



## VIEWPOINT

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### In what way will the Eurodistrict enable better structuring of cooperation in the cross-border Eurometropolis?

The objective is to make daily life easier over the whole of the cross-border territory, for the inhabitants, the border workers, the entrepreneurs, etc., who are confronted every day with difficulties related to the presence of the border. The aim is to "harmonise" and find pragmatic solutions to these day-to-day problems.

To accomplish this, the Eurodistrict aims to place all the competent authorities around the same table. This is a very important step forward which will enable genuine consultation at all levels (local authorities and administrative bodies, economic and social partners, experts, etc., from the two countries). The objective is therefore to set up an effective structure, with a legal personality, which has real decision-making and policy-generating power. In parallel, it will monitor the operational implementation of the decisions taken. Committees on specific subject areas will propose new works and projects, for example, and an agency with French and Belgian staff will be established to put these decisions into effect. These bodies will be governed by two principles: French-Belgian parity and bilingualism.

### What are the priority projects?

The cooperation concerns many topics, but some flagship projects will be conducted in priority. I am thinking in particular of transport (A24 motorway, road and rail networks) and the economy. For example, it would be useful for the French and Belgians to present industrial sites to international investors together, and to organise joint actions to attract them to our territory while emphasising our cross-border and multinational position. Landmark projects must also be developed to highlight our cross-border position. I am thinking of the Rekkem-Ferrain border post conversion project, for example; it could be the location of the headquarters of the agency of the new Eurodistrict, of a public-private cooperation, and the site of events and exchanges on the border itself as symbols of cross-border relations.

## Towards the "Lille - Kortrijk - Tournai Eurometropolis" Eurodistrict

*On 19 March 2007 in Lille, the French and Belgian (Flemish- and French-speaking) partners signed a declaration of intent for the establishment of the "Lille - Kortrijk - Tournai Eurometropolis" Eurodistrict. This cross-border conurbation of 2 million inhabitants, encompassing the Lille urban community, the south of Western Flanders and the Walloon part of Picardy, aims to become "an exemplary laboratory and territory of European integration".*

This project, strongly backed by Pierre Mauroy, has been germinating since the establishment in 1991 of the CoPIT (*Conférence Permanente Intercommunale Transfrontalière* - standing cross-border inter-municipal conference) with the aim of developing metropolisation on a cross-border scale. This enabled the adoption in 2002 of a "common strategy" and the proposal to establish a "multicentre, tricultural and binational metropolis". 2005 was a decisive year, with the coming into effect of the French-Belgian agreement allowing a common legal structure and the setting-up of a Franco-Belgian parliamentary group, the role of which was to define concrete solutions for reinforcing cross-border cooperation in the field. The final report of this working group, chaired by Alain Lamassouse, was submitted on 19 March 2007. It recommended the establishment of a Eurodistrict, taking the legal form of a European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), available under European Union legislation.

The principal mission of this Eurodistrict will be to promote and support effective and consistent cross-border cooperation within the territory. By bringing together all the competent institutions,



it will be a forum for:

- consultation, dialogue and political debate,
- producing cross-border consistency at the scale of the whole territory,
- facilitating, sponsoring and carrying out projects implementing a jointly-defined development strategy,
- facilitating the daily life of the inhabitants of the French-Belgian metropolis by actions in particular on mobility, transport, education, health, employment, fiscal and administrative harmonisation, security, water resource management and the environment.

Within the framework of the Eurodistrict, the broadcasting of cross-border programmes on the local television channels could be developed, for example. Similarly, provision of cultural and sports facilities, establishment of new public transport links, coordination of competitiveness clusters, cooperation between natural parks or the promotion of cross-border tourism are other topics which could be examined.

The aim is to set up this structure by the end of this year. Meanwhile the statutes, budget and the cooperation agreement giving official status to the joint structure will be finalised.

## Franco-Belgian cooperation for emergency services

*A new step has been taken in cross-border health cooperation between France and Belgium with the signature of a partnership agreement on emergency medical assistance.*

This agreement, signed on 20 March 2007, concerns the responses of the emergency medical services (SMUR) units\* along the whole France-Belgium border. In practice, there has already been close collaboration between French and Belgian emergency services for several years; there are some 400 cross-border responses each year, but they are not recognised officially.

The agreement covers both the medical management aspect and the administrative and financial aspect. It will enable French SMURs to respond on Belgian territory and conversely Belgian SMURs on French territory. The objective is to reduce the time necessary for a medically-equipped mobile unit to reach the patient (on a public way, at home, etc.). While the nearest SMUR team is giving first aid, the ambulance of the country where the incident occurred has

time to arrive, and the patient can be taken to the nearest hospital if necessary. The agreement also has the advantage of not changing anything for the patient: the calling country will reimburse the called country.

The system has been approved by the authorities concerned. The agreement was signed by the Belgian minister of health and social affairs Rudy Demotte and the French minister of health Xavier Bertrand, represented by Dominique Deroubaix, head of the Nord-Pas-de-Calais regional hospital agency.

The project applies to the entire border territory from Dunkirk to Longwy, and it seems that Germany is already showing interest in it.

Effective implementation of the system should be possible in the second half of 2007; it still requires ratification of the Franco-Belgian health cooperation framework agreement.

\* Medically-equipped vehicle carrying a doctor and a nurse.



