Aquitaine-Euskadi

Boosting cross-border employment

A study, launched within the framework of a European project,* sets out a comprehensive assessment of cross-border employment in the Nouvelle-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarra Euroregion. The figures presented on flows of workers point to a low degree of cross-border integration in this domain: only 3,863 people cross the border every day to go to their place of work in the Euroregion, whereas 170,000 workers cross the Franco-Swiss border, and 46,000 the Franco-German border. Of these cross-border workers, 87% are Spanish, with the majority of them living in France and making the journey from north to south. Against the backdrop of this assessment, which provides numerous statistical data (demographic, economic, tax, social, etc.), the aim of the project will be to propose actions to better integrate the region’s labour markets and facilitate access to jobs on either side of the border. The MOT has assisted the Euroregion in carrying out this major study. More info

* The “Empleo” project (“Strengthening Europe: development of an Aquitaine-Euskadi Euroregional employment area”), funded by the Interreg programme POCTEFA.

Greater Region

"UniGR", a European centre of skills and resources

As part of the "UniGR – Centre for Border Studies" project, the six member universities* of the University of the Greater Region (UniGR) are going to set up a "European centre of skills and resources in border studies" with international visibility. The multidisciplinary academic field of "Border Studies" brings together in particular the human and social sciences, economics and geography around the topic of national borders, their meaning, their implications and the societal challenges that they generate. The project aims to create the framework conditions conducive to cross-border research, increase exchanges and enhance the mobility of researchers through the organisation of academic seminars and visits by UniGR researchers. The *teaching* component envisages the development of remote learning techniques that were tested in the context of the "Border Studies" Master’s course. Lastly, the strengthening of ties between researchers and socioeconomic players will be fostered through the organisation of citizen forums and the contribution to the Greater Region’s territorial development programme. The only one of its kind, the centre will help to establish the Greater Region as a place with an ambition for excellence. The project enjoys the support of the Greater Region Interreg VA programme. The MOT is a strategic partner in this project. More info

* Universities of Kaiserslautern, Liège, Lorraine, Luxembourg, Saarland and Trier.
European Conference on the Energy Transition and signature of a cross-border agreement

The 2018 edition of the European Conference on the Energy Transition took place on 30-31 January and 1 February in the territory of Greater Geneva, a cross-border first for this event that every year brings together more than 3,500 professionals in the areas of energy and sustainable development. The conference also provided the opportunity to sign a cross-border agreement on air quality in Greater Geneva.

Inspiring plenary sessions set the tone for political and civic mobilisation. The "PACTAir" agreement, which sets out 14 cross-border actions aimed at improving air quality in Greater Geneva was thus signed at the conference. More info

Cooperation on the development of the economic sectors relating to the energy transition was discussed, with the presentation of the strategies of the "4 engines of Europe": the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region, Lombardy, Baden-Württemberg and Catalonia. These regions have similar needs in their territories (air quality, energy-efficient renovation of buildings, clean modes of transport, etc.). Cooperation projects in the areas of innovation and economic development may be set up in relation to this theme. Etienne Blanc, Vice-President of the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region, sees for instance opportunities in the development of the hydrogen car sector with Switzerland.

Workshops provided a forum to discuss a range of topics such as the Aquitaine-Euskadi Euroregional strategy on renewable marine energies, a comparison of French, Swiss and German views on geo-thermal energy, and the exchange of good practices on energy-climate planning between the Metz Metropolis and the city of Worms (DE), etc.

The MOT led a workshop on cross-border cooperation and climate in West Africa and also took part in many of the other workshops, including that run by Enerdis, one of the MOT’s members, on multi-fluid data platforms. Other MOT partners were also present, such as the Caisse des Dépôts, which had a stand on the "Energy Transition Village" to present its new programme "EnRcit", which funds citizen-led renewable energy projects in their development phase. More info

The Greater Geneva conurbation presented several cross-border transport projects that foster sustainable cross-border mobility. More info

The 2019 edition of the conference, which will mark its 20th anniversary, is scheduled to take place in Dunkirk – another cross-border and European event... More info

Bourgogne-Franche-Comté: optimising cross-border relations

"The regions and countries that border the Bourgogne-Franche-Comté Region are very attractive to its inhabitants, businesses and territorial authorities." The Bourgogne-Franche-Comté Regional Economic, Social and Environmental Council has attempted to understand the dynamics at work in the neighbouring territories and their impact on the region, in an 84-page document entitled "From good neighbourly relations to a development strategy". More info

"MMUST” to facilitate mobility within the Greater Region

The MMUST project (Multimodal model and scenarios for cross-border mobility) has just been approved by the Greater Region Interreg VA programme. It is an ambitious project that aims to simulate cross-border movements between France, Luxembourg, Germany and Belgium. In a cross-border region where the road infrastructures leading to Luxembourg are almost permanently congested – over 185,000 cross-border workers travel every day to Luxembourg – and where the situation is constantly getting worse, resulting in delays and stress for cross-border workers, the MMUST project should make possible:

- in-depth knowledge of cross-border movements;
- a comprehensive overview of transport-related projects as well as improvements in them;
- forecasts of cross-border movements and traffic in the future;
- increased cooperation between the four neighbouring countries.

