



An example of an economic development project on the Germany/Netherlands/Belgium border

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At the border between Netherlands, Belgium and Germany, six partners* joined forces some time ago and decided to agree on a common agenda for a Top Technology Region, known as TTR-ELAt. The partners decided to unite after realising their combined competitiveness would only blossom through long-term collaboration. The Swiss firm of BAK Basel Economics identified potential sectors for collaboration and also demonstrated that this region, with some 8 million inhabitants, is one of the top technology regions in Europe. The six subregions have cooperated in developing an action programme, and on 10 March 2010, the national, regional and local politicians involved kicked off the implementation process.

In terms of content, the emphasis is on developing activities related to Chemicals and New Materials, Health Sciences and High-Tech Systems, in particular the connections between these sectors. The action programme will be implemented in six action categories, including strategic cross-border networking, support for business development, entrepreneurship, and removing institutional barriers. The Dutch Province of Limburg has played a leading role in setting up this unique initiative by dovetailing regional and national government interests with an existing initiative undertaken by the three cities involved. The emphasis is on optimising collaboration between research and educational institutions, multinationals and small and medium-sized enterprises, and government, resulting in specific projects, products and activities. This initiative goes well beyond traditional INTERREG initiatives, and in fact constitutes an open innovation model at the functional regional level. It represents a new dimension in cross-border collaboration. For example: the TTR-ELAt stakeholders are already members of two European KICs; Aachen's university of technology and NedCar are collaborating on a new electric car; research institutions and enterprises in three countries are integrating their knowledge into an "intelligent" cane (I-Cane) for the blind; research campuses are working together; cross-border partners are cooperating on developing biomedical materials; universities have developed entrepreneurship curricula; and so on. Structured collaboration opens up almost unlimited opportunities!

* Dutch Provinces of Limburg and Noord-Brabant, the Belgian Provinces of Limburg, Flemish Brabant and Liège, part of Germany's federal State of North-Rhine Westphalia, and the Cities of Eindhoven (NL), Leuven (B) and Aachen (D).

Economic development: Exploit the "cross-border territorial capital"

Reinforcement of cooperation between economic actors on either side of a border can generate real development opportunities. In this area public-sector and economic actors often find themselves in a complex system of competition and cooperation. The challenge for cross-border territorial development is to move forward from a logic of pure competition to a logic of "coopetition" combining the two.

There are many initiatives in Europe encouraging cross-border economic development, as shown by the examples presented here (point of view to the left and box on page 2). In general the experiences show that the workers' and businesses' mastery of two languages, two cultures and two different administrative and legal environments is an essential step in such development.

Disparity between the economic forces on either side of the border is also a determining factor. The economic or industrial fabric often varies according to differences in wages, unemployment rates and prices which can be considerable. This type of context can be both an asset for businesses that can profit from such differences (for example by choosing the most suitable system) and a handicap for other actors.

In an economy of scale approach, "larger" also means "greater impact"; cross-border cooperation expands the territory, and may enable a "critical mass" to be reached in terms of facilities or investments, for example. Cross-border clusters provide a good example of economy of scale, exemplified by the Biovalley trinational life sciences cluster on the French-German-Swiss border, where the cooperation has enabled a critical mass to be attained and allowed integration of all steps in the production chain (www.biovalley.com).



Nevertheless, cross-border development of businesses necessitates support from the public authorities, because these businesses face all sorts of difficulties: financing, distortions of competition (public-sector markets closed to businesses from the other side of the border), lack of interoperability in terms of standards, insurance, certifications, labour market, etc. Initiatives can help businesses by providing information and facilitating their actions (for example to set up cross-border territorial marketing), helping them to find skilled personnel, financing their development on the other side of the border, coordinating the actors, establishing suitable infrastructures (such as cross-border business parks), etc.

