

Espaces transfrontaliers

Cross-border areas



The letter of the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière

To organise, set out and clarify more effectively!



Michel Delebarre, President of MOT, Former French Minister of State, MP and Mayor of Dunkerque

Network's annual conference

More than 100 participants, stakeholders in cross-border cooperation in France and Europe, met in Paris on 2 June 2010 for the MOT's annual conference.



The MOT's conference set up to debate the organisation and financing of cross-border cooperation in Europe has sought to outline answers to key questions, whose topicality is underscored not only by the French parliamentary mission entrusted by the Prime Minister to the three MPs Etienne Blanc, Fabienne Keller and Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid, but also by the "post-2013" discussions and its consequences for the financing of cross-border cooperation in Europe.

The parliamentary mission is a clear signal of the government's growing interest in establishing a "genuine French cross-border policy", one that is concerted, organised and resolute. Other countries in Europe are moving in the same direction, underlining that this is a necessity with which all European states will be confronted sooner or later. These national concerns do not apply solely to models of centralised organisation (as in the Netherlands for example), but also to topical priorities, as demonstrated by the example of the "North Portugal - Galicia" border with its powerful economic axis.

While participants are unanimous on the need to pursue the financing of cross-border projects for the benefit of inhabitants, the perception of macro-regional approaches (such as in Baltic States or the Danube) overall and in terms of micro-regional cooperation has been the source of heated debate. The representative of the European Commission, Mr José Palma-Andres¹, was able to provide much-needed clarifications and highlight a number of perspectives, in particular the absence of any financial competition between the micro and macro approaches, which he stressed were complementary rather than competitive. In this context the MOT as the only multi-level network focused on cross-border projects will have an important role to play in both the multi-level organisation of cooperation (between local, national and European levels) and the governance, also at multiple levels, of local cross-border projects.

Welcomed by the Director General of the Caisse des Dépôts, Augustin de Romanet, who underlined his attachment to the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière, Michel Mercier, French Minister of Rural Areas and Spatial Planning, opened the conference by restating the government's current priority to implement a "genuine national cross-border policy". At the conference this topical issue for France linked to the submission of a parliamentary report on cross-border policy expected for the end of the June was placed within the context of other experiments in Europe.

Michel Mercier reminded the conference that the opening of the borders represented a "wonderful opportunity for economic and cultural development" and announced the creation

of "metropolitan centres" for French border territories². Michel Delebarre stressed that all these advances should result in "a change in the way in which the State's administrative machinery viewed the regions: border territories, previously 'France's outposts', are in the process of becoming European centres".

Pierre Lellouche, French Secretary of State for European Affairs, was ultimately represented by his cabinet director, who concluded the conference by expressing the wish that "the mission should submit strong and innovative proposals to boost the competitiveness of the territories, improve the everyday lives of the inhabitants of frontier zones, and rethink public cross-border governance": "we have reached the crossroads; the time of diagnosis is over. Now is the time for action!" ■

¹ Director at the Regional Policy DG, European Commission

² Provision voted on within the framework of the government bill on the reform of local authorities allowing "French metropolitan centres" to be extended to cross-border territories.

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MOT conference and Annual General Meeting, 2 and 3 June 2010

Supporting cross-border territories at all levels



The conference organised by the MOT to debate the “organisation and financing of cross-border cooperation in Europe” was held in Paris on 2 June at the invitation of the Caisse des Dépôts. Hosted by Laurent Miguet, journalist with *Le Monde*, it showcased two schemes: the example of the cooperation between Galicia in Spain and North Portugal, and the work carried out by the French parliamentary mission on cross-border cooperation. It also provided an opportunity to debate the financing prospects for cross-border cooperation within the future cohesion policy.

Galicia/North Portugal: the economic development reinforced through cross-border concertation

Nuno Almeida, head of Norte de Portugal strategic cooperation unit, provided an overview of the cooperation between the regions of North Portugal and Galicia, which since the early 1990s constitute a working community

whose surface area (50,000 km²) and population (6.7 millions) exceed those of Denmark.

This political approach is concurrent with the flourishing of cross-border economic relations between the two territories, which are home to more than 500,000 businesses, most of them in the secondary sector. Every day 40,000 border workers living in Portugal cross the border to work in Galicia.

The working community relies on an analysis and strategic reflection group and on local and theme-based commissions. For 2007/2013 the emphasis has been placed on maritime issues and on large-scale projects such as the International Iberian Nanotechnology Laboratory.

