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Espaces transfrontaliers

Cross-border areas



The letter of the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière

For a multi-level governance of cross-border issues



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In France, the recent parliamentary report on cross-border cooperation commissioned from Étienne Blanc, MP for the Ain, Fabienne Keller, senator for Bas-Rhin, and Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmidt MEP reveals the challenges specific to French European border territories, including the situations of imbalance that they experience with regard to territories of the neighbouring states.

These border territories are facing common problems (employment, transport, public services, housing, organization of their cooperation arrangements, etc.), but many situations call for specific responses, because of the diversity of these territories (urban, rural, mountain, coastal).

The report has spotlighted the most urgent situations and proposes innovative solutions. We consider that the action of the State with respect to border and cross-border territories must be long-term, based on detailed knowledge of the territories and involve better organization of the response by the State, at both central and deconcentrated levels, to the demands of local stakeholders.

The DATAR has been tasked with organizing interministerial working groups to assess the feasibility of the proposals in the parliamentary report. The MOT, which is closely associated with this work, has made a significant contribution on the issue of the governance of cross-border cooperation. The DATAR, in liaison with the MOT and the Network of the French urban planning public agencies (FNAU), is also developing a cross-border section of the Observatoire des Territoires (territory monitoring unit), which is an initial element of a response to the need identified in the report to "set up a strategic monitoring unit for border territories".

Conference in Budapest

At an international conference in Budapest on 9 and 10 December 2010, in the presence of Dr. László Kövér, president of the National Assembly of Hungary, the representatives of four support organizations involved at national level in cross-border cooperation* have signed the Budapest Declaration, aiming at setting-up a European platform of national cross-border cooperation support structures.

And it seems to be more and more necessary to develop cooperation and coordination structures integrating all the levels: local, regional and state levels.

Develop the exchanges between the countries

Models of organizing cross-border cooperation already exists in some European countries** and encountered difficulties can be solved in the exchange of



The signature of the Declaration of Budapest

A strong need in Central Europe

More fragmented than others, the Balkan area must face the need to rebuilt confidence after the conflicts of the 90's, with problems related to the integration of minorities. Also, cross-border cooperation can be a very practical way to overcome old barriers and to improve the development in the whole area.

experiences and the example of other models in Europe.

In that context, the objectives of the European platform are to create a professional supporting network for multilevel organized cross-border cooperation, including the national level, to share experiences and realize common projects in order to remove obstacles to the development of cross-border areas. ■

* The MOT for France, the CESC for Hungary, the "Grensmakelaar" for the Netherlands and the working communities Galicia-North Portugal and Castilla y León-North Portugal for the Spanish-Portuguese border.

** See the report pages 2 and 3.

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Central governance and cross-border cooperation

Four examples in Europe

The Declaration of Budapest* signed on 10 December 2010 has set up a “European platform of national cross-border cooperation support structures”, which brings together the MOT for France, the CESC for Hungary, the Grensmakelaar for the Netherlands as well as the Castilla y León/North Portugal and Galicia/North Portugal working communities for the Spanish-Portuguese border. This report describes the situation in these four territories.

FRANCE: towards an organized national cross-border cooperation policy

Identifying cross-border policy as “a leading issue for the sixteen regions concerned and the ten million French



people who live near a neighbouring country”, the French prime minister commissioned a report on cross-border issues from three members of parliament**. Officially submitted in June 2010, the report of this commission put forward nineteen proposals, in response to three primary objectives. The last objective is to “encourage coordinated planning of

cross-border ‘living areas’ and more effective governance between the State and the local authorities”.

In order to analyze the responses to these recommendations, working groups with members from the various ministries concerned and the MOT met between September and December 2010.

Abundance of cooperation programmes, malfunctioning governance

The June 2010 report emphasized:

- the great diversity of situations, objectives and needs in border areas,
- the intensity of the cooperation programmes, thanks to strong local political commitment,
- great complexity in the setting-up and management of cooperation programmes,
- difficulties stressed by the lack of national strategic vision of the development of border territories.

“These shortcomings deprive such areas of potential for innovation and growth, restrict the development of activities and limit the cultural and democratic links that their pivotal position could strengthen.”

