

## VIEWPOINT

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### What can be said about France-Italy cross-border rail service provision?

At the moment, we cannot really speak of truly "cross-border" railway services between France and Italy. There are very few local services, with only two railway lines, one between Marseille and Savona ("LI RI CA" project) and the other between Cuneo/Turin and Breil, Nice and Ventimiglia.

In addition, the cross-border service is not very good. The connections at the border, in Ventimiglia station, are unattractive, with connection times ranging from 5 to 60 minutes. The reasons for this poor transport interoperability include different equipment and electrical power supplies on each side of the border and a lack of coordination of timetables. There are also different standards for safety and signalling.

### How will the "LI RI CA" project be able to change the situation?

The implementation of the area information system, accessible by Internet and scheduled to be opened to the public at the end of 2007, should encourage the use of public transport for cross-border journeys by facilitating searches for itineraries combining the different modes, rail and road.

The purpose of the studies is to give decision-makers, including politicians and competent operators (regions and railway operators), reliable information to assess the need to take action in this domain. But the response to these questions is political above all!

To counter the problems of interoperability of the railway systems and the equipment differences, the solution from a technical point of view would be engineering modification of the existing railway equipment on each side of the border. Such changes would demand substantial investments, and it is up to the politicians of the two regions to decide whether they are feasible.

## The "LI RI CA" project

*The "LI RI CA" project aims to improve the provision of cross-border public transport, not very satisfactory at present, in the French-Italian coastal area. More particularly, it concerns the local railway line from Marseille to Savona via Monaco, Menton, Ventimiglia and Imperia.*

The Alps form a natural border which is unfavourable to the development of public transport between France and Italy. Nevertheless, the population density is very high on the coastal fringe and there are constant flows of border workers: almost 30,000 workers, including about 5,500 Italians, travel to Monaco every day, and more than 1,500 Italian workers travel to the Alpes-Maritimes department every day.

The difficulties related to road traffic are substantial. The road infrastructure is saturated and it is particularly difficult to enter the towns. Problems of road safety, pollution and parking are experienced throughout the area.

In this context, there is high potential for modal shifting of journeys to the railway network. The objective of the "LI RI CA" project is to identify the most appropriate measures to encourage such a shift.

Financed as part of the INTERREG IIIA Alcotra programme, the project is being conducted between 2005 and 2007 by several partners\*. It comprises four strands:

- The first strand concerns the setting-up of a French-Italian territorial information system. The objective is to make timetables, routes, connections and journey times between all places in the study area accessible on the Internet, integrating several modes of transport. It also includes road information, car parks and sites of interest for tourists. The usefulness of setting up a common ticketing system is also being considered.

## A bus route between the French Riviera and Imperia Province

In response to the saturation of the road system in the coastal sector between Monaco, France and Italy, the French Riviera conurbation Community and Imperia Province, together with all the local authorities concerned, have launched a project to introduce a bus route linking San Remo, Ventimiglia, Menton, Roquebrune and Cap-Martin. The route will operate in both directions.

Despite their closeness, the French Riviera and Imperia have never had direct and regular road services, each authority having developed its own public transport network, without complementarity.

Moreover, the only integrated transport system, rail, does not serve all the population centres and is limited to the stations only. Many people thus have



PACA regional train on the Roya bridge, Ventimiglia

- The second strand concerns joint communication activities: definition of a strategy in terms of communication, image and marketing to raise awareness of the railway services and its links with the other transport systems.

- The third strand is developing reciprocal knowledge actions: seminars presenting the organization of the transport system in each country, sharing of experience and know-how, exchange of personnel, etc.

- Finally, the last strand concerns the conducting of socio-economic studies on the potential customers, intended to lead to proposals for actions to develop synergies between transport modes. It also plans studies on the feasibility of introducing interoperable rail services, focusing on the legal and financial arrangements and the technical aspects for establishing joint investments.

\* Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region, Liguria Region, Principality of Monaco, Alpes-Maritimes Department, Imperia and Savona Provinces, Municipality of Ventimiglia, French Riviera conurbation Community, SNCF and Trenitalia (Italian national railway company).

no alternative to the private car.

For an optimum response to this very high demand, the project plans a route that runs along the coastal strip, through the centres of the most dense urban areas. There will be frequent stops, including all the present transport stops, encouraging intermodality (service to the main railway stations and connections to the existing urban networks). The target is to carry 353,000 passengers each year (almost 970 passengers per day).

The route will be operated as an experiment for 30 months up to September 2008.

The MOT is publishing the sixth issue of its topical 'Cahiers' (*The MOT Guides*), which will cover cross-border passenger transport. This publication will soon be available on the Internet site [www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu](http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu).



Mercantour national Park  
French-Italian border

## The Alpine convention

The Alpine convention is a framework agreement on the protection of the Alps. Its objective is to safeguard the natural ecosystem of the Alps and promote sustainable development, while protecting the economic interests of the resident populations. It sets out the principles on which cross-border cooperation between the countries of the Alps must be based, while aiming to harmonize the policies of the signatories in order to achieve this.

