objective in its own right

During the 2000-2006 period European territorial cooperation was part of the Interreg Community Initiative Programme (CIP). It is now covered by its own objective in the new 2007-2013 Cohesion Policy.

As its place grows at Community level, demonstrated by explicit references in the Community Strategic Guidelines (CSG), it is also defined at national level.

Each state has drawn up its National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF), in which national priorities for cohesion policy implementation are defined, in relation to the Lisbon and Gothenburg objectives. These NSRFs have been used as the basis for the development of Operational Programmes (OP) in each country. Some states have adopted the proposal of the regulation to include territorial cooperation in their NSRFs. This is the case for France, for example, and for Sweden, which has included cross-border cooperation as one of its national strategic priorities.

### Broader geographical coverage

The cross-border cooperation programmes cover a broader

geographical area than the Interreg III, particularly with regard to maritime cooperation: NUTS 3 (sub-regional) level districts on internal land borders<sup>2</sup>, but also on external borders and along maritime borders<sup>3</sup>, are now eligible.

This extension to include maritime cooperation is apparent for example in the France-England-Flanders-Netherlands (southern North Sea) and France-England (Channel) programmes, and in the NUTS 3 districts along the coast of the Baltic Sea, which are almost all incorporated into the new OPs concerned.

In another major extension, for the first time outermost regions are eligible for cross-border cooperation (Caribbean, Amazon and Indian Ocean programmes, for example).

### Restructured management and monitoring

One of the objectives of the new programming period is to make OP management easier and more effective. To accomplish this, changes are being made in many programmes. Some have merged, such as the Pamina and Upper Rhine Centre-South spaces.

A single managing authority is established for each operational pro-

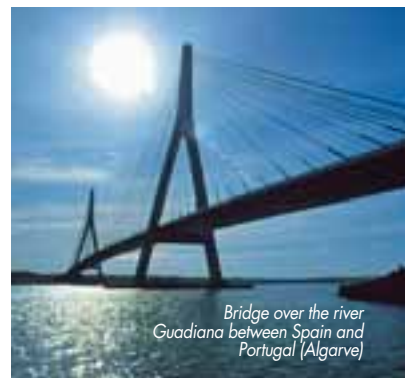
gramme. The paying authority becomes the certifying authority, and the Joint Technical Secretariat is mentioned explicitly in the regulations, underlining its importance in assistance to project holders.

These effectiveness measures also include the introduction of the principle of the "lead partner" of the funding, tasked with subsequently transferring it to the other partners. This principle is intended to facilitate joint financial management when several regions or states are involved.

The maximum funding level is set at 75%<sup>4</sup> for each OP and can be modulated according to programme priorities. The ERDF can also fund up to 10% of the contribution granted for actions located outside the European Union.

### A dedicated legal instrument: the EGTC

In a major advance for the implementation of Community legal structures for cooperation, in July 2006 the Commission published a



*Bridge over the river Guadiana between Spain and Portugal (Algarve)*

new regulation introducing the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)<sup>5</sup>.

The EGTC, which has legal personality, can bring together local authorities of different member states, including on borders where there is no international cross-border cooperation agreement. The EGTC can be used to cover cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation.

The competencies of the EGTC are defined in a mandatory cooperation convention. The law applicable for interpretation and application of ➤

### Territorial cooperation

She has retained the three-strand organisation: cross-border cooperation, transnational cooperation and interregional cooperation (networking and sharing of experience). The structural fund associated with this objective is still the ERDF.

### Note

For reasons of public perception, many Territorial Cooperation programmes include "Interreg IV" in their name, although this term has no official significance.

## Viewpoints



**Ignacio Sánchez Amor**  
**Vice-president of the Extremadura autonomous region (Spain)**

For 200 kilometres one of the oldest land borders in Europe separates the Extremadura region in Spain from the Alentejo and Centro regions in Portugal. After years of isolation and mutual indifference, over the last decade these regions have decided to commit themselves to cross-border cooperation. This has given excellent results, given concrete form by language teaching, knowledge of the culture of the neighbouring country, increases in relations and the volume of trade, and "normalisation" of relations which were previously almost nonexistent. The cross-border cooperation strategy for 2007-2013 will be focused on three fundamental priorities: topical, territorial and sectoral. The topical priority concerns the development of alternative energies and the new information and communication technologies. The second priority will have a territorial scope, focusing on two large-scale common spaces: the Tajo international park and the shores of the Alqueva dam reservoir on the river Guadiana. The third priority is based on a major collaboration, already initiated, in the areas of health, culture, education, civil defence and research. Cross-border cooperation has encouraged initiatives from civil society. The political determination to pursue this close collaboration with the Portuguese regions is already guaranteed, since it has already brought enormous benefits on both sides of the border.



**Martine Filleul**  
**Vice-president of the Nord-Pas de Calais regional council (France)**

The Nord-Pas de Calais region is heavily involved in European territorial cooperation. It is the only region of Europe to be managing authority of three programmes for the 2007-2013 period: the France-England-Flanders-Netherlands cross-border programme, the North-West Europe transnational programme and the Interreg IVC interregional programme. This "one-two-three" is a unique combination which confirms a major regional ambition in terms of European governance. More specifically with regard to the European cross-border cooperation policy, the Nord-Pas de Calais has been involved in Community programmes for more than 15 years. Through Interreg I and II to III, the implementation of projects has evolved gradually from parallel development to integrated cross-border development, with the central objective of strengthening economic and social cohesion.