The working groups analyzed the technical feasibility of the recommendations, which cover very different topics and might be implemented at different scales. Some concern legislative changes (such as the recent introduction of “border metropolitan clusters” in the local government reform act), while others could obtain a response in the implementation of institutionalized interministerial coordination, for which the MOT could provide technical support, and in the setting-up of “a strategic border region monitoring unit”. An interministerial meeting in 2011 should provide an opportunity to present the official results of this work.

The point of view of Patrick Crézé, director of the DATAR, deputy delegate

Since the official submission of the report in June 2010, what is the role of the DATAR in the examination of the report’s proposals?

The prime minister’s office gave the DATAR, in liaison with the secretary of state for European affairs, the task of analyzing the proposals formulated in the parliamentary report. Four interministerial working groups have been set up on the following topics:

- equip France with a toolbox for greater competitiveness on its borders,
- meet the needs for services of the border populations,
- facilitate the spatial organization of the cross-border territories,
- organize a real governance of cross-border issues.

Are there measures that are going to be able to be introduced rapidly?

It will be up to the prime minister to decide on the follow-up to this work. But all these subjects concern legislative or regulatory measures which must undergo in-depth impact analyses and bilateral or European discussions. For the singular characteristic of cross-border matters is the great diversity of situations to which it is difficult to give a single response other than through European regulation. The most important issue is thus the formalization and adoption of governance systems adapted to each cross-border area.



What is the challenge of setting up a genuinely national system of support for cross-border cooperation?

Being open to the free movement of goods and persons while maintaining different economic and social systems, the cross-border areas are subject to a double challenge of competitiveness and territorial cohesion. They must therefore be covered by a specific monitoring system in order for an integration strategy to be constructed, the only way to reduce or overcome competitiveness differentials.

* Refer to the article on page 1.

** Etienne Blanc, MP for the Ain, Fabienne Keller, senator for Bas-Rhin, in liaison with Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid MEP, produced this report for Michel Mercier, minister for the rural space and spatial planning, and Pierre Lellouche, secretary of state for European affairs, between December 2009 and June 2010.

HUNGARY: a new structure, the CESCO

New association established in November 2009, the CESCO (Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives) is an instrument of technical assistance at the service of Hungarian border authorities and cross-border structures. It networks them and provides a channel for communicating information on border obstacles from local level to national level. At national level there is a secretariat of State responsible for cross-border cooperation, an interministerial committee for cross-border cooperation and a national development agency (responsible for managing European funding).

THE NETHERLANDS: a cross-border mediator

With a centralised organisation, the Netherlands have set up a “Grensmake-laar” (cross-border mediator) to solve cross-border problems. Appointed for three years by the ministries concerned, the mediator’s role is to identify obstacles by working with the neighbouring countries and to look for solutions at national level. A cross-border task force, composed of representatives of border regions and districts, has also been established to support this work, along with working groups on well-defined topics including employment, education, health, security, the environment, public transport, and spatial planning.

SPAIN/NORTH PORTUGAL: a coordination organisation

The organisation concerns more specifically the border between the North of Portugal and Galicia. At central level, a cross-border correspondent is in place in each ministry of foreign affairs (MFA) on each side, and a mixed committee on cross-border cooperation is run by the two MFAs. At regional level, on the Portuguese side there is a coordination and Norte regional development committee and a cross-border correspondent, and on the Galician side a cross-border correspondent. The organisation is supported by several cross-border structures as a Galicia/North Portugal EGTC, a working community and a Euroregion. ■

Budapest conference

The point of view of the European and national authorities

During the conference, the national and European representatives highlighted the added value of support structures for cross-border cooperation:

Point of view of the European Commission

“Support structures at the national level are very important for some member states. In order for all these structures to reach the maximum potential support to cross-border cooperation, there is a need to work in coherence and seek for synergies. A platform enabling all these structures to exchange views and work together for the mutual goal - more effective, more strategic cross-border cooperation - would be welcome by the European Commission.”

*Simona Pohlová
Programme Manager
European Commission, Directorate
General for Regional Policy*

Point of view from French authorities

“France has undertaken to develop a multi-level governance related to cross-border cooperation. This multi-level governance needs to function properly, a real support structure for information, support, training and dissemination. It requires both a global view of the cross-border fact and a pragmatic approach and differentiated into contact with field partners, on each border, taking into account the economic, sociological, historical and cultural territories.”

