

**Roland Ries**Mayor of Strasbourg,
Honorary President of the MOT

The MAPTAM (modernisation of territorial public action and affirmation of metropolitan areas) Act of 27 January 2014 has opened up new fields for the cross-border cooperation of large conurbations. Linked with the cohesion policy and the EGTC instrument in particular, it shows that the importance of metropolitan approaches in cross-border living and working areas is being taken into account.

Consolidated by the same act, the European status of Strasbourg involves a reaffirmation of its cross-border dimension on three levels: that of its territorial proximity with Kehl, that of the intercommunality within the Eurodistrict and that of the Upper Rhine conurbations. Strasbourg has fully taken on board this challenge of the strategic governance of cross-border spaces, which are no longer just the point of contact between two countries but territories of innovation based on a joint vision. The transition to Eurometropolis status as of 1 January 2015 follows on directly from the policies developed over a long time by the urban community with its German partners. Reflecting the radical transformation of the cityscape by the Deux Rives project, which anticipates a new city centre focused on the Rhine, the whole of the urban community is entering a new dimension as it takes up the challenge of integrated governance.

The establishment on 29 May 2015 of the Eurometropolis development council, open to the German partners and cross-border organisations, and the cross-border development plan, the future 360° territorial contract for which the Eurometropolis will be the lead partner, form the pillars of this approach

Strasbourg, a resolutely cross-border metropolis

Bridging the gap between France and Germany, Strasbourg is at the heart of the Upper Rhine and has formed diverse partnerships at various levels of cross-border cooperation consistent with its metropolitan policies:

- The neighbouring town of Kehl is a preferred partner with which relations are becoming ever-stronger: a cross-border centre for young children was inaugurated in 2014 and the two cities will be linked by a tram line from 2017, a backbone for the Deux Rives development.

- With the Maison de l'Emploi and the Agentur für Arbeit, the Eurometropolis enables many young people, most of them French, to access the job market through apprenticeship. The Start'Hop and Kiosk schemes support cooperation between young entrepreneurs on both sides of the Rhine by providing guidance for creating or taking over businesses and making co-working spaces available to them.

- The Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict is 10 years old and now includes the French administration and three other intercommunal communities on the French side as members. An innovative approach coordinated since 2010 by an EGTC, the Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict is building a territory project oriented towards the future. Particular emphasis is placed on citizen dialogue with topical forums and annual meetings between elected representatives and citizens.

- Strasbourg has become the mouthpiece for the Upper Rhine Cities Network, a body for consultation and cooperation between the major conurbations. This platform implements territorial lobbying and experience-sharing actions on issues of accessibility, urban development and cultural visibility.

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The Deux-Rives project, an ambitious urban development establishing a new cross-border city centre between Strasbourg and Kehl.

EVENTS

Only a few days left to register for the MOT annual conference!

"Territorial reforms: what impact for cross-border cooperation?"

17-18 June 2015 in Chamonix, at the invitation of the "Conférence Transfrontalière Mont Blanc", a member of the MOT's network.

[Programme](#)

[Online registration before 2nd June.](#)

TransParcNet meeting 2015: "The value of healthy ecosystems for nature and people", 9-11 June 2015 in Stozec (Czech Republic)

4th regional conference of the Euregio Meuse-Rhin, 12 June 2015 in Hasselt (Belgium)

"The potential of small and medium cities in cross-border polycentric regions", organised by the incoming Luxembourg Council Presidency, 30 June 2015 in Luxembourg

"Cross-border cooperation with German participation: Local public services in the cross-border context", 30 June - 1 July 2015 in Berlin

Cross-Border Healthcare in Europe: Promoting Equal Access to Quality Care, 1st July 2015 in Brussels

[More info, all the events.](#)

The Espace Mont-Blanc: a cooperation space to be protected and promoted

For more than twenty years, the Espace Mont Blanc has been striving to meet the needs for sustainable and balanced development of the Mont Blanc massif and its valleys, in order to protect and promote this emblematic cross-border territory.



