

# Press release

Launching of the European project:  
"The integrated economic development of  
cross-border territories"

22 April 2014



To download the launching  
conference's documents:

[In English](#)

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Concerning the borders, the mobility of people is often raised: more than 360,000 workers cross a French border every day to work in a neighbouring country. But movement of goods and cooperation between companies located either side of borders are also major factors, as yet inadequately examined, in increasing the potential for development of cross-border territories.

To initiate discussion on this topic of the economic development of cross-border territories and put forward practical proposals, the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière organised a European conference which took place on 15 April 2014 in Paris, attended by more than 150 persons. **It was the occasion to launch an eighteen-month project with the aim of constructing territorial diagnostics and supporting the stimulation of partnerships and economic development projects on French borders.** This project is funded as part of the national technical assistance programme Europ'Act.

#### A European conference to place the issues in their context

The conference was an opportunity to take **an overall view of the main issues, obstacles and needs encountered by those involved in cross-border territory actions.** Several topics were raised by the speakers and participants, including employment, training, clusters, innovation, internationalisation of SMEs, public-sector contracts, state aids, and institutional and economic governance, from a cross-border perspective.

The picture that emerged from the discussions was mixed: asymmetry of framework conditions either side of some borders, competition between businesses and territories, but also substantial potential for cooperation, often under-exploited as a consequence of the compartmentalisation of those involved in actions. Florian Némethi, director of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Neuchâtel (Switzerland), spoke of "a variable-geometry relationship, a glass half-empty and half-full", and Olivier Ceccotti, cross-border projects manager at the Greater Lille Chamber of Commerce and Industry, of "a real difficulty bringing the actors together around the table", a situation which Bernard Soulage, Rhône-Alpes region vice-president with responsibility for Europe and international relations, summarised as "**a problem of governance of cross-border cooperation**".

Referring to the new "thematic concentration"<sup>1</sup> of the European programmes for the 2014-2020 period, Bernard Soulage also stressed that **the "territorial" criteria must not be forgotten** in the preparation of strategies, citing the example of the Rhône-Alpes Region, straddling two very different border areas: the France-Vaud-Geneva area with a high level of urban integration, and the mountainous French-Italian area, consequently offering very different cross-border economic development opportunities (agricultural economy, mountain tourism, etc.). He also emphasised "the need to simplify the

<sup>1</sup> For 2014-2020, at least 80% of the ERDF resources allocated to each cross-border cooperation programme have to be concentrated on no more than four of the eleven thematic objectives of the European funds.



Project co-funded by the European Union. Europe is committed in France with the European Regional Development Fund.

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mechanism", referring to the European funding (ERDF, etc.) which provides essential support for local initiatives.

## A project to facilitate the economic development of cross-border territories

The project "Instruments for the facilitation of the cross-border territories integrated economic development" led by the MOT is a launch project of the European Union cohesion policy's 2014-2020 programme, strongly oriented towards the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. With this project, the MOT intends to contribute to the preparation of new tools for European project and programme managers, in order to support cross-border economic development.

### General objectives of the project

- ≡ Provide a better stakes knowledge concerning the economic development of cross-border territories and the links between the economic and employment issues and the players of cross-border cooperation.
- ≡ Facilitate the economic development of cross-border territories by contributing to the elimination of obstacles, as well as contributing to the research and the dissemination of tools and good practices.
- ≡ Encourage and reinforce exchanges and partnerships between the players of cooperation on cross-border territories concerning the economic development and employment.
- ≡ Contribute to the evolution of framework conditions for cross-border territories regarding the economic development and employment.

### Practical examples on the borders

Encouraging initiatives have been highlighted, offering courses of action for the economic development of cross-border territories. Three examples:

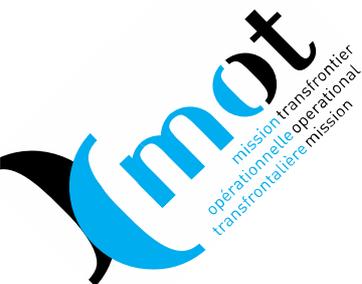
#### **BIHARTEAN - Cross-border chamber of commerce and industry**

Countries: Spain, France  
Border(s): France-Spain-Andorra,  
European programme(s): Interreg IVA - France-Spain-Andorra

"BIHARTEAN" is a cross-border chamber of commerce and industry formed in the Basque country in 2011 by the Bayonne Pays Basque CCI and the Càmara de comercio de Gipuzkoa. It is the first European example of a cross-border structure established jointly by two chambers of commerce.