The two regions formalised their cooperation in February 2010 by setting up the “Galicia-Norte de Portugal” EGTC, whose purpose is to provide the operational structure for the working community.

In France: parliamentary mission on cross-border issues

In the presence of Fabienne Keller, Senator for the Bas-Rhin, Etienne Blanc, MP for the Ain, and Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid, MEP, the conference was an opportunity to present the work carried out by the parliamentary mission entrusted to them by the French Prime Minister, with ministers Michel Mercier and Pierre Lellouche.

The Report has since been officially submitted by the three parliamentarians on June 18. The 19 proposals recommended by this Report to “develop a genuine policy in favour of border territories” address the following four main challenges:

- To endow France with a toolbox for greater competitiveness at its borders
- To meet the need for services of the resident populations
- To facilitate the spatial organisation of cross-border territories
- To organise a genuine governance for cross-border issues.

The June/July MOT newsletter, *Cross-border News No.60*, features more detailed information on these recommendations. The report is available online at: www.datar.gouv.fr.

High expectations with regard to European financing

The debate helped situate these national initiatives within the European context and address the points of view of the players operating at the local, regional and European levels.

The participants insisted on the need to maintain the European financing schemes earmarked for cross-border

A new cross-border map!

The MOT has just published a map representing the “territory projects and the cross-border administrative division” on either side of the French borders. The mapping work illustrates the scale of cross-border realities, which today can no longer be ignored in the way in which France is represented in maps.



For more information go to www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu

projects in the next phase of programming. Fabienne Keller stated that the work of the parliamentary mission had shown that no project of any substance could have been carried out at the French borders without such financing: "their role as facilitator is obvious." The financing of local projects is essential: "it is by being close to its citizens that Europe can be strong!" According to Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid, taking account of issues of everyday life has to be at the heart of the debates: "we need to encourage a border-related approach by financing the pooling or creation of cross-border services and equipment such as the cross-border hospital in Cerdanya on the French-Spanish border".

Jöel Giraud, Vice President of the MOT and the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Regional Council, underlined the diversity of border territories in his region, itself engaged in setting up a Franco-Italian Euroregion: "the Region co-finances the cross-border projects of the Alpine départements, projects which play out within a European policy of local development." For his part Nicolas Evrard, Vice President of the Vallée Chamonix-Mont Blanc, explained that the Alcotra Interreg programme between France and Italy provided support to the implementation of a cross-border scheme for sustainable development in the Espace Mont-Blanc, and that to continue along this path it is essential to anchor these funds and position the cross-border challenges within the context of territorial policies.

The representative of the European Commission, José Palma-Andres, Director at the Regional Policy DG, wished to reassure the participants by indicating that there was now a "consensus" on the continuation of the policy of territorial cooperation for the period 2014-2020 and that it applied to all European regions. Discussions were currently underway on maintaining or increasing the budget for territorial cooperation and on defining European rules governing the conditions for expenditure and eligibility. A regulation project ought to be ready by the autumn. The MOT network and all the local stakeholders in cross-border cooperation will therefore closely be monitoring the way in which these discussions evolved. ■

MOT Annual General Meeting: new orientations!

The Annual General Meeting which convened the Association members on June 3 was an opportunity to showcase the MOT's activities and discuss new orientations.

New services for members

Following a working group set up to address these issues, new services for members are to be implemented from 2011:

- **"Vouchers"**: from 2011 each member on the French borders will receive an annual voucher¹ corresponding to one day of MOT services, to apply to various types of consulting, interventions within the framework of events, technical support to set up projects, etc.
- **A technical exchange platform**: to meet the demand for exchanges between

- **Members outside the French borders**: since a large part of the services applies mainly to the French borders or is available only in French, a reduction down to 1/10th of the fees was proposed and accepted for members of the other European borders.
- **A solution concerning membership by cross-border structures** has been found: if a member of a cross-border structure on either side of the border is already a member, the structure itself can become a member of the network without a membership fee. Besides these new services³, the meeting on June 3 provided an opportunity to discuss **the current tools** reserved for members of the network such as the online "Espace adherents" (Member space), which offers dedicated resources (documentary, legal, etc.) and press reviews on cross-border cooperation⁴.



members, a technician platform is to be set up to provide the framework for regular "brainstorming" sessions on specific themes.