A few examples of projects on page 2.▶

French-Swiss cross-border congress

The 28th congress of the Groupement Transfrontalier Européen (GTE), chaired by Michel Charrat, was held on 10 April 2010 in Annemasse, France, and attended by Micheline Calmy-Rey, federal councillor, Swiss ministry of foreign affairs, and Pierre Lellouche, French secretary of state for European affairs. They stated their determination to work for a better economic, social and fiscal balance for border territories on either side of the French-Swiss border.

This year the GTE congress took place in a context of major developments, starting out with an agreement signed the previous day between the French partners of the France-Vaud-Geneva conurbation project. This agreement, establishing a *syndicat mixte* (joint union) ARC SM, is intended to enable the French side to speak with a single voice. It constitutes an historic step in the establishment of joint cross-border governance and lays the foundations for a European Grouping of Cooperation (EGC). Within this framework, the introduction of a single point of contact for cross-border workers in the

prefectures and the introduction of border free zones were also discussed.

The GTE, which joined the MOT in 2008 and now has 30,500 members, also presented its dossiers. Intended to facilitate the daily life of border workers, they cover very practical issues such as the free choice of health insurance after 2014, retrocession of unemployment insurance contributions, family allowances, and the problems of double taxation. (Further info.: www.frontalier.org)

Also worth noting, on 29 March, Pierre Lellouche made a field visit to the EuroAirport and the business park that depends on it in the Bâle-Mulhouse territory. This site has a special binational status dating from 1949 for which, according to the minister, there is a "dilemma between application of French law and maintaining employment". A compromise should be found between a waiver of French labour law (for the 4000 French workers concerned) and the consequences in economic terms of any delocalization of businesses on the Swiss side that would lead to.

The Eurodev Center cross-border business incubator between Lorraine and the Saar



The Eurodev Center cross-border business incubator, on the Eurozone site on the French-German border
www.pepiniers-forbach.fr or www.gruenderzentrum-forbach.com

Marked over a long period by its mining activities, the eastern Moselle territory on the French-German border has undergone a major economic and social transformation in order to exploit new energy sources and innovative technologies linked with both industry and services. In 2008, to guide the territory in these changes, the Forbach conurbation community established a cross-border business incubator. Located in the Saarbrücken-Forbach 'Eurozone', the incubator accommodates and provides guidance for any type of business startup project (or business less than five years old) relating to innovative activities or to high added value services applying a sustainable development approach. The incubator guides entrepreneurs starting new businesses through the various steps in the development of their project: assessment of the business project and the conditions for success, information on available public and private aid, assistance in drawing up the business plan, regular follow-up of the activity of resident businesses, establishment of relations with the local and cross-border economy.

The structure now accommodates ten companies, two of which are German, and has created some thirty jobs. Conferences aimed at Lorraine and Saarland businesses are regularly programmed there. A large part of the strategy is based on the development of close relationships with economic and scientific entities in Germany, and more particularly in Saarland, including territorial authorities (within the SaarMoselle Eurodistrict framework), chambers of commerce and industry (IHK, HWK), French-German business clubs, Saarland training and technology transfer institutions and private-sector partners.

It should be noted that another project, for a "French-Italian business platform for developing the innovating economy of the Maurienne valley", is under study in order to develop economic exchanges between Savoie and the Piedmont region. This project includes a specific approach linked with the redevelopment of mountain territories. A cooperation agreement is due to be signed soon between the partners. (www.maurienne-expansion.com).

Establishment of a cross-border CCI in the French-Spanish Basque country

The CCIs (chambers of commerce and industry) of Bayonne Pays Basque and Gipuzkoa, which for many years have been developing active cross-border cooperation, have decided to take a step forward in their partnerships by establishing a joint cooperation structure. On this territory, whereas the main subjects of cooperation or competition between the North and the South govern the future of businesses (railway line, port, airport, logistic hub, business parks), economic issues are still too rarely included as a key factor in public project decision processes.

