

Birth of the Aquitaine-Euskadi Euroregion

A new European cooperation territory

On Monday, 12 December, in Vitoria, Spain, Alain Rousset, president of the Aquitaine regional council, and Patxi López, president of the Basque Country autonomous community, signed the birth certificate of the Aquitaine-Euskadi Euroregion, in the form of a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC). The objective is to intensify the cooperation between the two regions and contribute to the formation of a large space of relations, trade and joint projects encompassing an area with more than 5 million inhabitants. As Alain Rousset says, "it's the right scale to be more

competitive" in terms of economic, social and cultural development. The EGTC contributes to building Europe "from the bottom up", bringing together stakeholders and territories. Three priorities will be emphasized: accessibility and modal transfer, sustainable growth and the reinforcement of the Euroregional identity. The new structure will be based in Hendaye, and will have an assembly of 20 members from the two regions, which will finance it on a 50:50 basis. Alain Rousset will hold the presidency for the first two years.



Patxi López and Alain Rousset at the signature on 12 December 2011.

First assembly meeting for the "Espace Pourtalet" EGTC

Following the official signature on 19 May 2011, the 1st Assembly of the "Espace Pourtalet" EGTC officially launched its operations on 22 December 2011.

Set up for 10 years between the Aragon government and the Pyrénées-Atlantiques department council, this operational project management structure has its registered office in Sabiñanigo, half-way between Pau and Zaragoza. The deliberative assembly comprises eight

representatives of each institution and the technical team will consist initially of a manager.

The work priorities have been defined: winter maintenance, economic development, heritage, culture and tourism. Within the scope of these major themes, practical projects will be conducted starting in 2012-2013, such as effective coordination on winter maintenance with the establishment of a cross-border snow

clearance centre at the Col du Pourtalet; this centre will be used in the summer for tourism and cultural purposes.

A feature of this EGTC is the fact that it is not intended to be a governance structure. The GECT provides greater visibility and enables more ambitious and more structuring projects to be developed under a single "brand". A territorial analysis will be undertaken in 2012 to move in this direction.

EVENTS

JANUARY - FEBRUARY

Les Entretiens du Certu (Certu conference): 'Métropolisation et nouvelles urbanités', on 31 Jan. and 1 Feb. in Lyon (FR) - Note: One workshop will cover cross-border cooperation.

3rd Entretiens territoriaux (3rd territorial conference): 'Culture' of the Regio Pamina Eurodistrict, on 2 February in Wissembourg (FR).

MOT EVENTS IN 2012

- The General Assembly will take place on 4 April in Paris and will be followed on the morning of 5 April by a meeting of the Technicians platform.

- The 1st meeting of the "Renewable energies" working group set up by the Regio Pamina Eurodistrict will take place at the end of May in Lauterbourg (FR). Further information: conchetta.mundo@mot.asso.fr

- A European conference organized within the framework of the CECICN (see page 3) will take place on 25 and 26 June in La Coruna (SP).

- A seminar on the monitoring of cross-border territories in partnership with the FNAU and the DATAR will take place in the autumn.

- A seminar presenting the Europ'Act* study and a seminar on EGTCS in practice are also to be scheduled between October and December 2012.

* Study conducted by the MOT aiming to connect the strategies, the programmes and the projects of cross-border territories on each French border.

Further information on these events: www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu

Positive balance sheet for the 1st cross-border CCI formed in Europe

"BIHARTEAN" is a cross-border chamber of commerce and industry formed in the Basque country in 2011 by the Bayonne Pays Basque CCI and the càmara de comercio de Gipuzkoa. It is the first European example of a cross-border structure established jointly by two chambers of commerce.



Presentation of the cross-border subcontracting directory at the Cumbre industrial de Bilbao, in September 2011.

The principal objectives of BIHARTEAN are to stimulate, coordinate and promote cross-border projects, to be a mediator between the businesses on each side of the border and to develop their relations and their cross-border development potential.

After more than a year of activity, the cross-border CCI displays a very positive balance sheet: 250 businesses in Gipuzkoa and Iparralde (French Basque country) have called upon its services. These businesses come from very diverse sectors (commerce, services, industry, innovation, tourism, agri-food, etc.), reflecting the economy of the two territories.

The actions undertaken include in particular the publication of the first cross-

border directory of subcontracting businesses in the two territories, guidance services for individual businesses and the organization of two "Business leaders without borders" meetings which attracted 200 businesses.

In 2012, the actions will concern two priority sectors: tourism and industrial subcontracting. Regarding tourism, the intention is to encourage cross-border relationships between sites and museums in order to build joint and visible cross-border provision for tourists from all around the world. With regard to industry, BIHARTEAN will be a prospection tool for the subcontracting businesses of the two territories. Other projects such as the setting up of a cross-border commerce monitoring unit

or the implementation of a cross-border e-commerce platform are also planned.

