

The Picardie Region: a new member of the MOT network

The Picardie Region is located at the heart of North-West Europe. This strategic position, with its shared border with Belgium and its maritime border with the United Kingdom, has for nearly 20 years enabled it to be a major actor in cross-border cooperation.

The stakeholders in Picardie, who are pioneers in the area of cross-border healthcare cooperation, have collaborated with Wallonia since early 2000 in providing and developing supplementary healthcare – facilitated by public health insurance which covers the associated costs – across the French-Belgian Thiérache region¹.

It was by cooperating with the cities of Rochester and Canterbury in the United Kingdom that the coloured

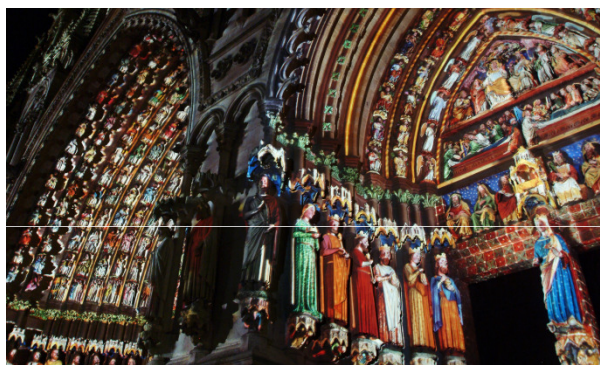
illuminations of Amiens Cathedral could allow an ever-growing public to enjoy its polychrome medieval statuary².

Lastly, cross-border cooperation is also an asset for the development of key sectors such as agricultural resources, wind farms and composite materials. By anticipating economic changes using strategic intelligence, SMEs in Picardie can confidently develop their markets with their Belgian and British neighbours³.

¹ *TRANSCARD/COSANTRAN/THIERACHE SANTE project(s) (Interreg France-Wallonia-Vlaanderen)*

² *"Cathedrals in Colour" project (France-Channel-England)*

³ *CIS2T project (France-Wallonia-Vlaanderen)*



Cross-border economic development in Ireland

On 30-31 January 2014 in Cavan (Republic of Ireland), a conference was held entitled "Cross-Border Economic Development and the Border Development Zone (BDZ) Concept", which was jointly organised by the Centre for Cross-Border Studies (CCBS) and the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD). With the point of departure being that the border effect is too pronounced in Ireland (the border regions in both countries are peripheral and are less dynamic than more central regions), the aim was to propose solutions to offset the negative impact of the border in economic development:

fragmentation of markets, reduced economic interaction and lost development opportunities. The concept of a "border development zone" comprises three components: a territorial one (thinking about the best possible structure depending on the territorial configuration); a sectoral one (actions mentioned with respect to cross-sectoral support for SMEs, but also concerning tourism and leisure, agriculture, fisheries and agri-food, and renewable energies); and an institutional one (organisation of governance and strategic reflection on cross-border support for economic players). The issues

are common to many borders: support and involvement of border region SMEs, understanding the legal framework on the other side of the border, the difficulties involved in setting up a common governance structure, and coherence with Interreg V.

The MOT, which attended the conference, is in 2014 embarking on a similar process of looking at this topic of cross-border economic development along France's borders (see "Events" on the next page).

More info

EVENTS

NEXT MOT EVENTS

Conference on cross-border economic development : the MOT is organising a European conference on **"The integrated economic development of cross-border territories"**, the 15th April 2014 in Paris.

The programme is available!

The MOT's next Annual General Meeting and conference-debate, on the topic **"Cross-border networks: mutualising services and experimenting with Europe on each border"**, will take place on 18-19 June 2014 in Paris.

OTHER EVENTS

6th European Summit of Regions and Cities, 7 and 8 March 2014 in Athens (Greece), organised by the Committee of the Regions, together with the Region of Attica.

"Frontiers and boundaries of territorial sciences", 27 and 28 March 2014 in Paris, organized by the "Collège international des sciences du territoire".

The French-Swiss Cross-Border Workers' Fair, 3-5 April 2014 in Annemasse, organised by the Groupement transfrontalier européen in collaboration with the Dauphiné Libéré.

More info – All the events

New MOT publication on the legal framework for cross-border cooperation

The Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière, produced a guidebook entitled **"The legal framework for cross-border cooperation. The legal instruments available to cross-border projects"** which is aimed at helping cooperation practitioners to choose the legal form that is most appropriate for their needs. The document is available in six languages: French, English, German, Italian, Spanish, Dutch.



This guidebook is aimed at cross-border cooperation practitioners (territorial authorities and their groupings, government departments, chambers of commerce and industry and professional organisations, educational institutions, businesses, European programme bodies, representatives of civil society, and cross-border structures, etc.) that have adopted legal structures for their projects or who intend to do so.

This work closes a project carried out by the MOT between October 2012 and December 2013, with the financial support of the national technical

assistance programme Europ'Act. More specifically, as part of this project the MOT ran five seminars* giving information about the legal tools available to cross-border projects. Each seminar was devoted to one or more of France's borders.

