



Preamble

A LITTLE-EXPLORED TOPIC REGARDING FRANCE'S BORDERS

The topic of cross-border economic development along France's borders was first addressed by the MOT in November 2001 in its first thematic guide, then in 2007 at the symposium celebrating the MOT's 10th birthday and, more recently, in a study on business takeovers in the cross-border setting. Moreover, in 2010, the report of the parliamentary taskforce on cross-border policy by the MPs Etienne Blanc, an MP from the Ain Department, Fabienne Keller, a senator from the Bas-Rhin Department, and Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid, an MEP, proposed experimenting with border region economic development clusters – economic areas with special status and a strong leveraging effect.

Apart from this work, the economic development of cross-border territories along France's borders remains an uncharted area of study; some institutions have dealt with this topic with respect to other territories: the OECD's study in 2011 on innovation in cross-border regions,¹ and the study by the Centre for Cross-border Studies in 2014 on the potentialities for economic development along the Irish border.²

The MOT's overall assessment is that the situation on either side of France's borders is unbalanced³ and that the potential for cross-border economic development is insufficiently exploited.⁴

Also noting the rapid changes made to national public policies, but separately and without coordination regarding border regions, the MOT decided to produce a summary of the issues and possibilities for action with respect to this topic. Moreover, this work has been carried out in the context of the launch of the 2014-2020 European programmes, which makes it necessary to design new tools for European programme managers and project developers, notably regarding areas highlighted by the European Union (economic development, innovation, SMEs, jobs and training, financial engineering and tools for integrated territorial development, etc.).

¹ *Regions and Innovation: Collaborating across borders*, <http://www.oecd.org/fr/regional/regions-and-innovation-collaborating-across-borders.htm>

² *Towards a Cross-border Development Zone*, <http://crossborder.ie/?p=3639>

³ Even if this assessment needs to be qualified depending on the different parts of the border.

⁴ SMEs' lack of openness to the cross-border dimension, for example.