

UNDER THE HIGH PATRONAGE OF
MR EMMANUEL MACRON PRESIDENT
OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC



borders forum

Cross-border territories
on the front line?

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PROCEEDINGS



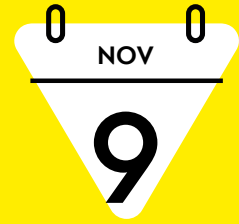
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FIRST DAY 09 NOVEMBER 2020

Cross-border territories in Europe and the 10th meeting of the EGTC Platform 2020



The first day of the Borders Forum, co-organised with the European Commission and the European Committee of the Regions, has been introduced by Elisa Ferreira, European Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, Apostolos Tzitzikostas, President of the European Committee of the Regions, and Christian Dupessey, President of the MOT, Mayor of Annemasse, President of the Metropolitan Pole of the French Genevois. It was a privileged moment to discuss the future of Europe, the need for a Europe of territories, and the means to strengthen cross-border cohesion.

The objectives:

- reaffirm, along the representatives of the European institutions and States, that at a time when the world is going through an unprecedented health and economic crisis, European and cross-border cooperation is the right response;
- highlight the EGTCs¹, their role after 2020, and the draft European ECBM² regulation (resolution of cross-border obstacles);
- highlight the Franco-German Treaty of Aachen and debate the possibility of similar approaches in Europe, in order to strengthen bilateral cross-border cooperation and European integration.

Moderation by: Caroline de Camaret, Chief editor of Europe, France 24

4 round-tables:

ROUND-TABLE #1

Overcoming borders, a major challenge for the future of Europe

ROUND-TABLE #3

10 years of the EGTC platform and 30 years of INTERREG – outcome and visions for the future

ROUND-TABLE #2

What European tools to implement an effective cross-border policy?

ROUND-TABLE #4

The Treaty of Aachen, a driving force in Europe?

And two key points:



KEY POINT

during round-table #1



Presentation of the "European Cross-border Citizen's Alliance"



KEY POINT

during round-table #3



2020 EGTC award, by the European Committee of the Regions

⁽¹⁾ European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation.

⁽²⁾ European Cross-Border Mechanism.

OPENING OF THE 1ST BORDERS FORUM



By Elisa Ferreira,
European Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms

The values that you are defending now represent essential European values that we all share around our Union.

We will see the amazing richness of cross-border cooperation in the European Union. The Covid crisis has demonstrated with force that borders remain an important issue of public interest and debate.

How do we manage borders in a public health crisis? How do we ensure that our important cooperation in healthcare, connectivity and innovation is not suddenly interrupted at the borders?

This year also marks an important anniversary: 30 years of INTERREG. We have come a long way. And we can be proud of this. When INTERREG started in 1990, the main objective was to support regions along internal borders to implement the single market.

Since then we have built an instrument that brings together people from more than 30 countries – member states and neighbouring countries – to tackle all kinds of current challenges across our borders. The network we have created is truly impressive: More than 100 programmes across land borders, sea borders including larger territorial spaces and with our pre-accession partners and neighbour countries.

I pay particular tribute to those who have been willing to experiment and who have taken the initiative to reach further. I also pay tribute to the European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation. When we introduced this idea back in 2006, there was enthusiasm, but also scepticism. Today, we have around 80 successful groupings - Some of whom have played a key role in tackling the Covid crisis. The

Groupings form an important pillar in cross-border cooperation.

Today, we must look ahead and debate the key challenges in front of us.

First, the continued political relevance of borders.

Earlier this year during the first confinement, when borders closed sometimes overnight, we realised how much our European livelihood depends on open borders. Some were prevented from working, some from seeing family, some from accessing healthcare facilities. We must draw the necessary lessons from these experiences.

Borders as testing grounds of our European ambitions.

We must not forget that a great deal of public goods such as transport, access to energy, jobs and healthcare transcend borders. None of these European public goods should be blocked by a border.

I strongly believe that cross-border issues matter and need attention. We analysed it in the last Communication from 2017, before the Covid-19 crisis, on Boosting EU Border Regions. And we will prepare a new Communication soon.

Cooperation with regional organisations is of key importance. And of course we welcome and encourage national initiatives, such as the Treaty of Aachen for cooperation between France and Germany.

When we speak about borders we cannot overlook the new external border we will soon have with the United Kingdom.

OPENING OF THE 1ST BORDERS FORUM

I am satisfied that the British authorities will continue with the PEACE programme in Northern Ireland. But at the same time, I very much regret their unwillingness to continue with other INTERREG programmes. Some programmes will have to disappear and we are currently working to find fall-back solutions wherever possible.

The financial means available.

With fewer resources available, we will need to concentrate our actions and prioritize. Concentration means a focus on high added value activities. Projects that will really change border life in the long-term.

This means a strong focus on the twin transition. INTERREG must promote Europe's transition to a green economy and I am glad that the thematic concentration in the new legislation will provide the necessary framework.

But we must also be more digital and innovative. And the new Interregional Innovation Tool will help us to reach that goal.

Concentration also means a focus on the territories where we need change most.

The importance of technical assistance.

There is an old saying from the military field: Amateurs discuss strategy, experts discuss logistics. For us this means that, it is not enough to have a good overall plan

and sufficient funds, but in order to succeed we also need solid implementation.

As European institutions, we promote the sharing across Europe of knowledge and experience. Border regions often face similar problems. They should not have to reinvent the wheel each time. We have developed an on-line platform for practitioners to exchange experiences.

And we offer more support through the so-called "b-solutions" (border solutions) tool. Through this we make legal and technical expertise available, in transport, health care, data exchange or recognition of diplomas and skills. We have already completed more than 40 cases.

For 30 years, you have provided practical solutions in order to overcome border obstacles. You have been working at the fore-front of European integration. But the mission is not accomplished. I want to encourage you to continue with your dedication and efforts in the future. You are building Europe every day!

Looking ahead in the middle of Europe's second confinement we have learned the value of open borders. With your experiences we will draw the right conclusions.





By Apostolos Tzitzikostas, President of the European Committee of the Regions

Many Europeans no longer know what it is like to have borders in the middle of Europe. The controls, the limitations of living in one country or another, is something new generations do not know; and it is probably a distant memory for older populations.

Nevertheless, the immigration crisis in 2015 and 2016 has put considerable pressure on the Schengen Agreement, which has raised concerns about its future. These crises have led some of our citizens and politicians to question the future of Europe and the usefulness of cross-border and transnational cooperation. Just when we thought we were leaving these difficult times behind, the Covid crisis has changed our way of life like never before. With this pandemic, we have once again been caught up with the past, and borders unfortunately closed overnight.

The Covid-19 platform set up by the Committee of the Regions has brought together many cross-border projects that contribute to European resilience. Part of the EU's response to the pandemic is indeed to analyse cooperation between regions during the crisis and its impact. But despite all efforts, many citizens in border regions have not been able to go to work, receive medical care, or see their relatives. Businesses that depend on border labour have also suffered greatly from the situation. It is important to respond to their needs, and to those of citizens. We must seize this opportunity to raise awareness of the important role of cross-border cooperation for European integration.

To the arguments of those who believe in hiding behind national borders, our response is: borders are not obstacles, they are laboratories that are there to increase resilience, to enable dialogue, to accelerate the green transition.

Internal border regions represent 40% of the Union's territory, 37% of the population, with almost 2 million cross-border commuters. Even before the crisis, a large number of citizens and businesses faced obstacles that prevented them from carrying out their activities. Local and regional authorities also face persistent obstacles to the development of cross-border services, due to legal, administrative and

cultural differences.

These obstacles need to be overcome because we know that border regions are the cornerstone of European integration. Cooperation programmes play a fundamental role; but citizens must also be willing to work together with their neighbours, to work together, for a better "collective future".

The Committee of the Regions plays a specific role with regard to cross-border cooperation and strong border regions. We are determined to offer comprehensive recommendations for improvement, such as our contribution to the Conference on the Future of Europe.

The development of our proposals on long-term cross-border cooperation is an inclusive and comprehensive work. We invite you all to contribute. We will present our final recommendations next year. We need your experience, your ideas, your needs. We will soon be launching a public consultation on this issue.

Our proposals are based on three priorities:

- Removing obstacles to the establishment of cross-border public services (health, transport, education, tourism).
- Maintain a good level of public services in the event of a crisis, to enable people to live normally in border regions. The four fundamental European freedoms must be respected.
- Increase the awareness of cross-border populations of these European issues.

As Governor of Central Macedonia in Greece, I would like to emphasize that the INTERREG programmes have really helped us to develop in these areas, where cross-border cooperation is indispensable. The best way to celebrate these achievements is to renew our commitment, and to say very clearly that the time has come to go even further together.

INTRODUCTION TO THE 1ST BORDERS FORUM



by Christian Dupessey,
President of the MOT, Mayor of Annemasse, President of the
Metropolitan Pole of the French Genevois

The global health crisis we are experiencing highlights the specificities that our cross-border regions are facing. We would never have imagined that we would once again experience the closure of borders within Europe.

Since spring 2020, this closure has been causing disruption to our inhabitants. The border, for most of our territories, has little sense, given the extent to which the living areas are completely cross-border on a daily basis.

The economic consequences are strong for cross-border workers and economic actors, although not only for them. Families, lives have simply been split in two for several months, and unfortunately risk being divided in two again.

The current crisis exacerbates the difficulties experienced by citizens of cross-border regions in finding a job, in accessing health services, or in moving around. Businesses are facing barriers that hinder their growth. Local authorities - I know this from daily experience - continue to face challenges in setting up cross-border public services.

The crisis - and this is its positive side - has stimulated multiple forms of cooperation and revealed cross-border interdependencies and solidarities.

These solidarities must now be strengthened, thanks to European and national public policies, which fully recognise the specific characteristics of cross-border regions.

How can these specificities be taken into account in a concrete, legal and regulatory manner?

I believe that it is by sharing our experiences, and speaking with one voice, that we will succeed. This is the aim of our Borders Forum.

It aims to demonstrate the central role of cross-border territories in bringing the peoples of Europe closer together, paving the way for sustainable and inclusive growth, and supporting European integration. We must convince the European and national authorities to put cross-border territories at the heart of their public action.

Today, we want to raise the voice of cross-border territories and their inhabitants, the cross-border citizens of France and Europe.

This is the meaning of the "European Cross-Border Citizen's Alliance" that we are presenting today to all of you, individuals, European and national institutions. Join us!

Cross-border territories are on the front line of the health crisis, just as they must be at the heart of Europe tomorrow!

It is these territories, and above all their citizens, that must be the driving force of European integration, conceived in the interests of the inhabitants. We are dealing with real-life situations that require concrete solutions, and that is what we are going to show during these two days.

ROUND-TABLE #1

"Overcoming borders, a major challenge for the future of Europe"

With the effective implementation of Brexit in 2021, the external borders of the European Union will be changed. The internal borders, for their part, suddenly came back into the news with the Covid-19 pandemic. As a new discussion on the future of Europe is starting, how can address the question of both internal and external borders, and above all the need

to overcome them? How can we envisage the "post 2020" and provide global and concerted responses to meet the challenges of tomorrow's Europe and strengthen territorial and cross-border cohesion?