Today it is often cited as a laboratory for testing tomorrow's mountain region policies at the heart of the Alpine arc.

A Plan Intégré Transfrontalier (integrated cross-border plan) has been implemented with the aim of introducing a joint concept of sustainability into everyday life. It leveraged 12 million euros of investment between 2009 and 2013, including 6.8 million euros in ERDF grant as part of Europe's France-Italy Alcotra programme. Six innovating projects have been developed in the areas of natural resources, renewable energy, hiking, education about the environment, active transport and local produce.

Two other projects, "Eco-innovation en altitude" and "PlanETer", have recently been completed, and have triggered substantial work on the sustainable management of structures at high altitude and in favour of the energy transition.

Today its territory project "Stratégie d'Avenir" (future strategy) aims to establish a sustainable and innovating economy protecting resources and providing added value for the inhabitants.

A broad consultation approach encompassing local authorities, institutions, associations and socio-professional organisations has resulted in the emergence of interesting

lines of action for promoting the attractiveness and sustainability of tourist activities, short distribution channels, supporting innovation at the service of the economy and mobility, and taking better account of the effects of climate change. These actions will be submitted for the 2014-2020 programming of the European Union funds.

The answers to all these environmental and developmental issues the Espace Mont Blanc faces can be obtained only by a collective and cross-border ambition.

The Espace Mont Blanc has been a member of the MOT since 2004.

[More info](#)

Shared concerns about the dropping of bilingual classes

59 MPs, members of the French parliament's French-German friendship group, have reacted to the planned dropping of bilingual classes announced by the Ministry of Education as part of the middle school reform. Suzanne Wasum-Rainer, German ambassador to France, stated on this occasion that "This proposed reform, in our opinion, could weaken the impetus of our bilateral agreements and projects. We fear that it could lead to substantial negative repercussions, in terms of the interest of pupils in France in the German language diploma

(DSD) and the AbiBac (Arbitur-baccalauréat), as well as with regard to twinning arrangements, the French-German University, school exchanges and the programmes of the French-German office for young people (OFAJ)."



Inauguration of the Wissembourg wastewater treatment plant

The Wissembourg cross-border wastewater treatment plant was inaugurated on 18 April 2015, an event attended by a number of elected representatives of the area. The cross-border aspect was openly stressed by Christian Gliech, mayor of Wissembourg: "Here, French-German friendship has for a long time been no longer a symbol, but well and truly a day-to-day reality. Water knows no borders, and now the cycle is completed, as from its production to its treatment we have been able to join forces." The contribution of the German local authorities amounts to 2 million euros; funding was also obtained from the Interreg programme.

First EGTC under German law

The first German EGTC, "Interregional Alliance for the Rhine-Alps Corridor", with its registered office located in Mannheim, was approved on 24 April 2015 by the Regierungspräsidium Freiburg. The Rhine-Alps Corridor, situated between Rotterdam and Genoa, is one of the most important European corridors. The EGTC is aiming to set up a joint development strategy, produced as part of the CODE24 project funded by the Interreg IVB North-West Europe programme. The objective is to improve the utilisation of the existing infrastructure and expand the capacity for transport of persons and goods. [More info](#)

Establishment of regional conferences on public investment

A circular signed by French Prime Minister Manuel Valls has been sent to the regional prefects requiring them to set up regional conferences on public investment before the end of May. The conferences are intended to facilitate the implementation of investment projects in order to support activity in the construction sector. They are required to involve all the entities concerned by public investment in the territories (local authorities, government departments, funding bodies and businesses). They will also contribute to the establishment of multi-year infrastructure plans for future financial years in the regions and remove obstacles to the launching of investment projects. They will be able to obtain support from the *conférence territoriale de l'action publique* (regional public action conference), defined by article L.1111-9 of the CGCT (local authority general code), which will enable them to bring the border partners together and discuss cross-border investments.

