

The European Straits initiative is continuing!

On Wednesday 22 October, the NOSTRA (Network of STRAits) project was closed in Brussels. NOSTRA is a European cooperation project led by the Pas-de-Calais Department. The 16 partners along 8 straits, from North to South, including the Danube delta, share the objective of preserving the biodiversity and natural heritage of their territories, while also highlighting their common concerns: governance, the environment, tourism, mobility and maritime safety, etc.

To respond to these challenges, in 2010 Kent County Council and the Pas-de-Calais Department set up the European Straits Initiative, with the first concrete action being the launch in 2012 of the

INTERREG IVC "NOSTRA" project, for which Europe provided 75% of the financing.

The project's outputs consist of the production of a guide detailing 50 good practices, a baseline study of European straits and 15 implementation plans. The official closure of the NOSTRA project was also the opportunity for the official signature of a new Memorandum of Understanding for the European Straits Initiative. Now numbering 19 partners, the body renewed its political commitment to work for the recognition of the specificities of strait areas by the European authorities and to encourage the development of cooperation projects. [Read more](#)



The BRIT international conference: "The border, a source of innovation"

On 4-7 November 2014, in Arras, Lille and Mons, the BRIT's 14th international conference¹ was held. The aim was to contribute, in a cross-disciplinary approach, to collective reflections on innovations related to border and cross-border dynamics.

Held on the French-Belgian border a century after the outbreak of the Great War, the conference traced the changes seen by the border, which went from being a "front" border to being a "seam", or even "suture" border, as Michel Delebarre, the MOT's Chairman, senator and former mayor of Dunkirk, spoke about in his

opening address, in which he stressed the challenge of making daily life easier in cross-border territories and the unwavering determination that cooperation requires. Numerous workshops allowed researchers from all over the world to present their scholarly contributions relating to all types of borders, both closed and open, and all the topics linked to cooperation. Four workshops² organised by the MOT enabled cross-border professionals to participate in the academic conference. Several MOT members had the opportunity to promote their cross-border territories, particularly during

the day field trip entitled "from the Great War to cross-border cooperation": the Conseil général of the Pas-de-Calais Department and the European Straits Network; the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis and the cross-border Jacques Delors Square, which links the towns of Halluin and Menen. [More info](#)

¹ "Border Regions In Transition" is an international network that brings together researchers and practitioners who deal with border issues. The "BRIT" conference is held every two years in different parts of the world at university sites located on either side of a national border.

² On jobs and education; innovation; public services; and representations of the border: from violence to integration.

EVENTS

Conference "Borders, regions, neighborhoods: Interactions and experiences at EU external frontiers", 27-28 November 2014 in Tartu (Estonia)

Stakeholder Conference on the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region, 1-2 December 2014 in Milan (Italy)

Interregional cooperation forum INTERREG EUROPE: "Europe, let's cooperate!", 2-3 December 2014 in Bologna (Italy)

Conference "Castle-talks on Cross-Border Cooperation", 8-9 December 2014 in Strasbourg

MOT

Conference "Cross-border healthcare", 10 December 2014 in Paris, organised at the Assemblée Nationale by Philip Corderoy, Member of parliament for French residents in the Benelux and Chairman of the Parliamentary Group on Cross-Border Cooperation (FR), in partnership with the MOT.

Conference "Cross-border and medico-social cooperation: taking stock – challenges and perspectives", 11 December 2014 in Lille, organised by the French-Belgian Health Observatory.

Tous les événements sur : www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu

The "Espace Pourtalet": from border to symbol of cooperation



On 27 October 2014, the two member institutions of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), set up in 2011 by the Pyrénées Atlantiques Department and the Government of Aragon, inaugurated the Espace Pourtalet Centre, the first concrete result of the work carried out by the EGTC. Located in a converted former Spanish customs house, this new facility comprises a cross-border snow-clearing centre and a cross-border resource centre.

At a cost of more than €1 million, 65% of the project's financing has come from the POCTEFA programme as part of the "Espalet" project.

The new cross-border facility is designed to give impetus to cultural, tourism and economic projects on either side of the border, with these activities also coming within the EGTC's remit. In place of the border, there is now the work of art entitled "El otro lado-L'autre côté", a symbol of cooperation.

The ground floor of the cross-border resource centre is a space dedicated to welcoming pilgrims and mountain enthusiasts. The first floor consists of a multi-purpose space for exhibitions, seminars and training courses, as well as a tourist information point. The second floor, the building's "technical" area, is given over to the EGTC's headquarters.



The coordination of the teams charged with ensuring the roads are passable in winter is based in the second building, the cross-border snow-clearing facility. In the summer, this multi-purpose building will house different tourist-oriented and cultural events.