As a consequence of its geographical situation, Nord-Pas de Calais has the specific characteristic of participating in two cross-border cooperation programmes: the land programme with Flanders and Wallonia, which is part of a development strategy intended to consolidate cooperation and establish a cross-border space of excellence; the France-England-Flanders-Netherlands maritime programme covering the southern North Sea, with four countries, three languages, a maritime border, a new institutional partnership to build, bilateral and multilateral projects to be defined and close cooperation with the France-England programme covering the Channel, to be ensured through a common priority recommended by the European Commission. Our region is going to face many challenges!



**Stephan Brauckmann**  
**Director of the Saxony/Lower Silesia and Saxony/Czech Republic Interreg IIIA managing authority, Ministry of the Economy and Employment of Saxony (Germany)**

On the Saxon-Polish territory the river Neisse forms a natural border. In the Saxon-Czech area the border is marked by the Erz mountains. Accessibility is therefore an essential cooperation issue. The accession of the Czech Republic and Poland to the European Union in 2004 enabled these territories to benefit from Interreg funds. Substantial adaptation work was thus undertaken during the programming period. Startup difficulties were overcome in a very constructive reciprocal learning process. For 2007-2013 the Commission has stipulated new requirements: the principle of "lead partner", the need for the projects to satisfy at least two of the four criteria "joint development", "joint implementation", "joint staffing" and "joint financing", etc. To meet these requirements, the launching of new programmes necessitated repeating the startup phase. In order to prepare a joint development strategy, a socioeconomic analysis of the territories was carried out. The results showed that, in order for this border area to develop, work was needed to eliminate the existing structural and economic disparities and improve living conditions. They also showed that identification by the population with the cross-border space played a very important role in such development. In this context, the selected projects will target not only "soft" activities intended to improve the climate of cooperation but also "infrastructural" measures.

➤ the convention is that of the member state where the EGTC has its registered office.

Conceived above all as an instrument of territorial governance, the EGTC is intended to bring together local authorities, public bodies and, in

a particularly important innovation for cross-border cooperation, the member states.

Provision is also made to be able to transfer the managing authority functions of operational programmes to an EGTC. ■

1. Italy-Austria, Bavaria-Austria, Meuse-Rhine Euroregion and Ireland-Wales programmes.
2. Substantial increase on internal borders due to the enlargement of the European Union to 27.
3. Maximum separation 150 kilometres.
4. Up to 85% for the states with the lowest GDPs.
5. Transposition of the EGTC regulation is still proceeding in most member states, despite an initial deadline of 1 August 2007.

# "The MOT is 10 years old!"



**Jacques Houbart,  
Director-general of  
the MOT**

It is on the basis of the Longwy PED (Pôle Européen de Développement – European development hub) experiment, a pilot programme for industrial rehabilitation of the Lorraine-Luxemburg-Wallonia cross-border steelmaking basin described by Jacques Delors as the "laboratory of Europe", that the idea of the MOT gradually took root and became a reality.

- This experiment, initiated in 1985 by France, Belgium, Luxembourg and the European Communities, was assimilated into general practice from 1989 with the allocation of structural funds to Objective 2 areas for support of declining industrial areas and also to areas eligible for the Interreg I Community initiative for development of cross-border cooperation.

- Early in 1996, as I was completing my work on the PED, Michel Cadot, on behalf of the DATAR and the Caisse des dépôts et consignations (CDC), asked me to conduct a feasibility study for the establishment of a national cross-border operational assistance unit.

- The MOT was established officially by the French government on 10 April 1997 to "provide operational aid to project holders and, more generally, to cross-border territories." It initially took the form of an inter-

ministerial steering committee, which was joined by representatives of the CDC and of five candidate pilot sites for experimentation (Lille Metropolitan Area, Strasbourg - Kehl, Saint-Louis – Basle - Mulhouse, Menton – Ventimiglia, Bayonne – San Sebastian conurbation).

- On 16 January 1998, on the initiative of the French state, the MOT set up its own structure during the first European conference that it organised in Strasbourg, on the topic "Cross-border projects in the construction of Europe". The constituent assembly adopted the statutes of an association for networking project sponsors, and elected its first policy committee, with Roland Ries<sup>1</sup> as chairman and Alain Lamassoure as vice-chairman.

- Since then the MOT has developed, with the gradual assembling of a multidisciplinary and multicultural technical team capable of meeting the growing needs of the members,

with the arrival in 2002 as chairman of Pierre Mauroy, chairman of the Lille Urban Community, and with unfailing support, among others, from François Philizot, deputy head of the DATAR, from the present head of the DIACT Pierre Mirabaud and from the Caisse des dépôts et consignations.

- From the beginning the MOT set out its European ambition, limited initially, for reasons of financial availability and operational effectiveness, to the border partners of the nine countries which are France's neighbours. Today, drawing strength from its network of 46 members, it is legitimately preparing to expand to the European scale in order to share its practices and know-how with other networks and defend the cause of cross-border cooperation in Europe. So, for the next 10 years, good luck to EUROMOT!

<sup>1</sup> At the time chairman of the Strasbourg Urban Community.



"Cross-border projects in the construction of Europe", conference in Strasbourg, 15 and 16 January 1998.

## Agenda

### Third Cross-Border Discussions

Organised within the framework of the Interform project, the third Cross-Border Discussions will be held on 13 and 14 December 2007 in the Basque Eurocity (San Sebastian-Bayonne) on the topic "Culture and citizenship in cross-border cooperation".

**Information and registration at [www.interform-eu.org](http://www.interform-eu.org).**



## Cross-border maps

The MOT is republishing its "Atlas of cross-border cooperation", which now includes nearly 100 maps on cross-border geography, the territories, the frameworks and instruments and the major topics of cooperation. Further information [www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu](http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu).