Speakers

Elisa Ferreira, European Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms

Apostolos Tzitzikostas, President of the European Committee of the Regions

Christian Dupessey, President of the MOT, Mayor of Annemasse, President of the Metropolitan Pole of the French Genevois

Karl-Heinz Lambertz, President of the Parliament of the German-speaking Community, President of the Association of European Border Regions

Judit Varga, Minister of Justice, Hungary

Moderator: Caroline de Camaret, Chief editor of Europe, France 24

Caroline de Camaret: In the context of the German Presidency of the European Union, which is planning a European Agenda for 2030 and a new Leipzig charter, in which direction should territorial cooperation and cross-border issues be pushed? Does Hungary support the "European Cross-Border Citizen's Alliance" announced today?

Judit Varga: Hungary is an active member of the EGTC Platform with many EGTCs on its borders. At the centre of Europe, in the Carpathian Basin, we have seven neighbouring countries, and of our 19 counties, 14 are on the border and 15 are part of a cross-border cooperation programme. 40 small and medium-sized towns are located near a border. The cross-border issue is thus a key feature of our European partnership. And more than 80% of Hungarian citizens live in cross-border regions, much more than the European average. The economic and political landscapes will change after the Covid-19 crisis, and we must strengthen our strategic cooperation today. We need to be able to respond in a united way to the different challenges within and outside our borders in Europe. It will be important to seek a consensus among Member States, reflecting the priorities of the citizens who need to be put back at the heart of the discussion on the Future of Europe. The Committee of the Regions has an important role to play in strengthening communication between the EU and citizens, in order to guarantee a truly democratic Union.

2.5 million Hungarians live in Hungary's neighbouring countries. The cross-border issue is thus a key feature of our European partnership.

Caroline de Camaret: Many expectations towards the European Union have emerged in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis, particularly with regard to the European recovery plan. Is it still relevant to encourage this territorial approach, to offer more resources and power to border authorities?

Elisa Ferreira: Yes, the relevance and importance of cross-border regions remain today. Border areas are very diverse. The closure of borders has been very violent. It was a shock for many European citizens who were used to working together for a very long time. We need a framework for cross-border cooperation that is resilient even in times of crisis.

We cannot ignore the situation of borders, and that is why we need an approach based on a local level in addition to coordination between regions, with specific attention given to each Member State.

We know that the Commission's competences regarding the management of a health crisis are very limited, hence the initial reactions taken by the Member States, without consultation. The work that was then done at the Commission level was aimed at gradually reopening the borders, at having public procurement policies on essential equipment, in an approach of consultation and not of legal constraint, since health protection actions are managed by the States.

The role of the new territorial Agenda in the context of the discussion on the future of Europe is essential. We need to

ROUND-TABLE #1

think more broadly about the Commission's competences in such circumstances. Since the beginning of the crisis, we have already learned that we cannot protect ourselves by closing borders, and that cooperation is essential.

In a crisis there are freedoms that must be respected and a minimum level of public services that must be guaranteed. For this to happen, regions and local authorities must work together towards a common understanding so that states acknowledge what is going on. The lack of preparation, coordination and panic at the beginning of the crisis must be a lesson for us to be prepared for the next time. The subsequent situation for frontier workers is emblematic. As far as future European programmes are concerned, the Commission is fully aware of this new challenge. To sum up, there is a lot of work to be done.

INTERREG and cohesion funding will make it possible to answer these questions, not just on emergency issues, but in the long term. We also need to work on the European cross-border mechanism (ECBM) to stabilise systems and enable them to withstand crises.

Caroline de Camaret: What is your message in the face of this virus which questions the border, why seal the "European Cross-Border Citizen's Alliance" today, of which we mentioned the ten priorities in the introduction?

Karl-Heinz Lambertz:



The importance of borders is not new. The AEBR, the association I have the honour to chair, will celebrate its 50th anniversary next year. This half-century is also half a century of history of borders in Europe. This small continent of Europe, just a little bigger than Australia, is the one with the most national borders. European cooperation is an extraordinary effort to overcome them.

As soon as there is a crisis, whether it is terrorist attacks, the migration crisis in 2015, and now Covid, states close borders, even outside of the realm any European legislation, when it is precisely when there should be cooperation across borders.

This is only partially done. Nevertheless, we notice, and this is a sign of hope, that a very large number of European leaders, civil society organisations and politicians, are convinced that we will only be able to succeed tomorrow by cooperating more. This is why this European Cross-Border Citizen's Alliance is so important. I am very grateful

to the MOT for having initiated it with its partners.

Caroline de Camaret: Do you feel that the crisis has strengthened territorial cooperation, or, on the contrary, that "cross-border" is now suspected of letting the virus pass, and not being sufficiently equipped to deal with the crises it engenders?

Christian Dupessey: Thank you for calling upon my experience as a local elected representative in an international and bi-national metropolis. Although Switzerland is not a member of the European Union, it is a member of the Schengen area, and our region is highly integrated. The crisis we have experienced has shown what should not be done. The borders were closed brutally, without asking the opinion of those who experience it on a daily basis. What we have all said is that beyond the obvious economic consequences, there have been very strong consequences in people's everyday lives. For example, there were scenes of a father presenting his child to his mother, over barriers, on the other side of the border. This was unimaginable, and we can speak of a real shock.

We have drawn positive consequences from this. Today, with this second shock of the pandemic, the choice to leave the borders open has been made as much by Switzerland as by France. We have created even closer links between elected representatives on both sides, to try to coordinate our measures and ensure territorial coherence. The inhabitants, for their part, have become aware that they are in the same living area. The crisis has strengthened cross-border identity in a positive way.

Now we want to say: never again! No more brutal measures, but coordination, coherence, and a real policy for cross-border areas, with a global vision, involving citizens. I believe that it is possible, solidarity exists in times of crisis, particularly in the health sector.

Caroline De Camaret: In Hungary, Viktor Orban was suspected of wanting to re-establish internal EU borders at the time of the 2015 migration crisis and during the health crisis. Has the pandemic fundamentally changed your view of borders?

Judit Varga: I would like to separate the issue of migration and that of the pandemic, because they are different challenges in their nature. Before the health crisis, Hungary demanded the restoration of the Schengen area. The condition for this is real protection at the external borders of the EU. Within the framework of Covid, we faced challenges that were unknown until then. Over the summer, the figures improved, and Hungary was one of the first countries to abolish all border measures, to restore free movement of people and goods. With the second wave, decisions were taken on the basis of scientific experts. Concerning the lockdown and border mechanisms, measures taken in the spring were reintroduced, with numerous exceptions, as for cross-border residents and workers. For example, on the majority of our borders, mobility was ensured within a limit of 30 km between home



and workplace, and this has worked very well. We have also cooperated a lot to help neighbouring countries with protective equipment, as well as providing healthcare staff.

The Hungarian EGTCs also gave information on border arrangements, they collected masks and disinfectants to send them to neighbouring countries. The EGTCs during the crisis worked very well.

Caroline de Camaret: Nevertheless, the risk with this coronavirus, which plunges us into very strict lockdown periods, as in Greece, is to hinder free movement between countries and to block cross-border traffic. Is there not a risk that the idea of abolishing the borders between the European states will be called into question in the long term, a risk that Schengen will be called into question?

Apostolos Tzitzikostas: Closed borders are the last thing Europe needs right now. They should not be put in place in the EU for any reason. There is no crisis strong enough to justify closing internal borders.

Whether it is Covid or immigration, no country should be left alone in facing a crisis. Solidarity is the very foundation of Europe. It is not with less Europe that we will be able to respond to this crisis, but on the contrary with more Europe. Europe is about opening borders, it is about cross-border cooperation.

As Governor of Central Macedonia in Greece, I have worked a lot with the regions on the other side of the border and we have achieved excellent results. The Committee of the Regions after my election as President had to deal with the coronavirus crisis from the very beginning. We set up a platform for the regions to discuss, to put forward ideas, and this has been very useful. So, yes of course, I can understand that there may be difficulties, with workers going from one region to another. Nevertheless, the EU has looked at these issues and there are definite results that have to be put in place everywhere.

Caroline de Camaret: More Europe must inspire you as you look forward to the conference on the future of Europe, which should also involve citizens. But this does not only affect the two million cross-border workers, nor the 150 million who live in a border region. Can you also address the other 250 million Europeans? How can you get them interested in border issues and freedom of movement?

Karl-Heinz Lambertz:

Freedom of movement primarily concerns people living in border regions. However, it would be a great mistake to believe that only this population group is concerned. Europe is small compared to other continents. Everything that happens here, every solution to our problems, bears a border dimension.

This is why the abolition of internal borders is important, inherent in the creation of the European Union, and this is also why we must achieve a common policy on external borders. We need more Europe, to find answers to our common challenges, for a better integration of border regions, connecting with the citizens. The latter must be convinced that what happens in their own country is best done if it is in synergy with the rest of Europe. Border regions, because of their specificities, have a more or less double role: as a laboratory to see what works best by cooperating, but also as a driving force to move things forward. We have to convince States to give them all the attention they need.

Caroline de Camaret: More Europe, more coordination, this is what you have been called on to do during the crisis, but we have noticed that you have few competences in the field of health. There are many responses from the public saying: "Let's build a federal Europe with a real foreign policy, an integrated asylum and migration policy". How do you see the future of the Schengen area? Is this area revalidated or weakened?

Elisa Ferreira: We cannot imagine that everything we have built together will be called into question. Of course the Schengen area exists. The states themselves have learned that what happened during the first wave - the closing of borders - was against their interests. We have talked about the issues of cross-border work and interconnections, but there were also other problems such as the transport of raw materials, equipment, etc. In some cases, necessary medical equipment was blocked on one side of the border. The border is not the main criteria.

If we all have the same criteria, for example in the case of lockdown, then people should be treated the same regardless of which side of the border they are on. That is the objective.

Cooperation is increasingly necessary to overcome the challenges we face. These challenges do not arise at a national level, they are European and international challenges. This concerns all areas, we cooperate on forest fires, migration flows, crime, money laundering, but also on globalisation, climate challenges or terrorism. There is a need for more intelligent cooperation, and therefore, of course, more Europe.

ROUND-TABLE #1

Caroline de Camaret : More Europe is not necessarily the motto in Hungary. Do you think that with the second wave, there will be more Europe, more solidarity and cooperation?

Judit Varga: Hungary's position has always been quite reticent to this idea of more Europe. We are in favour of a safer and wider Europe. We are, together with Austria, in favour of the other Balkan countries joining the European Union. That is why we are still in favour of accession talks. We also cooperated a lot during the crisis with our neighbours, for example in the field of medical equipment: this shows our willingness to cooperate.

Caroline de Camaret: It should also be noted that you have many residents in the border countries, which makes cross-border commuting important for you. Can you tell us more about this and raise the issue of Hungarian minorities?

Judit Varga: Yes, after the First World War, Hungary lost two thirds of its territory, and one third of Hungarians found themselves outside the borders. Today they represent 2.5 million people (for 10 million Hungarians within the country). This is a quite high percentage.

