

## The first Borders Forum brought together over 700 participants online

The first Borders Forum was a great success, with over 700 participants online throughout two days of discussions, on 9-10 November 2020. The event was organised by the MOT, in partnership with the European Commission and the European Committee of the Regions.

At the start of the discussions, which were moderated on the first day by Caroline de Camaret, Editor-in-Chief Europe at France 24, the European Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, Elisa Ferreira, stated that, “we could no longer ignore the situation at borders. That is why we need an approach based on the local level and coordination between regions.” “As soon as there is a crisis, whether it’s terrorist attacks, the migrant crisis or now Covid, countries close their borders,” pointed out Karl-Heinz Lambertz, President of the Parliament of the German-speaking Community of Belgium and President of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), “even outside of any European legislation, when cooperation

across borders is precisely what is needed.”

According to Apostolos Tzitzikostas, President of the European Committee of the Regions: “The closures, which were very often decided without consulting local elected representatives, had drastic consequences for thousands of cross-border area inhabitants who could not go to work, receive medical treatment or see their loved ones, even if it was a matter of just a few kilometres from their homes. But this negative effect was felt far beyond these areas, across of the EU, with the risk of collapse of some business sectors. Cross-border territories represent 40% of the total territory of the EU – it is therefore not the problem of a few people, but one affecting everybody!”

The MOT’s President, Christian Dupessey, the Mayor of Annemasse, went on to add: “Now we feel like saying: never again! No more harsh measures, but instead coordination, coherence and a genuine policy for cross-border areas, [...]” [Continued on p.2.](#)

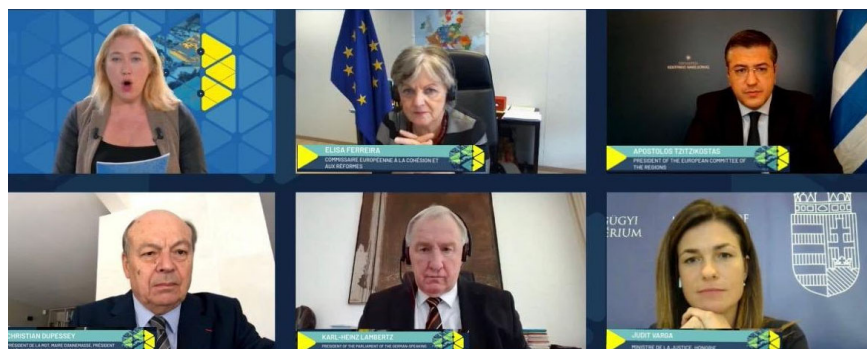


**Jacqueline Gourault**  
French Minister of  
Territorial Cohesion and  
Relations with Local  
Authorities

"Having for centuries been areas of expectations, fears and conflict, European borders are now the subject of a Forum. It is a fine symbol. In these difficult times, solutions can only come from our ability to make cross-border areas places of convergence, trust and partnership.

We need to further intensify cross-border cooperation over the coming months and years. To do this, we have created frameworks to help us formulate common assessments and to have a joint strategy, as is the case with the EUSALP, the macro-regional strategy for the whole of the Alps, the Aachen Treaty, or the Commission’s proposed regulation on the European Cross-Border Mechanism (ECBM) aimed at overcoming cross-border obstacles. This is what enables us to devise appropriate responses for the needs of cross-border territories, especially since they are, owing to their many specificities, areas that are particularly well-suited to the territorial action that we have embarked on over the past three years, on the initiative of the President of the Republic: “bespoke”, or “hand-sewn” action, as I like to call it.

