

## Cross-border cooperation between the Netherlands and its neighbouring countries



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Anholt castle, on the border between Germany and the Netherlands, where the Anholt Treaty on cross-border cooperation between the two countries was commemorated in 2011 after 20 years of existence.

There has been cross-border cooperation between the Netherlands and its neighbouring countries for several decades. The efforts are focused on a number of areas of cooperation such as transport, education, the job market, security, health, the environment and spatial planning. This direct cross-border cooperation receives a substantial boost from European cooperation, expanding rapidly between the Member States within the EU. In particular the EGTC, an instrument which has been available for several years, provides a uniform basis for cross-border cooperation throughout Europe.

"The commitment of the EU is vital for the establishment of a Europe without borders, so that Europe can develop fully and competitively, with the objectives of a single market and free movement of goods and services.

Cross-border initiatives contribute to the formation of this Europe without borders, but the road is long and results are not always obtained rapidly. Europe brings together 27 countries that have their own national, regional and local regulations, laid down historically according to their own conception and organisation of constitutional law. Some are federal, others are more centralised, and there are a number of variants. These differences are noticed more specifically at the borders. Citizens and businesses that decide to develop their activities on both sides of the border are confronted every day with the differences in regulations, and sometimes they receive unpleasant surprises. For example, because of differences with regard to social security, acceptance of a job on the other side of the border can become a real 'adventure' with sometimes unpredictable consequences. The regulations regarding the environment or businesses, which stop at the border, can also raise problems of liabilities for what happens on

the other side.

In 2008, in the Netherlands, the minister of internal affairs and the secretary of state for foreign affairs took the initiative of reinforcing cross-border cooperation. The objective was to eliminate as many as possible of the obstacles hampering cooperation in the labour, business and housing sectors. To this end, a project was implemented with respect to the immediate neighbours, i.e. Flanders, Wallonia, Federal Belgium, North-Rhine-Westphalia, Lower Saxony and Federal Germany. During the first two years, it called upon a national "cross-border mediator" ("Grensmakelaar"), Wim van Gelder (former Commissioner of the Queen in Zeeland). Contacts were established at all levels of administration on both sides of the borders, and all the interested parties drew up an inventory of the border problems, identifying what was causing them and what was likely to provide solutions to them. This organisation was a success, in particular because understanding of cross-border difficulties has become more systematic.

At the end of this project, we were able to identify what could be done at regional level and in a continuous manner. The Commissioners of the Queen were brought in to stimulate

cooperation at regional level, with overall coordination by the

Commissioner of the Queen of the Dutch province of Limburg. In parallel, the Dutch ministry of foreign affairs appointed a special representative for the bordering countries to work regularly on the elimination of the obstacles to cross-border trade and on making use of the available opportunities. Regular consultation between the national level and the Dutch border regions monitors the progress of this work. The Netherlands parliament is involved in this process, and the efforts of the Dutch ministries are interlinked in a working group, referred to as the "Task force". Lists of bilateral actions are drawn up with the regions and the bordering countries. In 2012 a list was drawn up between Flanders and the Netherlands, and others will soon be compiled with Lower Saxony and North Rhineland-Westphalia.

To sum up, this novel structure for organising cross-border cooperation at national level\* enables real progress on the long path to reducing cross-border difficulties and obstacles to cooperation.

\*<http://www.budapestplatform.eu>

# EVENTS

## MARCH-APRIL

Annual event of the INTERREG IVA 2 Seas programme, 14 and 15 March 2013, Rotterdam

Seminar on "Metropolitan hubs and cross-border issues", 19 March 2013 in Metz, organised by the metropolitan hubs network, in partnership with the MOT, the DATAR and the FNAU

4th Channel Forum, 20 March 2013, Caen

Conference as part of the TRION Energy-Climate network project (Upper Rhine), 21 March 2013, Colmar

Third European conference on decentralised cooperation, 9 and 10 April 2013, Brussels

## MOT General Assembly and conference

To be attended by president Michel Delebarre\*, the MOT GA will take place on 25 April 2013 in Strasbourg, at the invitation of the Communauté urbaine de Strasbourg, a member of the MOT network.

On 24 April, as each year on the eve of the GA, a conference will be organised, on the topic: "2014-2020: cross-border cooperation serving citizens".

[Download the pre-programme.](#)

\* Former French Minister of State, Senator and Mayor of Dunkirk, President of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform of the Committee of the Regions.

Further information: [www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu](http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu)

## The Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis: five years of fruitful cooperation!



The Eurometropolis presidency receives the score of the work *A l'heure au métro*, Paul !. Martine Aubry, president, and the vice-presidents Rudy Demotte, Stefaan De Clerck and Gilles Pargneaux.

The first EGTC to be established, the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis, facilitates cooperation between three large French and Belgian regions with a total population of 2.1 million: Lille metropolitan area, Walloon Picardy (Western Hainaut), and south and central parts of West Flanders.

The Eurometropolis Agency is responsible for coordination and discussion between the 14 founding partners and, essentially through them, converts the objectives and decisions that they have defined into practical actions. The Forum, its consultative assembly (80 representatives of civil society), contributes to this work.

The following projects have been implemented: a cross-border jobs forum, a physical

and virtual platform to encourage innovation around four thematic clusters (Innov'eurometropolis), a joint promotion to sell the economic advantages of the territory to investors world-wide (Investineurometropolis), a tourism website for exploring its 3550 square kilometres ([www.visiteurometropolis.eu](http://www.visiteurometropolis.eu)), a labelling and partnership policy. Rail services have been improved (frequencies, punctuality, ticketing, costs), and the Eurometropolis has been able to lobby the competent authorities in favour of the Seine Nord-Europe canal, a highly-structuring communication waterway for the development of all Europe.