Signed on 7 November 1991 and entered into force in March 1995, the convention includes France, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Austria, Slovenia and, since 1994, Monaco. The European Union is a party to the convention on the basis of its competences in economic affairs and environmental protection. The territory covered by the convention encompasses some 191,000 sq km, 6,000 municipalities and 13 million inhabitants.

The Alpine convention defines common objectives for the signatory states, but is just a general framework. Its implementation depends on additional protocols, ten of which were drafted between 1994 and 2000: "conservation of nature and the countryside", "spatial planning and sustainable development", "tourism", "mountain forests", "energy", "soil protection", "transport", "mountain farming", "settlement of disputes" and the "Monaco protocol".

These ten protocols have entered into application in five of the eight countries. In Switzerland, only the Monaco protocol has entered into application at the moment, six are in application in Monaco and none yet in Italy. For the European Union, entry into application concerns the Monaco protocol (since 1999) and the mountain farming, tourism, energy and soil protection protocols (since 6 October 2006).

### Alpine convention and cross-border cooperation

- With regard to the "general obligations" of the states and the European Union, the convention stipulates that cross-border cooperation in the Alpine region will be intensified and extended in terms of both territory and the number of subjects covered (article 2).
- Other than this general principle, the protocol of greatest interest for cross-border cooperation is that on sustainable development. In it, the states undertake to eliminate the obstacles to international cooperation between local authorities and to promote the solution of joint problems through collaboration at the appropriate territorial level. In border areas this cooperation will be aimed more particularly at coordinating spatial planning, economic development and environmental requirements (article 4). This cooperation must nevertheless be undertaken within the existing institutional framework (article 7).
- This protocol also stipulates spatial planning and sustainable development plans and programmes, drawn up in a cross-border framework by or with the competent local authorities, in consultation with the neighbouring authorities. Their objective is to define the sustainable development and spatial planning guidelines for coherent and periodically-reviewed territorial units. Their drafting and implementation will be based on inventories and studies defining the characteristics of the territory under consideration (article 8).
- Finally, the states undertake to examine the possibilities of economic and financial measures for compensation between local authorities at the appropriate level and support for cross-border projects (article 12).

For further information: <http://www.conventionalpine.org>

### Reminder

The MOT is organizing a seminar on the new European community territorial cooperation instrument, the EUROPEAN GROUPING OF TERRITORIAL COOPERATION (EGTC), on 16 November 2006 in Metz.

Working languages: French, English and German.

For further information:  
[www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu](http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu) (News)

### Interform - Seminar on "Methodology for setting up cross-border projects in public health"

This "test" seminar, organized by the MOT and the Kehl Euro-Institut on 25 and 26 October in Kehl as part of the Interform project, a European network of training and research on cross-border practices (funded by the INTERACT programme), is on the management of cross-border projects in health cooperation. It will be of interest to public health professionals, health cooperation entities, cross-border cooperation managers and researchers.

For further information:  
[www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu](http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu)

### Cross-border cultural cooperation

The French-Italian Alps Conference (CAFI) and the Alpes de Haute-Provence Department, in partnership with *Relais Culture Europe*, are organizing a seminar on 9 November 2006 in Digne-les-Bains on the topic of cross-border cultural cooperation, aimed at cultural players in the French-Italian Alps, tourism operators and local authority managers.

For further information:  
[www.relais-culture-europe.org](http://www.relais-culture-europe.org)

## Press review

- **Adoption of the Community strategic guidelines on cohesion**, Inforegio release, 6 October  
"The Community strategic guidelines on cohesion (2007-2013) have been adopted following a decision of the Council."
- **Warsaw and Vilnius want to connect their electricity grids**, AFP, 7 September  
"Lithuania and Poland are going to establish a joint company to build an energy bridge that will connect their electricity distribution grids. [...] This bridge will also integrate the Baltic countries into the European energy distribution grid."
- **A disaster on the Rhine to test cross-border cooperation**, AFP, 18 September  
"A barge loaded with hydrocarbons colliding with a boat carrying 400 passengers on the Rhine: that was the disaster scenario of a trinational exercise that [took place] in the Three Borders region [...]. French (Alsace), Swiss (Bâle-ville canton) and German (Lörrach Landkreis) emergency and rescue services [participated] together in this exercise."
- **Geneva-France: a public transport emergency!**, Le Progrès, 15 September  
"A survey emphasizes the inadequacy of public transport on the French side. 'If people come by car, it's because they have no choice.' Almost 500,000 people now cross the Geneva borders every day, including 45% [...] from Haute-Savoie and 20% from the Pays de Gex."
- **Bonifacio - The ports, vectors of cross-border cohesion**, Nice-Matin, 16 September  
" 'La Spezia, Livorno, Bastia, Bonifacio, Santa Teresa di Gallura, Golfo Aranci and Olbia are the ports of call in the log of a sea route that could be our territorial odyssey between 2007 and 2013.' Meeting in the town hall, the elected representatives of these border ports put the final touches to a uniting draft agreement, [...] signed on 22 September in Olbia, last port of call on this North-South route."