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On 5 December the charter of commitment of the France-Vaud-Geneva conurbation project was signed. In what way is this signature a major step forward?

Born of cross-border contacts initiated more than 30 years ago, the France-Vaud-Geneva conurbation, second-largest conurbation in Switzerland and second-largest conurbation in the Rhône-Alpes region, is the result of the determination to coordinate the action of the authorities on the scale of the solidarities bringing together the territories formed by the canton of Geneva, the Nyon district in the Vaud canton, and the neighbouring territories of the French Ain and Haute-Savoie departments.

This agreement is exceptional, reflecting the situation of Geneva, a city forming an enclave in another country, and historic, since, going beyond the various agreements signed up to now between our two countries, it is the first time a cross-border agreement is signed covering all the areas of the daily life of the population and sketching out the future portrait of the region through the ten topics dealt with.

What is going to change in concrete terms for the population?

The conurbation project produces concrete results which affect each citizen very directly in his or her daily life. It covers not only issues related to the organisation of the territory, such as mobility, urban planning and the environment, but also the improvement and better coordination of services to the population in the areas of training and culture, health and social affairs. Lastly, the topics of the economy, housing and agriculture are also dealt with.

Which are the flagship projects?

To give an example, the conurbation plan draws a picture in 2030 of a compact, multipolar and green conurbation, in which a dense public transport network facilitates mobility. We are currently establishing a cross-border regional express rail service, with two hubs at Genève-Cornavin station and Annemasse station, in Haute-Savoie. At the same time, we are working with the authorities in the Ain department so that the inhabitants of the Pays de Gex will soon be able to benefit from a cross-border tram linking Saint Genis to Geneva.

Progress for the France-Vaud- Geneva conurbation project

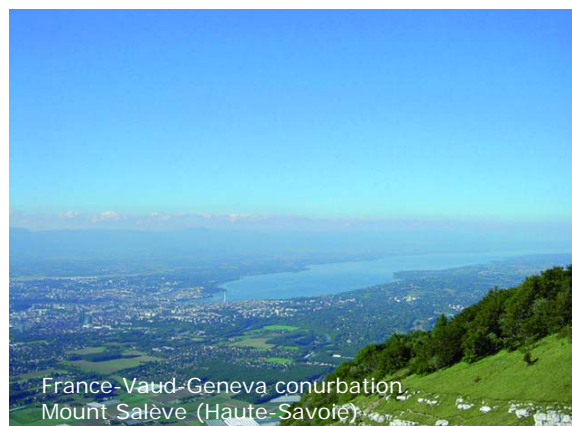
On 5 December 2007, the Charter of commitment of the France-Vaud-Geneva conurbation project was signed by the French and Swiss partners. This is a founding step in the development of the cross-border territory.

The conurbation project covers a territory of 1900 sq. km encompassing 204 municipalities: 112 French, members of the ARC (Geneva area regional cooperation association) and 92 Swiss, around Geneva and Nyon. The territory has a population of 777,000.

The Charter of commitment signed on 5 December is the end result of more than three years of work. It declares the political commitment of the 18 French and Swiss partners to work together to implement it and enables the establishment of a level of coordination and governance which will bring them together to do so. This project thus combines three mechanisms: at state level it falls within the framework of the Swiss Confederation's conurbation policy and the French state's metropolitan cooperation; at regional level the mechanism is strengthened with the Rhône-Alpes region's 'Grand Projet' (major project) label; at department level agreements will be signed with the Ain and Haute-Savoie departments.

In concrete terms, the Charter defines the main principles of organisation of the territory up to 2030. It is organised at three levels:

- a political perspective of the partners on objectives, a strategy and a detailed implementation of the conurbation project,



France-Vaud-Geneva conurbation
Mount Saleve (Haute-Savoie)

- a conurbation master plan and strategic planning including transport and public service infrastructures,
- a defined action programme on ten or so topics.

With constantly-increasing worker flows, priority is given to transport. The backbone of cross-border mobility is formed by the CEVA (regional express trains linking Cornavin-Eaux-Vives-Annemasse), but the project also plans to develop tramways, buses, coaches and park-and-rides.

The other priority related to these flows concerns housing, with the drawing-up of a cross-border housing master plan (PDHT). The objectives include building 50,000 dwellings in ten years, balancing the number of dwelling and improving the distribution of jobs and dwellings on either side of the border.

Many other topics are covered with detailed action plans: health, the economy, the environment, agriculture, training, culture, urban development and social affairs.

Land issues on the Basque and Catalan coasts

After its first study in 2006 on land and property issues in the Geneva and Basle cross-border conurbations, the MOT has extended its expertise by conducting a second study of these issues on the French-Spanish Basque and Catalan coasts.*

The objective of the study was to produce a diagnosis of the land and property characteristics of these two territories in order to:

- analyse the planning tools on either side of the borders;
- obtain a better understanding of issues concerning the control of land and property shortages;
- produce a reference resource for property and land in these spaces through better knowledge of the mechanisms at work: what context? what market? what players? what difficulties? what trends? what current actions?

