



**Pierre Lellouche**  
Secretary of State for European affairs



**Michel Mercier**  
Minister for rural areas and spatial planning

## A new impetus for cross-border policy in France

Last December, French prime minister François Fillon appointed Etienne Blanc, MP for Ain, and Fabienne Keller, senator for Bas Rhin, as "parliamentary commissioners" reporting to Michel Mercier, minister for rural areas and spatial planning, and Pierre Lellouche, secretary of state for European affairs, to examine cross-border issues. Their task, carried out in liaison with Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid MEP, is to draw up an inventory of cross-border cooperation and put forward proposals to reinforce the economic attractiveness of French territories, improve the use of the cooperation instruments implemented by the European Union and identify the expectations of the authorities of border areas. Hearings are being conducted by the three members of parliament in order to produce a report due in April. The MOT, cited in the letter of appointment from the prime minister, is a technical instrument made available to the MPs. It was heard by this commission on 18 January.

Cross-border policy is an issue of primary importance for the development of our border territories, which concern no less than 16 regions, 28 departments and some ten million French citizens.

There is an urgent need to respond to the economic distortions that we observe on either side of our borders, to encourage the establishment of businesses on these territories, to generate employment there and, more broadly, to meet the needs of the citizens who live there and are confronted every day with border issues.

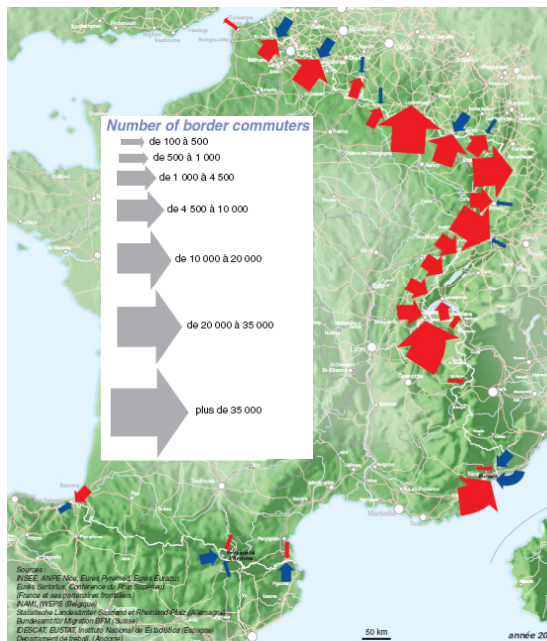
These affect very various but very practical areas, such as transport, health, services to the public, taxation and social services.

Today the difficulties encountered, sometimes even the "barriers" raised, need to be transformed into opportunities and "development systems". All this takes on a particular dimension in the context of the constitution of a "Europe of territories", which we must bring closer to the day-to-day concerns of its citizens.

Therefore we have great expectations of the parliamentary commission initiated by the prime minister in December to draw up an inventory of cross-border cooperation and put forward proposals for taking better advantage of the opportunities in the cross-border territories.

There is thus a substantial challenge to achieve a better balance between the territories on either side of our borders! And it is with great attention that we will follow the results of this work, expected by next spring.

Border worker flows on French borders



EGTCs and planned EGTCs\* on French borders



### Some major topics\*\*

**Governance:** A number of legal instruments (LGCC, EGTC and soon the ECG) facilitate cooperation procedures and organization (see map above).

**Economy, employment and taxation:** The economy and employment are at the heart of the functioning of urban or rural cross-border living areas. More than 310,000 persons who live in France cross the border every day to work in a neighbouring country, while only 10,000 persons make the trip in the opposite direction to work on the French side. This raises questions on the economic interdependence of French border territories with neighbouring countries.

**Transport and mobility:** Cross-border public transport of passengers is of fundamental importance in making exchanges smoother. However, the modal share of public transport in cross-border areas is very small: 90% of the 310,000 cross-border workers use their own cars. Of the remaining 10%, 80% use trains and 20% buses. Substantial progress remains to be made, not only in the introduction of new bus or tram routes but also in thinking about the establishment of cross-border intermodal networks.

**Health:** Services to the population are intended to provide the best possible care to border patients as close as possible to where they live, which necessitates complementarity and pooling of healthcare facilities on either side of the border and mobility of practitioners and

patients, with the healthcare cost reimbursement issues that it raises.

**Education:** Civic integration and the competitiveness of cross-border territories necessitate greater mastery of the languages of the neighbouring countries and also increased cooperation at university level. Bilingualism remains problematic and is not promoted sufficiently.

**Sustainable development and environment:** The cross-border scale is relevant in many areas, including pollution control, water management and flood control, renewable energies, waste, and non-motorized travel modes.

\* European grouping of territorial cooperation – To download these maps: [www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu](http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu) – You can also view the MOT map collection (in French): more than a hundred topical maps analyzing the state of cooperation by topic and by territory.

\*\* Non-exhaustive list. For a more thorough analysis by topic and by territory (in English): [www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu](http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu).

## Conference at the French foreign ministry on cross-border policy

At the invitation of Pierre Lellouche, secretary of state for European affairs, a conference on "The French and their neighbours: what is cross-border policy for France?" was held on 9 February at the French foreign ministry in Paris. Three hundred elected representatives, prefects, ambassadors, ministers and representatives of states, as well as a number of local actors, took part in the discussions based on three round tables\*:

### • "How can the employment situation in border regions be improved?"

The first round table emphasized the necessity of generating more balanced conditions of attractiveness, including with regard to taxation, on either side of the border, in response to the growing border flows and their imbalance\*\*. Despite very diverse situations on different borders, a number of common issues can be identified in order to improve the environment of workers (development of mobility, bilingualism, training) and of businesses.

