

## ISSUES AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EUROPEAN CONFERENCE

Cross-border territories: pacifying the borders and facilitating the daily life of the population

The construction of Europe was initiated to leave behind the conflicts that marked the first half of the 20th century. For Robert Schuman, one of the founding fathers of Europe, borders were “the scars of history”. Since the beginning cross-border cooperation has been at the heart of the development of Europe, as one of the means of eliminating these scars and making border regions spaces for building sustainable peace and prosperity in Europe.

But these regions are still too often areas of tension and spaces where linguistic and cultural communities are divided.

The aim of cross-border cooperation, which encourages cooperation on a given territory between the institutions and authorities on either side of the border, is to bring citizens together, overcoming such cultural and linguistic obstacles and eliminating the effects of an administrative border in these places where the populations live and work together every day.

Cross-border territories are “lived territories”, living and employment areas generating substantial flows of border workers and consumers every day, where different forms of cooperation are implemented in highly-diverse areas including the economy, culture, the environment and health. They are fertile locations for developing a “European citizenship”, enriched by national and regional affiliations and cultures.

They require an integrated territorial approach in order to allow the implementation of concrete projects satisfying the needs of the population.

The political and operational issues of tomorrow’s cross-border cooperation

The cross-border cooperation programmes of the 2007-2013 cohesion policy have been launched and the challenge now is to place these programmes at the services of cross-border territories.

However, it is clear that the drafting of the operational cooperation programmes has often been the occasion of only minimal consultation of the cross-border partnership and in particular of the local authorities. The architecture of these programmes is above all topic-based, and local authorities have little or no representation in the process. It is now important to find a way of making their voice heard by the competent higher-level authorities.

The issue is also important for France on the eve of its European presidency and in order to reaffirm the full measure of its commitment to Europe.

At the local level, there is no doubt about the “added value” of territorial cooperation.

The ambition of our conference is to demonstrate that:

- a concrete Europe is on the move in cross-border territories: a Europe of projects, a Europe which responds to the needs of its citizens;
- a Europe is being built in compliance with the Lisbon-Gothenburg objectives: places where national and European policies converge, these cross-border

territory projects embody the sources of good linkage between national territories and of successful European integration complying with the sustainable development objectives;

- the development of cross-border cooperation must be pursued: it is in the best interests of the states and the European Union to support the development of such territorial projects in order to “pacify” borders and make them places of testing and linkage of national policies, forging a European citizenship. But national and European authorities have yet to be convinced. That is the other challenge of our conference!

That is why the MOT has decided to present concrete projects implemented in cross-border territories through 12 workshops, which will put forward proposals and recommendations to the national and Community authorities.

For its part, to ensure that these proposals are followed up, the MOT has chosen a new strategic orientation with a double change: an affirmation on the political level and clear European positioning.

EUROMOT, to be established on 8 November in Lille, will be materialised by the setting-up of a European network of cross-border local authorities. A strategic alliance will also be formed with the AEBR (Association of European Border Regions) (refer to page 22 EUROMOT).

Our common objective is to bear our messages with a single voice so that these major issues of cross-border cooperation in Europe are taken into account to a greater extent in national and European policies.

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