For us cross-border cooperation, and more broadly accession and integration into the European community, means that we all belong to the same community.

Concerning "more Europe" we were talking about, we in Hungary are in favour of the framework that we have joined, even if some competences will always be a matter of national sovereignty. We wish to preserve this "status quo" and refuse the idea of a federal union. We believe that the number of border controls will have to be reduced after the pandemic. But we remain in favour of strong protection at the external borders. It is a matter of better protecting

our common values and providing a sense of security for European citizens.

Caroline de Camaret: There is a strong economic dimension to this cross-border issue. Why are border regions often more fragile than others, how do you explain this, the so-called "border effect"? How can this be overcome?

Christian Dupessey: This is a paradox. The ability to exploit the tremendous development potential of cross-border regions is limited by constraints and obstacles, which we have already highlighted. When it works effectively in practice, we achieve outstanding results. Looking at the territory that I know very well, the Franco-Genevan region, we have just made an extremely significant investment leading to a real revolution in mobility with a cross-border RER that serves the whole of French-speaking Switzerland and the whole of Haute-Savoie. We are capable of going far in terms of cross-border development, provided there is equity on both sides of the borders. A balance must be found in joint development, so that one country does not "eat" the other. It is this balance that must be guaranteed. There is also this very strong idea that we must not forget anyone in our regions. Even in a rather favoured region like ours, social cohesion is an extremely important element. Not all citizens have the same standard of living. My borough of almost 40,000 inhabitants is considered to be one of the most unequal cities in France and this is due to its border location where there is a very large difference in income.

I too am very much in favour of what I have heard from all sides about "more Europe". Europe, by relying on the reality on the ground, by listening to our cross-border spaces, by giving more power to local decision-making, must allow a better balance of development on both sides of the borders.

Border areas are today an opportunity to strengthen European citizenship. This cross-border citizenship becomes



a European citizenship, by building something tangible, a win-win situation, and by leaving no one on the sidelines. The Conference on the Future of Europe, the French Presidency, which will be our responsibility in 2022, are extremely important issues.

The point of today's debate, and of our Borders Forum, is to focus on these regions which are an opportunity for Europe.

Caroline de Camaret: The public is asking about the impact of border closures on employment? Is the classic concept of border based on the criterion of territory a concept in crisis?

Apostolos Tzitzikostas: There is no such thing as a crisis in this concept. I don't think that open borders go against national sovereignty, on the contrary, they strengthen economic cooperation. It also allows European countries to focus on their priorities. Furthermore, it is important that our external borders are protected so that we can have these open borders within the EU.

Karl-Heinz Lambertz: On employment, it depends on the situation. Where there is high mobility in the labour market, the impact of border closures can be quite catastrophic. Citizens face the worst difficulties in continuing their work on the other side of the border while opportunities for job creation disappear. The difficulties are greater with closed rather than open borders.

The dimension of the border is always important, even when it is open, since there are always two different systems.

When I cross a border that is no longer a place of control, then I enter another legal system without realising it, until I encounter a problem. Many borders continue to exist in people's heads, they are the most difficult borders to cross. It is in our interest to keep the borders open, but to do so in such a way that the crossing poses as few difficulties as possible. The notion of territory is changing a lot with globalisation and communication technologies.

One thing remains fundamental, citizens do not live in the Internet, or I don't know where, but in a village, a town, a region, and this anchoring is very important.

This must not become an argument for retrenchment or exclusion. This territorial anchoring must allow an opening towards the outside world. It is this exchange between these two dimensions that makes Europe strong, and we need more Europe. We also need to have common values in Europe, and here we still have a great deal of work to do. You only have to read the latest report on the rule of law in Europe, but that is another matter.

Caroline de Camaret: In 2021, the British leave us. There will be 27 of us instead of 28. The external borders of the EU are moving across the Channel. Will we continue the transmaritime projects with our English friends?

Elisa Ferreira: This is a crucial issue as the negotiation process with the UK is still ongoing today. The UK has already informed the EU that it wants to maintain the cooperation programme on peace between Ireland and the UK, a programme of reconciliation and stability. We welcome this. But the UK was also an active member of other programmes such as INTERREG. It no longer wishes to take part in them, although the possibility exists for a third country to do so, following the example of Switzerland. Today, the Commission is concerned about the continuity of these programmes. They need to be thoroughly re-thought so that the substance of cooperation can continue without this very important partner, the United Kingdom. At Council level, a decision has also been taken to set up an instrument to support regions affected by Brexit. We are working on it.

Finally, the Commission is of the opinion that we must have a careful management of the external border. It has put forward proposals for this.

We also have the ambition to establish a common understanding on the basis of European values. These values include leaving no one on the sidelines. With these values, we can manage the European neighbourhood, as well as major challenges such as terrorism, earthquakes, floods, hurricanes... as we cannot respond to them individually.

Caroline de Camaret: As you said, there are no borders when it comes to terrorism, climate change, or natural accidents. How do you respond to that, Ms Varga?

Judit Varga: To answer on Brexit, the problem is that Europe has not been able to keep the UK within the Union and stop migration. It is a short answer, but we have to move forward from a democratic point of view. Article 2 of the EU Treaty lists European values, such as freedom or democracy, as the first two words. It is important to respect national identities and citizens' decisions. We need intelligent integration, a common and European response to climate change, to terrorism. But the question of national identity and democracy are European values that must be protected equally.

Key point



European Cross-border Citizen's Alliance

"BORDERS AT THE HEART OF TOMORROW'S EUROPE"

Presented the 9 November, during the round-table #1.

At a time when Europe is preparing to decide on its budget and trajectories for the period 2021-27, the European Committee of the Regions, the MOT, the AEBR³ and the CESC⁴, presented during the round-table #1 a "European Cross-border Citizen's Alliance".

This Alliance advocates, on behalf of cross-border territories throughout Europe, that European and national decisions should in the future provide border authorities with more resources and powers to deepen cooperation across borders. It is addressed to European and national authorities.

The signatories of the Alliance advocate that:

- border regions are reflected more fully in EU policy and legislation,
- border regions and their cross-border groupings be involved in the conference on the future of Europe,
- border public authorities have appropriate powers and dedicated resources, as well as accelerated procedures,

- negotiations on the draft regulation on a European Cross-Border Mechanism (ECBM)⁵ come to a successful conclusion,

- the legal and administrative obstacles to cross-border cooperation are removed,

- the States and the European Commission carry out cross-border territorial impact assessments of public policies,

- cross-border observatories be set up to measure cross-border integration and identify obstacles,

- an effective framework allows the implementation of cross-border public services,

- border regions be involved in the implementation of the European Green Deal, and fully benefit from the Next Generation EU recovery plan,

- a minimum level of cross-border cooperation is guaranteed in the event of a global, European or regional crisis.

MORE INFO ON THE ALLIANCE

<http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/en/activites-ue/european-cross-border-citizens-alliance/>

To sign the Alliance: <https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/Pages/cross-border-alliance.aspx>



⁽³⁾ Association of European Border Regions.

⁽⁴⁾ Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives (equivalent structure to the MOT on the borders with Hungary).

⁽⁵⁾ COM(2018) 0373.

ROUND-TABLE #2

"What European tools to implement an effective cross-border policy?"

ECBM – European cross-border mechanism; cross-border governance tools; Operational Programmes 21-27 and attention paid to cross-border territories; new financial tools – InvestEU... Cross-border territories, their specificities and their integration and cohesion needs are more than ever integrated in the tools proposed by the main European actors

(Commission, EIB, etc.). What do these different tools cover? What does such an awareness of cross-border issues reveal? How can local actors take ownership of these new tools?

Speakers

Anne Sander, Member of the European Parliament

Claude Turmes, Minister for Energy and Spatial Planning, Luxembourg

Rudy Demotte, President of the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis, President of the Parliament of the Federation Wallonia-Brussels

Normunds Popens, Deputy Director General, DG REGIO, European Commission

Michael Frehse, Head of Directorate-General for Community, Federal Ministry for the Interior, Building and Community, Germany

Moderator: Caroline de Camaret, Chief editor of Europe, France 24

Caroline de Camaret: Some very innovative instruments have been put in place by the European Commission. Tell us which ones and for what purpose they have been developed.

Normunds Popens: The DG REGIO coordinates all European cohesion programmes. In the context of the Covid-19 crisis it is clear that more needs to be done. The decisions taken by the Member States have not been sufficiently coordinated. From the point of view of DG REGIO: there are lessons to be learnt.

Today there is a European toolbox. The aim is to use it to develop concrete actions in cross-border areas, particularly in the areas of health, education, economy, mobility or employment. The Borders Forum is a working tool in itself, a formidable platform for exchange.

The DG REGIO is in constant dialogue with the Member States. It has developed a programme to increase inter-regional and cross-border cooperation. As a result of the Brexit, funding will decrease. It will be necessary to ensure that investments are sufficiently targeted. DG REGIO also supports work on legal tools for cooperation. The European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) work very well and provide a legal basis for cross-border cooperation. DG REGIO also provides technical tools, such as the

"B-Solutions" programme, which funds 40 initiatives to remove cross-border obstacles on borders.

We hope that the German Presidency of the Council will take forward the ongoing negotiations on the cross-border issue, and that the member states will be more inclined to do so as well. An important principle for future programmes is that of "functionality" and supporting territories that seek to work together. Functionality differs between regions and areas. For example, there is a need to strengthen investment in health projects. The different funds and instruments must be complementary and work in synergy.

Caroline de Camaret: What do you think of the European Commission's innovations and of these new cooperation tools, targeted at cross-border regions?

Anne Sander: As an Alsatian, border-related subjects are close to my heart. The health crisis has shown us the limits of cross-border work and all the difficulties that this has caused: both economic and social, but also in people's hearts. It is a region in which we have rebuilt a Franco-German friendship, but also Europe, on the basis of the fractures of the past. This crisis with the closure of the borders has had a great impact on the population. But finally, it is also an opportunity, an encouragement to go faster and further in the tools proposed to us by the Commission. The Parliament is in favour of a certain number of these tools. It is mobilising citizens and alerted the Commission in March on the issue of borders. It is fighting to set up green corridors, to increase the fluidity of border

ROUND-TABLE #2

crossings, or to request additional funding for INTERREG programmes. INTERREG is a wonderful programme but its funding is very limited: 3% of the ERDF. I also welcome the role of EGTCs.

Concerning the ECBM⁶ tool currently being negotiated to remove cross-border obstacles, it is essential to move faster. A pilot project has been submitted to the European Parliament. Its objective: to prepare for the post-crisis period and to experiment a project with special funds for this experimentation. This pilot project has been approved by the Budget Committee of the European Parliament.

CBC is a cross-cutting issue concerning many areas, and there is no group in the Parliament specifically dedicated to cross-border issues. This is my objective: to create a group of parliamentarians who are interested in cross-border issues in order to pass on all information and good practices. This group would be responsible for lobbying the European institutions (the Commission and the Council) on cross-border issues.