The area covered by the BIHARTEAN cross-border CCI encompasses the French Basque country and the Province of Gipuzkoa in the Spanish Basque country. This territory has almost a million inhabitants, 63,000 businesses, mainly SMEs.

The cross-border CCI was established in 2011 with the legal form of an EEIG (European economic interest grouping), with the support and the expertise of the MOT.



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## Partners

Bayonne Pays Basque CCI  
Càmara de comercio de Gipuzkoa

## Project goals

The principal objectives of BIHARTEAN are to stimulate, coordinate and promote cross-border projects, to be a mediator between the businesses on each side of the border and to develop their relations and their cross-border development potential.

## Cross-border business centre (CTE GO-KMO)

Border: France-Belgium  
Territory: Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis  
European programme: Interreg IVA - France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen

The Cross-border business centre is a network of partners comprising French and Belgian (Flemish and Walloon) public- and private-sector economic organisations wishing to support SME-SMIs that want to develop their activities either side of the border. To this end, the Cross-border business centre provides specialist, customised guidance on fiscal, social, legal, administrative and regulatory questions, while advising SME-SMIs on cross-border commercial strategy and assisting them during inspections by the Belgian public authorities (Social Law and VAT inspectorates). The services provided also include a programme of events: meetings on cross-functional and sector-based topics, participation in international trade shows, networking of French and Belgian entrepreneurs, organisation of business speed dating sessions.

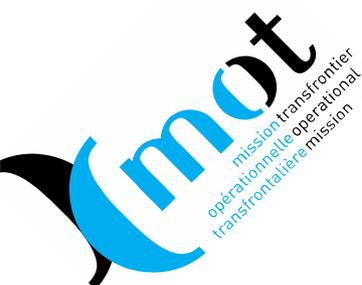
## Partners

- IDETA – Intercommunale de développement économique des arrondissements de Tournai, d'Ath et de communes avoisinantes
- IEG – Intercommunale d'étude et de gestion
- CCI Grand Lille
- UNIZO – Unie van Zelfstandige Ondernemers
- Voka – Vlaams netwerk van ondernemingen
- POM – Provinciale Ontwikkelingsmaatschappij West-Vlaanderen
- CCI Wallonie Picarde

## Greater Geneva French Eco-city

Border: France-Switzerland  
Territory: France-Vaud-Geneva conurbation  
European programme: Interreg IVA – France-Switzerland

The Greater Geneva French Eco-city is an economic development strategy intended to develop the dynamism of the France-Vaud-Geneva cross-border conurbation. It brings together all the entities involved in economic development either side of the border (chambers of commerce and industry, economic development agencies, competitiveness clusters, local authorities, etc.) and supports structuring investments for the territory (public transport, multimodal hubs, hospitals, etc.). The Eco-city is based on seven economic development priorities with high innovation potential mobilising different sectors and industries: life sciences, well-being and eating well, sustainable construction, future industry, a focus on water and water sports, territorial solidarities, and transport and mobility. The goal of the approach is to reposition the French Geneva area within Greater Geneva and contribute to more balanced development of the conurbation.



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#### Project leadpartners

- Arc Syndicat mixte
- Public- and private-sector economic development organisations
- French Greater Geneva local authorities

#### Partners

- Network of France-Vaud-Geneva conurbation businesses (competitiveness clusters, centres of excellence, hubs, etc.)
- Rhône-Alpes Region
- Ain and Haute-Savoie Departments Councils

#### Project objectives

- Make use of private- and public-sector entities in the territory to prepare projects resulting from their collaboration
- Consider the issues of sustainable development as stimulators of innovation, generation of added value and creation of qualified local jobs
- Support structuring investments and projects under way in the territory



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