*Pierre Ricard
Director at the interministerial
agency for spatial planning and
regional attractiveness (DATAR)*



Declaration of Dr. László Kövér, president of the National Assembly of Hungary, during the conference.

Point of view from Hungarian authorities

“Cross-border cooperation contributes to regional development and European integration for the benefit of citizens and must have the support of states. On the eve of the Hungarian EU presidency, Hungary welcomes the signing of the Budapest Declaration and undertakes to support the implementation of its objectives.”

*Dr. László Kövér
President of the National Assembly of Hungary*

Cross-border cooperation in West Africa

In 2010 the MOT conducted a study for the OECD Sahel and West Africa Club to produce an analysis for use as a basis for formulation of proposals to improve cross-border cooperation between Mali and Burkina Faso in both institutional and practical terms (for example the mango industry). The results will be incorporated into a guide to cross-border cooperation in West Africa.

A review seminar was held in June 2010 in Burkina Faso. It was the opportunity to present the conclusions and organize a debate with the representatives of the ministries and the African Union, the mayors of border municipalities, economic operators, etc.

This work has opened the way to a new collaboration with the Border Programme of African Union, willing



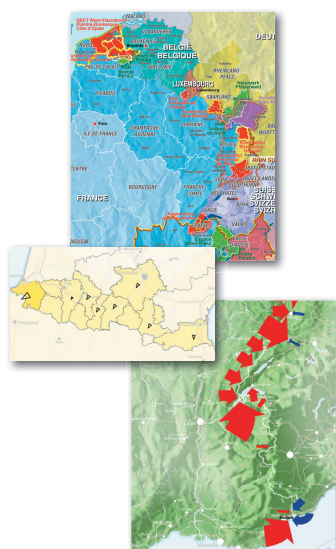
Signing of the agreement between the director-general of the MOT, Dr. Hans-Günther Clev, and the head of the African Union Border Programme, Aguibou S. Diarra, in December 2010.

to share know-how through a partnership agreement with the MOT. This agreement will lead to a 2011-2012 work programme. ■

Statistical monitoring of French cross-border territories

Starting from the observation that there are no pertinent strategic indicators for cross-border territories and that this has consequences in terms of failure to take these areas into consideration in public policies, the DATAR Observatoire des Territoires (territory monitoring unit) commissioned a study from the MOT and the FNAU* to obtain a better understanding of the functioning of these territories. Following on from exploratory work

carried out in 2008 by the MOT, the study investigates and compares a short list of key indicators based on available data for ten cross-border urban areas**. This work, the conclusions of which will be presented in Spring 2011, is intended to enable analysis of the common points and the differences between all the territories in the study, with the objective of organizing the monitoring of cross-border territories at national level. ■



* Fédération Nationale des Agences d'Urbanisme (the network of the French urban planning public agencies).

** West-Vlaanderen/Flandre-Dunkerque-Côte d'Opale platform, Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis, Northern Lorraine territories, Lorraine corridor, Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict, Basle Trinational Eurodistrict, France-Vaud-Geneva conurbation, Côte d'Azur metropolis, Catalan cross-border area Eurodistrict, Bayonne-San Sebastian Basque Eurocity.

New publication of "The MOT Guides"

"Civil society and cross-border cooperation"



The new issue of "The MOT Guides" focuses on the involvement of civil society in cross-border cooperation. Published in French and in English, this twenty-page publication emphasizes the role of civil society in cross-border cooperation, which, according to Dr. Hans-Günther Clev, constitutes "a return to the sources, an increasing awareness of the very purpose of cross-border cooperation and, in a broader sense, of the construction of Europe".

The topic encompasses civil society both as a player in cross-border cooperation and as a recipient of public-sector projects

or a consumer of cultural and information provision.

The issue presents a number of initiatives in Europe, along with the results of the URBACT EGTC* project, which has shown that "the involvement of civil society was one of the conditions for the success of a cross-border territory project".

The publication can be downloaded from the website www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu. To obtain a paper version: mot@mot.asso.fr

Seminar on sport

The results of the seminar on cross-border cooperation in sport, organized on 26 October 2010 by the MOT with the Pas-de-Calais department council, are available:

- the report on the website www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu,
- additional resources for MOT members in the "Espace Adhérents" of the website.

* "Expertising Governance for Transfrontier Conurbations".