Caroline de Camaret: Luxembourg is a cross-border country par excellence. You are particularly affected in the event of traffic jams. Are you satisfied with the Commission's proposals for new tools?

Claude Turmes: For Luxembourg, the cross-border issue is essential. Firstly in terms of employment: 200,000 cross-border commuters work in Luxembourg. Cross-border cooperation enables fantastic cultural exchanges. During the Covid-19 crisis, we took in patients from Alsace; and that was a heartfelt exchange compared with the thousands of carers from Lorraine working in Luxembourg, who run our health system. There was a great incomprehension among Luxembourg and German citizens in the face of the rigidity of Berlin, which decided to close the borders. The European spirit suffered a lot at the beginning of the crisis; all the political actors must understand the damage that has been caused by these closures.

We need an efficient toolbox. The EGTC is indeed a wonderful instrument. It is used in Luxembourg and allows the development of concrete actions: transport, cycle paths, etc. Thanks to it, we can better plan the urban planning and joint architecture of the cross-border region. A major project has just been launched: "Luxembourg in transition", in which we have involved all the border regions. Moving towards "zero carbon": we will not succeed alone.

I would also like to draw attention to the political blockages of the draft ECBM Regulation. The European Commission has made a proposal: the ECBM, validated by the Parliament. However, we are confronted with a blockage at the level of the Council. The Scandinavians, for example, consider that their borders are already well managed and that they do not need new mechanisms. The Eastern states are also opposed to this. The Netherlands is not very much in favour. France has not yet taken a clear position.

We need lobbyists to support the ECBM. To give a concrete example: an industrial wasteland, two-thirds of which is on French territory and one-third on Luxembourg territory, could contribute to the development of a cross-border metropolis. But setting up such a project comes up against the different French and Luxembourg legal regimes, which the ECBM would make it possible to resolve. It would also help to restore citizens' confidence in Europe.

Caroline de Camaret: Have you noticed any blockages within the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis?

Rudy Demotte: When we talk about cross-border we are in a dimension that is consubstantial with Europe. Borders are by definition made to be crossed, they are "door-spaces" for the whole European edifice. The Romans called "limes", spaces that allowed crossing but at the same time were witnesses of unity and a common space.

The 170 million people living in cross-border spaces are confronted with highly visible problems on the ground.

As soon as special problems arise: disease, pollution, we realise that the border no longer works as it should. It becomes a major obstacle to the quality of life. The aim is therefore to improve people's lives.

The Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis encompasses two countries but three cultures: French, Dutch-speaking Belgium and French-speaking Belgium. In the field of training, for example, three regulations confront each other, and practices are radically different. To overcome this, it is necessary to build "ad hoc" models. We could imagine, with the help of the Commission, a pilot initiative that would enable young people from one side of the border to be able to follow training courses with identical arrangements throughout the cross-border space. This type of experimentation is very relevant and could then be translated into European regulations.

95,000 people cross the border daily to work in all three directions. Border workers also need common reference points, simple tools and clear concepts. Europe must be concrete and daily. We need dynamic "monitoring", common "dashboards", a common "foundation", in order then to be able to structure a response on a concrete cross-border subject or obstacle.

Caroline de Camaret: The current German Presidency is ambitious in terms of cross-border cooperation. What is your vision for better cross-border cooperation, particularly in the context of the Covid-19 crisis?

Michael Frehse: The issue of borders and cross-border cooperation, for us at the BMI, is a real and long-standing concern. We note that living conditions in our border regions are often different from those in other regions. People are not doing as well as those living in large agglomerations elsewhere in the country. Borders should no longer separate us. In 1989, the fall of the Berlin wall put an end to the division of Europe.

⁶ "European Cross-Border Mechanism": a mechanism to resolve legal and administrative obstacles in a cross-border context. The objective of the regulation proposed by the Commission in May 2018 is to establish a mechanism to apply, for a common cross-border region, in a given Member State, the legal provisions from the neighbouring Member State if applying its own laws would present a legal obstacle to implementing a joint project. More info: <http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/en/news/news/news/show/le-mecanisme-transfrontalier-europeen-une-victoire-pour-la-mot-et-ses-partenaires/>

Initiatives have to come from the local level, not from Berlin, because they have to correspond to the daily reality of the inhabitants of these spaces.

Unfortunately, the pandemic has had an impact on all these initiatives. I understand the remark of the Luxembourg minister who criticised us for having closed our borders. We accept this, but we do not intend to repeat it in the future. With our neighbours to the East, the border was really closed. Heavy goods vehicles were bottled from Frankfurt to Warsaw. There is a real question of trust. However, we should not be under any illusions: the system remains fragile.

Caroline de Camaret: On the ECBM question, is France "dragging its feet" along with other countries? Has the crisis weakened our confidence? The French President mentioned a strengthening of the external and internal borders?

Anne Sander: If Emmanuel Macron campaigned on European issues and on his European commitment, he should now support the ECBM tool. France is historically a very centralised country - and increasingly so. In Paris, we are sometimes far from the reality of cross-border spaces. To enable local actors to go further in cross-border cooperation, a European legal framework is needed. France has signed the Treaty of Aachen, and an entire chapter deals with cross-border cooperation, including the establishment of a Cross-border Coordination Committee (CCT). The objective is to remove obstacles, usually regulatory, to cross-border cooperation.

The Covid crisis has had a major impact on borders, which are still a national competence. However, it would be relevant to establish common criteria. This should be the case when we think in terms of fine particles, but it should also be the case for the Covid crisis. The action of the European level on the control of the external borders must also be strong, and I advocate for this reinforcement, which should enable us to cooperate better internally.

Caroline de Camaret: The European Union, which promotes the regional, cross-border and transnational level, is regularly accused of wanting to put an end to the "Europe of Nations". Could this explain why the Nations "rebel" against their dilution in a large Europe without borders?

Claude Turmes: Yes, you describe the main obstacle. Concerning ECBM, it is a discussion between sovereign states in a European federation. Sovereignty on the borders of Lille, Kortrijk and Tournai is very confusing for the citizens on an issue such as pollution, for example, since the calculation methods vary. It's a long-term fight.

Could the result of the American elections, and the defeat of Donald Trump, who wanted to build walls at the borders, be a "wake-up call"?

What is the weight of the German economy in the world? What is the weight of the French economy in the world? The only way for Europe and its social and democratic values - of which we should be proud - to assert itself is through its political and economic unity. How can we explain to European citizens the shortcomings in the management of the Covid-19 crisis? From an institutionalist point of view, we could answer that health is a national competence - but that would not be responsible. We have to find ways of tackling crises together, even if formally the treaties do not give the required competences (for example on health) to the Commission.

Caroline de Camaret: Despite the reluctance of the States that has been mentioned, do you think that these new tools will see the light of day quickly?

Normunds Popenis: I hope so. We support these tools at European level. Cross-border programmes facilitate cooperation, but this is not enough. Many of the remaining obstacles, particularly those encountered during the crisis, are not related to local problems, but are the responsibility



of the national authorities. The European Commission is already mobilising all its resources. We have shown that there are hundreds of obstacles within the EU. This is why we have developed the EGTC and that today we propose the ECBM. These tools must be used voluntarily by the member states. This will enable us to structure a legal basis for cross-border cooperation.

Caroline de Camaret: What impetus do you expect from the Treaty of Aachen and the German Presidency?

Michael Frehse: The Territorial Agenda to be adopted on 1 December 2020 plays a very important role. Germany has many neighbouring states. We are a federal state: powers are delegated to the Länder, which all have different neighbours. The aim of the Territorial Agenda is to move towards two objectives - a fair Europe and a green Europe.

With the new Territorial Agenda, we want to achieve a fair Europe with equal opportunities for development that takes into account the special characteristics of the different regions.

We want to establish functional areas at the local level that enable development and cooperation to move forward. It is important that there is integration on both sides of the border in order to improve the daily lives of the cross-border population. It is necessary to fight against regulatory and bureaucratic obstacles in order to build a Europe of territories.

Question from the audience: Could you give some examples of cooperation on health?

Rudy Demotte: I wish to address the opposition between national sovereignty and the delegation of powers to the European Union. This debate can be overcome. The antidote lies in territoriality. Today, we have the possibility of putting in place instruments that do not negate national sovereignty but support its legitimacy. National sovereignty is now being undermined by globalisation and economic agreements, but also by the shrinking of space, because regions and localities weigh more and more heavily in people's minds.

In 2004, I was Federal Minister of Health. At that time we were having a debate on the issue of pandemics (with regard to SARS) and we considered that our national frameworks were no longer working. There was no European response. Today the EU is wondering how it can, despite its lack of competence on health, build up stocks of masks or other medical equipment. The local level is the right place to create cross-border structures. When there is a tragedy, such as the explosion of Ghislenghien in 2004 in the French-speaking part of Belgium, it is the hospitals of Lille that have made it possible to treat burned patients. We didn't have sufficient capacity on our territory. Tomorrow, these trends will increase, especially concerning the use of heavy medical equipment. Another example, that of mobility: to cross the French-Belgian border by train there was a passage tax (about 5 euros) with Pierre Mauroy (former Prime Minister, former mayor of Lille) we decided to abolish this tax. Today cycle ways are being created between Flanders, Wallonia and France.

Question from the audience: The first wave of the crisis particularly hit the Grand East region. How do you envision a response based on solidarity? Is a cross-border hospital project a good response?

Anne Sander: I very much believe in the action of those working in the field. If patients from the Grand Est have been able to be treated in Germany and in our neighbouring countries, it is because local elected representatives were used to working together. When the borders with Germany were closed, the local elected representatives were not informed even though they had maintained good relations. In the field of health, we do not understand why we cannot go faster and further. If cross-border hospitals are necessary, their establishment must be supported. But we must do everything possible to be able to mobilise existing health and hospital capacities. In my region, for example, the delays are sometimes very long for access to certain examinations, whereas it would be much easier on the German side. In France, the model is built on a national structure. And here it is the responsibility of the Member States, through their bilateral relations, to relax the pressure. At the European level, we have set up a framework, in particular for access to care in cross-border spaces. But many complications persist, for example on questions of reimbursement. The framework for receiving care on the other side of the border must be simplified.

Question from the audience: European legislation limits teleworking time for frontier workers to 25%, why not 40% or 100%?

Claude Turmes: On the question of teleworking during the crisis, we had a lot of discussions with Paris and Berlin. This was easily resolved. On the questions of health and the right to seek treatment in another country: some States have set up authorisations because they feared for their health system. In the wake of the crisis, we should take a different look at the general interest and public services. Even if the first reaction of Berlin during the crisis was bad, I must thank them today. On the question of the ECBM: the German Minister of Economy has personally committed himself to put the ECBM on the agenda in Brussels.

If everyone shows good will, we can achieve the establishment of the ECBM which will enable us to achieve many things. The legal questions must be resolved as a matter of priority.

Question from the audience: Is it possible to consider abolishing the 25 km² land area criterion in the new European Territorial Cooperation Regulation?

Normunds Popenis: We have fought to retain local programmes and must keep the spirit of the INTERREG programme as it exists, ensuring that there is sufficient funding if the programme extends beyond the nearby cross-border area.