[More info \[FR\]](#)

EUROPE NEWS

Identifying the obstacles to cross-border cooperation

With a view to its presidency of the EU Council in the second half of 2015, the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg has placed the clearing of obstacles to cross-border cooperation at the centre of its priorities. A member of the MOT, the Grand-Duchy commissioned it to provide assistance, generating input for one of three technical seminars which took place on 19 May 2015 in Luxembourg City in preparation of its presidency.

On the basis of the responses to a questionnaire sent to entities involved in cross-border cooperation throughout Europe, the MOT produced an analysis of the legal obstacles preventing or threatening the implementation of cross-border projects, along with potential solutions that might involve the introduction of a new European legal instrument. [Read the MOT analysis.](#)

These results, and the work of the cross-border strategic committee on observation, were presented at the seminar on 19 May, stressing the importance of observation as a prior condition for the clearing of obstacles.

Some examples of obstacles highlighted by the survey:

With regard to health, one obstacle is the difficulty for patients to obtain easy access to care in a cross-border territory, with complex administrative procedures for the patients and

for the healthcare professionals, as well as national healthcare provision planning instruments which stop at the borders. As this difficulty has been to a large extent overcome on the French-Belgian border thanks to an outline agreement between the two countries establishing ZOASTs (organised areas for access to cross-border healthcare), a proposal to make similar partnerships possible through a European regulation is put forward.

Another potential version of such a regulation could be the facilitation of agreements between States in response to local initiatives, to secure the legal framework applicable to a specific cross-border project. Examples given of the needs for such legal security include in particular French doctors made available to the EGTC Hôpital de Cerdagne, governed by Spanish

law, the penal liability of whom remains unclear, and the case of an Interreg project which has trained a French-British cross-border firefighting team for dealing with fires at sea in the Dover Strait, without giving its members the legal possibility of intervening in the territorial waters of the other country. Similarly, the towns of Valga and Valka, on the Estonian-Latvian border, want to have the same legal framework for their cross-border town. Although these questions can be settled by an intergovernmental agreement that has then to be ratified, a European instrument would shorten the time necessary for implementing such an agreement, while leaving the initiative directly to the local authorities concerned, under the control of the Member States concerned. [...] [Read the rest of the article.](#)



Health bill in France: a cross-border section for the SROS

Joël Giraud, MP for the Hautes-Alpes and former MOT vice-president, has had an amendment to the Health bill passed which requires that the *Schémas Régionaux d'Organisation des Soins* (SROS) (regional healthcare organisation schemes) include a cross-border section in the territories concerned. With support from Philip Cordery, MP representing French citizens residing in Benelux, "this provision is very important for many of our fellow citizens living either side of our borders. Patients commonly receive healthcare on the other side of

the border, thanks to the many agreements between hospitals or between health professionals. This often involves a shorter distance, and thus greater safety. [...] The committee has already adopted an amendment enabling hospital groups to sign agreements with hospitals on the other side of the border. In this case, the aim is to enable the ARS (regional health agencies) to take the existing provision and demand in the regional health schemes into account. It is an important advance for the French citizens concerned."

[Text of the amendment \[FR\]](#)
[Record of the session \[FR\]](#)

Download the MOT annual report!

The association's annual report has just been published. It summarises one year of MOT activities at the service of its members and cross-border territories.



[Download the report.](#)

"Cross-border projects at the service of the local population"

In order to illustrate the role of cross-border cooperation and the impact of the projects in the daily life of the inhabitants, the MOT has published a package of project sheets on practical topics such as employment, transport, the environment, health, education and culture.

[Consult the package \[FR\].](#)

If you want to promote your cross-border project, [please contact us.](#)

PRESS REVIEW

▲ Working together to combat climate change

www.actu-environnement.com
17 April 2015

"On the occasion of the 7th World Water Forum, the International Network of Basin Organizations and its partners presented good practices in adaptation to climate change in cross-border basins."

