

## VIEWPOINT



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**In your area, what are the main cross-border projects in the environmental sector?**

Many separate connections between the Swiss and French sewage systems have already been made, but until now none of them had necessitated the establishment of a cross-border entity such as the LCCG. For example, three municipalities of the eastern Gex catchment area have been connected to the Aire water treatment plant in Geneva canton for the last ten years. As most of the project (and ownership) was managed on the Swiss side, the signature of a simple agreement was enough to conduct the programme. In addition to other connections of this type all along the border, another sizeable project worth mentioning consists in connecting Divonne-les-Bains to the Swiss system of the SIDAC (Coppet circumscription joint municipality water supply association): to meet Divonne's drinking water needs, a system will soon be established drawing water from Lake Geneva; the water will be treated in Switzerland and then conveyed to Divonne by an underground pipeline.

Another cooperation project that can be mentioned is being implemented around Geneva airport: a noise tax is used to compensate nearby residents and fund various soundproofing work. As the airport is adjacent to the border, and as noise doesn't stop there, cooperation is under way between the Canton of Geneva and the adjoining French municipalities so that the latter can also benefit from this compensation.

**Is there another LCCG project being implemented in your area?**

The "Rectangle d'Or" project, in which the Pays de Gex municipalities community is a stakeholder, plans to establish an LCCG soon. This is a large-scale economic and urban development project involving the establishment of a multi-business economic hub around Geneva airport. It includes the regeneration of the existing Swiss sector and the establishment of a new business corridor to the west of the airport, in Pays de Gex. It also plans to introduce cross-border public transport and create a landscaped park on either side of the airport. The statutes and the scope of this future LCCG are being decided. All that is needed now is a decision in favour by all the municipalities concerned.

## Establishment of the first LCCG on the French-Swiss border

*The Pays de Gex municipalities community and the Canton of Geneva have established the first local cross-border cooperation grouping (LCCG), "Galerie de Chouilly" (Chouilly tunnel), on the French-Swiss border. The objective is to build and operate a wastewater transfer tunnel linking the French and Swiss sewerage systems.*

This new infrastructure, located beneath the Chouilly hillside in Geneva, will carry waste water from the central part of the Pays de Gex to Switzerland. The water will be treated at the future Bois-de-Bay treatment plant to be built on the Geneva side, and then discharged into the Rhône.

The linking of the Swiss and French systems has been shown to be the most ecological solution. Population growth and rapid urbanization of the France-Genève basin have made certain treatment plants obsolete, such as the Journans and Allondon plants in the Pays de Gex, obliged to discharge their partially-treated water into the natural environment.

These two stations will be dismantled, and a new main sewer is to be built and connected to the Swiss system by a new tunnel.

2.7 km long and running at a depth of up to 80 metres, the tunnel will be built between 2006 and 2008. Although located entirely on Swiss territory, it will be funded mainly by the Pays de Gex municipalities community (90%), with help from the French water agency, the region, Interreg and the department council. The Canton of Geneva will also contribute to the funding in return for ancillary uses (utilization of the tunnel for rainwater retention, for example, and in anticipation of a future connection to its sewage system).



To implement this project, the partners have opted for the establishment of an LCCG, a possibility since the extension of the Karlsruhe Agreement to the French-Swiss border in 2004. This entity is a public corporation with legal capacity and budgetary autonomy. It provides a legal basis for the international calls for tenders involved in the construction of such infrastructure and will act as owner for the construction and operation of the tunnel. With the form of a joint association, the grouping will be administered by an association committee. Half of the committee members will be appointed by the Canton of Geneva and half by the elected representatives of the Pays de Gex municipalities community. A chairman and a vice-chairman will be elected by the association committee for four-year terms.

Finally, it should be noted that this operation falls within the scope of the "Pays de Gex - Léman" cross-border rivers contract, signed in 2004, which indicates the active cooperation implemented in the France-Genève basin on environmental and water protection matters.

## Cooperation between the employment departments of the Principality of Monaco, Imperia province and the Menton area

*On 24 November 2005 the employment departments of Monaco, Imperia province and the Menton area signed a cross-border collaboration protocol intended to facilitate the employment of cross-border job-seekers.*

Local links between France, Italy and Monaco are highly concentrated in the narrow coastal strip, some fifteen kilometres wide, between Nice, Monaco and Imperia. Every day more than 33,000 workers cross the French-Monacan and French-Italian borders (between the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region and Italy). Monaco is a particularly attractive employment centre, since more than 30,000 Italians and French work there.

In this context, cooperation between the employment departments of the Menton, Monaco and Ventimiglia areas has become a necessity.

The Alpes-Maritimes labour, employment and

professional training department, the Nice Côte d'Azur branch of the French national employment agency (ANPE), the Côte d'Azur branch of the French unemployment insurance association (ASSEDIC), the Monaco labour department and the Imperia province employment centre have therefore taken the decision to pool their technical facilities and their local resources to provide a joint response to the problems of placement, recruitment and training over the whole area.

The newly formed cross-border team's task is to conduct joint actions aiming to support and reinforce the action of the employment departments, targeting both cross-border job seekers and employers. For example, for mass recruitments the partners will be able to use the resources of each partner to meet the needs of businesses.

