

Cross-Border Project Cafés

BORDER	France-Germany
TERRITORY	Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict
DURATION/DATE	Since November 2012
PARTNERS	Start Hop; Urban Community of Strasbourg, Strasbourg Jobs and Training Centre, Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict
OBJECTIVE	Business creation
MAIN ACTIVITY	Organisation of thematic “project cafés” bringing together budding entrepreneurs and heads of businesses to discuss setting up a business in the neighbouring country

WHAT DO THESE CROSS-BORDER PROJECT CAFÉS CONSIST OF?

The cross-border Project Cafés (“Cafés à Projets” in French) were initiated in November 2012 by Start Hop, a French cooperative based in Strasbourg and Offenburg that provides advice on business creation and is charged with promoting economic projects, in partnership with the Urban Community of Strasbourg, the Strasbourg Jobs and Training Centre (Maison de l’Emploi et de la Formation de Strasbourg) and the Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict.

Based on the observation that French and German entrepreneurs only rarely include the other side of the Rhine in their market studies and find it difficult to project themselves into the neighbouring territory, Start Hop’s aim is to promote business creation across the Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict by organising thematic “project cafés” to which people with business projects, business starters and young entrepreneurs are invited.

Experienced business owners also take part to contribute and exchange ideas about the way business creation works in the neighbouring country. Start Hop provides information to participants about the resources available in the region (networks, advisers, business-clubs, business incubators, etc.).

Since the project was launched, eight thematic Project Cafés have been held in Strasbourg, Kehl and Offenburg on:

- ↳ Financing
- ↳ How to develop one’s clientele
- ↳ Location
- ↳ Web-marketing and social media – differences and similarities between France and Germany
- ↳ Speed meeting: partnerships in the Eurodistrict
- ↳ Creativity and innovation in the Eurodistrict: one entrepreneur – one project
- ↳ Student entrepreneurship in the Eurodistrict
- ↳ Wirtschaftsforum – best practice: the players in innovation.

Each Project Café comprises around 50 participants on average, the majority of whom are French (68%), which is explained by the strong interest in business creation against a backdrop of high unemployment in Alsace, but also of development of tools to support business start-ups (incubators, cooperatives, etc.). People with business projects can have an individual consultation with Start Hop at the end of the meeting to better assess their needs (financing, premises, etc.) and to direct them where necessary to the appropriate players. Additional workshops for smaller groups of participants have also been offered in order to supplement the discussions initiated at the Project Cafés. An account of each thematic session is published on Start Hop’s blogs (novoeco.info, starthop.eu) and on the website of the Strasbourg Jobs and Training Centre.