The project brings together 23 partners and is led by the North Lorraine Urban Planning and Sustainable Development Agency. More info
Towards a new European legal tool: the “ECBC”

The intergovernmental working group on innovative solutions to cross-border obstacles met for the sixth time on 6 February 2018. It is working on the proposal for a new European tool dedicated to cross-border cooperation: the European Cross-Border Convention (ECBC).

Initiated by Luxembourg and France (General Commission for Territorial Equality) and coordinated by the MOT, the group was set up during meetings of directors of spatial planning and urban policy in May 2016 under the Dutch presidency. Its mandate was renewed in Tallinn in December 2017.

During its presidency of the EU Council (second half of 2015), the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg highlighted cross-border cooperation issues and the need to resolve obstacles to cooperation. A study on legal solutions to overcome obstacles to cross-border cooperation was then entrusted to the MOT, with the remit to examine the need to change the law and envisage new legal tools.

At European level, the assessment was made, through the "Cross-Border Review" conducted by DG REGIO in 2015-17, that the majority of obstacles to cross-border cooperation are of a legal or administrative nature.

Given the coexistence of different legal systems on either side of a national border, Luxembourg proposed a new European legal tool known as the European Cross-Border Convention (ECBC), which would make it possible, in the case of a territorially circumscribed cross-border infrastructure or service (e.g. a hospital or tramline), to apply the standards of one of the two countries. The idea is to enable local players to trigger a procedure whereby a request is made to the national authorities concerned, which would then have to provide a response, within a given timeframe, to resolve the cross-border obstacle in question – either adapting the legal provisions blocking the project, or concluding an agreement covering their shared areas of competence (e.g. a cross-border public service), choosing to apply just one of the national normative frameworks concerned. This tool, based on the principle of mutual recognition, would allow local players to propose a solution that national governments would either validate or not following a simpler procedure and within a shorter timeframe than in the case of an intergovernmental agreement.

Continued.
A Franco-Belgian action plan to preserve biodiversity
La Voix du Nord, 5 March
"The triennial project TEC (Tous éco-citoyens – ‘All eco-citizens’) comprises twelve partners in the Franco-Belgian border region that have committed to ten action plans to protect cross-border biodiversity."

Those French unemployed people who go and work in Germany
France 2, 27 February
"In the Grand Est Region, France’s employment service Pôle emploi is collaborating with its German counterpart to orient border region jobseekers towards German firms that are having difficulties hiring staff."

Agricultural innovation in the Upper Rhine
PHR, 2 March
"Innov AR is a new European applied research project focusing on major crops (maize, wheat and potatoes) and is aimed at supporting efforts to develop agro-ecology in the territory of the Upper Rhine."

Cooperation in the area of blood transfusions
Principauté de Monaco, 23 Feb.
"On Friday 23 February a meeting was held at the Ministry of State […] within the framework of the drafting of a cooperation agreement aimed at the implementation of the ‘Accord on cooperation in the area of blood transfusions between the Principality of Monaco and the Government of the French Republic’ signed on 13 July 2017."

Merging Greater Region emergency services
La Dernière Heure, 20 February
"National borders cannot be an obstacle to the provision of rapid and appropriate help to the population by the fire and other emergency services. Some areas would, for example, be better covered in terms of intervention times by a service from the other side of the border – hence the idea of merging the Greater Region’s emergency services."

The French drill, the Germans dig their heels in
DNA, 3 March - "On the fringes of the GeoThERM fair at the Offenburg exhibition park, a conference on geothermal energy projects in the Upper Rhine brought together supporters and fierce opponents of this technique on Thursday. Between the power stations that are proliferating in Alsace, Swiss caution and opposing ‘citizen-led initiatives’ in Germany, geothermal energy sometimes struggles to cross the Rhine."

Switzerland – an eldorado for European workers
24 Heures, 2 March
"Free movement last year: 80,000 more working age Europeans lived in Switzerland compared with 2014, i.e. nearly one million in total. Four years after the approval of the ‘Against mass immigration’ referendum, Switzerland remains in the top five most attractive European countries for workers from the European Union (EU), behind Italy and ahead of France."

Heritage: a Franco-Italian cross-border programme
Le Journal du Bâtiment et des Travaux publics, 22 February
"Two proposed itineraries are going to be put in place between Savoie, Piedmont and the Val d’Aosta, with the focus on the promotion, preservation and restoration of certain monuments and sites."

The Saar-Lor-Lux Greater Region: towards cross-border supra-regionalisation?
"Beyond the speeches and symbols, what meaning can the concept of a cross-border region have? By defining the region as an identity-based, territorial and institutional construction that endures over time, this work identifies and investigates the specificities of this process in the cross-border setting. The issues are explored using the emblematic example of the Greater Region, which launched a long-term strategy in 2008 involving Lorraine, Luxembourg, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland and Walloonia." More info

This publication is available in the MOT’s document portal (FR). Specialising in cross-border cooperation, the portal provides more than 4,000 document references. More info