The cross-border CCI was established in 2011 with the legal form of an EEIG (European economic interest grouping), with the support and the expertise of the MOT. The new entity also received European funding through the POCTEFA Interreg programme.



The area covered by the BIHARTEAN cross-border CCI encompasses the French Basque country and the Province of Gipuzkoa in the Spanish Basque country. This territory has:

- almost a million inhabitants
- 63,000 businesses, mainly SMEs.



www.bihartean.com

News from the Upper Rhine Trinational Metropolitan Region



New website www.rmtmo.eu

Three major events dominated the news from the Upper Rhine Trinational Metropolitan Region (RMT) in recent months:

- The first meeting of the RMT policy committee on 28 November 2011 was a "first" in the history of the Upper Rhine. Its objective was to simplify the institutional environment regarding cross-border cooperation while promoting

closer ties between existing structures. This committee is composed of political representatives of the four institutional cooperation bodies: the Upper Rhine Conference, the Rhineland Council, the four Eurodistricts and the Cities Network. Charles Buttner, president of the Haut-Rhin department council, was appointed spokesperson for the

Political Pillar in 2012.

- In December, the RMT website was officially launched. Accessible at www.rmtmo.eu, it is a tool for sharing and joint promotion of the Upper Rhine.
- October saw the launch of the "Offensive Sciences", which is the first trinational instrument for funding pioneering research and development projects.

The tools of cross-border cooperation: Legal bases on the French borders

Best wishes for 2012 and new members



MOT wishes you happy border crossing in 2012!

On this occasion, a new map of the members has been published, in the form of a card.

In 2011 and at the beginning of 2012, the following organizations joined the MOT network: Maubeuge - Val de Sambre agglomeration, chamber of commerce and industry in French Guiana, Ain department council, Haute-Savoie department council and Nice Côte d'Azur metropolis.

Download the new map of members:
http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu/carte_adherents.pdf

View the MOT's electronic New Year card:
http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu/voeux_2012

▪ In French domestic law, border territorial authorities (TA) and their groupings may:

- join a **public body governed by foreign law** or take a holding in the capital of a corporation governed by foreign law of which at least one TA (or grouping) of a Member State of the EU or of the Council of Europe is a member or participant (art. L.1115-4 of the CGCT - French general code for local authorities),

- establish **European districts** with their foreign counterparts in order to conduct operations that have an interest for each participant (for example management of joint public services or facilities) (art. L.1115-4-1 of the CGCT),

- establish **local public-private partnerships** (SEML) with their foreign counterparts (art. L1522-1 of the CGCT),

- set up a **public interest grouping** with foreign public corporations and foreign private corporations with public service responsibilities in order to implement and manage cross-border or inter-regional

cooperation projects and programmes (art. 103 of act no. 2011-525).

▪ In agreements between states signed by France with neighbouring states¹:

- On the French-Spanish border, under the Bayonne Treaty of 10 March 1995, border TAs and their groupings may establish **cross-border consortiums**² enabling them to manage public facilities or services and coordinate their decisions.

- The Karlsruhe agreement of 23 January 1996 between France, Luxemburg, Germany and Switzerland, and the Brussels agreement of 16 September 2002 between France and Belgium enable the countries to establish **local cross-border cooperation groupings** with their border counterparts with a view to accomplishing tasks and providing services that present an interest for each of them.

▪ In European community law: The regulation on the European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) enables any corporation applying the public-

sector contracting code (including French TAs and their groupings) to set up an EGTC to manage European territorial cooperation projects.

None of these structures can exercise any policing or regulatory power, nor raise taxes, nor exercise the powers, duties and functions that the member local authorities exercise as agents of the state.

Conversely, they can receive European community funding when they undertake cooperation actions co-fundable by the EU, for example in the context of European territorial cooperation.

“ The MOT legal information sheets (tools, texts and examples) are available in the members' space of the website: www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu (Accès adhérents > Ressources). Accessible in French.

¹ On the basis of principles defined by the Madrid Outline Convention of 21 May 1980 on transfrontier cooperation between territorial communities or authorities (Council of Europe).

² Public establishments governed by Spanish law.

The work of the CECICN

The CECICN* partners met twice in December and in January in the MOT offices. The work covered the production of a strategy document entitled "Cities and regions engaged in European territorial cooperation" and the organization of a conference on European territorial cooperation, planned for the 25 and 26 June in La Coruna, Galicia, at which the strategy document will be presented. In the context of the Europe 2020 strategy and the future cohesion policy, the objective of the CECICN is to promote the

competitiveness of cross-border cities and regions with the aim of overcoming the effects of the crisis and stimulating growth. European territorial cooperation appears to be a means of ensuring European integration and strengthening the single market. The document is due to be submitted to the DG Regio in the coming weeks.