The EGTC's activities are ongoing and relate to different areas such as tourism, with the creation of a unique tourist destination in the heart of the Pyrenees, culture, with the setting-up of a cultural industry incubator, and economic development.

[More info](#)

Summit on the EuroAirport

On 30 October 2014, French President François Hollande received Didier Burkhalter, President of the Swiss Confederation, to talk in particular about the cross-border airport in Basel-Mulhouse, a subject of disagreement between Paris and Bern since the summer.

In July, Paris informed the Confederation that from 2015 it was going to apply French tax rules to companies located in French territory in the sector of the airport with Swiss status – whereas these companies are currently taxed according to Swiss law. Following strong reactions in this territory, the summit of 30 October was reassuring and should make it possible to arrive at "a clear and balanced legal framework" during 2015.

In the words of Didier Burkhalter: "I am now convinced that we can find a solution that will be a good compromise." On his side, President François Hollande said that he would ensure that the facility retains its "binational"

character and its "development".

This was the reaction of Jean-Marie Bockel, Senator of the Haut-Rhin Department, the EuroAirport's administrator:

"These are the first effects of the strong mobilisation by representatives from the economic sphere and all of the elected representatives [...]. It is crucial that the negotiations succeed in order to safeguard this model of French-Swiss partnership, which is vital for the future of our region, with the EuroAirport being the second biggest employer in South Alsace, providing nearly 27,000 direct, indirect and dependent jobs."



The end of roaming charges in Europe - not straightaway!

In April 2014, the European Parliament adopted a draft regulation on the ending of roaming charges for mobile phones in Europe.

Originally scheduled to take effect on 15 December 2015, the ending of roaming charges has been postponed, with no indication of the new date, as stated in a document put out by the Italian presidency: "The legislative date for the initial introduction of RLAH (roam like at home)...needs to be defined and is a significant political question."

It should be recalled that roaming is an artificial market and that it constitutes a significant obstacle to mobility and economic development in Europe. In border regions, it greatly hampers firms' competitiveness and runs counter to citizens' rights.

Seminar to launch the 2014-2020 programming period in Montpellier

In France, the Government and the regions launched the 2014-2020 programming period for European funds at a seminar held in Montpellier on 14 November 2014, in the presence notably of Sylvia Pinel, the Minister of Housing, Territorial Equality and the Countryside, and Harlem Désir, the Secretary of State for European Affairs. The event brought together 500 representatives from public administrations, local and regional authorities, and socio-economic and civil society players, including the MOT, in order to provide information about progress on and preparation for the fund programming period. To date, ten French programmes have been adopted by the European Commission. Funding of €27.5 billion has been allocated to France for the 2014-2020 programming period (under the ERDF, ESF, EMFF and EAFRD). [More info \[FR\]](#)

Two workshops on cross-border economic development held at the MOT's offices

As part of its project on cross-border economic development*, co-financed by the technical assistance programme Europ'Act, the MOT held two workshops on 27-28 October in Paris in order to prepare the drafting of two handbooks on this topic.



Currently being drafted for publication in 2015, the first handbook will deal with the life cycle and setting-up of cross-border economic projects. The second document will address the partnership procedures to be implemented in order to encourage the emergence of operational projects.

More than 20 local and national players took part in two working groups set up by the MOT in its premises on 27-28 October 2014. The exchanges between the participants made it possible to identify the challenges that face cross-border economic cooperation, the potential solutions and points where vigilance is needed. The

participants also exchanged views about the format of the two handbooks, emphasising the need to produce methodological and practical guides that are easy for stakeholders to appropriate.

The lively discussions of these two days enabled the MOT to produce a preliminary detailed plan of the two handbooks. This was then submitted to the participants and other key stakeholders in cross-border economic development in order to gather their written comments and contributions.

The first sections of the two deliverables (summary and contents) will be the subject of validation at a second session of

the working groups that will take place on 15-16 December in Paris.

Another objective of these two sessions is to determine the final recipients and the means of capitalising on the deliberations carried out since the start of the project in January 2014.

The handbooks will be finalised and ready for distribution by June 2015.

*More info on the project



Project co-funded by the European Union. Europe is committed in France with the ERDF. www.europ-act.eu

Interactive meeting of the network on the MOT's activities and launch of a working group on changes to its structure

The members of the MOT's network met in Paris on 15 October 2014 for a day of exchanges about their wishes and needs with respect to the MOT's activities and objectives. The day was also an opportunity to think about the 2015-2017 work programme and to launch a working group charged with deliberating on changes to the MOT's statutes. The working group's first meeting, which is open to all of the network's

members, will be held in Paris on 18 December. Its role will be to draw up a new version of the statutes in order to adapt them to territorial developments and to players' new needs. This version will then be submitted for approval at the MOT's next general assembly, scheduled to take place on 19 June 2015 in Chamonix.

