

25 June 2015

More than 150 people, elected and players in cross-border territories, national and European representatives met in Chamonix¹ on 17-18 June on the occasion of the MOT General Assembly to debate on the impact of territorial reforms on cross-border cooperation.

At the foot of the Mont Blanc, "roof of Europe, roof of cooperation", Eric Fournier, Mayor of Chamonix, welcomed the participants calling for greater recognition of cross-border spaces and in particular mountain areas, to build "consistent solidarity territories".

Christian Dupessey, Rhône-Alpes Regional Counselor, Vice-president of the MOT, stressed the urgency of this support: **"border regions are carrying a positive message on Europe to our fellow citizens"**. "They are the solution, not the problem, the improvement of the living conditions of the inhabitants being the first stake."

According to Jacques Lévy, Geographer, Professor at the Ecole polytechnique fédérale of Lausanne, who moderated the debates throughout the three round tables: "it is the individual actors who build the spaces, and each actor is bigger than any space". **The local political decision on the border areas should therefore fully take into account the reality of the border.** He thus stressed the **"virtues" required for cross-border territorial development:**

- the correct scale: the local has to manage the local
- the Republic: create a space of deliberation beyond the intergovernmental arrangements
- Democracy: give a voice to the people
- the imagination: invent territories beyond the borders.

The first round table, focusing on the local level, put forward several experiments such as the Mont Blanc area, which, represented by Nicolas Evrard, Mayor of Servoz, Vice-president of the Communauté de communes of the Vallée de Chamonix Mont Blanc, structured itself at a trinational scale to meet the environmental and economic issues along with accessibility of the territory as well as to better be heard at a regional and supraregional level. Anna Karina Kolb, representing the Canton of Geneva, stressed that "cross-border cooperation is international cooperation in the field". **"It is necessary to go beyond our own rules in order to work together, out of a national vision to invent new and hybrid forms.** Cross-border territories are tanks of experiments and labs." And progress is real, as Simon Jodogne, representing the European Metropolis of Lille, noted: **"what seemed exotic ten years ago is no longer exotic today, and even if we are never in the usual framework, cross-border cooperation has become common law in our consciousness"**.

The second round table focused on the regional level has answered to other questions related to the reforms. According to Christian Dupessey, **the distance from centres of decisions regarding the borders, due to new regions, does not mean that cross-border issues will be 'less' or 'less well' processed. On the contrary,**

¹ On the invitation of the Cross-Border Conference of the Mont Blanc.

Press release

MOT's general assembly and annual conference, "Territorial reforms: what impact for cross-border cooperation?", 17-18 June 2015

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this should reinforce the need for local and cross-border governance. According to Denis Duvernay, Vice-president of the Haute-Savoie Department "the reinforcement of metropolises and the strengthening of the intercommunality should not call into question the relevance of the departments." The example of the Saarland, more independent than the French regions in terms of decision-making, illustrated the balance of the difference of competences on either side of the border, claiming that **the creation of a single large region on the French side (Alsace-Champagne-Ardenne-Lorraine) could promote a more consistent and common voice towards Paris, Berlin and Brussels.**

During the third round table focused on national and European levels, **the representative of the European Commission, Agnès Montfret, underlined the outcomes of the last 25 years cross-border cooperation**, the latter being now completely integrated into the work of the Commission. "Regarding the border territories, the focus has to be a 360 degrees focus". **"It is now necessary to show citizens that this Europe works, thanks to projects that match not only the vital functions of territories, but allow to increase investment in growth and employment"**, she added. European objectives are currently at the forefront of these issues².

Representing the European Parliament, **Anne Sander, newly elected MOT Vice-president, enhanced the role of the European Parliament which wants to capitalize on the experience of networks such as MOT to adapt European legislation and place cross-border in the heart of its policies.** It thus announced the creation of a new EP working-group on cross-border cooperation (first meeting on June 24th, 2015).

Jean-Christophe Baudouin, Director of territorial strategies at the General Commission for Territorial Equality (CGET, France), welcomed the "swarming" of experiences. **"We are in the heart of the construction of Europe; the success of the European project depends on the success of the cross-border projects!"**

Elisa Vall, Director of the support to territories at the the Caisse des depots (France), for her part highlighted **the willingness of the Caisse des dépôts to develop cross-border public investment**, while highlighting the role of the MOT in developing this cross-border engineering.

President Michel Delebarre, concluded the debate with a positive message about the reform process: **"The Law will bring clarification between the regional, departmental and intercommunal competences. We should dispel fears and perceive the opportunities.** If the will is there, everything is possible, including at a cross-border level!".

² Inclusion of cross-border cooperation in the Juncker plan; works of the Luxembourg Presidency of the EU Council on the identification of obstacles to cross-border cooperation ([more info](#)); DG REGIO project which will be launched in the fall on this same question.

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General Assembly of the MOT, June 18th, 2015

Michel Delebarre, former Minister of State, Senator of the North, is re-elected president of the MOT, on the basis of renewed statutes, with a new "Advisory Committee" and a new "Board".

On 18 June, following the conference-debate, MOT annual bodies were the occasion of important votes for the association. **New statutes**, after several months working with members, were adopted. They allow to :

- 1 - Reaffirm the MOT status as a public multi-level cooperation tool;
- 2 - Take into account the new context for the cooperation and diversity of its actors;
- 3 - Consolidate the organisation and facilitate the functioning for its members and institutional partners.

According to these new statutes, the members then proceeded to the **election of a new Board and a new "Advisory Committee"**³ for a renewable term of three years. They allow a better geographical representation of the territories and levels of cooperation (local, regional, national and European), especially with the introduction of a new category of members: European and national parliamentarians.

A new scale of membership fees was adopted in order to adapt to the evolutions of the French territorial reform (notably the number and size of French border regions).

New members⁴ were presented at this occasion - bringing total membership to 66 - as well as the activity report 2014. The annual programme was adopted as well as a **three-year programme 2015-2017** focused on three main objectives:

- 1 - Support the cross-border cooperation stakeholders (operational and legal studies); network and capitalize experiences.
- 2 - Contribute to the definition, the evolution and the implementation of cross-border policies regarding the various territorial levels.
- 3 - Represent the interests of the territories at European level; develop activities on the overseas and at international level.

³ Which replaces the Board of Directors. More info: [list of the new members](#).

⁴ Region Rhône-Alpes, the Communauté de Communes of Western Guyana, the Secretariat of the Summit of the Greater Region, the town of Beausoleil, the Conference TransJurassienne and as a partner the Group Transdev. [Map of members](#).