ROUND-TABLE #3

"10 years of the EGTC Platform and 30 years of INTERREG – outcome and visions for the future"

After 30 years of Interreg cooperation, particularly cross-border cooperation, the crisis experienced in 2020 has shown that it is necessary to continue and redouble efforts to support border territories. Impacted by the crisis, they have also been a response to it, especially those structured in EGTCs – European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation.

What role did they play during this period? How can they contribute to inventing the Europe of tomorrow? What do they expect from the European authorities, and from the Member States, to enable them to better act locally and on a daily basis, in the service of their citizens?

Speakers

Isabelle Boudineau, President of the COTER commission (European Committee of the Regions), Coordinator of the EGTC Platform

François Calvet, Senator for Pyrénées-Orientales, President of the Cerdanya Hospital EGTC support committee

Béla Keszegh, Mayor of Komárno (SK), Member of Pons Danubii EGTC

Sandra Sodini, Director of International Relations, Friuli Venezia Giulia Region, member of the Senza Confini EGTC (IT/AT)

Jorg Saalbach, Director of EGTC Interregional Alliance for the Rhine-Alpine Corridor

Moderator: Caroline de Camaret, Chief editor of Europe, France 24

Caroline de Camaret: Border territories were the first victims of the health crisis, with cross-border actors in the front line. How did you experience this crisis, which particularly affected your territories?

Isabelle Boudineau: For decades we have valued the fact that internal borders no longer exist. Then terrorism, migration issues, and now the health crisis came along. It is from there that open borders have been questioned. Following the health crisis, which saw the closure of internal borders by States, the European Committee of the Regions set up a platform dedicated to the effects of Covid-19, and this platform quickly put cross-border territories to the fore. Close cooperation with DG REGIO, then the main European actors, was established. The EGTCs played a key role in this process. More than 100 cross-border experiences have been collected on the platform.

Well-organised lobbying of the territories is absolutely necessary to avoid reproducing unilateral border closures. This is what the "European Cross-border Citizens' Alliance" demands.

The EGTC is a very valuable tool to overcome the obstacles of cooperation. There are currently 79 EGTCs in Europe involving 1000 local authorities, 20 Member States and three non-EU countries. It is an instrument which is experiencing a rise in interest with 25 new EGTCs being developed. EGTCs have been in existence for more than 10

years and are not just administrative structures, they involve citizens and businesses in their territory.

Caroline de Camaret: An EGTC can be given here as an example, that of the Cerdanya cross-border hospital.

François Calvet: The idea of the cross-border hospital was conceived in 1996. An initial declaration in 2005 was confirmed in 2007, followed by a framework agreement signed in 2008. Then the structure of the EGTC was established to implement the project on this territory of the two Cerdanyas, which involves 33,000 inhabitants. The cross-border hospital, the only one of its kind in Europe, was opened in 2014. It is located at an altitude of 1,300 meters and provides the inhabitants with a local healthcare offer including a maternity unit (they previously had to travel 150 km). Since its establishment, many problems have had to be overcome and many others remain to be resolved: for example, the status of personnel is different depending on their nationality. Also the problem of French births, as the hospital is located on the Spanish side, or the problem of transferring corpses. We would need a European status. Since the crisis, the hospital has a Covid unit, and transfers are operated with neighbouring hospitals.

The aim is to become a model that could be transposed to other borders. This cross-border hospital project gives a positive and concrete image of what Europe is achieving.

ROUND-TABLE #3

Caroline de Camaret: How has the EGTC Pons Danubii, on the border between Hungary and Slovakia, been impacted by the recent crisis?

Zoltán Bara: The impact of Covid-19 has been significant. Between Hungary and Slovakia, about 25,000 people cross the border daily. This number has decreased significantly since the crisis. The impact is felt by businesses but also by citizens. Moreover, the crisis has been managed differently on both sides of the border. For example, in Slovakia, 4 million inhabitants have been tested with Covid-19. Recently a new bridge has been inaugurated, but it cannot be used at the moment. We are following the information on a daily basis to learn about the devices in the regions on both sides of the border. The situation changes regularly.

Caroline de Camaret: On the border between Austria and Italy, which are traditionally very close, what are the particularities following the health crisis?

Sandra Sodini: The first wave between March and May was particularly difficult. Everyone was unprepared and little was known about the Covid-19. Thanks to the EGTC, a consolidated structure between the two regions, very useful policies could be put in place. Sanitary equipment was provided on both sides and patient transfers between hospitals in the two countries could also be organised. During the second wave, the border is not as closed as it was during the first wave. Lessons have been learnt, the organisation within the EGTC has been implemented so that today we can carry out many useful actions on a daily basis for the cross-border region.

Caroline de Camaret: We have stressed the importance of keeping the border open since this morning. How did the crisis occur within the interregional EGTC Rhine-Alpine Corridor?

Jörg Saalbach: Our EGTC is atypical because it brings together very different cross-border situations along the corridor. During the crisis, transport was blocked, not only trains, but also freight on the roads, flows of goods and passages. Even train drivers refused to go to Italy at the beginning of the crisis. We must avoid this type of total blockage in the future. The importance of supply chains for the economy, and their maintenance in the event of a crisis, must be emphasised.

Caroline de Camaret: Borders have been more or less closed along with the many difficulties this has created. There were administrative obstacles, very different health systems, significant regulatory differences. Will EGTCs be able to take a step back, with a vision to drive change?

Isabelle Boudineau: This period of crisis has shown the usefulness of cross-border cooperation. We have had many exchanges with the Grand Est Region, and we thank Germany, which made it possible to receive French patients. There are simpler things to implement. The fact of not having helped Italy in the first days of the crisis damaged Europe's credibility, even though it subsequently made up

for it. France saw the importance of relying on the regions.

Cross-border cooperation is a European "added value" and a demonstration of its usefulness.

Caroline de Camaret : We are somehow managing to solve problems bilaterally. Will Europe succeed to solve today's problems with collective tools?

François Calvet: When we start touching regional powers, things get more complicated. We encounter all kinds of problems when we build a cross-border hospital. The usual administrative procedures are much longer. At the moment we are working on a common emergency system. The aim is to link people living on a common territory.

It is through Europe that this cross-border hospital project was made possible.

Today we can develop complementary cooperation in areas such as research and university cooperation. We have to get out of the isolation of states and accept the tremendous possibilities that are available to people. But unfortunately, Member States are not very far ahead on these issues.

Caroline de Camaret: Will the health crisis serve as a lesson? Will we go backwards or forwards in cooperation?

Zoltán Bara: The communist period, during which we could only cross the border twice a year, remains a bad memory. When the border was opened and we entered the Schengen area, there were many celebrations. Today, the sudden closure of the borders has "cut in two" businesses. We must do everything we can to come back to open borders. But there are still a lot of borders in people's mentalities and legal obstacles. We must first focus on businesses, tourism (which has stopped on the Danube), the common heritage.

Caroline de Camaret: How can we continue to work at the service of citizens?

Sandra Sodini: Borders are visible, administrative procedures are not going to disappear. There are shortcomings in national legislations and it is necessary to be very creative in each case to find cross-border solutions. I hope that the ECBM mechanism proposed by the European Commission will be quickly implemented to find solutions to obstacles, as there is a real demand.

Tools such as EGTCs could be integrated into the processes of the Conference on the Future of Europe. This is where new Europe will innovate. Cross-border cooperation must be fully taken into account in this context.

Caroline de Camaret: How do you see the future of EGTCs after the pandemic, terrorism, migration crisis? Will their role be enhanced?

Jörg Saalbach: Yes, our EGTC was set up only five years ago. It involves six countries in a 1300 km long corridor. Linguistic, cultural and administrative obstacles persist. We must have the technical means to act. It is through the meeting of our 25 members that we can act together.

Thanks to the EGTC we are able to put our point of view across the national and European level, to enable more fluid modes of transport.

Question from the audience: What specific competences ; what new competences for cross-border structures? Could citizens elect cross-border representatives in the future?

Isabelle Boudineau: This will be more difficult in centralised states. Within countries, the transfer of competencies to the regions is often already difficult. Nevertheless, the transfer of new skills is certainly a step in the right direction. It is essential to take into account the specific characteristics of cross-border territories

Question from the audience: What is the link between the Principality of Andorra and the Cerdanya Hospital?

François Calvet: It was a former Andorran minister who launched the first study for the hospital. The link exists, even though cooperation is not yet in place. The first agreement has been completed. In the next one, more cooperation with Andorra is planned, as the hospital is only 60 km from the Principality.

Caroline de Camaret: The European Union calls for efforts to be made on environmental issues with the Green Pact. Will it be possible to achieve better environmental results through the structures of the EGTCs?

Zoltán Bara: The environment has always been a major issue. Within our EGTC, there are several approaches: funding by members (municipalities) for example for the

development of green and blue roads, or national funding, for example for the bridge. We will soon be celebrating the structure's 10th anniversary. When it was created, there were no cross-border cycle paths, today we have many. In March 2021 the EGTC will launch a bicycle sharing project, with a new cross-border service. We are taking a good look at good practices on other borders.

François Calvet points out the cooperation between natural parks on the French-Spanish border.

Jörg Saalbach: Environmental aspects are at the heart of our work. This is a modal issue, we are also thinking about a hydrological corridor. Moreover, some of the existing infrastructure is not being used. We need to make better use of the existing infrastructure by using computerised management. We can easily make the corridor more efficient without building new roads.

Caroline de Camaret: What impulses can be given? What lessons can be learned and how can they be implemented?

Sandra Sodini:

EGTCs are a formidable tool for Europe. When we started, 25 years ago, the border between Italy and Yugoslavia was very complex. There was no cooperation because of the Iron Curtain.

Thanks to INTERREG, we have got to know each other, we have built up networks, we trust each other, we can launch partnerships. But with the EGTC we reach a second level: we benefit from a stable structure, which can be considered as a first "brick" of our European construction.

What is important is not individual projects but the long-term strategy. Europe needs strategy.



Key point – 2020 EGTC award



Isabelle Boudineau proceeds with the presentation of the **European Committee of the Regions' 2020 EGTC award**, as Coordinator of the EGTC Platform, which is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year: this is the fourth edition of the prize, awarded every two years. Its aim: to show the lever effect of EGTCs in very diverse fields. The choice this year was very difficult, with 15 very good applications.

EGTC EURODISTRICT PAMINA

The EGTC prize of the year 2020 is awarded to the EGTC Eurodistrict PAMINA for its project "Passe-partout/Weltenbummler", a project for pupils to develop intercultural exchanges.

Patrice Harster, Director of the EGTC Eurodistrict PAMINA: First of all I would like to greet Jörg Saalbach, because it was with him that we set up our cross-border structure in 1991. The PAMINA Eurodistrict EGTC is very proud to have been selected for this award. The project has brought together nearly 3,000 children from the cross-border space around an online game intended to promote bilingualism and develop in them the feeling of belonging to the cross-border and European territory. The project was

initiated by a board game manufactured on the Polish-Czech Republic border. It was then developed on the scale of the Upper Rhine in partnership with the teaching staff. I salute their commitment and the work of all the partners involved for several years. The game is under an "open source" licence, which means that it can be used on all borders.

