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# Espaces transfrontaliers

Cross-border areas



The letter of the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière

## Cross-border cooperation in the territorial cooperation objective



**Danuta Hübner**  
European commissioner for regional policy

*In the new 2007-2013 programming period, territorial cooperation becomes the third objective of the community cohesion policy, with a budget of 7.8 billion euros, three quarters of which will directly concern cross-border cooperation on the internal and external borders of the European Union. European integration involves the territories, with the cross-border areas such as the cross-border conurbations in the front line. The cooperation that develops in such areas must enable the emergence of genuinely innovative and structuring projects, working towards the objectives defined by the Lisbon and Gothenburg strategies. I support with conviction bodies such as the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière which guide cross-border territories in their cooperation. I encourage key players in these territories to mobilise within the framework of the new European programming period to give their territorial cooperation projects concrete form aligned with the priorities defined by the Council of the European Union. The effective launch of the new mechanisms is scheduled to take place at the beginning of 2007. Cross-border cooperation players must therefore start cooperating now with the managing authorities in order to prepare the cooperation programmes for the 2007-2013 period, so as to provide optimum conditions for the integration of cross-border territories that I am so determined to see happen.*

## Interform project The first "Entretiens du transfrontalier"\*



**As part of the Interform project, a European network for training and research into cross-border practices funded by the European Interact programme, the first "Entretiens du transfrontalier" was organised in Nice in December 2005 on the topic of cross-border economic performance.**

Hosted by the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (Interform project lead partner), the University of Nice Sophia Antipolis, the University of Genoa and the International Institute for Communication in Genoa, this conference took place on 2 and 3 December 2005 at the chateau of Valrose, University of Nice Sophia Antipolis, on the issue of "How to improve the economic performance of border territories?".

At the closure of a call for communications issued in August 2005, 14 speakers were selected to present their work. Field practitioners and researchers were able to compare their points of view on subjects such as the transition from a logic of competition to a logic of cooperation, the question of the effectiveness of Interreg programmes for implementing economic development projects, and the linkage of economic development projects with territorial projects. The accounts and the study presentations provided a wealth of material rich and gave rise to extensive discussions. The origins of the participants were very diverse, both geographically (Finland, Belgium,

Spain, Czech Republic, etc.) and professionally (chambers of commerce, universities, local authorities, training bodies, associations, etc.). The proceedings of this seminar are available on the MOT site [www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu](http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu).

The next "Entretiens du transfrontalier" conference will take



Chateau of Valrose.

place on 30 November and 1 December 2006 on the French-German border, in liaison with the Kehl / Strasbourg Euro-Institute.

Finally, note that the Interform project Internet site, now under construction, will soon be available at the address [www.interform-eu.org](http://www.interform-eu.org).

\* Cross-border forum.

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## Preparation of the new 2007-2013 European programming period

### A challenge for cross-border territories

**With the agreement on the 2007-2013 European financial framework, the Brussels European summit in December 2005 opened the way for the preparation of the new European programming period. "European territorial cooperation" is presented one of the three objectives of the new European cohesion policy.**

#### Cross-border aspects in the new programming period

In July 2004 the European Commission adopted its legislative proposals for the 2007-2013 cohesion policy reform. They include general regulations on the three funding sources for structural actions (ERDF, ESF and cohesion fund), three specific regulations for each of these funds and a final regulation proposing the establishment of a new instrument, the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). This new cooperation structure has a legal personality, and will bring together all the competent partners on both sides of borders.



The European cohesion policy is reorganized into three principal objectives: "Convergence", "Regional competitiveness and employment" and "European territorial cooperation". European territorial cooperation, which replaces Interreg, thus becomes an objective in its own right (objective 3). It covers cross-border cooperation, transnational cooperation and inter-change networks.

The Community Strategic Guidelines (CSG) set out the priorities for the new programming period. Published by the Commission in an initial version in July 2005, they are aligned with the Lisbon strategy for growth and employment. They promote European territorial cohesion as a cross-functional priority.

The agreement on 2007-2013 financial perspectives negotiated by the European Council on 15 and 16 December 2005 has been followed by an interinstitutional agreement reached in April 2006, which has yet to be formally adopted. According to the terms of this agreement, 7.75 billion euros are budgeted for objective 3 (representing 2.5% of the overall cohesion policy budget), with 74% for the cross-border strand, 21% for the transnational strand and 5% for the networks.

To ensure more effective management, the number of programmes concerning cross-border cooperation should be reduced; some of them, covering smaller areas, will merge.

#### Linkage of national and European community levels

The regulations and the CSG enable the national authorities to prepare their National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF). The aim of this document is to define the strategic cohesion policy implementation priorities specific to each state and the linkage between the policy and the national spatial planning policy. Now being finalized at national level, the NSRFs will be submitted to the Commission. The French government has included territorial cooperation in its NSRF, as suggested by the draft regulation, thus showing that territorial cooperation is an integral part of national policy.