- outline potential solutions for controlling these shortages and guide harmonious technical and political development of these territories;

- place the land and property issue at the heart of the territory project of these two cross-border areas.

Going beyond the national strategic dimension, the recommendations of this study are intended to guide territorial players in their cross-border land and property development policy.

The first part of the study, on the Basque coast, was submitted in August 2007 and the second part, on the Catalan coast, in October 2007.

* These studies were commissioned by the Directorate-General of Urban Planning, Housing and Construction of the French Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development and Spatial Planning. They are available on request to MOT members.



Cross-border cooperation atlas

The MOT is updating its Cross-Border Cooperation Atlas, five years after the first edition.

The atlas comprises nearly 100 maps providing views of the factors at work in all the cross-border territories between France and its nine neighbouring countries. It is an unrivalled reference document in which the principal topics of cross-border cooperation are analysed.

The new edition of the atlas has two objectives:

- to continue the work compiling this unique documentary reference on the reality of the cross-border geographical situation,
- to make the competent authorities in France and in the other European countries more aware of cross-border realities, often poorly known and underestimated.

■ 2008 General Assembly

The 2008 General Assembly of the MOT will be held on 29 May in Sarreguemines at the invitation of the association Zukunft SaarMoselle Avenir. A conference on the launch of EUROMOT will take place on 28 May in Saarbrücken.

■ White paper in preparation

Following the European conference on "Cross-border territories: day-to-day Europe" on 8 and 9 November 2007 in Lille, EUROMOT* is preparing a **white paper of recommendations on cross-border cooperation**, the fruit of the work of the 12 workshops of the conference. The white paper will soon be published in French, English and German, and sent to national and European authorities.

*European network of cross-border local authorities which includes the MOT, Eixo Atlántico and City Twins.

Further information:

www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu

■ "European health cooperations II"

Congress organised by the AEBR and Regio Basiliensis in Basle on 22 February 2008.

Further information: www.regbas.ch

■ "The origin of cross-border cooperation"

Series of seminars on cross-border cooperation in Europe, spread over 3 years and culminating in a major conference in 2010, organised by Robert Schuman University and the Kehl Euro-institut.

Further information: www.euroinstitut.org

The areas of observation have been diversified and treated in greater depth in order to provide better guidance for national and Community policies in favour of cross-border territories. For example, the number of territory projects listed has doubled since 2002 and no longer includes only urban spaces but also natural and rural spaces, in the majority along the borders. The atlas is divided into four major parts:

- The first part covers the cross-border geographical situation: worker flows, employment, sea crossings, etc.
- The second part covers a number of topics characteristic of cross-border cooperation: health, public transport of passengers, rivers, culture.
- The third part covers the territorial dimension of cross-border cooperation: cross-border territory projects and national planning, urban areas, cross-border rural and natural areas.
- The fourth part deals with the political and legal framework and with the instruments for planning and funding cross-border cooperation: operational law and management of objective 3 "European territorial cooperation", cross-border strand.

The maps are accompanied by in-depth comments on the issues illustrated, and include zooms on specific territories.

All of these maps can be downloaded online from www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu (section "Ressources" > "Fonds cartographique" (Resources > Map collection)).

Press review

■ Launching of the 2008 OPEN DAYS, *Inforegio*, 18 December

"Last 14 December, at a launch meeting attended by 150 representatives of regions and cities of Europe, Dirk Ahner, Director-general of DG Regional Policy, and Gerhard Stahl, secretary-general of the Committee of the Regions, kicked off the OPEN DAYS..."

■ Seven European electricity systems establish a joint services company, *AFP*, 18 December

"Seven European electricity transmission system operators [RTE (fr), Elia (be), Cegetel (lu), TenneT (nl) and EON Netz, RWE TSO and EnBW TNG (de)] have established a joint services company to "facilitate cross-border energy exchanges" between the countries concerned..."

■ The Commission announces the adoption of 35 programmes to implement "European territorial cooperation", *Inforegio*, 21 December

■ Saar-Moselle: an urban marriage, *Le Moniteur*, 11 January

"On their own, they are just two small, poor regions, menaced by population decline and weakened by the disappearance of their heavy industries. Together, they form a conurbation of one million inhabitants, enriched by its binational culture and proclaiming a joint cultural heritage..."

■ Two French towns join the LELA network, *Tageblatt*, 21 December

"The network of towns of the Grande Région LELA (Luxembourg, Esch-sur-Alzette, Longwy and Arlon) becomes "LELA +", for it has recently been joined by two new members at Longwy: Thionville and Metz..."

■ The Basle paradox, *Le Frontalier* magazine no. 87, December

"In Switzerland there are two leading regions where the majority of French border workers are concentrated: Geneva and Basle. However, since the introduction of the bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the European Union and the free circulation of persons, the number of border workers has jumped, except in one region: the Basle region!"

■ France and Spain boost their cross-border cooperation, *Le Monde*, 12 January

"MM. Sarkozy and Zapatero have decided to undertake the construction of a high-voltage line in the Pyrenees..."