MORE INFO

<https://www.eurodistrict-pamina.eu/fr/passe-partout-weltenbummler.html>

EGTC LILLE-KORTRIJK-TOURNAI EUROMETROPOLIS

A second honorary prize is awarded to the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis for its project of cross-border citizen consultation: "Europe, I love you too?".

Loïc Delhuvette, Director of the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis: I would like to thank the European Committee of the Regions for this award. Our project is aimed at citizens. In April 2018 we launched a cross-border citizens' consultation, following the initiative of the French President Emmanuel Macron, which brought together nearly 300 inhabitants. Our aim is to make this dialogue a sustainable dialogue through the "Espace citoyen Europe" project

that we are going to set up in 2021. Cross-border territories are above all at the service of citizens. For us, this is a clear activist approach to the European citizen-native. I warmly thank my team and all the partners for their commitment.

MORE INFO

<https://eurometropolis.eu/fr/blog/2020/01/24/europe-je-taime-moi-non-plus-3-vers-linfini-et-au-dela/>

ROUND-TABLE #4

"The Treaty of Aachen, a driving force in Europe?"

In 2019, France and Germany signed the Treaty of Aachen, which defines priorities and a method for cooperation on their common border. Its implementation in 2020 coincided with the COVID-19 crisis. The crisis certainly revealed flaws – a lack of coordination or a European mandate – but also new cooperation

and perspectives. Can this Treaty, and the method it proposes, show the way for other borders in Europe? How do territorial actors perceive its impact on the cross-border relations that they establish, and the cross-border actions that they deploy?

Speakers

Bernard Guetta, Member of European Parliament

Enrico Letta, President of the Jacques-Delors Institut, Dean of the PSIA Sciences-Po Paris, former President of the Italian Council

Jean Rottner, President of the Grand Est Region, France

Heike Raab, Secretary of State for Europe, Media and Digital of the German Land of Rhineland-Palatinate.

Moderator: Caroline de Camaret, Chief editor of Europe, France 24

Caroline de Camaret: The implementation of the Aachen Treaty in 2020 has been abruptly halted by the Covid-19 crisis which has revealed shortcomings, but also new possible forms of cooperation. How do territorial actors perceive its impact? And how has the crisis revealed shortcomings in coordination and solidarity between States and the European mandate?

Bernard Guetta : The Covid-19 crisis first of all reminded us that the health of our fellow European citizens continued to be a matter solely of national competence, which in itself is an aberration. At the same time, the crisis is pushing us towards an absolutely necessary evolution of the European Union. For a long time I have been advocating a more intelligent approach to the application of the Maastricht criteria and a joint loan for investments in the future.

The Treaty of Aachen had anticipated many of these developments; one of the chapters concerns regional cooperation. We experienced this last spring when this cooperation made it possible to send sick people from France to Germany. This aid was not from our partners but from our fellow European citizens. Moreover, there is also in the Treaty of Aachen the idea of enhanced cooperation between France and Germany to enable Europe's defence to make greater leaps forward. Furthermore, there is the idea of speeding up industrial cooperation between the two countries, i.e. laying the foundations for a common European Union industrial policy.

With the Treaty of Aachen, France and Germany played the role of intellectual and political driving forces of the European Union

and this will continue. There was a certain momentum that the needs of the fight against the pandemic precipitated. Moreover, the taboos of industrial cooperation and common defence in Europe have fallen.

Caroline de Camaret: What do you expect from the implementation of the Aachen Treaty?

Heike Raab: The Aachen Treaty process represents a major step forward for cross-border cooperation. This has been reinforced by the Covid-19 crisis. We have weekly exchanges with our French partners, in particular with Jean Rottner, President of the Grand Est Region. We can open the borders and leave them open within the Schengen area, which is very important for people who live on one side of the border and work on the other. We work together to ensure the security of supply chains, to respond to all issues (economic market, health), notably through the establishment of working groups. Health offers a number of practical examples of partnerships between the Länder (Rhineland-Palatinate, Baden-Württemberg, Saarland) and the Grand Est Region. In this sector, we have always worked with French and German health organisations in order to be able to control the circulation of the virus. Following the first wave during which we welcomed French patients in our hospitals, as a result we now have partners for these issues and can thus guarantee more security for our fellow citizens. In the future, our cooperation within the framework of the Aachen Treaty should be intensified, for instance to deal with the problem of tracing contact cases and with non-compatible apps in France and Germany.

ROUND-TABLE #4



Caroline de Camaret: The Aachen Treaty has been hampered in its dynamic by the crisis. Is the Franco-German cross-border relationship still to be built?

Bernard Guetta: You always have to do more and better, see the glass half full. We are outraged at the humiliating or ridiculous fact that we do not have the same application for tracing contact cases on either side of the border, but also measure the steps that are already being taken. We now have to cross to the other borders. On the Franco-German border, there is already very significant progress, we must do the same thing on the Franco-Italian border. When a Frenchman arrives in Turin, he may no longer be in France, but he arrives in a totally French-Italian European region. This city is imbued with a culture common to our two nations, and this is what we need to develop in the future.

Caroline de Camaret: There are differences between the competences of the Länder and the Grand Est Region. How can we cooperate in these cases? Has the impetus of the Aachen Treaty not waned to some extent as states close their borders?

Jean Rottner: Today we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the death of General de Gaulle, who worked for European stability and the Franco-German friendship. General De Gaulle was very much influenced by our region because he was aware of the importance of borders and as soon as the war ended he considered that the Rhine became a link between countries.

The pandemic does not turn us into inward-looking people; it triggers initial reflexes that have had to be countered, bypassed and surpassed. The work we have been doing for many years with our German partners has made it possible to move faster. It has turned us into a European team which, by sticking together, has managed to find solutions, by going beyond their own political history.

Today, as we are in the early stages of the second wave, the right reflexes are being put in place. Cross-border cooperation has reached a form of maturity which makes it possible to be very concrete. The Treaty of Aachen has much to do with it, but it is also due to the joint projects that we are carrying out on health, artificial intelligence, language practice and everyday cross-border activities.

We are in charge of making these subjects better known in Berlin, Paris, Luxembourg, Bern or Brussels, because the central authorities are very often unaware of this cross-border reality, of the force that it can cause. In the Grand Est Region, we are "the sailors of the earth", the equivalent of our Breton or Aquitaine friends, those who penetrate the European continent, those who are in a position to bring French ambition to Europe and not simply to a cross-border reality.

Our day-to-day contacts are the federal states surrounding the Grand Est, but we also work with states located further away, in Austria and Northern Europe. This develops this day-to-day Europe, this Europe of the Regions, which is sometimes placed in the second or even third division. But today it is finding its reality, its balance, its strength and its political effectiveness.

Caroline de Camaret: Do you have a sense of cross-border belonging?

Heike Raab: Yes, this is a reality. Rhineland-Palatinate has a border with Belgium, Luxembourg and France. We live in Western Europe with open borders, a Europe of Schengen and a Europe of bilateral cooperation. Many points are very beneficial in cooperation, in areas such as health and education. Germans work in France every day and vice versa. To meet mobility needs, we have built railway lines, we cooperate in emergency services. Following the terrorist attacks, we must go further in terms of security and police cooperation.

The Aachen Treaty shows that with the work of institutions, but also with interpersonal knowledge we can improve the daily lives of citizens on both sides of the border.

Caroline de Camaret: Is France, which is centralized and jacobean, and which adheres to the "European Cross-border Mechanism" (ECBM) project from the tip of its lips, rebelling?

Bernard Guetta: It plays against the progression of our unity. And at the same time, when we are in the Grand Est, at the Belgian border, at the Italian and Spanish borders, there are obviously other types of France's that are there, European regions, "Euro-regions" that have already been formed. On the Franco-Swiss border, it is striking to see the number of workers who cross the border every day, as well as to observe that France and the Swiss Confederation share two common airports, essential infrastructures: Basel-Mulhouse airport and Geneva airport. These "Euroregions" exist, French Jacobinism or not. Without it, we would perhaps have gone further, but without the impetus of a centralising state like France, we might not have gone as fast as we did with the Elysée Treaty (1963) or the Aachen Treaty (2019).

Caroline de Camaret: Could the Aachen Treaty inspire a similar treaty on the French-Italian border to resolve cross-border obstacles?

Enrico Letta: There is good cooperation between France and Italy, but also hostility between 2018 and 2019, when the Italian government was very anti-French. The Quirinal Treaty could provide a framework for joint work.

I am convinced that a bilateral cooperation framework is a way to make cooperation between regions easier. Europe is not only made up of nation states but also of territories.

Everybody is closely linked to his or her territory and if Europe makes this work possible between territories, without having to go through the capitals, then it will appear to be very useful to its citizens. The American elections have revealed the same trend that we have experienced in Europe with the Brexit, in France during the 2017 presidential election (Macron-Le Pen duel), or in Italy at each election: there is a split between voting in cities and voting in rural territories.

It is necessary to ensure that territories outside big cities can benefit more from the advantages of cooperation. This would be a real "booster" for the European idea.

Caroline de Camaret: This Europe of the regions is suspected of wanting to claim the allocation of structural funds, which France is not prepared to concede. Would it not be more efficient if money was distributed as close as possible to the territories?

Jean Rottner: We have to stop with this Jacobin syndrome, Girondin in France. Dreaming of French federalism in the way that our Belgian or German friends may know it is an illusion. We have decentralisation to make some progress with in France. The State can largely rely on its territories, and should not be afraid to do so. They are a

source of flexibility, profit, speed and efficiency.

In France, we, the local elected representatives, the territories, must no longer constantly be in a form of dependency: we demand more autonomy, but at the same time we demand more and more means from the State. It is also up to us to bring solutions.

I conceive that there can be a framework fixed by the country, the Nation, and that within this framework, as close as possible to the realities of the territories, we can be specialists in the allocation of European funds, because the subjects in the Grand Est Region are not the same as those in the South PACA or in Nouvelle-Aquitaine.

We need fewer middleman decision-makers, fewer 'layers' so that we can show the citizen that this Europe is as effective as possible. The regional level is a good level for part of these European funds to be used for major structuring projects.

Caroline de Camaret: Is the return of border controls due to the fight against epidemics or terrorism the reality of a Europe questioning its borders?

Bernard Guetta: This is not the reality of Europe, it is the reality of the political situation, at a difficult, tragic time that we are all going through. What the French President has announced is not a closure of national borders but a strengthening of their surveillance. This is not incompatible with the Schengen Area. On the other hand, the common development, at European level, of the surveillance of our external borders, in particular the borders of the Schengen Area, is not a step backwards, neither in terms of unity nor freedom of movement. On the contrary, it is a reinforcement of its unity.

Caroline de Camaret: The French-Italian border is particularly vulnerable (terrorism, flow of migrants...). Are we at a turning point for the idea of abolishing borders or are we in the process of questioning Schengen?