The strategic programme of the Eurometropolis is built around three cross-cutting priority topics: development of

economic potential, improvement of internal mobility and international accessibility of the territory, and development of the blue and green links as elements of enhancement and attractiveness. It is scheduled for adoption in mid-2013.

To build its vision for 2030, the Eurometropolis is making use of partnership tools gathering the information necessary for imagining the future and organising conferences and workshops on the metropolitan development of the territory.

An assessment is in progress to identify the ways of strengthening its role in the coordination and the processes for implementing practical actions.

[www.eurometropolis.eu](http://www.eurometropolis.eu)

## An LCCG for Greater Geneva

On 28 January, the Greater Geneva steering committee was replaced by the France-Vaud-Geneva conurbation project Local Cross-border Cooperation Grouping (LCCG). This important change for Greater Geneva is an affirmation of the determination of the partners, Swiss and French elected representatives, to meet the major challenges of this cross-border services and employment area. The bureau of this new political,

administrative and deliberative body consists of new president François Longchamp, state councillor of the Republic and Canton of Geneva (Urban Planning department), accompanied by seven vice-presidents. This is the first LCCG under Swiss law tasked with the management of a cross-border conurbation project.

[Further information](#)

## 13th Summit of the Greater Region

On 24 January, the Rhineland-Palatinate took over the presidency of the Summit of the Greater Region for the coming two years and presented its work programme: "Demographic change is one of the major challenges that the Greater Region job market with its 213,000 border workers must face". One of the priority objectives is to coordinate the partners in order to "develop new potentials in terms of

availability of qualified labour in the cross-border context". Other areas of cooperation were highlighted, including health, services, planning and transport, social inclusion and the fight against social dumping, renewable energies, cross-border clusters and monitoring.

[Further information](#)





# PRESS REVIEW

## ▲ Almost 30 billion euros slashed from the cohesion policy

Europe Information, 12 February

"On 8 February, the European Council declared in its conclusions that 'the cohesion policy is an essential instrument for investment, growth and job creation at EU level and for structural reforms at national level'. Not matching deeds to words, it nevertheless decided to limit the cohesion policy budget to €325.149bn (commitment appropriations) within the 2014-2020 multi-year funding framework, €29.7bn less than for the current funding framework. [...] The Territorial Cooperation objective is allocated €8.948bn, practically the same amount as for 2007-2013 (€8.7bn). This amount is divided up as follows: €6.627bn for cross-border cooperation, €1.822bn for transnational cooperation and €500m for inter-regional cooperation." Summit conclusions: [www.europolitique.info](http://www.europolitique.info) (search for 329807).

## ▲ The European Union agrees on a budget without ambition

Le Monde, 9 February

"Only just agreed, already contested: the budget compromise reached in extremis [...] by the heads of state and government of the 27 is not to the taste of the MEPs. In a rare joint declaration, the leaders of the four main parliamentary groups threatened that they would not vote for the agreement in its present form."

## ▲ Cross-border rail links: the regions will be able to partner with neighbouring states

Transport public, 1 February

"Eighteen years after the Schengen area came into effect in 1995, allowing free movement within the signatory states, another step is going to be taken for the organisation of cross-border rail travel. To run cross-border regional express trains, the French regions are now going to be able to form alliances with bordering states. Until now, the French transport code only authorised a regional council to conclude an agreement with the transport organising authority of a region in a bordering country, and only bilaterally. Today, article 2 of the bill on measures with regard to transport infrastructure and service [...] provides for this extension."

## ▲ Alzette-Belval: 'City of tomorrow' launches the cross-border ecocity

Urbapress, 30 January

"On 18 January, the Lorraine region prefecture, the Alzette-Belval EPA (public planning agency) and the Caisse des dépôts et consignations formed a partnership which moves the Alzette-Belval ecocity on the Luxembourg border forward to the operational phase."

## ▲ A cross-border nursery

Le Républicain lorrain, 3 February

"Gilbert Schuh [president of the Eurodistrict Saar-Moselle], thinking of infants, is launching the idea of a cross-border nursery, starting from the observation that French is less spoken in Saarland and vice versa, and that languages must be used from the earliest possible age for immersion in the two cultures. This would be a first."

## ▲ A cross-border placement service projected in Kehl

DNA, 25 January

"Until March, cooperation between [French national employment service] Pôle Emploi and its counterpart across the Rhine is going to take another step forward with the opening of the first French-German agency in the border area in Kehl."

## ▲ A cross-border project to remedy the shortage of nursing personnel

Le Messager, 31 January

"The solution considered: a training centre in Ambilly for the whole of the Franco-Genevan area. The ARC is working to set up a cross-border IFSI (nursing and healthcare profession training institute). 'The objective is to remedy the inadequate provision of vocational training for nurses and nursing aids over the whole of our territory, while our population is growing and our medical facilities are always in demand [...]'"

## Publication: Interact newsletter "Territorial cooperation 2014+"

The winter 2012-2013 issue of the Interact programme journal focuses on the instruments, in particular the EGTC, and the opportunities likely to improve the implementation of territorial cooperation for the 2014-2020 programming period.

What instruments and funding are available? What contributions and changes does the EGTC bring? These questions are discussed by experts on territorial cooperation in Europe and are illustrated by numerous examples.

[http://www.interact-eu.net/interact\\_newsflash/newsletter\\_interact\\_winter\\_2013\\_territorial\\_cooperation\\_2014\\_part\\_2/188/13651](http://www.interact-eu.net/interact_newsflash/newsletter_interact_winter_2013_territorial_cooperation_2014_part_2/188/13651)



## CROSS-BORDER NEWS

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