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# Espaces transfrontaliers

Cross-border areas



The letter of the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière

## Giving the voices of local stakeholders a better hearing!



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and EUROMOT  
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Minister of State,  
MP and Mayor  
of Dunkerque

I am particularly honoured to have succeeded Pierre Mauroy as President of the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière, since 29 May 2008. My first objective will be to maintain the very strong link between our association and the local protagonists in the cross-border territories, while guiding its Europe outreach.

Since my presidency of the Committee of the Regions, I am convinced that it is essential to give the voices of local stakeholders a better hearing, to make their needs and their contribution to the European project better known to the European institutions. The launching of EUROMOT, a European network of cross-border local authorities, is a move in this direction.

Following my meeting with Danuta Hübner, European Commissioner for Regional Policy, on 31 October 2008, EUROMOT has established closer contacts with the DG Regio and is now working on a joint action programme. A lot is at stake for the cross-border territories, since it aims at better consideration of the local level in the cohesion policy after the 2007-2013 period, in order to bring Europe closer to its citizens.

## About local governance

**“EGTC” URBACT project – Expertising Governance for Transfrontier Conurbations.**

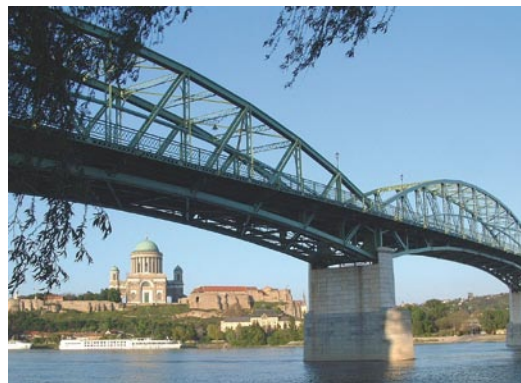
The “EGTC” project, launched in Strasbourg on 19 November 2008, involves the MOT as lead partner and six cross-border conurbations in Europe\*. Dedicated to networking these conurbations on the topic of governance, it meets a growing demand of border cities to manage the border effects to which they are subjected and draw benefit from the potential that they offer.

To accomplish this, cross-border conurbations must develop cross-border strategies and projects that have high added value for the inhabitants and the protagonists of the territory. Political backing for these approaches and support from the citizens are fundamental in order to ensure the continuity of these actions. Against this background, the project partners intend to answer this question: how can dialogue and concerted action on both sides of the border be ensured in order to encourage cross-border initiatives enabling better integration of the cross-border conurbation?

For 2009, the work will be focused on two priorities: the management of the territory and the relations between the cross-border governance structure and the broader community of stakeholders. Each of these priorities will be the subject of a seminar: the first in Chaves, Portugal, 12 March 2009 and the second in November 2009

in Lille (cf. <http://urbact.eu/egtc>).

In parallel, the partners will work on the difficulties and the transferable experiences in order to draw up a “local action plan” for each conurbation, which is intended to be implemented after



View of Esztergom (Hungary) and of the Maria Valeria bridge from Štúrovo (Slovakia).

the end of the project. The MOT has also initiated a dialogue with the European, national and regional authorities concerned, within the framework of a “European URBACT support group”. Its objective is to communicate good practices and the needs of the cross-border conurbations at these levels. ■



**PROJECT PART-FINANCED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION**

\* Eurometropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai (France/Belgium), Frankfurt (Oder)/Slubice (Germany/Poland), Eurocidade Chaves-Verim (Portugal/Spain), Ister-Granum EGTC (Hungary/Slovakia), Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau (France/Germany) and the Trinational Eurodistrict Basel (Switzerland/Germany/France).