The NSRFs will be used as a basis for the preparation of the Operational Programmes (OP). The OPs, currently in preparation, set out the intervention strategy for each cooperation territory. Their contents include a territorial diagnosis, priorities and a simplified funding plan.

**The local players must start investing now in this preparation of operational programmes by communicating their needs and their projects to the state and regional authorities responsible for drafting the programmes.**

### The amounts allocated to cross-border cooperation

For the European Union as a whole, the amounts allocated to cross-border cooperation for the 2007-2013 period increase by more than 1.6 billion euros, from 3.998 to 5.576 billion euros. For France this growth means a doubling of the funds made available to cross-border project leaders.

The Operational Programme approval timetable is linked to the final adoption of the European budget, the regulations and the CSGs, and to the submission of the NSRFs to the Commission. The OPs will then be sent to the Commission for negotiation. The future programmes will be adopted and implemented during the course of 2007.

#### The positioning of the MOT and its network

In this key period for cross-border cooperation, it is essential to take into account the needs in the field, relayed by the local players. The Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière, with a network of 40 members including local authorities and their groupings, cross-border entities, major companies and federations, is closely involved in the preparation of the new European instruments. For example, it has worked to incorporate changes concerning cross-border cooperation into the French NSRF and is contributing to the discussion on the new national and community technical assistance mechanisms. The MOT is working alongside the local authorities to assist them in drawing up their territorial strategies, preparing their cross-border projects and establishing legal umbrella structures such as the new EGTC. ■

## Viewpoints



**Pierre MIRABAUD**  
Interministerial  
delegate for  
territorial  
planning and  
competitiveness

### (DIACT)

"The objective of territorial cooperation, which replaces the present European community Interreg initiative, is now at the core of European cohesion policy for the 2007-2013 period. The French government is confirming this priority by including territorial cooperation in the diagnosis and the priorities of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF). Community funding of the cross-border strand is going to increase, particularly for France, benefiting cross-border strategies which the DIACT would like to be more ambitious. As a consequence of the extension of the maritime strand, the cross-border strand now concerns 15 regions of mainland France and the 4 French overseas departments. The coordination of European and national programming (state-region project contracts and territorial agreements) will have to allow the highest level of synergy between the two processes. The regional and territorial diagnoses and strategies (urban cooperation, conurbations, districts, competitiveness clusters, rural centres of excellence, etc.) will thus have to include the cross-border dimension whenever possible. Structuring projects or the methods to complete them successfully should be identified from the programme

drafting stage, which necessitates greater involvement of the state and the regions alongside the other local authorities. Better linkage with transnational cooperation strategies must be sought.

In this new programming and contractualisation phase, the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière has the role of providing project assistance at local and regional levels and as an active partner at European level in network programmes such as Interact, Urbact and Espon in the cross-border field. Finally, it remains an indispensable investigatory tool on cross-border issues for the ministries concerned by such questions."



**Philippe SUINEN**  
Director General  
Directorate-  
General  
for External  
Relations,  
Walloon Region

"Territorial cooperation is obviously one of the priorities of the Walloon Region for the 2007-2013 programming period. This approach is applied for all the programmes, with a particular emphasis on the territories where the Walloon Region exercises special prerogatives (managing authority). We have attempted to identify cross-functional concerns, i.e. those common to the various borders of the Walloon Region, while retaining specific features for each of them. A study conducted by an outside consultant provides a synthesis of the results of this approach. Development priorities are included both in the NSRF and in the draft Operational Programmes. The new programming period will

probably be more closely aligned with the European Commission guidelines, confirmed by the various partner border regions, which might be defined as follows: create a lasting culture of cross-border cooperation, favouring growth and employment and generating added value for the citizens, while ensuring the implementation of the local features specific to the cross-border programmes. A dual approach must be planned in order to attain this objective: define a limited number of objectives and concentrate the financial resources on structuring development priorities."



**Christian DUPESSEY**  
Vice-President of  
the Community of  
municipalities of  
the Annemasse  
conurbation,

### Deputy Mayor of Annemasse

"The new European programming period (2007-2013) which is now being prepared constitutes a real challenge for our France-Vaud-Geneva cross-border conurbation project. It seems to me essential that, starting now, these new European programmes be synergised with the "project contracts" proposed last March by the French government. Our France-Vaud-Geneva territory has been developing active cross-border cooperation for many years, backed by a strong political determination. Many cross-border projects are implemented within the conurbation project and its urban cooperation strand. They are based on practical objectives, developed by standing working groups, which concern the daily life of the population of the entire region. This forms a sound foundation that must be taken into account in full in the new programmes. There is much talk of sustainable development and competitiveness. I would like to finish by emphasizing the essential elements of our cross-border conurbation project: the interconnection of transport systems, the development of cultural relations, the location of international organizations (NGOs) on French territory, supplementing Geneva, and environmental protection (around Lake Geneva, for example) respond to these challenges and are at the heart of our concerns. We must make the earliest possible use of the new instruments made available to us in order to progress in this direction."

