

Press release

Nearly 180 people assembled in Paris to discuss the topic of cross-border economic development

7 October 2015

The final conference of the project¹ embarked on by the MOT in 2014 on cross-border economic development brought together nearly 180 people in Paris on 30 September – the size of the gathering reflecting the importance of the issues at stake...

Marc Abadie, Director of the Network at the Caisse des Dépôts (CDC), stressed the priority that should be given to cross-border territories, affirming the CDC's desire to invest in structuring and "pilot" projects²: "Cross-border economic development is a crucial subject that has taken on even greater importance at this time of territorial transition and the merger of regions. [...] It is necessary to avoid the dispersion that sometimes occurred in the past", requiring better coordination of national and European sources of funding in order to produce a veritable "leverage effect" in these territories. In addition, he saluted the role of the MOT in bringing together all of the players and fostering this expected synergy between stakeholders.

Echoing these themes, particularly innovative cross-border projects were presented and provided food for discussion (see page 2 for more details on each of these):

- **The Kiosk Office**: a co-working space for French and German entrepreneurs in the Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict
- **The cross-border chamber of commerce and industry Bihartean** on the French-Spanish border
- **The innovation strategy of the Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion**
- **The TTC "Top Technology Cluster"** of the Euregio Meuse-Rhine
- **The InnovARC project** in the French-Swiss Jura Arc
- **The GAT Caraïbes Cluster**
- **The Regio Pamina Eurodistrict** and its territorial approach to employment and training

Jean-Christophe Baudouin, Director of Territorial Strategies at the Commissariat Général à l'Égalité des Territoires (CGET – General Commission for Territorial Equality) likewise affirmed the CGET's commitment: "This cooperation is today a necessity, not only to optimise territorial development along the country's borders, but also because these territories embody the European project par excellence. We must be ambitious in showing this progress that makes it possible to counter tendencies for populations to turn in on themselves." He recalled the importance of cross-border observation, the indispensable prerequisite for action, while saluting the contribution made by the MOT's work, which is helping to reduce the ignorance about cross-border economic dynamics.

Henry Beillet, President of the French-German Kiosk Office (see below) makes the same assessment on the ground: "Reading firms' business plans, we realised that entrepreneurs don't take account of the cross-border potential for the simple reason that they don't think of it! There is real work to do in terms of raising awareness and this is also one of the Kiosk Office's tasks."

Among the other priority areas to be developed, the appropriateness of regional cross-border innovation strategies (such as that of the Pyrenees-Mediterranean, see below) as well as, more

¹ Project entitled "The integrated economic development of cross-border territories", co-financed by the Europ'Act Programme. For more information: <http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/en/european-activities/the-mots-european-projects/project-the-integrated-economic-development-of-cross-border-territories/>
² For example, in terms of cross-border planning, transport and public services.



To download the final outputs of the project:

Introduction – Project factsheets

Practical guide

[Click here.](#)

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generally, of **cross-border planning** strategies, was strongly emphasised. Examples of these are in the **Lille Eurometropolis** and the **Rhône-Alpes Region**, which signalled the importance for it of Greater Geneva, the region's second-largest conurbation, and of the mountain territories.

Agnès Monfret, head of unit in DG REGIO, recalled the support of the European Commission which has become a priority for the EU, as shown by the public consultation launched on 21 September by Commissioner Corina Cretu on the obstacles that remain in the area of cross-border cooperation.³

The role of Interreg was illustrated by the **France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen Programme**: 50% of the budget of the new Interreg V programme will be devoted to research/innovation in the areas of the economy and employment, as well as to increasing the cross-border competitiveness of SMEs.

Some examples of projects presented at the conference:

The Kiosk Office, the first cross-border co-working space, was set up in Offenburg in July 2014 and in Strasbourg in early 2015. This meeting place for entrepreneurs from either side of the border fulfils a real need observed in the territory (administrative and legal advice, networking, etc.). Since it was established, 600 people have visited it and two French-German businesses have been set up. The Kiosk is due to spread initially to three other locations in the Upper Rhine. [More info](#)

Bihartean has brought together the Bayonne-Pays Basque and Gipuzkoa chambers of commerce and industry since 2010 to support businesses in their cross-border projects, develop joint economic activities and design a range of cross-border training. In 2014, 246 companies took part in B2B meetings. As Peio Olhagaray, Director of Economic Development of the Bayonne-Pays Basque CCI, emphasised: "Our first concern is to respond to the needs of businesses. In the cross-border setting, 90% of them are small businesses: supporting them in the cross-border market is daily work on the ground that requires substantial input from our teams." He also talked about the cross-border actions carried out in the context of "San Sebastian, European Capital of Culture", such as the putting in place of joint tourist facilities and the publication of a gastronomic catalogue to welcome the thousands of visitors expected. [More info](#)

In the Euregio Meuse-Rhine (Germany-Netherlands-Belgium), the objective of the TTC project is to set up cross-border consortia of SMEs and to develop innovative projects in the life sciences, healthcare, innovative materials, ICT and energy sectors. Among the TTC's activities: networking events, personalised assistance to businesses, accompanied by substantial financial support.⁴ The project's results are very encouraging and provide an example to follow with respect to accessing private funding. [More info](#)



³ <https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/overcoming-obstacles-border-regions>

⁴ With "innovation vouchers" with a maximum equivalent value of €5,000.



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The InnovARC project⁵, which was born out of a partnership between the chamber of commerce and industry of the Doubs Department and arcjurassien.ch,⁶ helps to stimulate innovation in the microtechnologies sector in the French-Swiss Jura Arc. This cross-border business networking initiative was spurred by the awareness of the lack of connection between the cutting-edge expertise and skills in microtechnology on either side of the border, which were underexploited as a result. [More info](#)

The Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion, which is made up of the Midi-Pyrénées and Languedoc-Roussillon Regions and the Autonomous Communities of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands, put in place a Euroregional Innovation Strategy in 2014 for three priority sectors (water, e-health and agri-food) and a cross-cutting area (tourism). [More info](#)

The GAT Caraïbes Cluster, set up in September 2012, brings together public- and private-sector players to develop innovation, trade, logistics and transport in the whole region of the Caribbean, whose maritime borders, veritable gateways to the markets of the entire world with the forthcoming opening of the third set of locks on the Panama Canal, offer an as yet little-explored opportunity for development. [More info](#)

The Regio Pamina Eurodistrict is drawing up for early 2016 a territorial component of the agreement on cross-border apprenticeships signed two years ago at the level of the Upper Rhine. This local approach is aimed at achieving a better match between the available labour force and the needs of businesses in terms of professional training. [More info](#)

The other innovative projects presented in the final outputs are:

- Tandem (FR/BE)
- Seed4Start (FR/DE/LU/BE)
- Interregional Council of the Chambers of Trades of the Greater Region (FR/DE/LU/BE)
- Framework agreement on cooperation regarding French-German job-seeker placement (FR/DE)
- Strategic workforce planning (SWP) for the ports of Strasbourg and Kehl (FR/DE)
- Euro 3 (FR/BE)
- GCS "Crossborder Cluster Stimulation" (BE/NL/DE)

[Click here](#) to download the project factsheets.



⁵ The second phase of an initial project called "MinnovARC".

⁶ An association under private Swiss law.