### Contents

<b>Special report:</b> After six months of French Presidency of the European Union: What balance sheet for cross-border cooperation? .....	<b>p. 2-3</b>
<b>News:</b> The MOT guides the establishment of the first EGTCs – The MOT network expands – Publication of an operational and financial guide .....	<b>p. 4</b>

After six months of French Presidency of the European Union:

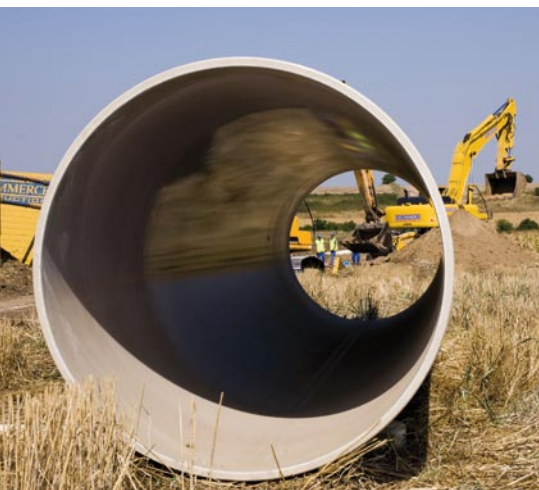
## What balance sheet for cross-border cooperation?



**T**he debate on the future of the cohesion policy, relaunched in October 2008 with the adoption by the European Commission of the green paper on territorial cohesion, was also supported by France during its six months of European Presidency. Taking the form of an informal political approach, this work, supported by the successive presidencies of the European Union, is playing a major role of political impetus for the post-2013 period. It is looking forward to the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty<sup>1</sup> and is based on the work of the Territorial Agenda<sup>2</sup> and of the Leipzig Charter<sup>3</sup> on “sustainable European cities”.

Of the five major objectives of the French Presidency regarding territorial policy, two directly concern cross-border cooperation: “cohesion policy and spatial planning” and “territorial governance and local authorities”. Many events attended by the persons responsible for spatial planning in the twenty-seven Member States were organized during the six months of French Presidency. EUROMOT<sup>4</sup> participated actively in all of these meetings with the aim of ensuring that the specific nature of the cross-border situation was better taken into account.

*Construction of an aqueduct at Ruse, Bulgaria, on the border with Rumania (project funded as part of the Interreg programme).*



**Sofia, 3 and 4 July 2008**

### “The challenge of the new borders”

First event of the French Presidency, the “regional meeting of cross-border cooperation, sustainable development, territories and decentralized cooperation in the Balkans” was held in Sofia in July 2008. The objective was to hold discussions between local authorities from France and from south-eastern Europe in order to encourage the emergence of projects of cooperation between them. Cross-border cooperation was the topic of a workshop run by EUROMOT. The presentation of a tool case was an opportunity for an overview of the possible ways of cooperation and the emergence of local cross-border projects.

**Biarritz, 14-16 September 2008**

### “Involvement of the local level”

The major role played by local authorities in European territorial development and the necessity for the States to involve them to a greater extent have formed another issue of the French Presidency. At the “5<sup>th</sup> seminar on local governance” in Biarritz in September 2008 devoted to “best practices for involving of local authorities in decision-making processes and the implementation of Community law”, Alain Marleix, French Secretary of State for the Interior and Territorial Communities, expressed how pleased he was about the implementation of the European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) tool, which can “involve all scales, from local to national levels, in a single structure in order to lead cross-border cooperation projects”. In this context he hailed “the action of the MOT in favour of cross-border projects and the EUROMOT project in which great ambitions can be placed”.

**Paris, 13 and 14 October 2008**

### “Health at the service of patients”

Access to healthcare must be a local service and it takes on particular importance in cross-border territories. This topic is of current interest

with the adoption in July 2008 by the Commission of a draft Directive on cross-border healthcare. This aims to facilitate the procedures for citizens who receive healthcare in another country. Under the French Presidency, a conference on “European health at the service of patients” was organized in October 2008. One of the round tables, introduced by Alain Lamassoure, MEP and EUROMOT Secretary, was devoted to the management of, and the law applicable to, patients in the case of mobility in cross-border territories. Concluding the discussions, Jacques Houbart, Executive Manager of EUROMOT, was able to reaffirm one of its principal recommendations<sup>5</sup> on the issue: develop the “cross-border health community” concept, which incorporates the area of health in the territorial project by involving all the protagonists and thus optimizing healthcare provision with regard to the needs of border populations.

**Paris, 30 and 31 October 2008**

### “Encouraging innovative governance”

A major forum on territorial cohesion and the future of the cohesion policy after 2013 was organized in Paris on 30 and 31 October 2008. One of the workshops, on “integrated territorial development and governance”, devoted much of its attention to cross-border local governance issues. The objective was to put forward practical proposals to help territories implement local governance enabling them to develop a comprehensive, consistent and “cross-sector” territorial strategy.