Enrico Letta: It is clear that Schengen is one of the major issues in the European debate. I agree with the idea of a new foundation for Schengen. But this revival requires Europe to have a migration policy. What we have done in recent years in Europe has nothing to do with defining a migration policy. They were exceptional measures taken at a given time. The Member States must give Europe the opportunity to do so. This is the condition for eliminating borders within the continent. If we do not take a first step in this direction, we will keep the habit of closing borders in case of problems.

At the beginning of the pandemic, border closures were described as "ramparts to invasion", which were very harmful to public opinion and European membership.

The money from the European recovery plan ("Next Generation EU") should be sent directly from Brussels to

territories, companies, workers or job seekers, explaining to them that it is European money. The big risk is that in the end national political leaders will say that they are the ones who give out this money. "Next Generation EU" is a real revolution, and the European citizen must be made aware of this.

Caroline de Camaret: How to develop solutions that depart from national law but are relevant for a cross-border territory? Is a bilateral treaty sufficient?

Heike Raab: The Aachen Treaty is a very good basis for us. It provides an institutional foundation. We now have the support of both the French and German Foreign Ministers. This gives us the opportunity to work together and to make ourselves heard more clearly when we address important issues. With this structure, there exists both the German federal system and the French centralised system which thanks to the treaty gives them a basis to work together. It is necessary to have funding to enable this living-together, as can be seen with INTERREG programmes.

Caroline de Camaret: Was the Aachen Treaty a lifeline during the crisis? Was it adapted to this emergency?

Jean Rottner: These are two completely different times. Faced with the reality of Covid, we had to improvise, find solutions.

The strength of the Aachen Treaty is interparliamentary work. This joint assembly between our parliaments makes it possible to legislate both in France and in Germany in the same direction and on a common project.

We live in a European area of cooperation marked by regulations that apply to each territory.

I dream of being able to experiment with "cross-border bubbles" of cooperation in which there would be a form of common regulation, an adaptation of our law to enable us to simplify everyday life.

We were referring to Basel-Mulhouse airport: it forms an exception, based on a form of Swiss territoriality on French territory, made possible by an agreement between the two countries dating from 1949. Today we can see how fragile it is. Luxembourg, during its presidency of the European Union in 2015, had put forward this very interesting idea, which was taken up in the draft regulation of the ECBM. We should now be able to use it to deal with everyday issues that irritate us.

Caroline de Camaret: What is the future of cross-border cooperation, beyond the idea of abolishing borders? What is the scope for its implementation by institutions and citizens?

Enrico Letta: The Conference on the Future of Europe offers a great opportunity. It is an idea launched by France

and should, for the first time, fifteen years after the failure of the referendum on the European Constitution, relaunch the idea of change to better engage citizens. It represents an appropriate place to start this discussion. The exit of the United Kingdom can also help us because this country was the "toughest" on these issues. What we have managed to do with the Next Generation EU demonstrates this.

Caroline de Camaret: Is the opening of borders the direction of the post-Covid European project?

Heike Raab: Yes, I feel strengthened in the idea that we can build a European Union that can live "internally", with a stronger migration policy and a reform of the Dublin system. We will achieve this.

Caroline de Camaret: Are cross-border mobility and the opening of borders still in favour?

Jean Rottner: On our territories, citizens consider that there are no more borders in their daily lives. On the other hand, borders reappear in times of crisis, when migration and military policies are not sufficiently accepted at the European level. Today, remodelling Schengen does not mean putting borders back in place, on the contrary, it means saving Schengen. It is not going to crack or fracture the European ideal, but to provide us with the capacity to redefine it. The world is changing, Europe must evolve. In terms of borders, the European ideal is not behind us but ahead of us.

Caroline de Camaret: Should we invest in cross-border or rebuild walls like some EU governments?

Bernard Guetta: Of course we must invest in cross-border cooperation, since our cross-border regions are "day-to-day European Unions". This is where we can see what the European Union should be tomorrow. The challenge for the 27 Member States, and for the European Union itself, is to assert political power on the international stage. A political power has external borders: it is not a question of re-establishing internal borders, but of asserting, defending, monitoring and controlling our common border. The European Union also needs a defense for which we need to invest, because there will be no full, complete and reassuring reopening of an American umbrella and a common industrial policy.

Borders, defence, investment in the future - this is what we need to invest in now, and of course also in cross-border regions, because this is where the day-to-day life of our unity lies.

CLOSING REMARKS OF THE 1ST DAY

By Clément Beaune

Minister of State for European Affairs,
France



I would like to deliver a strong message of support from the French government as we pay particular attention to the cross-border dimension which is an embodiment of Europe.

This forum is particularly timely because the current pandemic makes the links and dependencies between our countries visible every day. It is essential to look at how we can improve this cooperation.

This first day of the Borders Forum focused on the issue of overcoming obstacles while discussing the support tools, financial or otherwise, which are in place and which facilitate the emergence of a common life together in our cross-border regions.

The Aachen Treaty signed on 22 January 2019 opened a new stage of convergence between France and Germany, between our territories, at the service of Europe and its citizens. It includes an entire chapter dedicated to cross-border cooperation, with the establishment of the Cross-border Cooperation Committee (CCT), which confirms this desire for a concrete and operational body, bringing together the appropriate actors to identify needs and find solutions. This CCT has three distinct missions: to resolve blockages, to promote new projects and, above all, to coordinate the development of our regions. It is a flexible, responsive body that brings together governments, local elected representatives and national MPs from the two countries most

involved in this issue. According to a new, simple method, everyone must work together on cross-border solutions that make daily life easier.

This cross-border cooperation between our territories has been particularly important in the face of the health crisis. I know that in the spring there have been difficulties, restrictions and sometimes closures. But thanks to this cooperation and to the CCT, which I brought together with Michael Roth a few weeks ago, we have been able to prevent the same situations, the same difficulties, in the face of this resurgence of the epidemic.

This is a good example of what cross-border cooperation enables, of what our new bodies resulting from the Treaty allow, i.e. to resolve everyday problems and to accept our human, economic and social interdependence.

I would like to commend all of your work, to encourage you to continue it, to thank you for this work, and in particular for the fact that we will be implementing these ideas at the service of cross-border cooperation and Europe in the coming weeks and months.

Long live Europe!

SECOND DAY 10 NOVEMBER 2020

Territories on the French borders



The second day has been inaugurated by Jean Jouzel, Climatologist and glaciologist, Member of the Academy of Sciences. It highlighted cross-border territories on French borders, to reveal their diversity and specificities, from Dunkirk to Bayonne, via Nice, Geneva and Strasbourg, and discuss decentralisation, deconcentration and "differentiation".

The objectives was to discuss:

- the major issues concerning cross-border territories, and specifically the challenges of mobility, energy transition and health;
- the role of cross-border territories as pioneers of the "territorial differentiation" highlighted in the 3D bill "decentralisation, differentiation, deconcentration";
- the issues of inter-territoriality, by intersecting the perspectives of different levels and types of territories (metropolitan, peri-urban, sparsely populated, rural, mountain, coastal, etc.), cross-border territorial engineering, with the creation of ANCT – the French National Agency for the Cohesion of territories in 2020.

Moderation by:

Marianne Malez, Director of mission, FNAU (French National federation of urban planning agencies), and **Giuseppe Bettoni**, Professor at the University of Rome, Expert in Geopolitics

4 round-tables:

ROUND-TABLE #5

Health, digital evolution, climate...
time for cross-border transitions?

ROUND-TABLE #6

Cross-border mobility and attractiveness,
back to the borders?

ROUND-TABLE #7

Cross-border areas, differentiated areas?

ROUND-TABLE #8

Metropolises, mountains, rural areas:
What kind of cross-border cohesion?

OPENING REMARKS OF THE 2ND DAY

By Jean Jouzel,
Climatologist and glaciologist,
Membre of the French Academy of Science

The last six years have been the hottest years we've had in 150 years. It's no surprise: we've been emitting more and more greenhouse gases for the last 50 years.

These emissions, which have doubled over the last fifty years, have no borders. Greenhouse gas emissions mix very rapidly in the atmosphere.

The reality of global warming is confirmed by the rise in the sea level: today 3 to 4 mm per year. It is on the basis of this observation that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states that warming is unequivocal. We have gone a step further by stating, with almost certainty, that most of global warming is linked to human activities. We are in a world whose climate we have already changed, which we modelled 30 years ago. This must lead us to take seriously what modelers envision for 2050. The climate of the next 20-30 years is already determined. We must now look beyond 2050: if nothing is done to combat global warming, we will increase temperatures by 4 to 5 degrees, or even 10 degrees in the high latitudes of the northern hemisphere.

Consequences concern all areas. Let us give the example of ocean acidification. Of the 44 billion tonnes of CO₂ emitted each year, about ten are absorbed by the ocean, which acidifies it. The ocean is already 30% more acidic than at the beginning of the last century. If its acidity doubles by the end of the century, the consequences for coral reefs will be dramatic, and extreme events will occur much more frequently: droughts, floods, cyclones, heat waves, etc.



There will also be consequences for populations: food security will be jeopardised, as will water resources, pollution and health. The loss of biodiversity and irreversible phenomena, such as sea level rise, will be accelerated.

When we look at all the consequences, especially for humans, the first risk of global warming is the increase in inequalities.

This is true between poor and rich countries, but it is also true in our regions where the poorer members of the population are the most vulnerable to global warming.

The consequences of global warming ignore borders.

This is clear for the rise of the sea level. From 2050 onwards, large areas in Europe will be flooded during high tides. The North Sea would be very affected, whether on the French, Belgian or Dutch side. Fishery resources are also likely to be affected. Some regions will experience higher rainfall; others, such as the Mediterranean basin, will experience both a decrease in rainfall and an increase in evaporation leading to much lower quantities of available water.

OPENING REMARKS OF THE 2ND DAY

As for the question of Mediterranean events, such as the "Storm Alex" that we have just experienced in the Maritime Alps and on the Italian side, they caused a certain number of victims. The consequences in the Alpine valleys are very important, both on the French and Italian sides. Besides, the Mediterranean regions often face forest fires. By 2050, other regions could be affected, such as western and central France. Regions that are not currently affected could become "at risk".

As far as health is concerned, every year in Europe there are about 3000 deaths linked to global warming. This number could be multiplied by 30 or 40 in the event of significant global warming. 99% would be caused by heat waves.

With 4 to 5 degrees more, temperature peaks could reach 50 degrees in Europe in the second half of this century. The consequences for our metropolises and our territories will be very significant.

The discharges of rivers will also be affected throughout France and Europe, including in regions such as the north of France. Major border rivers, such as the Rhine, Meuse and Rhône, will see their discharges modified. This is very important for the economy of these regions, in terms of hydroelectricity, tourism, water supply, etc. These cross-border elements must be taken seriously. This is even more marked for low-water discharge. Decreases in the flow of the Rhine have already been observed, and this may also concern the Rhône.

In a nutshell, the consequences of these developments do not respect borders: the common denominator is geography, topography.

Coastal cities in vulnerable regions relative to sea level will also have to take joint adaptation measures. This is also the case for the Alpine regions, where there is a common denominator in terms of the need to adapt to climate change, or on both sides of the Rhine, for example in terms of irrigation capacity and agricultural development. All this must be looked at together on both sides of the border.