In this context, the cross-border CCI being established has a double vocation: 1) greater economic integration of the Basque Country-Gipuzkoa area by encouraging connections of all types, and 2) resolution of the difficulties that hamper cross-border economic cooperation every day. Two missions have therefore been defined: represent businesses before public bodies (opinion on major projects, seminars on cross-border issues, source of proposals) and back projects that facilitate cooperation between businesses. The MOT is currently working to help the partners in developing the legal framework of the project, which receives Interreg funding.

Press review

- Herman Van Rompuy in Lille yesterday: weighty support for Eurometropolis, *La Voix du Nord*, 11 April
The president of the European Council [...] was in Lille to observe the workings of the cross-border body.
- No more borders for the air, *Le Républicain lorrain*, 27 April - Simone Peter, Saarland minister of the Environment, and Alain Marchal, representative of the prefect of the Moselle, attended the signature of a cooperation charter reinforcing collaboration between the air quality monitoring networks...
- Eurodistrict - Marcus Obrecht appointed secretary-general, *DNA*, 25 April - Two months after its establishment, the bureau of the Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict has just appointed its first secretary-general.
- A cross-border plan to protect Mont Blanc, *Environnement Magazine*, 1 April - *The Espace Mont-Blanc has obtained funding of €12m as part of an integrated cross-border programme. Objective: recognition of the territory as UNESCO biosphere reserve or world heritage site.*
- An EGTC for restoring her entity to Mother Nature, *Tribune Bulletin Côte d'Azur*, 23 April - *Parc national du Mercantour and Parco naturale delle Alpi Marittime are preparing to sign a union [...] thanks to the EGTC...*
- University partnership with Gerona, *L'Indépendant*, 25 March - *A framework agreement has been signed for the establishment of a Pyrenees-Mediterranean cross-border research and higher education centre...*
- Gipuzkoa and Pyrénées-Atlantiques are collaborating actively, *Sud Ouest*, 14 April - *The Pyrénées-Atlantiques council and the Diputación foral de Gipuzkoa were pioneers in signing a cross-border cooperation agreement on 13 April 2005. On Monday the protagonists of this agreement drew up the balance sheet...*
- The first cross-border hospital in Europe under construction in the Pyrenees, *AFP*, 26 April - *The French minister of health, Roselyne Bachelot (3rd from left), her Spanish counterpart Trinidad Jimenez (3rd from right) and the president of Catalonia José Montilla (4th from right) during a visit to the site in Puigcerda...*

2010 General Assembly

The MOT General Assembly will take place in Paris this year on 3 June 2010 at the invitation of the Caisse des Dépôts. It will be chaired by Michel Delebarre, MOT president, former minister of state, MP and mayor of Dunkirk.

The assembly is preceded, on 2 June, by a conference on the topic:

"The future of the organization and funding of cross-border cooperation in Europe".

For further information, and if you wish to attend, all of the documentation is on line at www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu

In brief

■ Establishment of the CECICN

The Conference of the European Cross-Border and Interregional Cities Network (CECICN) was launched officially on 23 April 2010 in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, where its head office is located. This conference brings together more than 500 cities and towns, located in European border areas and members of the following six founding networks: the MOT, the RIET (Red Ibérica de Entidades Transfronterizas), the CAAC (Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities), the FAICT (Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities), Medcities and the UBC (Union of the Baltic Cities). The main objective is to establish a direct line with the European Union and share the same scenario existent for similar regions network. A more complete article will be published in a future newsletter.

■ EU 2020

Following a European Commission proposal on the Europe 2020 strategy on 3 March 2010, the Committee of the Regions has opened a new consultation with European regions and cities to reinforce the place and the role of the territorial level in this process. The MOT contribution, available on the website www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu, aims to promote the inclusion of the cross-border local level. The new European strategy is due to be adopted by the European Council in June.

■ The Guide to cross-border projects



In March 2010 the MOT published a "Guide to cross-border projects", a practical operational and financial tool intended for local elected representatives and for project stakeholders (available in French).

For requests or to download the Guide: www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu (in French).