The guidebook aims to provide a summary of the main legal tools that can be used to set up cross-border projects at France's borders. It contains a series of factsheets that set out for each tool its definition, its legal basis, the scope of its use and its main advantages and limitations. Each tool is

illustrated by two examples of structures that have been set up at France's borders and that were presented in the five information seminars.

This guide also sets out the main stages that need to be gone through in the choice of a legal tool, as well as providing a table that summarises the different tools.

* More information on the five seminars

To download the guidebook: [click here](#).



* Project co-funded by the European Union. Europe is committed in France with the ERDF.

Switzerland calls into question the free movement of workers

By endorsing the UDC's initiative "against mass immigration" on 8 February, the Swiss voted for the introduction of annual quotas for workers, whether from across the border or people that have been granted asylum, thus going against the recommendations of the Federal Council. It may be noted that French-speaking Switzerland and the areas bordering France* voted against this initiative. The Federal Council will have to put forward draft legislation to make this vote concrete and the limits will have to be set in accordance with "Switzerland's overall

economic interests and the principle of national preference", "international agreements contrary to this spirit - like the free movement of persons - will have to be renegotiated and adapted within a timeframe of three years". The European Commission, for its part, regrets this initiative which "goes against the principle of free movement of persons between the EU and Switzerland"; it "will examine the implications of this initiative on EU-Swiss relations as a whole."

**Notably Geneva, Basel-City, Vaud, Neuchâtel, Jura, Valais and Fribourg.*

Progress for the "Espace Mont Blanc"

Implementation of a cross-border strategy for the future of the Mont Blanc mountain range took a step forward on 22 January 2014 with the signature of a statement of intent regarding the setting-up of a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation by the three vice-chairmen of the Mont Blanc Cross-Border Conference. It was also an opportunity to set up thematic working groups designed to implement the strategy and identify priority projects.

[More info](#)

The "Metropolitan Areas" Act

The final version of the draft legislation on the "modernisation of territorial public action and the affirmation of metropolitan areas" was adopted by France's Joint Parliamentary Committee on 19 December 2013 (following the vote on its second reading in the Assemblée Nationale). Three articles in the legislation contain references to cross-border cooperation (those on "the territorial conference on public action", "the reinforcement of the external action of territorial authorities and their groupings" and "metropolitan areas"). [A note with extracts of the relevant articles is available to MOT members \(in French\): click here.](#)

The EGTC Platform

On 18 February, the Committee of the Regions held the 4th annual meeting of the EGTC Platform, which focused on the role that EGTCs can play in the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy. [More info](#)

At this event, the first EGTC “Building Europe across Borders” prize was awarded by the Committee of the Regions’ President, Ramón Luis Valcárcel, to the Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion EGTC, which has done valuable work in creating a network for young entrepreneurs (the CREAMED project). Two honourable mentions were awarded to the “Gate to Europe” EGTC (HU-RO) and the “Europaregion Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino” (IT-AT).

[More info on the EGTC award.](#)



Launch of the 2014 OPEN DAYS

The 12th OPEN DAYS - the European Week of Regions and Cities - were launched on 10 January 2014. Applications to be an “official partner” of this event may be submitted until 14 March. The event will be held on 6-9 October in Brussels with the theme “Growing together - smart investment for people”.

[More info](#)



Changes to the legal regime governing EGTCs

On 17 December 2013, the European Parliament and the European Council approved [Regulation 1302/2013 concerning European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation \(EGTCs\)](#). This new regulation introduces a series of amendments to Regulation 1082/2006, which forms the legal basis for EGTCs. It will help to clarify, simplify and improve the establishment and functioning of EGTCs.

- One of the notable amendments is the expansion of these structures’ potential members. The following entities will now be able to participate in EGTCs: authorities at national level (national agencies or departments, etc.), public undertakings and undertakings entrusted with the operation of services of general economic

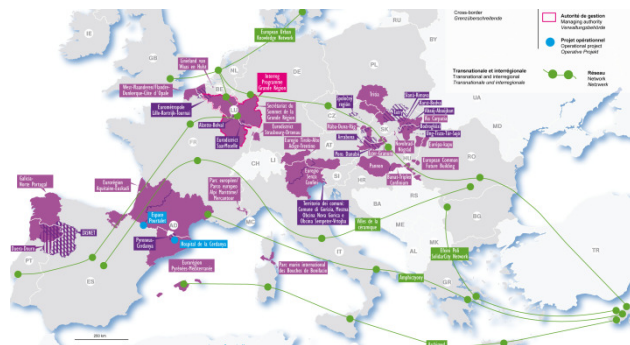
interest (SGEI).

- Another advance concerns the participation of third countries. It will now be possible for EGTCs to be set up by a structure belonging to an EU Member State and a structure from a neighbouring third country with which the Member State carries out cooperation actions.
- The accession of new members will be facilitated: if these new members are from a Member State that has already approved the convention, their participation is approved only by the State whose law governs the new member’s establishment.
- The new regulation also aims to amend the procedure for the approval of EGTCs by the national authorities, which shall now solely concern the EGTC’s convention. Member States must decide

whether to approve an EGTC within a period of six months following the submission of the request to set it up. If no objection is raised the request is deemed to be approved, except with respect to the Member State in which the EGTC will have its registered office, which must formally approve the convention.