## Harmonisation of national and European strategies: the French example

The European strategy for 2010, set out by the heads of state and government in Lisbon in March 2000, aims to make Europe "the most competitive and most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world". The Gothenburg Council meeting in June 2001 extended this strategy to the protection of the environment and to sustainable development. The French government has stated its determination to align its spatial planning policy with these objectives. This resulted in the decision made at

the CIACT (interministerial committee on territorial planning and competitiveness) meeting on 6 March 2006 to coordinate the new 2007-2013 state-region project contracts (replacing the previous generation of state-region planning contracts) and the future generation of European programmes around these strategies and the same timetable. This approach is accompanied by a priority given to "structuring investment projects" and "large-scale" projects.

## Launch of the Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict

Following the joint declaration on 22 January 2003 by the French President Jacques Chirac and the German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder supporting the establishment of a Strasbourg-Kehl Eurodistrict, in October 2005 the French and German parties<sup>1</sup> signed a framework agreement defining the political guidelines of the Eurodistrict, the decision-making structures set up and the priority topics. This text refers to the 2004 Strasbourg-Ortenau white paper and affirms the necessity of seeking complementarity with the "metropolitan cooperation"<sup>2</sup>.



Over and above its symbolic and institutional dimension, the Eurodistrict is intended to allow the implementation of practical projects between the French and German authorities, with three principal objectives: to become a pilot territory within the European Union for in-depth integration in border regions; to contribute to the sustainable development of the region and enhance its European reach; and finally, to improve the daily life of its citizens.

Many areas of action have been defined, some of which, considered priorities, may be the subject of experimentation: bilingualism, culture, professional training, connection between the TGV and ICE high-speed railway lines, public health, prevention of natural risks, and public safety.

Since the signature of the agreement, the Eurodistrict Council, a decision-making body bringing together the political representatives of the partner authorities, has held two meetings,

in December 2005 and February 2006. In addition to defining a working method, these two sessions have defined the first practical projects, such as the harmonization of the health systems to facilitate patient management on both sides of the Rhine, and the establishment of joint communication in the context of the 2006 Tour de France (which will pass through Ortenau), with the creation of a joint logo and web site. Other subjects raised included the need for a cross-border approach to the environment, the harmonization of telephone rates on either side of the border and the connections between the French TGV Est and German ICE high-speed railway lines. ■

<sup>1</sup> Strasbourg urban community, Ortenaukreis, towns of Offenbourg, Lahr, Kehl, Achem and Oberkirch.

<sup>2</sup> Call for metropolitan cooperation issued by the DIACT (Interministerial delegation for territorial planning and competitiveness, formerly the DATAR) in 2004, which accepted the application by the Strasbourg urban community and Ortenau.

## Land and property issues in the Geneva and Basle cross-border conurbations

Between November 2005 and May 2006 the MOT conducted a study on land and property issues in two cross-border conurbations experiencing a high demand for land: the France-Vaud-Geneva conurbation and the Basle trilingual conurbation.

This study, commissioned by the ministry of infrastructure\*, compared the parts of the territories on either side of the border and provided information about their functioning, the players and the specific problems related to land and housing for each conurbation. Another objective was to compare, on each side of the border, how these elements are taken into account in local planning policies and in the cross-border territory project, and the differences in the instruments used to control the demand for land. Proposals

were formulated in terms of land policy and instruments.

The study revealed relatively dissimilar situations. The France-Vaud-Geneva conurbation, experiencing very high population and economic growth and with land available only in the French part, is subject to very high demand for land and property. This gives the French part the status of a territory under pressure, with few equivalents on other borders. Both French and Genevan authorities of this territory are now trying to consider cross-border cooperation on land banking and housing product.



In the Basle trilingual conurbation the demand for land and property is much lower. Part of the demand is generated by the presence of many border workers, the majority of them French, and leads to repercussions on the urban development trends to be controlled on the Alsace side. ■

\* Directorate-general for urban planning, housing and construction.

### www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu passes the 100,000-visitor mark!

After the posting of the English, German, Spanish and Italian versions last autumn and the change to a new ".eu" extension, the site [www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu](http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu) passed the 100,000-visitor mark in April 2006, with an average

of 443 visits per day since the beginning of the year. This resource site on cross-border cooperation has been published by the MOT since June 2002.

