



**borders
forum**
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The plea of cross-border territories: a time of urgency!

Almost 700 people are currently attending the 1st Borders Forum, organised by the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT), in partnership with the European Commission and the European Committee of the Regions, along with France 24, which is moderating the first day. It is being held online on Monday 9 and Tuesday 10 November.

Elisa Ferreira, European Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, underlines on this occasion: “Since the coronavirus outbreak and the sanitary and socio-economic crisis, we have become even more aware of the importance of solidarity across European borders. Thanks to the Borders Forum we reiterated the need for closer cooperation among border regions which are often peripheral with more limited access to public services. The European Commission welcomes the signing of the “**European Alliance for Cross-Border Citizens**”¹ which aims to make border regions much more visible among local, national and European decision-makers. We are committed to working hand-in-hand with border regions to make sure we leave no-one behind.”

According to **Apostolos Tzitzikostas**, President of the European Committee of the Regions: “The pandemic is testing our cooperation capacity across borders to the limits. Border regions have put in place an extraordinary and creative effort to join forces to protect citizens and support the economy. But when borders were closed overnight, thousands of European citizens could not go to work, receive medical treatment or see their loved ones. And business sectors relying on workforce coming from the other side of the border risked collapsing. As regional and local leaders we know the struggling of these communities and also that our people want more cooperation on challenges including health, security, migration, climate. The European Committee of the Regions is working hard to turn the lessons we are learning in a new phase where EU's internal border are laboratories for unity, enhancing resilience, fostering dialogue and accelerating the green transition.”

The president of the MOT, **Christian Dupessey**, mayor of Annemasse, representing an emblematic cross-

¹ Launched at the initiative of MOT, AEBR (Association of European Border Regions), CESC (Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives), and joined by the European Committee of the Regions. Consult the text of the Alliance and join it: <http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/en/news/news/news/show/alliance-europeenne-pour-les-citoyens-transfrontaliers>

border territory, Greater Geneva, said: “**The health crisis has aggravated the difficulties experienced by citizens, businesses and communities in our border regions.** Certainly, it has stimulated cooperation, and revealed the very strong interdependencies on both sides of the borders, but today it leaves us facing huge challenges”.

“**At a time when many countries are turning inwards, our Borders Forum illustrates the role of borders, and of territories adjacent to them,** in bringing people and nations closer together, paving the way for sustainable and inclusive growth, and supporting European cooperation and integration. Today **we are sending a message to national and European authorities to strengthen their support and place cross-border territories at the heart of their action. This is the meaning of the “European Alliance for Cross-border Citizens”** that we are presenting today to Commissioner Elisa Ferreira, as well as to the representatives of the States participating in the Forum².”

The signatories of the Alliance advocate that:

1. border regions are reflected more fully in EU policy and legislation,
2. border regions and their cross-border groupings be involved in the conference on the future of Europe,
3. border public authorities have appropriate powers and specific resources, as well as fast-track procedures,
4. negotiations on the draft regulation on a European Cross-Border Mechanism (ECBM) come to a successful conclusion,
5. the legal and administrative obstacles to cross-border cooperation are removed,
6. the States and the European Commission carry out cross-border territorial impact assessments of public policies, etc.
7. cross-border observatories be set up to measure cross-border integration and identify obstacles,
8. an effective framework allows the implementation of cross-border public services,
9. border regions be involved in the implementation of the European Green Deal, and fully benefit from the Next Generation EU recovery plan,
10. a minimum level of cross-border cooperation is guaranteed in the event of a global, European or regional crisis.

“This Alliance is proposed today to you all, elected representatives, local authorities, border structures and citizens. Join us. Cross-border territories, on the front line of the health crisis, will be at the heart of tomorrow's Europe!”

More info:

The press kit of the Borders Forum: http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/Borders-forum-PRESS-KIT-EN.pdf

The website of the event: <https://bordersforum.eu/language/en/elementor-2382/>

MOT website: <http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/en>

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² **Clément Beaune**, Minister of State for European Affairs (France) ; **Jacqueline Gourault**, Minister of Territorial Cohesion and Relations with Local Authorities, (France) ; **Judit Varga**, Minister of Justice (Hungary) ; **Claude Turmes**, Minister for Energy and Spatial Planning (Luxembourg) ; **Heike Raab**, Secretary of State for Europe, Media and Digital of the German Land of Rhineland-Palatinate (Germany) ; **Roland Theis**, State Secretary to the Minister of Justice of Saarland, Commissioner in charge of European Affairs (Germany) ; **Luciano Caveri**, Regional Minister, Assessor, Autonomous Region of Valle d'Aosta, (Italy); **Serge Dal Busco**, State Councillor of the Republic and Canton of Geneva (Switzerland).