Cross-border territories are “scale 1” laboratories in the next stage of decentralisation that I am advocating: that of enabling experimentation, which opens the way to differentiation. It is no coincidence that our principal success so far has occurred in a cross-border setting, with the creation of the European Territorial Authority of Alsace. This differentiation satisfies the need for both effectiveness and proximity expressed by players in the territories; it will give them the means to be more dynamic and more “elastic”. We are going to enshrine differentiation in two pieces of [...]” [Continued on p.2.](#)



## CONTRIBUTIONS by the MOT at events

**Cross-border conference on democracy: "Together, let's take stock of citizens' participation at the cross-border level"** (Grand Est Region), 20 November. [More info](#)

**Cœur Alpes - Cuore delle Alpi Integrated Territorial Plan, 20** November. [More info](#)

**Oradea Process 2020** (Hungarian-Romanian cooperation), 12 November. [More info](#)

**Annual conference of the AEBR,** 6 November. [More info](#)

**"The benefits of cross-border cooperation for European construction: 100 years after Trianon"**, 28 October 2020. [More info](#)

**Plenary council of the Working Community of the Pyrenees:** "Impact of Covid-19 on mountain border territories. Socio-economic and environmental challenges of the pandemic", 28 October. [More info](#)

## Article continued on page 1.



"[...] with an overall vision involving citizens. I believe that it is possible – solidarity in periods of crisis exists, especially in the area of healthcare."

For Anne Sander, MEP and Vice-President of the MOT: "Many obstacles remain and a great number of them come under the direct responsibility of Member States. We need a stronger European legal framework, and that's why we strongly support the proposed ECBCM aimed at overcoming cross-border obstacles."

It is in this context that the MOT, the AEBR and CESCO, backed by the European Committee of the Regions, have officially presented the ["European Cross-Border Citizens Alliance"](#).

The four roundtables on the first day underscored the needs of border territories: long-standing needs that have been

greatly exacerbated by the crisis. They also highlighted the progress that has been made and the successes of cooperation: Interreg, the EGTCs – with those of the PAMINA Eurodistrict and the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis, both MOT members, having received the Committee of the Regions EGTC prize – and the Franco-German Aachen Treaty. The latter was described as a precursor, "opening the way to a new stage", by the French Minister of State Clément Beaune. On the second day, the territories along France's borders were presented in relation to core themes (climate change, mobility, attractiveness, digital), while at the same time highlighting their great diversity (metropolises, rural areas, mountain areas, etc.). Roland Theis, State Secretary

(Saarland) for European Affairs, stressed that: "Cross-border cooperation in healthcare saves lives. We have to have this freedom to act in the cross-border setting without having to wait for solutions from Berlin or Paris. This is the freedom we need if we wish to be 'laboratories for the Europe of tomorrow' – a Europe of concrete action."

For Christophe Arend, MP for Moselle and member of the Franco-German Assembly, the next stage "will take place in France in the '3D' Act, which should contain a chapter on the cross-border dimension, since the smart solutions devised on the border with Germany can be transposed to all of France's and Europe's borders" ([more info](#)).

### More info:

- [Access all of the replays](#)
- [Press kit](#)
- [Event website](#)

## Continuation of editorial on page 1.

"[...] legislation: the bill approved by the Senate, which will facilitate experiments and open the way to sustainable differentiation; then in January 2021, the so-called "3D" bill, in which we will enshrine the three principles of differentiation, decentralisation and deconcentration.

In order to realise these ambitions and joint strategies, we have put in place powerful support tools. It was to this end that we set up the National Agency for Territorial Cohesion (ANCT): in order to encourage the emergence of projects very concretely and above all to provide the necessary technical assistance to enable their implementation. And to deliver this "bespoke" assistance, the ANCT teams already know they can count on the MOT to enhance their actions.

Faced with today's challenges, which are huge, it is more necessary than ever to work together, in a spirit of mutual understanding, for the benefit of our citizens, whom we wish to put at the heart of cross-border initiatives, in the run-up to France's presidency of the European Union in 2022."

## Opinion of the Grand Est Regional Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESER) on cross-border civil society

At its plenary assembly in October, the Grand Est CESER adopted an opinion on cross-border civil society. The MOT had been formally heard as part of the preparation of this publication.



