



## Guy Hermitte

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*Above and beyond the strong historical links between the greater Briançon and Maurienne districts and the Piedmont valleys, the local authorities of the Hautes Vallées share cross-border cultural, environmental and social problems and a certain isolation. The 1990s opened the way to cross-border cooperation. These exchanges resulted in 2000 in the formation of the "Conférence des Hautes Vallées", which converted into an association governed by Italian law in 2007.*

*Since then, these local authorities have been using a P.I.T. (Plan Intégré Transfrontalier - Integrated cross-border plan), as provided for in the 2007-2013 Interreg Alcotra programme, to develop reinforced inter-regional, inter-departmental and cross-border cooperation. A total of 200,000 inhabitants are covered. The Communauté de Communes du Briançonnais (Briançon district community of municipalities) is the French lead partner in this project, which has a grant of 9,463,708 euros funded by Europe, the French government, the PACA regional council and the Hautes-Alpes and Savoie department councils.*

*A number of projects will soon supplement all the actions already undertaken with our Italian neighbours on topics such as making the best use of heritage and cultural resources, enhancing geological sites, preserving forest biodiversity, and promoting typical products and the alpine gastronomic heritage. As an example, the prospect of the implementation of these projects has made all the partners aware of the need to develop a web portal to provide information and promote local tourism facilities through a single platform. In mountain regions, the essential support for life and work is the success of the winter sports resorts, but also the mobilisation of all the potential for diversification (scientific or environmental tourism, heritage, etc.) synonymous with year-round activities and employment. Like all our cooperation projects, this initiative is intended to be federating, structuring, and to complement the actions undertaken by the tourism industry. That is how things are today with the emergence of a community level which places our border spaces in the front line of the development of a sustainable society.*

*Looking further ahead, the Hautes Vallées project must also improve governance on common issues so that these spaces are gradually transformed into a genuine cross-border inter-municipality entity by strengthening all the partnerships. "There is no territory without a future, there are just territories without a project".*

France/Italy

## Cooperation moves up a gear

### The Hautes Vallées: a networked mountain

Last 14 July, in Briançon, all of the elected representatives and technical staff of the Conférence des Elus des Hautes Vallées (conference of elected representatives of the high valleys) were pleased to learn that funding of more than 9 million euros had been obtained for this cross-border area\*. Comprising European funding and national, regional and departmental contributions, this grant imparts a new impetus to cross-border policy in this mountain territory.

Aware of the need to upgrade the exchanges initiated since the early 1990s, the local authorities implemented a new procedure of the 2007-2013 Interreg Alcotra programme, the P.I.T. (Plan Intégré Transfrontalier - Integrated cross-border plan). The P.I.T. is used to develop a multi-topic territory project with a three-year strategy. The original aspect of the system that has been set up is the large number of French-Italian partners, 24 in total. This broad partnership reflects the reality of a mountain territory.

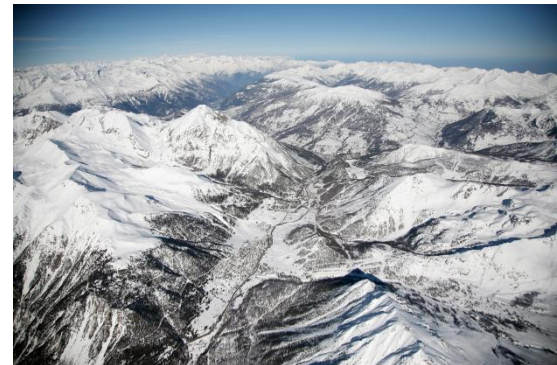
The Hautes Vallées P.I.T. consists of five topic-based projects:

- development of a cultural network for heritage requalification and enhancement,
- formation of a "cross-border geopark" for the preservation of geodiversity and the scientific, educational and tourist development of the sites,
- development of forest resources,
- promotion of typical products and traditional know-how,
- raising of the environmental awareness of various target audiences, with cross-border environmental education actions.

Implementation of these actions is scheduled to begin in the autumn and continue until 2013.

### Po-Queyras-Mont Viso: recognition for border parks

Not very far away geographically, another P.I.T.\*\*, "Monviso : l'uomo e le territoire", is in being set up



between the Parc naturel régional du Queyras on the French side and the Parco del Po Cuneese on the Italian side. According to Joël Giraud, vice-president of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region, "this plan is an excellent instrument for boosting the territories, covering both sides of the border. It is going to support development of the area concerned, based on sustainable practices". With a budget of 10,5 million euros, the projects to be implemented until 2013 cover water resources, slow tourism, culture, agriculture and crafts, timber and cyclotourism.