- In theory, the regulation gives greater flexibility concerning the law applicable to EGTCs (the actions of the EGTC’s bodies, the EGTC’s activities and the rules that apply to its staff). The regulation is very neutral, however, and leaves it up to Member States to interpret these provisions and define the law applicable to EGTCs and in particular to their staff.

[Map of the EGTCs.](#)



Seminar on ECGs

The first seminar on Euroregional Cooperation Groupings (ECGs), the cross-border tool created by Protocol No. 3 to the European Outline Convention, was held under the aegis of the Council of Europe in Ljubljana on 19 February. Ministerial representatives from Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary and Serbia took part in this meeting. The MOT made a presentation at the seminar in its capacity as an expert body.

[More info](#)

The Public Procurement Directive

On 15 January 2014, the European Parliament adopted on its first reading the proposal for a directive on public procurement, thus opening up interesting scope for cross-border cooperation. One provision (Article 38) provides for the possibility for contracting authorities from several Member States to carry out joint procurement. [More info](#)

PRESS REVIEW

Electricity: the creation of a huge exchange area in North-West Europe

AFP, 4 February

"Since Tuesday, the French and British electricity markets have been interconnected through the creation of a huge area covering North-West Europe aimed at encouraging cross-border exchanges of electricity."

The national interest no longer recognises borders

Le Républicain lorrain, 8 February

"When I'm asked to define our territory, I simply remind people that it is home to two very large-scale projects: Esch-Belval on the Luxembourg side and the Alzette-Belval operation of national interest on the French side. We form a kind of bridge between the two projects," explains Dorothee Habay-Lé, Director of the Alzette-Belval EGTC. This European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation is still in its infancy – it will celebrate its first birthday in March – but already abounds with projects. Which is normal as there is no time to lose. [...]

On the Esch-Belval side, an ambitious urban development project has literally been emerging from the earth over the past few years. On the French side, a parallel project is gradually taking shape."

French border residents fear the undermining of bilateral agreements

Les Echos, 11 February

"Since 2002, it has taken just five days to get a work permit in Switzerland. The some 145,000 French people who work in Switzerland [...] do not feel directly threatened by the result of the referendum. But this "no" to immigration is causing concern at a time when their representatives are already mobilised to try to save the system that gives them the choice between private insurance and the French social security system. Sunday's vote will indeed call into question the bilateral agreements that permit the free movement of Europeans in Switzerland [...] 'We need to put the results of this popular initiative referendum into perspective, as we know that Switzerland's current political leaders are not in favour of closing the country's borders to immigration or cross-border workers'".

The reactions of elected representatives, civil society and institutions

Le Dauphiné libéré, 11 February

"[...] Christian Dupessey, the PS Mayor of Annemasse: 'The border residents who are here today will remain in the region, but this will inevitably reduce the territory's economic attractiveness. It is in our interest to stand shoulder to shoulder with Geneva to defend jobs and strengthen the complementary dynamics in the conurbation.'"

Étienne Blanc, the UMP deputy for the Ain department: 'I think that this business of quotas is going to be terribly complex for Switzerland. How is it going to cope? Train nurses? It isn't managing to do it at the moment and it won't manage in the future. Geneva will have to ask for room for manoeuvre from Bern, but I have no doubts about the pragmatism of the Swiss.'"

Mountain issues reach us in the heart of the Alps

La Provence, 4 February

"The issue of the French Alps, but also of the Swiss and Italian Alps – particularly with regard to cross-border rescue operations – was at the centre of the numerous discussions that took place yesterday morning in the Pierre-Michel Room [in Forcalquier, Provence] in the context of the drawing up of the Government-Region planning contract regarding mountain ranges, as this competence is now entrusted to the Conseils régionaux."

In Aragon, the foundations for a Euroregion have been laid

Eclair des Pyrénées, 7 February

"Yesterday in Huesca, the chambers of commerce and industry of the Béarn and Hautes-Pyrénées departments signed an agreement with their counterparts in Aragon. The aim: to increase the number of cooperation initiatives on either side."

Final report - "German Regions in Cross-Border Functional Regions" (MORO IMeG project)

The IMeG is a project of the MORO spatial planning research programme of the German Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development (BMVBS) that was carried out between April 2011 and November 2013. The project's final report was published in December 2013.

The project promotes the concept of cross-border metropolitan regions along Germany's borders (the Euregio Meuse-Rhine, Greater Region, Upper Rhine and Lake Constance). The conference held in November 2012, in cooperation with the planning authorities in Luxembourg, opened up a European perspective that is also reflected in the report, with concrete examples of other cross-border metropolitan regions in Europe. It is aimed at players involved in territorial development at the regional, national and European levels, who are urged to take account of this concept in the implementation of cohesion and transport policy, but also at the general public, with a view to promoting greater territorial cohesion.

[More info](#)



CROSS-BORDER NEWS

Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière
38 rue des Bourdonnais
75001 Paris France
Tel: +33 (0)1 55 80 56 80
www.cross-border-territories.eu

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Production: Domitille Ayral

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