The discussions emphasized the need for “scales of governance that shake up the customary frameworks of relations between states, between regions, between cities and between socioeconomic protagonists”. The “pragmatism” with which projects across borders are initiated and the emergence of “multi-protagonist” and “multi-level” structures was also highlighted, as well as the necessity of providing more support for such “bottom-up” approaches “which have a progressive impact on institutional changes”.





*"The three countries footbridge" between the towns of Hüningue (France) and Weil-am-Rhein (Germany) in the Trinational Eurodistrict Basel.*

### Meeting between Michel Delebarre and Danuta Hübner

Following the publication of the "Manifesto for cross-border cooperation in Europe", MOT President Michel Delebarre, on behalf of EUROMOT, met Danuta Hübner, European Commissioner for Regional Policy, at the conference on territorial cohesion on 31 October 2008 in Paris. The objective of this meeting was to discuss a future cooperation between EUROMOT and the European Commission on all the issues relating to local cross-border cooperation and on the ways to encourage local governance and consideration of the cross-border situation at the local level in European territorial cooperation processes.

➤ More generally, at European policy level, a substantial gap was underlined. It concerns "the inadequacy or even the absence of consideration of the territorial approach or impact in sector policies".

**Marseille, 24-26 November 2008 and Montpellier, 2 and 3 December 2008**  
**"Sustainability and solidarity" in our cities**

For three days in Marseille the European Ministers for Housing, Urban Development and Spatial Planning met to discuss "sustainability and solidarity in our cities". This informal meeting, followed by the Forum of the cities in Montpellier, defined practical procedures for implementing the Leipzig Charter for integrated urban development. On

26 November the Ministers adopted the "Marseilles Declaration" on urban development, which defines a clear working method at the service of the "Territorial Agenda". The objective of this work is to take better account of the specific issues related to the working of cities. Moving in the same direction, since September 2008 the MOT has led the URBACT II "EGTC" project intended to promote innovative governance tools for transfrontier conurbations (article on page 1).

The Czech Republic took over the Presidency of the European Union on 1 January 2009 and the discussion on the green paper is continuing as the year gets under way, with the consultation organized by the European Union running until February. ■

1. The Lisbon Treaty includes provisions to add "territorial cohesion" as a priority objective of the European Union.
2. The Territorial Agenda has defined a reference policy framework for the territorial questions of the European Union; its action programme was finalized in the Azores in November 2007.
3. This was agreed in May 2007 between the European Ministers responsible for urban development.
4. European network of cross-border local authorities comprising the MOT, Eixo Atlántico and City Twins. Further information at [www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu](http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu).
5. Refer to the health workshop of the "Manifesto for cross-border cooperation in Europe".

## The green paper on territorial cohesion and the contribution of EUROMOT

The consultation launched by the European Commission between October 2008 and February 2009 on the green paper on territorial cohesion has also opened the debate on the future of the cohesion policy in Europe. This document places the question of territories and their diversity at the centre of the discussion: how can the cohesion policy contribute to boosting each territory, with its specific features, its potential and its wishes? EUROMOT has contributed to this consultation in order to improve the consideration of the needs and the specific nature of cross-border territories, which are effectively "laboratories" for the convergence of national and European policies and legislations. The EUROMOT contribution is

based on the "Manifesto for cross-border cooperation in Europe" which it published in April 2008, containing recommendations on twelve practical cooperation topics\*. For example, to encourage the development of a cross-border policy meeting the needs of the inhabitants of border territories, EUROMOT recommends encouraging the development of integrated cross-border territorial projects, especially by:

- aid for setting up local "multi-level" co-decision-making bodies,
- introduction of a "cross-border integration premium" in European programmes, taking the form of a full grant and intended to facilitate the funding of projects,
- recognition at European and national levels of a right to experimentation in order to eliminate the

obstacles to local cooperation that still arise.



\* For further information and to download the Manifesto (fr, en, de): [www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu](http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu)

## The MOT guides the establishment of the first EGTCs

Since its introduction in 2006, the new Community instrument, the EGTC (European grouping of territorial cooperation), has given new impetus to cross-border territory projects. Intended to facilitate territorial cooperation in Europe, it simplifies the process of cooperation and provides a common framework for the protagonists located either side of a border.