- **Theme-based working groups**: to go further still, one to two working groups will be set up each year to take stock of the situation with regard to cooperation. The themes can be put forward by members or by the technician platform before being submitted to the Conseil d'administration (Board of Directors). In 2010 work was carried out on sport and a seminar will be held in October as a result. For 2011 the Board of Directors has confirmed the theme of "personnel in cross-border structures".
- **More specific support**: the rendering of paying services² by the MOT is orientated more specifically towards missions of "assistance to the main contractor", which may for example concern drawing up specifications, drafting statutes for cross-border structures, etc. The "vouchers" can also be used within this particular framework.

Redefining European orientations

The bodies have also officially confirmed that the MOT's European activities should focus on the following main areas: lobbying at the European level, exchanges of good practice and the pooling of resources, the networking of stakeholders, and supporting the development of national structures similar to the MOT. These activities are to be channelled not just through networks (e.g. at the local level through the CECICN⁵; at the regional level through the AEBR; and at the national level through structures similar to the MOT) but also through partnerships with European institutions and other structures such as the Euro-Institute in Kehl. ■

¹ Two vouchers in the year of their membership to the MOT.

² Since May 2010 these services can be rendered freely within the framework of French public contracts below the threshold of EUR 4,000 excl. taxes.

³ For more information visit the "Member space" website (item "Vie de l'association", in French, only for members).

⁴ All the articles are fed into an online press database enabling various search criteria (topic, territory, etc.).

⁵ Conference of European Cross-border and Interregional City Networks, launched in April 2010 among six networks including the MOT (see Newsletter No. 59).

Conclusions and follow-up to the EGTC URBACT project

Pioneering conurbations in Europe

After two years of work on the governance of cross-border conurbations in Europe, the final conference of the "EGTC"¹ URBACT project held in Esztergom, Hungary, on 6 and 7 May allowed the seven partners² in the project to present the results of their discussions, and debate how they intend to follow-up the project.

The objective of the project was to "create a network to allow an exchange of experience" and it provided a first answer to one of the primary needs expressed by cross-border conurbations. This exchange of experience has in fact been strengthened throughout the project by the diversity of sites represented.

Organising internal governance

The first project seminar, held in Chaves in March 2009, focused on the political, technical and financial organisation of cross-border conurbations and highlighted the following elements:

- A strong political commitment and the establishment of a sustained link between the political and the technical levels are essential to the organisation of a sustainable cross-border governance.
- The choice of legal form for the governance structure may vary

depending on the political impetus, the size of the local authorities and the scale of the projects: there is no single model.

- It is not enough to create such a structure: the difficult part is to get the instrument to work around a global strategy and ambitious, structuring projects that incite local representatives to join as members.

During the project each partner drew up a Local Action Plan, in partnership with its local support group, aimed at improving the organisation of its own cross-border governance.

A sizeable challenge: involving civil society

At the second seminar in Tournai in February 2010, the discussions underlined the importance of associating the territory's "vibrant forces" (private sector, stakeholder organisations, residents, etc.), an involvement which was even defined as a precondition for the project's success. Many examples were cited, from the involvement of residents in the projects (sports and leisure fixtures, cross-border newspapers and TV stations, web forums, etc.) to initiatives formally associating civil society in public policies as such as the Forum of the Eurometropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai



Sports meet as part of the Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau

or the civil parliament of the EGTC of the Ister-Granum Euroregion.

National and European recommendations

Another need voiced by local stakeholders is to benefit from strong support at the national and European levels. The partners drew up a European Action Plan comprising numerous recommendations along these lines, from the idea of setting up a European commissioner for cross-border cooperation to launching a debate on the status of the personnel working for cross-border structures.

A second project in the offing?

At the final conference the partners expressed their wish to pursue the exchanges and broaden the partnership. They mentioned the possibility of setting up a second URBACT project to possibly address at the issue of employment. ■

Cross-border brass band at Frankfurt (Oder) and Slubice



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For more information and to download all the project papers go to:
www.urbact.eu/egtc.

¹ Expertising Governance for Transfrontier Conurbations

² Basel for the Trinationale Eurodistrict Basel (F/D/CH), the Urban Community of Strasbourg for the Eurodistrict of Strasbourg-Ortenau (D/F), Slubice for the agglomeration Frankfurt (Oder)-Slubice (D/PL), Lille Metropole for the Eurometropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai (F/B), Esztergom for the Euroregion Ister-Granum (HU/SVK), Chaves for the Eurocidade Chaves-Verim (S/PT), and MOT as lead-partner.