### Mercantour-Alpi Marittime: towards an EGTC

On 10 September, on the occasion of 30 years together for the Parc national du Mercantour and the Parco Naturale delle Alpi Marittime, an agreement was signed representing a further step towards the establishment of a "European nature park". This project is intended to lead in 2011 to the formation of an EGTC, one of the objectives of which will be to finalise the joint application of the two parks for UNESCO world heritage status.

\* The Hautes Vallées cross-border area is a genuine French-Italian entity under the aegis of the "Conférence des Elus des Hautes Vallées", an association governed by Italian law, which brings together the local authorities of the greater Briançon and Maurienne districts and the Piedmont valleys.

\*\* A total of seven P.I.T. are being implemented on the French-Italian border.

France/Spain

## Higher education: cooperation is getting organised

The dynamism of cooperation in the western Pyrenees is illustrated today in the area of higher education.

Since 2009 the Etablissement Transfrontalier de Formation et de Recherche Sanitaire et Sociale (ETFERSASO) (cross-border health and social training and research establishment) project has been backed by the Institut Régional du Travail Social du Languedoc-Roussillon (IRTS-LR), the Centre Hospitalier de Perpignan, the University of Perpignan Via Domitia and the University of Gerona.

Since March 2010 the two universities have also been collaborating within the framework of the Catalan Cross-Border Euro-Institute, with support from the Generalitat de Catalunya and the Conseil Général des Pyrénées-Orientales, and as part of the Perpignan-Mediterranean cross-border research and higher education cluster (PRES)

associating Pierre and Marie Curie University (Paris-VI), through its Banyuls Oceanological Observatory, and the Spanish universities of Gerona, the Balearic Islands and Lleida.

The ETFERSASO project is aimed at students, practitioners and researchers in the medical and social fields in the Catalan cross-border space, providing initial and continuing training and research opportunities. The Catalan Cross-Border Euro-Institute, modelled on the Euro-Institute (Strasbourg/Kehl), has been established to provide training for local people involved in cooperation and to develop a territorial cooperation resource and research centre. The Perpignan Mediterranean PRES aims to strengthen earlier cooperation arrangements between its member universities and encourage research and innovation based on the 80,000 students and 3,300 teaching staff and researchers that it represents.

Rail transport



The consequences of the reform of the business tax in France, and more particularly the presumptive assessment of

network businesses (IFER), is likely to weigh heavily on cross-border railway lines, particularly those that have been reopened or upgraded on the initiative of border local authorities. In practice this measure leads to the same tax whatever the length of line the business uses on the French network, even if it is only a few kilometres. Many cross-border lines, very important locally for meeting demand for day-to-day journeys, might be closed (because of lack of profitability resulting from this new law). The French-German border, where there is strong mobilisation, provides several examples of threatened lines (e.g. "Winden-Wissembourg" or "Ludwigshafen-Lauterbourg-Strasbourg").

The **Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière**, in liaison with local elected representatives who are members of its network, has informed the French government of this problem. Discussed alongside the meeting of French and German transport ministers on 31 August 2010 in Berlin, this issue is likely to lead to an amendment to the IFER regulations taking account of the "specific cross-border situation". The MOT and its network will closely monitor the progress of these discussions.

Events

The MOT is organising a conference on **cross-border cooperation in the field of sport**

on 26 October 2010 in Wimille (Pas-de-Calais, France), on the initiative of the Pas-de-Calais department council.

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

• **Belgian presidency: High-level conference on European territorial cooperation - 30 September and 1 October 2010 in Tournai (B)**

• **Open Days 2010 – Two workshops on the EGTC - 5 and 6 October in Brussels (B)**

• **Congress of regional nature parks (France) - 7 and 8 October 2010 in Reims (F)**

• **Council of Europe – Congress of Local and Regional Authorities**  
Discussion on draft resolutions and recommendations on the report on the state of cross-border cooperation in Europe.  
13-15 October 2010 in Strasbourg (F)

• **Conference on "Building bridges across borders: towards territorial cohesion in Europe?" - 18 and 19 October 2010 in Strasbourg (F)**

Further information and other events: [www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu](http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu)

The first 'programme' EGTC in Europe

The management of European structural funding allocated to cross-border cooperation is based on a common architecture set up by the European Commission. It is revised for each programming period.