In the morning, the technicians' platform made possible an interactive discussion about the

MOT's objectives and activities. The members stressed the importance of lobbying actions and networking among players. In the afternoon, the board, chaired by Michel Delebarre, highlighted the network's areas of concern, including account being taken of the cross-border dimension in the territorial reform and the need for "experimentation" in border territories.

[More info \[for members\]](#)

AEBR's position on the cohesion report

The AEBR is working on a position paper regarding the sixth cohesion report published in July 2014 by the European Commission. The AEBR points out that "even if territorial cooperation is described as being 'one of the two priorities of the EU's cohesion policy', it has not been given sufficient consideration in legislation". The MOT shares this position.

[The sixth report on cohesion](#)

PRESS REVIEW

▲ The Commission wants to harmonise European toll roads

Euractiv, 7 November

"The European Commission has announced that it will shortly propose draft legislation on motorway toll roads – a burning subject in France."

▲ More than 100,000 job vacancies on the border

Nord Eclair, 24 October

"A third of vacancies are difficult to fill. In 2014, one in four businesses in the Wallonie Picarde area [of Belgium] was planning to take on staff, particularly in the region around Ath. In Flanders on the other hand, it's one in five, but most of the vacancies are in the area of the Belgian border."

▲ Cross-border workers struggle to get their Belgian pension

La Voix du Nord, 31 October

"A former cross-border worker, Joao De Oliveira, who has been unemployed since he was 51, will only receive his Belgian pension once he is 65. He tells his story."

▲ Wallonia and France agree on residential care for disabled people

Le Soir, 4 November

"More than 6000 disabled French people are currently staying in 140 medico-social or educational structures in Wallonia."

▲ Third Eurodistrict marathon: attracting more Germans

DNA, 19 October

"The third Eurodistrict marathon resembles another well-known sport in this cross-border region that often comes up against national legislations: the administrative obstacles jump."

▲ Apprenticeship crosses the border

Le Républicain lorrain, 1 November

"With the Lorraine Region and Saarland having only just signed, in June, a cross-border agreement on apprenticeships, Smart France already expressed its wish to be a pilot site. 'We have a real need in this area, but above all a real problem in terms of recruiting,' shares Joëlle Bonnet, head of training at the production site in Hambach."

▲ Risk-taking by cross-border workers

DNA, 10 October

"Forced to choose between the French and Swiss health insurance systems, more and more cross-border workers have taken out private insurance. Even if it means crossing a line."

▲ Genevans living in France ready to leave

Le Pays Gessien, 16 October

"The Genevans who moved to France are going to come back. 'In the space of a few months, conditions in neighbouring France have been totally shaken up. The changes with respect to health insurance, death duties and taxation of capital gains have reduced the benefits of living outside Geneva' [recalls François Longchamp, President of Geneva's Conseil d'Etat]. The canton of Geneva, which has long relied on France to house its inhabitants, predicts that this movement 'is going to end up by coming back in our faces – and it won't take long'. Hence the need to build a significant number of houses."

▲ The CCPD, an effective tool for the French-Swiss police

Le Dauphiné libéré, 22 October

"Comfortable, but isolated and discreet prefabricated buildings on the other side of the runways of the airport in Cointrin. In Meyrin, no one seems to know the CCPD (the Police and Customs Cooperation Centre), and even less can they direct you there. It is here, in a secure area, that 40 or so police officers, customs officials, gendarmes and border guards work in close collaboration and in shared premises, 24 hours a day and 365 days a year."

▲ The Lyons-Turin line sees the start of the tunnel

Eco des Pays de Savoie, 10 October

"An important new milestone for the Lyons-Turin line has been reached. On 1 October, the agreement for the financing of the 'reconnaissance tunnel' in Saint-Martin-La-Porte in Savoie was signed."

A new website to facilitate transportation in the Greater Region

Cofinanced with INTERREG European funds and sponsored by the authorities of the five entities that make up the Greater Region (Luxembourg, Wallonia, Lorraine, Rheinland-Pfalz and Saarland), the new website mobiregio.net describes itself as being a portal for mobility in the Greater Region aimed at informing the general public about public transport provision.

The impetus to create this portal was the fact that only 7.2% of the 200,000 border residents in the Greater Region travel by train. The website provides intermodal transport solutions across the whole of the Greater Region. In the second stage of its development, it is planned to provide a cross-border route calculator for the whole territory.



CROSS-BORDER NEWS

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