"Through their local initiatives, civil society players have often been at the forefront of cross-border cooperation. However, today this is above all the preserve of public authorities. People living in cross-border areas are most often seen only as inhabitants, consumers and workers, and too seldom as citizens who should be involved in decision-making." In its opinion, the CESER judges that organising civil society at the cross-border level cannot be addressed at the level of the Grand Est Region, which is too large and too diverse. It should be undertaken at the level of cross-border territories, or that of the major cross-border entities: the Upper Rhine, the Greater Region and France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen. [More info \[FR\]](#)



Launched in 2020 on the initiative of the MOT, the AEBR and CESCO, the Alliance now has the political support of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR). [More info – Join the Alliance to shape the future of cross-border cooperation.](#)

### CoR consultation on

#### “The long-term future of cross-border cooperation”

The aim is to capitalise on the experiences of cross-border regions. Cross-border citizens’ dialogues will be organised in collaboration with players involved in cooperation. On the basis of these, the CoR will adopt a resolution, which will form an official contribution to the Conference on the Future of Europe. [More info](#)

## Incorporating the cross-border dimension into the “3D” bill: the MOT mobilises together with its network



Following on from the words of the Minister Jacqueline Gourault (see editorial on page 1), which give cross-border territories the role of “laboratories for the next stage of decentralisation”, serving as areas of experimentation at the forefront of territorial differentiation, the MOT wishes to elaborate with its network a joint position to incorporate the cross-border dimension into the 3D bill (Decentralisation, Differentiation and Deconcentration). This is due to be presented in the Council of Ministers in January 2021.

• **In the area of “differentiation”**, cross-border projects and the obstacles that impede their implementation

require “bespoke” treatment. The forthcoming 3D bill should go in the direction of the European Parliament and Council’s proposed regulation aimed at putting the [European Cross-Border Mechanism \(ECBM\)](#) in place, enabling the creation notably of a national and interministerial coordination point, which is indispensable to overcome obstacles.

• **In the areas of “decentralisation and deconcentration”**, the bill should be in line with the guidelines set out with the signature of the Franco-German Aachen Treaty in 2019. These signal the need to give “territorial authorities in border territories, and cross-border

entities such as EGTCs, appropriate competences, dedicated resources and accelerated procedures”.

**In order to ensure that this is taken on board, and to follow up on the proposal by the MP Christophe Arend at the Borders Forum to mobilise MPs in border territories around this position, the MOT is inviting the members of its network and its partners to contribute via the [online forum \[FR\]](#) to the drafting of these joint proposals. Dear cross-border players, get writing!**

[MOT’s contribution - working document \[FR\]](#)

## MOT study on the cross-border occupational mobility of refugees and European residents

This study was undertaken within the framework of the legal component of the “AB Réfugiés” project, which is led by the province of West Flanders and funded by the Interreg France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen programme. In the light of the disparities in unemployment on either side of the Franco-Belgian border and the difficulties that can be involved in obtaining a residence or work permit, the study provides an analysis of the legal frameworks pertaining to these statuses and obstacles to mobility. Its objective is to study possibilities for legal modifications.

While there are a number of exceptions permitting cross-border occupational mobility for foreigners residing in the EU, such as for highly-skilled professions, posted workers, seasonal workers and temporary jobs, this mobility is currently greatly impeded by the absence of mutual recognition between countries of the status of refugees and foreigners granted protection. However, the European directives leave open some possibilities in this regard, notably concerning the creation of a special regime for cross-border workers. A subject for the forthcoming 3D bill?

[More info – Documents relating to the study reserved for members.](#)

## Territorial meetings of the MOT network

In order to keep abreast of territorial realities and remain as close as possible to its members, the MOT has launched several initiatives: a technical committee, working groups and a Europe-wide event (the Borders Forum). It is currently preparing its 2021-23 programme, with the objective of better adapting to local, national and European needs, and fostering its “modularity”. It was in this context that it organised, in September and October 2020, nine “territorial meetings”. Their aim was to better identify territories’ needs, determine the MOT’s capacity to support them, and encourage the pooling of the needs expressed, in order to obtain economies of scale and the pooling of public funds.

