

Second meeting of the strategic cross-border committee on observation

16 June 2014

General Commission for Territorial Equality (Commissariat général à l'égalité des territoires – CGET), Paris

Key points and decisions taken



Premier ministre



List of participants

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1) Introduction: presentation of the statistical observation process for cross-border territories

Following on from their exploratory study, the Délégation interministérielle à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'attractivité régionale (DATAR, now the General Commission for Territorial Equality), the MOT and the Network of the French Urban Planning Public Agencies held¹ the first European seminar devoted to the observation of cross-border territories, on 10 December 2012 in Nancy. The objective was to present the work that had been carried out and to highlight the role of observation with respect to development policies for cross-border territories.

¹ In partnership with the city of Nancy and the Nancy Conurbation Urban Planning Agency.

Taking the form of a discussion around the aspirations of local players, it provided a space for exchanges of views about the role of the public authorities (governments, statistical institutes and European institutions) in this area.

It concluded with an agreement between the countries represented² affirming the need to coordinate initiatives for the statistical observation of border regions.

The emergence of coordination between countries

Following on from these exchanges, the countries concerned (France + neighbouring countries), conscious that it is impossible to completely harmonise cross-border data, agreed to prioritise a gradual and pragmatic process of improving and adding to the repository of data and indicators, which ultimately will make it possible to have a more precise understanding of the cross-border context.

Creation of a cross-border strategic committee (CSC)

Accordingly, to go further and put in place the basis for genuine cross-border observation at European level, these countries have set up a cross-border strategic committee made up of representatives of the ministries in charge of territorial development in France and the neighbouring countries. Its role will be to give impetus to and coordinate a multi-annual work programme and to propose and analyse, with the support of a technical working group, priority topics for European territorial cohesion and cross-border territories in particular in order to identify and render secure sources of data and their collection.

Other interested countries could join this initiative; it is desirable that the European Commission (DG REGIO, Eurostat) is involved, as well as ESPON, Interact, the OECD, etc.

The MOT provides the CSC's secretariat.

Creation of a technical working group (TWG)

The cross-border strategic committee will be supported by a technical working group that will bring together representatives of national and regional statistical institutes, ministerial departments and expert operators interested in this initiative. Its role is to make specific the instructions coming out of the cross-border strategic committee's deliberations, to define the conditions for "technical implementation" and to validate the results of work carried out before submitting them to the strategic committee.

The CGET's territorial observation unit provides the secretariat for the TWG.

2) The current political context

Within the framework of the trio of European Union presidencies (Italy 2H 2014 - Latvia 1H 2015 - Luxembourg 2H 2015) cross-border cooperation is an area of the

² Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Italy, Spain and Switzerland.

work programme. Luxembourg, which will work more specifically on Action 3 “Creating a legal instrument for cross-border cooperation”, wishes to work on the obstacles to cross-border cooperation. At the meeting, Jean-Claude Sinner presented the different stages of the initiative proposed by Luxembourg:

- ≡ Identifying the situations and obstacles that hamper the implementation of cross-border cooperation projects
- ≡ Observing cross-border areas in order to provide concrete examples of situations that need to be rectified
- ≡ Drawing up a list of possible fields of application
- ≡ Drawing up a list of policies that may not be the subject of derogations
- ≡ Discussing with stakeholders the possible fields of application and measures to be implemented
- ≡ Finding political allies
- ≡ Organising a workshop as part of a conference during Luxembourg’s presidency in 2015 (see below)
- ≡ Adding this point to the agenda of the ministerial meeting in November 2015
- ≡ Ensuring the initiative’s continuation after 2015

For Luxembourg’s presidency, the objective is to share at the political level the need for legislative changes to foster cross-border cooperation and, as a result, territorial cohesion.

Mr Sinner wishes the support of the CSC and the TWG to **contribute to the content of the session on observation as part of the workshop** due to be run by the Luxembourg presidency in July 2015.