## First trinational Eurodistrict under study

The political managers of the Basle trinational conurbation presented the outline of the first trinational Eurodistrict, covering the metropolitan area of the Basle trinational conurbation (ATB/TAB), on 14 November 2005 at the Palmrain TriRhena centre. The objective is for the new entity to be operational by early 2007. In the meantime various parameters remain to be defined, such as its scope, its areas of competency and the future of existing cross-border entities.

The "Eurodistrict" approach was launched in 2003 by the French and German governments on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Elysée treaty. It is taking a step forward with this trinational project, which also includes a country that is not a member of the European Union. Backed by a strong political determination, it is intended to transpose French-German thinking to the Basle region.

The Basle trinational conurbation has about 600,000 inhabitants. It is located at the heart of the French-German-Swiss region of the upper Rhine, at the point of convergence with north-west Switzerland and the Rhine-Rhône conurbation area. It extends over three countries, including four cantons in Switzerland, and is characterized by dispersed decision-making and political entities and by a substantial cross-border socio-economic network. The need to overcome divergences by means of cross-border cooperation was felt from a very early stage. Implemented today by four separate entities, each covering partial areas of action (the Basle trinational conurbation association, the conurbation confederation, the Regio TriRhena and the Infobest cross-border information bureau), this cooperation would gain by being more structured. The projected Eurodistrict is a response to these arguments, and is intended to simplify the present institutional framework of cross-border cooperation. It would simplify the overall view of the Basle trinational conurbation, more identifiable for the population and better placed for international outreach.

The objectives of the future Eurodistrict have therefore been defined as follows:

- improve the effectiveness of existing cross-border organizations within the framework of an efficient and transparent cooperation structure;
- increase cooperation in certain areas by making use of new legal instruments: in addition to the various areas already selected, such as planning, the environment and transport, there must be a mechanism for taking other subjects of interest to the citizens into consideration;
- meet the requirements concerning future means of funding, whether national or European: the establishment of a Eurodistrict will generate resources with which it will be possible in the future to obtain European and national support funding.

In 2007, the vocation of the Eurodistrict will thus be to oversee cooperation within the entire trinational conurbation. It will enable a long-term strategy to be drawn up for the development of the whole of the ATB/TAB metropolitan area and thus constitute a major step towards joint governance procedures at trinational level. The various municipal and regional executive entities would be organized within the Eurodistrict (operational level) and backed by a council (political level).

With its extended competencies, the Eurodistrict will be able to manage all the potential topics of cooperation, such as trinational development strategies, development and planning, communication and information, transport, the environment, culture and tourism, health and emergency services. The list of priority projects will be defined more precisely in 2006.

The organization of the Eurodistrict, which will also be defined in 2006, will give a substantial place to the ATB/TAB association. The association will act as the basic legal entity for the future Eurodistrict, the other institutions being directly attached to it.

## The MOT internet site goes multilingual



After the posting of the English version, the site [www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org](http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org) now features German, Italian and Spanish versions. With more than 87,000 visitors to date, it now opens up to a European audience. The new versions offer news articles, publications, internet links, a description of the MOT, etc.

## "Territoria Universitates"

This French-Spanish information bulletin on cross-border cooperation was launched as part of a French-Spanish Interreg IIIA project, "Territoria Universitates", which brings together many partners in Aragon, Hautes-Pyrénées and Comminges working in rural and local development.

This project is designed to set up a cross-border network of development agents, introduce a European Master's degree in rural development and encourage the emergence of joint projects.

To subscribe:

<http://webmail.unizar.es/mailman/listinfo/territoria.universitates>

## www.projetsdeurope.gouv.fr

Launched by the DIACT (ex-DATAR), "Projets d'Europe" is a site for information and discussion on European programmes concerning regional policy.

## Press review

### DATAR changes its name and becomes the DIACT..., [www.diact.gouv.fr](http://www.diact.gouv.fr)

"...the interministerial delegation for regional development and competitiveness - The decree establishing the DIACT was published in the Official Journal on 1 January 2006. Pierre Mirabaud was appointed interministerial delegate for regional development and competitiveness at the cabinet meeting on 3 January" »...

### Cross-border cooperation: local authorities refine their strategy, *Le Moniteur*, 16 December

"Cross-border cooperation is a combat." Star guest of the workshop on cross-border project ownership, co-organized by *Le Moniteur* and the Association des techniciens territoriaux de France (French regional technicians' association) on 8 December at the Strasbourg regional conferences (ETS), Jacques Houbart [director of the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière] recounted the battles already won"...

### Parliament calls for greater recognition for the Euroregions, *Europe Information Service*, 16 December 2005

"The European Parliament asks that the Euroregions be empowered to develop and manage EU community cross-border programmes and the programmes that will be conducted from 2007 as part of the EU neighbourhood and partnership instrument"...

### The Strasbourg Parliament rejects the European budget, *Libération*, 19 January

"By a massive majority, the Euro-MPs have rejected the "financial perspectives 2007-2013" adopted by the member states"...

### Leman basin: 900,000 inhabitants in 2025, *Le Dauphiné Libéré*, 31 December

"Demographic forecasts by the cross-border statistics observatory concerning the France-Vaud-Geneva conurbation are based on the attractiveness of the basin"...

### Inauguration of the first cross-border regional express train, [www.granderegion.net](http://www.granderegion.net)

"The south-west regional division of the Deutsche Bahn, the SNCF and Hans-Peter Georgi, Saar minister of the economy and transport, inaugurated in Saarbrücken the first cross-border regional express train, which passes from one national rail system to the other without changing driver"...