### • "How can the day-to-day life of border residents be improved?"

A number of local solutions were highlighted in this second round table, on very practical topics such as access to healthcare, and associations or task forces providing practical answers to workers. But local solutions are not enough: the speakers emphasized the necessity of an "overall strategy" or of "using legislation" to solve many problems, and that of introducing funding systems enabling authorities to meet already-identified needs (housing, nurseries, infrastructure, etc.).

### • "What governance for a national cross-border policy?"

In this round table Etienne Blanc, MP for Ain, presented the initial results of the work done by the parliamentary commission. He identified as principal difficulties the complexity of French territorial organization, the number of levels of competency and the lack of identified contacts at both local and central levels. Three initial proposals have been put forward: 1/ include cross-border sections in all organization plans for the services of territorial authorities, 2/ establish "special status" areas to relax fiscal and social constraints, and 3/ improve governance within the state and between the state and the territorial authorities through the establishment of an interministerial structure similar to that introduced on the coastline (*Secrétariat Général à la Mer* - General Secretariat for the Sea).

In conclusion, Pierre Lellouche, while reminding the conference of the work done by the MOT, declared that the initial intention of this approach is to identify the problems in order to organize good coordination at all levels. He also announced that he wanted to introduce "registers of grievances" in the border prefectures, books open to border citizens so that they can feed into and enrich these discussions, as well as a website.

\* The complete list of round table speakers can be viewed on the website [www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu](http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu)

\*\* 310 000 workers residing in France cross the border every day, and only 10,000 foreign workers in the opposite direction.



## Revival of the MOT interministerial steering committee

The most recent meeting of the MOT interministerial steering committee was held on 13 January at the invitation of the DATAR in Paris. The founding partners of the MOT\*, the representatives of ten border SGARs (general secretariats for regional affairs) and four other French ministries\*\* discussed the tasks of the MOT as support structure for interministerial coordination on cross-border issues involving French borders. The committee reaffirmed the necessity to define a genuine coordinated public policy on these issues and, to this end, identified the following needs:

- a need for knowledge and tracking of cooperation, with observation organized by border,
  - based on these observations, the implementation of an overall strategy meeting the needs of consultation between the state and territorial authorities,
  - a need for coordination at national levels (bilateral agreements, compatibility of laws, etc.) in order to identify the needs for harmonization at European level.
- To achieve this, the identification and networking of the actors at the various levels were recognized as fundamental.

\* DATAR, Caisse des Dépôts, French Ministry of foreign and European affairs, French Ministry of ecology, energy, sustainable development and the sea and French Ministry of the interior.

\*\* Health and sport; Culture and communication; Economy, industry and employment; Work, social relations, family, solidarity and towns.

## In Brief

### ■ Seminar on involving civil society



On 11 February in Tournai, Belgium, nearly 120 participants from fifteen countries took part in a seminar on "The involvement of civil society within cross-border conurbations" organized by the URBACT EGTC ("Expertising Governance for Transfrontier Conurbations") project, for which the MOT is lead partner. A full article on this event will be included in the next newsletter. [www.urbact.eu/egtc](http://www.urbact.eu/egtc)

### ■ Establishment of a new EGTC



On 1 February 2010, a prefectural order made official the establishment of a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) for the Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict. According to Roland Ries, mayor of Strasbourg, and Günther Petry, mayor of Kehl, "it is a great step forward, from today the 2005 cooperation convention is replaced by the seed of a real cross-border local authority, with its own assembly, its own budget, its own identity".

### ■ "EU 2020" strategy

The MOT contribution to the debate initiated by the European Commission on "the future EU 2020 strategy" is on line on the MOT website. [www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu](http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu).

## Press Review

- **European Summit of Local Governments**, *Inforegio News*, 29 January - "From 22 to 24 February 2010, Barcelona will host the European Summit of Local Governments, bringing together representatives of local authorities, governments, European institutions and the private sector. The question at the heart of the summit will be to know how local governments must work in order to reinforce the cohesion of cities and of Europe."
- **European strategy for the Danube region: beginning of consultations in Germany attended by commissioner Samecki**, *Europa - Press releases*, 1 February
- **New mandate, news competencies: the strengthened regional assembly of Europe in the starting-blocks**, *Committee of the Regions*, 4 February - "At the constitutive plenary session for the 2010-2015 mandate of the Committee of the Regions, the local and regional representatives of Europe will express their strengthened position in accordance with the new provisions of the Lisbon treaty."
- **Pilot project for electric vehicles between Strasbourg and Stuttgart**, *DNA*, 5 February
- **The Nord-Pas de Calais breaks down its borders**, *Le Monde*, 3 February
- **Signature of the France-Luxemburg intergovernmental agreement on cross-border matters** - *France Diplo TV*, Ministry of foreign and European affairs, 1 February
- **A cross-border plan between the Queyras and Po nature parks**, *Le Dauphiné libéré*, 24 January "An integrated cross-border plan (Pit) drawn up jointly by the Le Queyras regional nature park and the Po park in Italy has just been notified, as part of the Alcotra community project."
- **The Ventimiglia duty-free zone worries the Alpes-Maritimes**, *Les Echos*, 4 February - "The local authorities in the Alpes-Maritimes region have taken little interest in the proposed urban free zone that Ventimiglia is preparing to launch on the French border. In the absence of genuine cross-border cooperation, this project is nevertheless likely to penalize the Côte d'Azur economy."
- **Beyond the borders - La Casa de la Generalitat a Perpinyà presents its newsletter**, *Newsletter of la Casa de la Generalitat de Catalunya a Perpinyà*, no. 1, January-February

