



VIEWPOINT

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What are the specific factors in setting up cross-border projects in public health?

A cross-border health cooperation project can work only if the partners on each side of the border have a well-defined common interest in it. In the health sector, the identification of complementarity (structures, equipment, procedures, for example) is essential. Cooperation projects for organizing emergency responses are examples showing the importance of this topic for border areas. Important territorial public health issues can be resolved by good professional training.

To achieve this, the first need, an essential one, is to have good knowledge of the territory and of the different health problems arising on each side of the border. It is also important to identify the differences in terms of means, protagonists and structures involved on both sides. This analysis is a prerequisite for the definition of relevant complementarities to develop within the framework of cooperation.

What is the importance of the development of methodologies, within the Interform framework for example?

The methodology for cross-border public health being prepared within the Interform framework must be developed with and by professionals. The work done during this seminar is experimental. It was constructed around a "practical case" used to test a project management methodology. The important factor in this "pioneering" work is that it should be possible to "generalize" it and transfer it to other regions.

The specific problems of cross-border cooperation (the "intercultural" dimension, for example) and the specific aspects of setting up this type of project are things that can be learned. The prerequisite for doing this is to "formalize" these elements, which is what the Interform approach is undertaking. It is important to reassure people in this area so that they do not hesitate to participate.

Setting up cross-border projects in public health

A seminar on methodology for setting up cross-border projects in public health was held in Kehl on 25 and 26 October 2006, organized by the MOT and the Kehl Euro-Institut as part of the Interform project, a European network of training and research on cross-border practices.*

The context

The objective of the Interform project, backed by the European INTERACT programme, is to develop the capacity of territories to set up cooperation projects by organizing a body of scientific and technical experts dealing with field practices.

One of the strands of this project concerns the design of training courses for those involved in cross-border cooperation. Within this framework, "test" seminars are organized to bring together researchers, training professionals and field practitioners according to a methodological or topic-based approach. The aim of these seminars is to define, organize and formalize method components necessary for the emergence and success of cross-border projects. They lead to the production of "teaching kits", training tools developed for cross-border professionals and intended for transfer to all European borders.

The seminar on public health

Public health is of crucial significance for the populations living either side of a border.



The participants were public health professionals, health cooperation experts, cross-border cooperation managers and figures from the world of research.

They first contributed to the collection of project management methods on the basis of their own experience. There was a wide range of project examples, including inter-hospital collaboration, joint prevention campaigns, joint emergency services and cross-border health observatories.

They then used a case study as a basis for identifying the factors determining the success of a health project; formulated "knowledge", "know-how" and "behaviour" in the various phases of a project; and prepared the dummy of a topic-based training module entitled "cross-border training for project managers on health cooperation between public-sector bodies".

Further Interform working seminars on other topics will be held in 2007, starting in March.

* <http://www.interform-eu.org>

Cross-border world record

A bridge for pedestrians and cyclists was erected across the Rhine between Huningue (Haut-Rhin, population 6500) and Weil-am-Rhein (Baden-Württemberg, population 25000) on 12 November. According to its designers, its 230-metre clear span is the longest in the world for a tied arch bridge.

That day, two barges transported the structure from its assembly site at the port of Huningue to its final location a kilometre away. The bridge, designed by the Austrian architect Dietmar Feichtinger, is a 1000-ton steel structure 5 metres wide. The bridge represents a drawn bow intended, according to its designer, to "symbolize a new strong link across the Rhine between France and Germany".

Going beyond this symbolic link, which can be extended to include Switzerland*, this new bridge will strengthen cultural, economic and tourist relations between the two towns, twinned for more than 40 years. In this regard, the bridge already provides a link between the cycle paths on either side of the river.

Launched in 2003, the project has been managed under a cooperation and financing agreement between Weil-am-Rhein council and the Communauté des Communes des Trois Frontières for the construction and maintenance of the



bridge. The German town was client on behalf of the two authorities. The total cost of the operation is almost 9 million euros, co-financed in equal shares by the two authorities. The project has received grants from the European Union and from institutional partners in both countries.

The bridge is scheduled to be opened to the public on 31 December.

* The bridge has been named the "three countries bridge".