* Conference of European cross-border and interregional city networks, whose members are the MOT, the Iberian network of cross-border entities (RIET), MedCities, the Forum of Adriatic and Ionian cities and towns, the Union of Baltic cities and the Conference of Atlantic arc cities.



Meeting of the CECICN partners on 15 December 2011 at the MOT.

PRESS REVIEW

▲ Working in Belgium will be less of an advantage

Croix du Nord, 23 December

"From 1 January 2012, the 1964 French-Belgian tax convention will no longer be applicable for new workers. The cross-border status defined in the convention allowed workers to cross the border to exercise their occupation while retaining the tax conditions of their country of residence."

▲ The transhumance of employees

Le Républicain lorrain, 10 Jan.

"An in-depth survey has just been published by the Greater Region's statistics portal [...]. This work asks questions on "who are the border workers of the Greater Region? Characteristics and determinants of occupational mobility."

▲ Ports without borders

DNA, 17 January

"RheinPorts, which oversees the ports of Basle-Mulhouse-Weil, has signed the 'Connecting Citizen Ports 21' agreement. A novel agreement that seven European river ports have signed [...]."

▲ Setting up a platform

DNA, 17 January

"Establishing contacts between job-seekers on the French side and businesses located on the other side of the Rhine, in the Gewerbepark Breisgau, who are looking for personnel: that is the objective of the platform project initiated by the Essor du Rhin community of municipalities with support from Pôle Emploi and the Pays Rhin-Vignoble-Grand Ballon."

▲ A convention recognizes schooling across the Rhine

DNA, 5 January

"After nearly 18 months of battling to have the schooling of his 13-year-old daughter Juliette and of fourteen other severely handicapped epileptic children from Alsace at the Oberlinschule in Kork legally recognized, Anne Laforge has just won a victory. On 21 December, a cross-border convention was signed enabling third-party payment for these children in the German establishment."

▲ At the beginning of 2008, 58,000 workers reside in Haute-Savoie and 22,000 in Ain

Le Dauphiné libéré, 3 January

"These are the figures used by the cross-border statistics monitoring unit to draw up this map. It shows where these persons, who go to earn their living every day on the other side of the border, live."

▲ Health insurance and the second pillar targeted by the ECG for 2012

Le Messager, 12 January

"The president of the European cross-border grouping [Groupement transfrontalier européen], Michel Charrat, lists the major topics for 2012: free choice of health insurance; change in the number of border work permits; euro/Swiss franc exchange rate; the second pillar."

▲ Ground could be broken in 2014

Le Dauphiné libéré, 15 January

"The public inquiry starting tomorrow concerns a project set to cost more than 7.5 billion euros. The 'French accesses' of the high-speed rail link between Lyon and Turin, totalling 140 kilometres, have a cost comparable with the 8.2 billion of the international section."

▲ Regional policy: a complex score for Johannes Hahn

Euractiv, 20 December

"The Commission wants to orient the allocation of regional aids to the sectors that it judges strategic. A constraint that most of the Member States reject. How many divisions does regional policy have? Many, judging by what was said by European ministers meeting in Brussels on 16 December. For the vast majority of them, the reform taking shape for the 2014-2020 period would place too many restrictions on the end-use of regional funds. To combat the dispersion of expenditure, the European Commission wanted to refocus the cohesion policy on priority topics. Result: in the advanced territories, 80% of the national envelope of the [ERDF] would be devoted to SMEs, renewable energies, energy efficiency, research and innovation."

"La coopération transfrontalière"

Considered in the past as peripheral territories, today the cross-border regions are a preferred field of intervention for reducing the disparities in the European Union.

In the context of decentralization, French local authorities have gradually acquired the right to conduct cooperation actions with the authorities of neighbouring states, which already have broad scope for initiatives as part of decentralized or federal systems. This has enabled cooperation bodies to be established, resulting from cross-border or European community agreements.

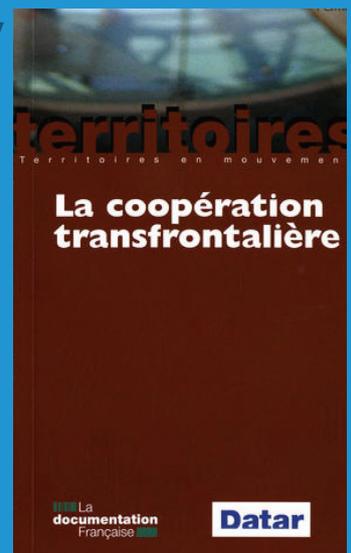
Nevertheless, legal obstacles persist, interfering with the development of some cross-border territories. To remedy this situation, new options are under study in France and in the rest of the European Union.

Available in French.

Author: DATAR - Collection: Territoires en mouvement

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To order: www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr - Price: €8.55



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