From 2000, the European Commission introduced the principle of single management of each operational programme entrusted to a managing authority, responsible for programme implementation. In most cases this responsibility was given to one of the programme partners.

As part of the preparation of the current programming period, some regions and states, including France, requested the introduction of an instrument for programme management. This led to the adoption of Community regulation 1082/2006 on the EGTC.

There is no obligation to use an EGTC as a managing authority: the regulation provides a flexible and optional framework for the participants in the field, enabling them to establish structures with organs and operating procedures that meet their needs on their borders.

The Interreg Greater Region Programme EGTC

As this regulation did not come into force in many European states until 2008-2009, the only EGTC that has so far completed the process of establishment is the one set up by the partners of the Greater Region\* (Lorraine, Luxembourg, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland, Wallonia) operational programme: launched in June 2006, the EGTC held its constituent assembly meeting at the end of May 2010.

This EGTC brings together within a single structure the eleven partner authorities in the operational programme\*\*. This very broad partnership results from the merging of three Interreg III A operational programmes (Saarland/Moselle (Lorraine)/Western Palatinate, Lorraine/Luxembourg/Wallonia and Germany/Luxembourg/German-speaking community of Belgium).

The EGTC is taking over the functions of managing authority, as defined in article 60 of regulation 1083/2006 (ERDF). Previously Wallonia was the managing authority. The EGTC is responsible to the European Commission for sound management of the programme. It is also working in collaboration with the other entities of the operational programme: it organises and prepares the meetings of the oversight committee, and implements the decisions relating to the programme and the actions concerning the Greater Region geographical entity. It is supported by the joint technical secretariat based in Luxembourg.

The advantage of the EGTC

"When the Interreg IVA Greater Region programme was set up, partner parity (one partner = one vote) prevailed, but one of the partner authorities had to take on the tasks of managing authority, Wallonia in our case", explain the representatives of the EGTC president. "The establishment of an EGTC rationalises this egalitarian representation of the partners, brought together within a single structure. The EGTC also functions as the managing authority, which gains visibility. Other advantages of an EGTC include the ability to recruit its own personnel and to have its own budget".

\* The Greater Region operational programme (106 million euros ERDF) is intended to support cross-border cooperation projects at the level of the Greater Region, but also of these three geographical entities.

\*\* Luxembourg, Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate, Wallonia, The French- and German-speaking Communities of Belgium, the Prefecture of the Lorraine region, the Lorraine region, and the Meurthe et Moselle, Meuse and Moselle departments. The EGTC, with its registered office in Metz, is chaired by the Prefect of the Lorraine region.

Further information at: [www.interreg-4agr.eu](http://www.interreg-4agr.eu)



Press review

- **Cooperation – Progress in small steps on cross-border projects**, Dossier on cross-border cooperation published in *La Gazette des Communes* on 23 August.
- **Make EU cross-border programmes more specific**, *Euractiv*, 1 September - "A recent European Commission report identifies a number of weaknesses within one of the European regional funding programmes...".
- **Four commissioners propose to bring the European funds together**, *Le Courrier des Maires*, 10 September - "Johannes Hahn, Maria Damanaki, Laszlo Andor and Dacian Cioloș propose the setting-up of a European common strategic framework covering the principal European funds...".
- **Health – Cross-border care: green light for the second reading**, *Europe Information Service*, 14 September - "Despite the reservations of some Member States, on 13 September the Council, without debate, adopted its joint position on the draft directive on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare...".
- **The Eurometropolis has its map**, *Nord Eclair*, 12 September - "Two years after its formation, the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis is still looking for symbols. This tourist map arrives at a good time...".
- **Border workers – Wage reduction in a company because of the strong Swiss franc**, *L'Alsace*, 9 September - "A company in the Basle region is imposing a 6% wage reduction on border workers because of the very high Swiss franc/euro exchange rate...".
- **The Casa de la Generalitat manages aid to local cross-border projects**, Casa de la Generalitat de Catalunya a Perpinyà information letter, Sept-Oct - "For the third consecutive year, the Casa de la Generalitat a Perpinyà has taken responsibility for dealing with Eurodistrict grants for the development of cooperation projects between the Girona region and Northern Catalonia...".