French-German cross-border health agreement

The French-German cross-border health agreement signed in July 2005 by the French and German health ministers was ratified on 13 October 2006. It applies to the German Länder of Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland and the French regions of Alsace and Lorraine.*

This agreement enables French and German health institutions in these regions to sign local cross-border cooperation agreements, the objectives of such agreements being to:

- guarantee the fastest possible emergency care,
- provide better access to high-quality healthcare,

- guarantee continuity of care for border region inhabitants,
- optimize the organization of care provision by encouraging capacity sharing,
- encourage the exchange of knowledge and good practices between health professionals.

The agreement thus emphasizes the improvement of access to care for the populations of the border area. It provides for easier call-out of mobile emergency services and simplification of administrative and financial procedures; it also aims to facilitate the utilization and sharing of human and equipment resources and the pooling of knowledge and practices.

Reimbursement for care

For patients treated in an establishment of the neighbouring country, the reimbursement times can be very long. To shorten these times, the agreement organizes reimbursement without prior authorization for care received within the area concerned, for both out-patient and hospital care.

Going beyond out-patient care, the agreement will enable patients in the areas concerned to receive scheduled care without needing prior authorization, as long as they fall within the scope of a local health cooperation agreement. From the time of signature of such an agreement, prior authorization will be considered to be granted automatically to the patients, which will guarantee their financial coverage by health insurance.

Better organization of services, particularly for emergency care

The rules governing the work of professionals and the financial aspects of the cooperation can be stipulated by the local cooperation agreements, together with the criteria for assessment, quality control and safety of care.

The agreement also enables waivers covering the status of health professionals, so that a French hospital doctor, for example, could be authorized to work temporarily in Germany.

In addition, the local agreements can lay down rules for the organization of emergency care and patient transfers. Exemption from prior declaration can be granted for personnel authorized to practice on the other side of the border. In practice, in the case of accidents the closest emergency service will be able to respond, whether it is located in France or in Germany.

* The text is available at <http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu> (in French and in German).

MOT 2007 Annual General Meeting



The MOT 2007 AGM, headed by Pierre Mauroy (Président of the MOT), will take place in the Palais du Luxembourg in Paris on the 21st of march 2007.

Interform project Internet site now on line



Produced as part of the Interform project (see page 1), a site devoted to research and training on cross-border practices is available in French and in English at www.interform-eu.org.

The aim of this new site is to:

- provide a resource centre on the subject (document database, directory of training locations and directory of experts);
- describe the Interform project and activities and, in a restricted-access section, establish networking between all its partners.

Study on land and property problems in the cross-border conurbations of Geneva and Basle

Commissioned by the French Ministry of Infrastructure, this study, conducted by the MOT in 2006, was presented in full to the Club des Opérateurs Fonciers in Nancy on 5 October 2006. A summary is available on the site www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu (in French). The complete study is available to MOT members on request.

Press review

■ A bridge between Brazil and France, *Le Monde*, 9 November

"French MPs have given their go-ahead for the construction of a road bridge over the Oyapock river, linking French Guiana to Brazil."

■ Esch-Belval: come in, we're open, *Le Républicain lorrain*, 16 November

"Two years after work started, and a few weeks before it welcomes Dexia employees, Belval has officially opened its doors to the public."

■ Three cities seeking stronger links, *L'Alsace*, 4 November

"Basle, Freiburg and Mulhouse want to form closer links. The long-term objective is to establish a strong zone in spite of border contingencies and the fact that Switzerland does not belong to the European Union."

■ Cross-border employment at the centre of the discussions, *Dernières Nouvelles d'Alsace*, 14 November

"Experts from the French, German and Swiss employment agencies met recently to prepare a joint strategy for providing effective services to job seekers and to recruiting businesses in the three borders region."

■ Perpignan - Waiting for the TGV, *Le Monde*, 3 November

"The new Perpignan-Figueras line, which will put Barcelona just 50 minutes from Castillet, will not enter service until February 2009. But the prospect of closer links with the Catalan city is already having a stimulating effect in a conurbation which, far from Paris, is now making an effort to take its future into its own hands."

■ Chirac-Zapatero summit: cross-border regions disappointed at having been kept away, AFP, 15 November

"The cross-border regions forming part of the Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion have expressed their 'surprise' at not having been associated with the preparation of the French-Spanish summit held on Thursday in Gerona. In a release issued in Barcelona, they also complained of the 'lack of progress' in the area of cross-border cooperation [...] since a high-level meeting on this issue a year ago."