European conference

## “Cross-border territories: day-to-day Europe”

*On the occasion of its 10th anniversary, the MOT is organising a major European conference on the political and operational issues of cross-border cooperation, “Cross-border territories: day-to-day Europe”, which will be held in Lille, France, on 8 and 9 November 2007. Close to 800 participants involved in cross-border cooperation from all over Europe are expected to boost reflection and favour consultation and dialogue on cross-border*

*cooperation. The Commissioner for regional policy, Danuta Hübner, and Michel Delebarre, Chairman of the Regions Committee, have confirmed their participation.*

At the time the Community cohesion policy programmes are being launched for 2007-2013, the conference wants to provide the opportunity to discuss the future of territorial cooperation as an important component in the relaunching of the European construction. The aim is to demonstrate that a concrete Europe is underway in cross-border territories: a Europe of projects, a Europe which responds to the needs of citizens and that the States and the European Union should be interested in supporting the development of such territorial projects. On this occasion, the MOT decided to promote a new strategic guideline of a dual nature: assertion on the political level and a greater European openness. It could also become a “Euro-MOT”, with the objective of setting up a powerful European network to pass on its message all over Europe. The two days of the conference are organised around 2 panel discussions and 12 workshops. They will take stock of the current situation and will formalise issues and proposals for the future in the form of a “white paper”.

**Opening panel discussion “Cross-border territories: an answer for meeting the requirements of the inhabitants, a relaunching of Europe through concrete projects”**

The aim of this panel discussion is to show that cross-border territories respond to the requirements of its inhabitants and that they are an effective way of relaunching Europe through the convergence of national and European policies around concrete projects.

### The 12 workshops

The role of each workshop is to present significant examples of experience, to identify the issues and the difficulties in cooperation, and to generate concrete proposals, topic by topic. These proposals will serve as a basis to establish recommendations that will be published following the conference. The topics of the 12 workshops are:

- First series **“Living and working in cross-border territories”**: Economic development, Employment and vocational training, Public transport, Culture and territorial integration, Environment, Health  
- Second series **“Building cross-border territories”**: Cross-border territories, Cross-border conurbations, Cross-border rural and natural territories, Maritime cooperation, Legal instruments of cooperation, Training in cross-border professions.

A call for contributions concerning the preparation of these workshops (in particular information on landmark projects) is on line at [www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu](http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu).

**Closing panel discussion “Europe of projects to serve European citizens: Which support national and European public authorities are ready to give to cross-border projects and territories?”**

The aim is to move things forward and submit proposals at the national and European level for the future of cross-border cooperation.

The working languages of the conference are French, English and German. You can download all the presentation documents in these three languages from [www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu](http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu).

For pre-registration, please send your full contact details to: [colloque-mot@la4emedimension.com](mailto:colloque-mot@la4emedimension.com)

### ■ Proceedings of the Metz seminar on the EGTC

The proceedings of the seminar on the European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation, organised by the MOT in Metz on 16 November 2006, are on line at [www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu](http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu).

This seminar was an opportunity to discuss the issues of this new European instrument on a European scale and present various EGTC projects.

### ■ Proceedings of the Lille seminar on cross-border public passenger transport

The proceedings of this seminar, organised in Lille on 27 January 2006 in direct liaison with the Ministry of infrastructure, are also on line on the MOT site.

### ■ Cross-border cooperation in the Balkans

The “First regional conference on cross-border cooperation, sustainable development, territories and decentralised cooperation in the Balkans” will be held on 5 and 6 July 2007 in Thessaloniki, Greece. The conference is organised by the French Embassy in Athens, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Thessaloniki city council, with the MOT as a partner.

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

## Press review

■ **Job-seeking: the EURES network reports**, *Europe Information Service*, 18 April

*“The European Commission has presented the activity report on the European portal for employment mobility, EURES, bringing together the public-sector employment services of 31 countries. At the end of 2005, the network had close to one million job offers available...”*

■ **Border workers: the new tax rules**, *La Voix du Nord*, 27 March

*“The “border” tax system is on its way out. Now taxes will have to be paid where one works...”*

■ **Cross-border agreement to predict Moselle flooding**, *Le Républicain Lorrain*, 21 March

*“...The agreement will enable full exchange of hydrological and hydrometeorological data and information relating to management of the dams on the Moselle and the Saar. It will encourage the joint development and application of hydrological models and flood prediction...”*

■ **The Franco-German agreement on cross-border health cooperation has come into effect**, Upper Rhine conference, May

*“The Franco-German framework agreement and the administrative arrangement that came into effect on 1 April and 1 May 2007 respectively enable the Länder of Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate and Saar and the Alsace and Lorraine regions to reach local and regional cross-border health cooperation agreements...”*

■ **Geneva’s geographical maps will at last give details of neighbouring France**, *Tribune de Genève*, 21 April

*“An agreement has been reached to harmonise the mapping of the France-Vaud-Geneva territory. The French Institut Géographique National (IGN) and the Geneva territory information system (SITG) are working together to update the mapping of the cross-border region...”*

■ **Sud Ouest and El Dario Vasco are preparing a monthly cross-border supplement**, *La Correspondance de la Presse*, 18 April

*“...In French, Spanish and Basque, this supplement will have a print run of 200,000 and will be circulated in the Basque circulation area of the Sud Ouest daily newspaper...”*