▲ Fourmies, Hirson, Chimay... first cross-border municipal council meeting

[La Voix du Nord, 30 April](#)

"It's a first. Monday evening, the towns of Fourmies and Hirson in northern France and Chimay in Belgium organised a French-Belgian cross-border municipal council meeting in the former principedom across the border from Quiévrain."

▲ The Route du feu promotes the industrial heritage

[Le Républicain lorrain, 5 May](#)

"The Route des vins (wine route) is not the only tourism booster in Moselle. This is well understood by the SaarMoselle Eurodistrict, which has recently inaugurated a Route du feu (route of fire) to develop industrial tourism. It consists of ten sites that have greatly marked our region on both sides of the border. We have placed them under the same roof of fire! In both coal mining and steelmaking, thermal energy is used. The link is formed between all these sites."

▲ A rail-road terminal project at Überherrn

[Républicain lorrain, 30 April](#)

"The Saarland employment minister would like to extend [a] logistics centre to a whole network of Saarland and Moselle businesses. The idea is to establish a French-German combined rail-road transport terminal. A sort of piggybacking hub, where complete tractor-trailer units are loaded onto trains. To accomplish this, the whole of the Falck-Völklingen railway line would have to be reactivated and re-electrified over a little more than 20 km."

▲ French-German apprenticeship on the right track

[DNA, 6 May](#)

"Alsace-Baden – Eighteen months after the French-German apprenticeship agreement, the entities involved on either side of the Rhine have presented a first report between initial utopia, assumed optimism and real potential. Absolutely to be continued!"

▲ A cross-border greenway between Huningue and Switzerland

[L'Alsace, 21 April](#)

"Layout work has begun on the second phase of the greenway for pedestrians and cyclists along the Rhine, between rue Moser in Huningue and the Swiss border. The work will last three months."

▲ Housing: Geneva explains its policy

[Le Messenger, 30 April](#)

"The State Councillor of the Canton of Geneva came to discuss with the French elected representatives how to solve the housing shortage in the cross-border region. For the president of the *Communauté de Communes du Genevois*, seen from France, the resistances come from the Geneva area municipalities, from the inhabitants, but also from the developers, who are happy about this property pressure which causes soaring real estate prices. 'Are the Genevans aware that this results in a very substantial increase in mobility?'"

▲ Border workers: a legal challenge to the income tax reform

[Le Dauphiné libéré, 27 April](#)

"We went to sound the alarm,' sums up Michel Charrat, president of the Groupement Frontalier Européen (GTE), about the visit to Bern on Thursday. Although this is not the first time that the GTE has raised the issue of taxation at source, since the president of the Swiss Confederation, Simonetta Sommaruga, had already been informed by letter [...]."

▲ Aquitaine-Euskadi: a trilingual web portal for cross-border travellers

[AFP, 2 May](#)

"The Eurorégion Aquitaine-Euskadi (Spanish Basque country) has inaugurated Transfermuga, a web information portal for cross-border travellers, in three languages (Basque, French, Spanish)."

The 'cross-border' prefect for European cooperation

The CHEMI* publishes the proceedings of the discussions' day on the "cross-border prefect" organized on 20th June 2014, in partnership with the MOT.

The 20 or so prefects and senior civil servants from the ministry who attended discussed with representatives of the MOT, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the DG REGIO and the CGET, the issues relating to cross-border territories, the new 2014-2020 cohesion policy, the redefinition of the State's role with respect to them and the support that the MOT can give. The need to provide training to civil servants who take up posts in border regions was reaffirmed.

To download the proceedings [in French]: [https://allchemi.eu/pluginfile.php/8009/mod_label/intro/Actes 27 Le préfet transfrontalier pour la coopération européenne.pdf](https://allchemi.eu/pluginfile.php/8009/mod_label/intro/Actes%20Le%20pr%C3%A9fet%20transfrontalier%20pour%20la%20coop%C3%A9ration%20europ%C3%A9enne.pdf)

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CROSS-BORDER NEWS

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