The MOT and EUROMOT are at the heart of this development. First, the MOT has provided its expertise on the Community regulation to the French Government since its adoption procedure in 2004.

At European level, as soon as the EGTC was introduced in July 2006, the MOT organized a broad debate

to promote the opportunities offered by the new instrument. This resulted in a first seminar in Metz in November 2006, followed by the organization of a workshop on the "legal instruments of cooperation" at the Lille European conference\* in November 2007.

Since 2008 the MOT has been participating in the Committee of the Regions EGTC expert group and is lead partner of the URBACT "EGTC" project on the instruments of governance of cross-border conurbations (article on page 1). Also in 2008 the MOT published an issue of the MOT Guides on the EGTC, providing a practical guide for local stakeholders.

### Guidance for the first EGTC projects

The MOT contributes its operational expertise to public authorities and protagonists who want to establish an EGTC. For example, since 2006 it has been involved in helping to define the organization of the governance of the Eurometropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai and the Catalan cross-border space. It has also worked on the drafting of the statutes of the "Flandre occidentale Dunkerque Côte d'Opale", the Eurodistrict SaarMoselle and the Euroregion Alpes-Méditerranée EGTCs.

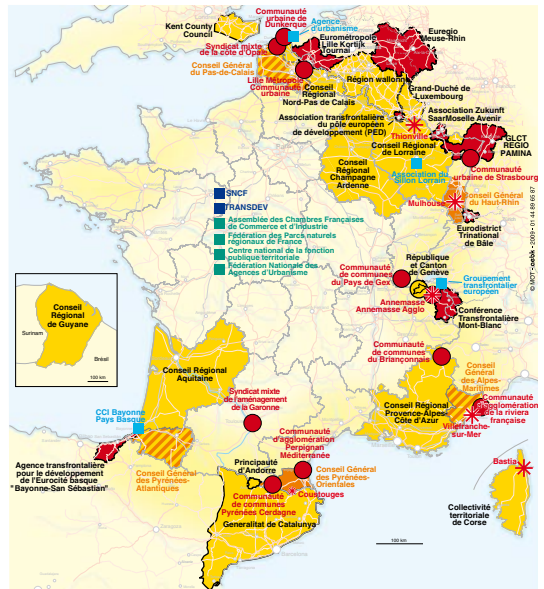
\* The conference on "Cross-border territories: day-to-day Europe" was attended by more than 800 persons from 36 countries in Europe. Further information at [www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu](http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu)

## The MOT network expands

In 2008 a number of new members joined the MOT network: the Regio Pamina LGTC (FR/DE); the Annemasse "Groupement européen transfrontalier" (GTE), which covers nearly 50,000 border workers (FR/CH); the Grand-duchy of Luxembourg (FR/LU/DE/BE); the Euregio Meuse-Rhin (BE/NL/DE); the Champagne-Ardenne Regional Council (FR/BE); the Bayonne-Basque Country Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FR/ES); and the FNAU (National Federation of Town Planning Agencies, FR).

Since the beginning of 2009, four more organizations have joined the network: Villefranche-sur-Mer (FR/IT/MN), Thionville (FR/LU), the Pyrenees-Cerdagne Community of Municipalities (FR/ES/AN) and the "Sillon Lorrain" Association (FR/LU/DE).

The MOT network now has 53 members.



## Publication of an operational and financial guide

In 2008 the Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations (CDC) commissioned from the MOT the production of a "Practical operational and financial guide for leaders of cross-border projects on the French borders". This 160-page handbook is

intended for those involved in cross-border cooperation, with the aim of facilitating the operation and the management of their projects through cross-border cooperation agreements or joint structures. It covers questions not discussed else-

where, such as the application of public-sector contracting rules in the cross-border situation, payment of VAT and public-private partnerships. This guide is available through the networks of the CDC and of the MOT.

### Upcoming network events \*

- Conference on "Local cooperation in the future European territorial cohesion policy" 10 June 2009, Catalan cross-border space
- MOT General Assembly 11 June 2009, Catalan cross-border space
- Seminar on "Territorial cohesion and competitiveness in cross-border territories" Autumn 2009, Paris

Further information at [www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu](http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu)

\* For URBACT "EGTC" events, see page 1.

