



VIEWPOINT

Christian Bourquin

Chairman of the
Conseil Général des
Pyrénées-Orientales



What are the objectives of the framework agreement signed between the Conseil Général and the Generalitat de Catalunya?

The objective is to provide concrete answers to the border-related problems encountered every day by the socioeconomic entities and the population of the cross-border territory. The agreement is also intended to help identify the development opportunities arising from the cross-border situation. The long-term objective is to establish a cross-border living area with a real cultural and linguistic community.

There are many border-related problems at present. They concern access to healthcare, public transport, administrative procedures, tax differences (competition distortions experienced by businesses, for example), job-seeking, etc.

What inventory of cooperation can be drawn up today?

We are now developing infrastructure projects with direct cross-border application. These play a highly structuring role for the territory. The Puigcerda cross-border hospital project (opening planned in 2008) is a first in Europe. We are also working on a project for a cross-border slaughterhouse in Cerdagne. Cooperation in the cultural domain also seems to me to be essential. An example is that being set up between the Rivesaltes internment camp memorial and the museum of the Republican exile in La Junquera.

Our cross-border space shows a high level of historical and geographical coherence. Perpignan, Figueras and Gerona are towns of the same type and are dealing with the same issues. The framework agreement aims to federate our movers and shakers (businesses, public institutions, associations, etc.) and pool our resources, our equipment and our infrastructure.

The establishment of an "organized" cross-border territory is thus taking shape little by little. In any case it is one of our priorities, as shown by the signature of this framework agreement.

Conseil Général des Pyrénées-Orientales - Generalitat de Catalunya

Cross-border cooperation framework agreement

A cross-border cooperation framework agreement was signed on 29 June 2006 between the Conseil Général des Pyrénées-Orientales and the Generalitat de Catalunya.

The agreement, which commits these two partners to active collaboration, defines the procedures of this cooperation in a precise manner. It consists in:

- establishing dialogue and regular collaboration between the respective departments of the Generalitat and the Conseil Général;
- federating and coordinating the cross-border initiatives and projects initiated on the territory by local entities;
- acting as "cross-border facilitators";
- jointly managing the preparation of the European "France-Spain territorial cooperation" programme for the 2007-2013 period;
- working on the establishment of a legal and territorial framework which, by setting up a joint organization, eliminates obstacles to the construction of a genuinely cross-border living space;
- studying the feasibility of setting up a joint fund between the two parties, as a financial instrument for backing the implementation of joint cross-border actions and projects.

Each year an agreement application convention will give details of the joint action programme. For example, the programme for 2006-2007 includes:

- a feasibility study on the introduction of cross-



border public transport routes and their impacts on local trade;

- production of a bilingual guide comparing the French and Catalan political and administrative organizations;
- development of an action study aimed at improving postal and telephone services;
- establishment of a custom service for project sponsors to help find partners on the other side of the border and to help setting up cross-border projects (legal support, help obtaining funding);
- strengthening of the feeling of belonging to a common cultural and linguistic community (bilingual signage on roads and at monuments, tourist sites and natural sites; strengthening of cooperation on teaching Catalan in schools, etc.).

Conseil Général des Pyrénées-Atlantiques - Diputació Foral de Gipuzkoa

First assessment after the April 2005 cooperation agreement

On 5 October 2006 the Conseil Général des Pyrénées-Atlantiques and the Diputació Foral de Gipuzkoa presented the first assessment of the cross-border cooperation agreement signed jointly in April 2005, the purpose of which was to stimulate and implement cooperation between the two authorities in their areas of joint competence.

Described as "very positive", this assessment emphasized the intensification of relations and exchanges between the two entities. It was supplemented by proposals for action indicating the determination to "target projects" in order to consolidate what has been achieved and base cooperation on sound foundations.

Many actions are being conducted in the area of social services: production of a diagnostic analysis of the social services on the two sides of the border; signature of a working protocol on child protection, the family and social integration; cooperation on provision of benefits in order to set up a sustainable system of aid for integration and provide better follow-up of persons moving from

one territory to the other. In 2007, actions must also be developed for elderly persons and persons suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

Another important area of cooperation concerns the environment and tourism. For example, the two partners are working on the extension of a coast path between Bidart and Hendaye as far as San Sebastian. This extension on Spanish territory will be an opportunity to project a common image, with the setting-up of joint signage and promotion. Some proposals for actions have also been put forward, such as a project for cross-border cycle paths and the production of a brochure describing the remarkable natural spaces in the Pyrénées-Atlantiques and in Gipuzkoa.

Finally, some actions in the area of sport and youth should be mentioned: the white paper on the organization of sport in the cross-border territory (practical guide to cooperation projects for public bodies and sporting associations), "cross-border vacation camps for young people", etc.