3) Actions to be taken

In order to prepare for this session, the members of the CSC agreed on the following roadmap of actions is to be carried out before the meeting of the technical working group on 14 October 2014. The MOT, as the CSC’s secretary, and the CGET, as the TWG’s secretary, will coordinate the following actions:

Identification of some key topics and indicators to be tried out in cross-border areas

The MOT is to propose a number of topics to be tried out in cross-border areas. The topics envisaged are employment, research/innovation, healthcare and services. Account will be taken of the thematic objectives adopted in the 2014-2020 cross-border cooperation programme projects. The indicators can be identified among the key indicators of the Europe 2020 strategy.

The increased requirements in terms of the production of outcome indicators by programmes, in a context in which there are gaps in cross-border data, should be an incentive to restart cross-border observation processes, where necessary co-financed by programmes.

Work of compilation and typology of cross-border obstacles (systemic, cooperation, regulatory, etc.)

The MOT has to produce a summarised compilation of a number of obstacles to cross-border cooperation by drawing on different pieces of work (Council of Europe, report for the Nord-Pas-de-Calais Region on the cross-border obstacles to French-Belgian cooperation, etc.) in order to inform the deliberations/discussions about the key observation topics.

Identification of pilot areas in which the indicators can be tried out

The MOT has to identify pilot areas along France's borders in order to try out the indicators selected and to provide examples of success or problems encountered.

All of these proposals will be presented and discussed at the TWG in October with the aim of securing active participation in preparations for the seminar in July 2015. These actions will only be possible if the national and/or regional statistical institutes, as well as the observatories, agree to participate in the TWG.

An invitation to take part in the TWG will be drafted by the CGET and will be submitted to the participants of the CSC present on 16/06/2014.

4) Other points

Technical preparation for a cross-border observation process

The task of carrying out a feasibility study for a cross-border database was given to the *Réseau interdisciplinaire pour l'aménagement et la cohésion des territoires de l'Europe et de ses voisinages* (RIATE – Interdisciplinary network for the development and cohesion of European and neighbouring territories), the focal point for ESPON in France. It proposes 3 scenarios:

- ≡ Scenario 1: Submission of data-files for analysis. The objective is to produce a catalogue of data on a given topic.
- ≡ Scenario 2: Database for analysis. The objective is to produce a comparable statistical representation of different cross-border territories.
- ≡ Scenario 3: Cross-border observatory. The objective is to provide comparable mapping of different cross-border territories, and to enable the processing and analysis of cross-border areas.

[Following the presentation of this summary, the strategic committee has asked the RIATE to present the results of this study in greater detail at the committee's next meeting.](#)

A web platform for exchanges on cross-border observation

A web platform could publicise the cross-border strategic committee's initiative and enable knowledge sharing.

3 sections are proposed:

- ≡ Part 1: “News on the strategic committee for cross-border statistical observation”: general information on the initiative, its objectives and major decisions taken.
- ≡ Part 2: “Links to partners”: link to the MOT page giving partners’ websites (administrations in charge of territorial development, statistical institutes of neighbouring countries, regional statistical institutes, cross-border observatories).
- ≡ Part 3: “Directory of observation work”: studies (or web links) carried out locally by statistical institutes or researchers on cross-border areas. These studies are grouped by topic and can be selected via a thematic and geographical search engine.

This bilingual web platform (in French and English) will be operated by the MOT and hosted on its website: espaces-transfrontaliers.eu

Before the next meeting of the technical working group, the MOT will carry out a survey of studies³ and links to websites among the CSC and TWG’s partners.

An online workspace for members of the strategic committee and the technical working group

An online space for exchanges is going to be opened soon for use by all members of the CSC and TWG. This workspace known as “Ariane” is hosted by the CGET and administered by Jean-Luc Frès and Gilles Toutin. It allows its participants to have access to all the documents relating to work sessions (agendas, different notes, minutes, presentations, etc.).

5) Calendar

- ≡ **30 September 2014**: Conference on the statistical observation of cross-border territories organised by the CESCO and the MOT in Hungary.
- ≡ **14 October 2014**: Next meeting of the technical working group
- ≡ **After 20 November 2014**: Meeting of the strategic committee (date to be decided)

³ Studies must be in French and English. If necessary, partners can provide a two-page summary in English for studies that are not available in French or English.