Complemented by a survey designed to assess the MOT’s actions and to identify the priority themes and expectations of the network’s local members, these meetings brought together, in person or virtually, nearly a hundred players. Intended to become regular events, they have already highlighted key issues and crucial areas of work. The information and experiences gathered will be communicated to the network shortly.

# PRESS REVIEW

## Internal border checks in the Schengen Area are not an effective tool

**Bulletin Quotidien, 1 December**

"Internal border checks in the Schengen Area are not an effective tool to prevent terrorism, and risk impeding the economic recovery after the Covid-19 pandemic, the European Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, warned yesterday. 'Freedom of movement will be our most important instrument for recovery,' the Swedish Commissioner declared at the first 'Schengen Forum', which brought together [...] the interior ministers of member countries and MEPs."

## The association Frontaliers Grand Est sees a surge in queries

**L'Ardennais, 29 November**

"From Switzerland to Belgium, it provides information to anyone with a connection to the neighbouring country regarding legal questions that they submit to it."

## Coronavirus accelerates cross-border cooperation

**Le Républicain lorrain, 29 Nov.**

"On Friday, the Grand Est Region signed a mutual assistance pact with its German neighbours of Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland to deal better with future health emergencies. A way of learning the lessons of the pandemic."

## For the Germans, "proximity is back"

**DNA, 7 December**

"For German leaders, the European Territorial Authority of Alsace could help make progress on very concrete subjects, such as the Colmar-Freiburg train and cooperation on healthcare."

## Difficulties regarding cross-border apprenticeships

**DNA, 30 November**

"André Reichardt questions Brigitte Klinkert: The Senator André Reichardt (LR) questioned the Minister for Economic Inclusion about difficulties regarding cross-border apprenticeships."

## The Léman Council asks Macron to relax measures

**24 Heures, 4 December**

"Representatives of Geneva, Vaud and Valais Cantons and two French departments have sent a letter to the French President asking him to authorise the 'secure opening' of ski lifts in France."

## Nice and Italy: thinking about tourism post-Covid

**Tribune Bulletin Côte d'Azur, 20 November**

"Organising the cross-border recovery of tourism, making it faster, stronger and more collaborative going forward – this is the aim of the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Nice. [...] The Côte d'Azur remains Italy's number one commercial partner."

## The Nouvelle-Aquitaine-Euskadi-Navarra Euroregion consults its residents

**La Gazette des Communes, 8 December**

"Within the framework of the preparation of its strategic plan 2021-2027, the Euroregion wishes to promote a participative approach by inviting its residents to respond to a survey."

## Cross-border buses: "It's a real boost for the territory"

**L'Indépendant, 3 December**

"These services are part of the Connect project, which aims to improve transport links between north and south Catalonia. The goal of the initiative is to make communities in very remote rural areas better connected."

## The MOT's documentary portal: latest online publications

- **15 years of the EGTCs. Lessons learnt and future perspectives**, *Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives (CESCI)*, Nov. 2020 - *With a chapter by Jean Peyrony, the MOT's Director-General: "Should EGTCs have competences, and not only tasks? Underlying visions of cross-border integration"*
- **Géopolitique des frontières**, *Anne-Laure Amilhat-Szary, Le Cavalier Bleu*, Nov. 2020
- **The role of open borders and cross-border cooperation in regional growth across Europe**, *Kadir Babosca, Taylor & Francis*, Nov. 2020
- **Cross-border cooperation in the EU 2020, survey by the European Commission**, *DG REGIO, Gallup International (follow-up to the first survey in 2015)*, Nov. 2020
- **Le guide opérationnel de la coopération décentralisée**, *French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Delegation for the External Action of Territorial Authorities (DAECT)*, 2020
- **Cross-Border Impact Assessment 2020**, *ITEM, Transfrontier Euro-Institut Network (TEIN)*, 2020
- **Impact of the Covid-19 crisis in the Jura Arc: preliminary statistical elements**, *Jura Arc Cross-Border Statistical Observatory (OSTAJ)*, 2020


[Access all of the publications on cross-border cooperation listed in the MOT's documentary portal \[FR\].](#)

## CROSS-BORDER NEWS

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