Practical guide to transfrontier co-operation

Guarantor of the integration of territories in Europe, cross-border cooperation has been placed at the heart of "territorial cooperation" in the new European cohesion policy for the 2007-2013 period. Intended more broadly for the 46 member states of the Council of Europe, a "Practical guide to transfrontier co-operation"* has been produced by the MOT for the Council.

The first publication providing a truly synthetic view of cross-border cooperation, this guide is intended directly for project sponsors. It is the result of long practice of cooperation in the field and builds on the experience and know-how of a whole network of local institutions and players. It describes the legal framework of cross-border cooperation and sets out good practices, methodologies and procedures for implementing cross-border cooperation between local institutions and authorities located on either side of borders.

Contents of the practical guide:

1. What is transfrontier co-operation between European local communities and authorities?

- Origins and definition
- Forms and methods

2. What is the legal and administrative framework on which co-operation may be based?

- General principles applicable to local communities and authorities
- Associations and other "de facto" co-operation bodies
- Tools provided by Council of Europe conventions and bilateral or multilateral treaties

3. What are the prerequisites for successful transfrontier co-operation?

- Co-operation context and requirements
- How do local communities initiate a co-operation arrangement?

4. How do transfrontier co-operation arrangements evolve?

- From initial contact to setting up joint projects
- Putting agencies in place
- A practical example: transfrontier urban districts

5. Setting up a joint body: what form should it take, and how are its statutes drafted?

- Choosing the appropriate management structure for the cooperation arrangement
- Advantages and disadvantages of different transfrontier set-ups
- How are the statutes drafted?

6. What national and EU funding is available for transfrontier projects?

- General principles
- Type of funding

7. How can transfrontier inter-authority co-operation be sustained?

- Political governance and citizen support
- Sustainable resources and shared working knowledge
- Incorporating transfrontier strategies into local, regional and national policy

* The guide is available in French and in English at <http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu>.

■ 2nd Cross-Border Discussions

Organized within the framework of the INTERFORM project, a European network of training and research on cross-border practices, the objective of the Cross-Border Discussions is to disseminate knowledge about cross-border matters by comparing the points of view of researchers and practitioners. The topic of this year's conference:

From Interreg III to the European territorial cooperation objective: new context, new stakes, new professional activities

Kehl, 30/11 and 01/12/2006

Further information:

www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu

■ Publication of the proceedings of the conference on 14 June 2006

The proceedings of the conference on 14 June 2006 on the topic of "Cross-border projects in the new objective 3 of European territorial cooperation" are on line at www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu.

Held in Mulhouse the day before the General Assembly of the MOT, this conference was an opportunity to share views between national, European and local political and technical levels on the stakes of cross-border matters and territorial cooperation for the new European programming period 2007-2013.

■ Cross-border tax guide

A cross-border tax guide intended for Spanish workers resident in the Pyrénées-Atlantiques department has recently been published by the French Ministry of the Economy, Finance and Industry. This approach could be extended to the whole of the French-Spanish border.

The guide is available in Spanish at: www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu

Press review

■ **The Saarbrücken Moselle-Est metropolitan area is observing Lille**, *Le Républicain lorrain*, 29 October
 "The association Zukunft SaarMoselle Avenir [...] has organized a two-day trip to Lille and Tournai for its French and German delegates. Purpose of this visit: draw inspiration from the establishment of the French-Belgian cross-border metropolitan area and, why not?, learn lessons from it for the proposed establishment of a 'Saarbrücken Moselle-Est' metropolitan area..."

■ **Strengthening French-German cooperation**, *Dernières Nouvelles d'Alsace*, 10 October
 "French-German exchanges between Alsace elementary schools and those of the Palatinate and Baden-Württemberg are showing contagious growth, since more and more teachers are participating in this type of experience..."

■ **Bastia - A protocol for the town**, *Nice-Matin*, 24 October

"As part of the preparation of the future cooperation programme, Bastia municipal council unanimously passed the draft agreement protocol between the port towns of the Tyrrhenian space. The objective is to encourage economic and social growth..."

■ **Cap-d'Ail - A cross-border neighbourhood built in a gap site**, *Le Moniteur*, 27 October

"A new urban neighbourhood is going to be built over the next four years at Cap-d'Ail (Alpes-Maritimes), on the border between France and Monaco..."

■ **Doctors and nurses blocked in their cross-border cooperation**, *Le Journal du Pays basque*, 20 October

"Meeting in Bidart for the first cross-border conference on emergency medicine, they are arguing for a joint action protocol. [...] Rumour has it that the Donostia ambulance had problems crossing the border during the exercise simulating an aircraft accident in Parma [...] The story is revelatory of the state of cross-border cooperation on medical matters..."

■ **Signature of an agreement between Perpignan and Gerona**, *L'Indépendant*, 1 November

"An agreement between Gerona and Perpignan universities will be signed on Monday 6 November in Gerona..."