The solutions are known, they can be found in the Paris Agreement, as the Climate Convention aims to keep global warming below 2 degrees. If nothing was done, we would be heading towards a rise in temperature of 4 to 5 degrees, and emissions of 65 to 70 billion tonnes by 2030. With this agreement, we would be moving towards a global warming of 3 to 4 degrees, and emissions of 55 billion tonnes. The capacity to adapt is interesting but limited. This carbon neutrality must be targeted in all cases if we want to stabilise the climate. All sectors are concerned.

In terms of adaptation, of decisions to be taken for territories, it is essential to take into account the fact that climate change knows no borders. This is a fundamental element in developing a dynamic cross-border strategy, and Europe must be able to address it.



ROUND-TABLE #5

"Health, digital evolution, climate... time for cross-border transitions?"

The Covid-19 crisis challenges our public policies, it forces us to better anticipate the transitions we will be facing and to accelerate our responses to the many transitions and transformations, particularly in cross-border areas.

How is the demographic transition (ageing of the population) being prepared for in border areas with different profiles? Is the numerical and digital transformation being thought out and organised at the scale of cross-border territories? Can the latter become laboratories for ecological and climatic transition?

Speakers

Pia Imbs, President of the Eurometropole of Strasbourg, France

Roland Theis, State Secretary to the Minister of Justice of Saarland, Commissioner in charge of European Affairs

Carlos Moreno, Scientific Director of the Chair ETI, Panthéon Sorbonne University – IAE Paris

Nathan Sourisseau, Community Councillor in charge of cross-border cooperation, Grand Besançon Métropole

Moderator: Marianne Malez, Director of mission, FNAU (French National federation of urban planning agencies)

Marianne Malez: The notions of borders and transitions are complex, polysemic notions. First of all, borders, some are barriers, some interfaces, geographical, administrative. As for transitions, they are multiple: demographic, ecological, digital, economic, health, etc. These are complex concepts, but they offer opportunities to do things differently, to reinvent themselves, particularly in these cross-border territories, which are often presented as spaces for experimentation. Although the "border phenomenon" can make public action more complex, these major challenges know no borders.

Strasbourg is a cross-border city par excellence, bordering the city of Kehl in particular. How did a project such as the energy recovery project between Kehl and Strasbourg come about?

Pia Imbs: This project involves the recovery in Strasbourg of the heat produced by a large steel mill in Kehl, just across the Rhine. It is an emblematic project, testifying to the strong cooperation between Strasbourg and Kehl. It meets the environmental ambitions set out in the EuroMetropolis' roadmap. But legal obstacles have yet to be removed. For it to succeed, the most important factor will remain the joint political will of the French and German elected representatives.

Marianne Malez: At another border, why is Greater Besançon turning towards Switzerland? Can you talk about the very particular example of the watch industry cooperation?

Nathan Sourisseau: Besançon is 50 km as the crow flies from Switzerland, 80 km by road. This distance is one

of the specific features of our territory in terms of cross-border cooperation. Our cooperation is based largely on metropolitan functions and cities located on either side of the Jura Arc.

Another particularity: our neighbour, Switzerland, is not a member of the EU. Cross-border flows are limited from the bisontinental territory. Our projects concern sectors such as higher education, research, innovation and inter-company cooperation. These projects contribute to economic specialisations shared by both sides, such as watchmaking. At the beginning of the last century, Besançon manufactured 90% of watches in France. Today, this watch production continues on the other side of the border in cities such as Le Locle or La Chaux-de-fonds. Besançon has kept industries, manufactures and subcontracting for Switzerland. Many cooperative ventures are part of this context, with an economic but also cultural dimension, such as the Franco-Swiss candidature for the UNESCO intangible heritage: a bi-national candidature based on our common expertise in watchmaking mechanics. This type of project enhances our common identity and culture.

The issue of training in watchmaking and micro-technology is also the subject of numerous partnerships with our Swiss neighbours, such as the partnership between the Besançon School of Engineering and the Lausanne Polytechnic. In 2021, the Greater Besançon Métropole will initiate an annual training forum bringing together representatives and employers on both sides of the border. Its objective: to facilitate exchanges. On our territory, the transition linked to this watchmaking history is therefore purely a Franco-Swiss issue.

ROUND-TABLE #5



Marianne Malez: How can digital technology help to overcome difficulties linked to administrative and geographical borders?

Carlos Moreno: We are reflecting on the impacts of digital technology in cities and territories, particularly cross-border ones. Digitisation is everywhere; its presence is reinforced by the pandemic. New territorial spaces, by definition multicultural, are being created. The cross-border dimension corresponds to the very essence of "cosmopolitanism", etymologically "the world of the citizen". With digital technology, the objective of a cross-border approach is to make life simpler in terms of services and uses.

A very practical issue is that of mobility in cross-border territories. If we take the example of the Grand Est Region, five borders are crossed daily by 200,000 people who go to the other side to work before returning home on the French side. The issues of mobility are major. In these cross-border journeys, the use of private vehicles is predominant, having a real impact on the climate. Digital technology offers other ways of getting around. For example, a digital platform has been set up in the eastern part of France to pool travel and promote multi-modality.

The risk of digital technology is isolation: we create bubbles that are technically hyper-connected but socially disconnected. This is what we are experiencing with teleworking. Digital technology must be at the service of new uses, social links, even "social intensity", to recreate economic life. In a cross-border context, this digital issue must be shared on both sides of the border. Each territory has a great deal of wealth and often hidden, under-used resources. Digital technology today is a major factor in rediscovering and making better use of them, for example in terms of housing, short circuits, education or culture. It represents a powerful lever to share these resources in a convergent, multicultural and cross-border way, and to move towards a culture of proximity. You are familiar with the concept of the "fifteen-minute city" and the "half-hour territory" which define the practice, par excellence, of proximity. Cross-border areas are a full part of this.

Marianne Malez: In Saarland, why did you set up a France Strategy? What made you decide to go beyond the border, to see it as a development opportunity for your territory?

Roland Theis: The Greater Region, i.e. this large border space between Luxembourg, Wallonia, Rhineland-Palatinate,

Saarland and Lorraine, represents the largest cross-border labour market in the European Union: 200,000 people live in one country and work in another. But at the same time we observe disadvantages in our situation, particularly in economic terms, such as the legal and administrative obstacles encountered by our companies in selling their products in the neighbour's country. The list can be long: protectionism, language differences, recognition of

diplomas and training courses, etc. All this leads to a situation in which border regions cannot be as economically successful as they would be without obstacles.

The European Commission's report on border issues published in 2017 states that border regions represent 30% of the population and 40% of the territory of the European Union. They are therefore not marginal. They alone represent the largest state in the Union.

In Saarland, the France strategy we have adopted demonstrates our desire to make cross-border business our "trademark". The aim is to strengthen the economic attractiveness of the Land for French-speaking companies, and for German-speaking companies to win on border markets. Thus we are the only German Land where you can plead before a commercial court in French. This message for entrepreneurs is very important: in Saarland, you are in Germany and already in France. Our flagship project: within a generation to make French the second language used after German. The results after five years: 50% of the nursery schools are bilingual, all primary schools teach French, and the place of French is also increasing in our universities.

This is also reflected at the political level. For several years now, we have had an office with the Grand Est Region to defend our common interests in Brussels; and in 2019, we opened the first joint office between a French Region and a German Land in Paris. The result is a high degree of mutual trust.

Marianne Malez: Several of you mentioned business, innovation. How can private actors be made to work together, to associate them within the same cross-border project, when it is more difficult to cross borders with the health crisis?

Nathan Sourisseau: Switzerland is part of the Schengen area. This freedom of movement is fundamental if you want to work as a cross-border worker. The closure of the border during the first wave of the Covid-19 crisis caused a number of obstacles and problems. In the field of innovation, we are focusing on cooperation at the metropolitan and major city level. In terms of inter-company cooperation, Greater Besançon plays an important role. Since 2018, for example, we have been running a project called "Hacking Health", a global network piloted from Montreal, which consists of an innovation hackathon in the

field of health, organised every year over a weekend. The objective: to encourage innovation in our territory, to increase cooperation with our neighbours, which could lead to the creation of start-ups. The 2018 and 2019 editions of the project included Swiss participants. The challenge is the following stage: how can we organise the transfer of innovative solutions, how can we develop the products internationally? For example, an Interreg project has been proposed with our neighbours of Lyon and Sion (Valais), two innovative cities in the field of health. If an innovation emerges in Besançon, for example, it could be worked on jointly and in complementarity with partners in Lyon or Valais.

Marianne Malez: Continuing on the issue of challenges in health, how can we go further in health cooperation with a country on the other side of the border in times of health crisis?

Roland Theis: In Saarland, for example, we have an agreement with the Moselle: the "MOSAR" Convention, since June 2019. It enables patients from Saarland or Moselle to receive treatment in the nearest hospital in three areas: cardiological emergencies, multi-trauma emergencies and neurosurgical care.

This cooperation was very useful during the first phase of the pandemic because the medical teams already knew each other. If Saarland was able to receive so many French patients, it is partly thanks to these Franco-German teams. Cross-border health cooperation is therefore capable of saving lives.

This encourages us to go further and broaden the pathologies concerned by this convention. The financial and legal stakes are very complex, but we have the political will to move forward. For patient x with disease y, the question that matters to us is no longer whether he lives in France or Germany, but where he will receive the best possible care. This is the political goal of the Saarland government.

Marianne Malez: Your example shows that citizens have a wider living area than border boundaries. Do you think that citizens living in these areas feel this sense of belonging to a specific territory? Are they sufficiently involved in the construction of this cross-border policy?

Pia Imbs: I would like to come back to the painful experience of the closure of the border between France and Germany at the beginning of the crisis. We demonstrated with umbrellas on both sides of the Rhine to underline our desire to keep the Franco-German friendship alive. We succeeded in ensuring that the border was not completely closed during this second wave of Covid-19. Even if the restrictions were strong, the elected representatives on both sides were supportive, considering the history that Alsace has been going through for more than a century. We were also able to realise how beneficial the cooperation between the hospitals was.

The Ortenau Kreis spontaneously offered us hospital beds when needed. This close Franco-German friendship is a reality because we have been cooperating for a long time and want to build together.

To this end, we have constructed a cross-border cooperation scheme within the Strasbourg Eurometropolis Council, with the support of the MOT. It sets out the main features and avenues of cooperation.

The mutual recognition of vignettes and low carbon impact car traffic conditions on either side of the border is a final example of our need for coordination and our successes.

It is this type of very concrete examples that our fellow citizens want and that generate a feeling of belonging to a cross-border living area that functions and acts without referring to our capitals.

Marianne Malez: We can see that cross-border cooperation requires very concrete actions for citizens. How can they be better associated? Do you have the feeling that there is a "European" way of looking at cross-border issues?

Carlos Moreno: Cross-border spaces are above all spaces of cooperation. The citizen living in this territory has a feeling of dual belonging, a multicultural feeling, that of being from one side but also from the other, our reference points are different. How can we generate their support so that they participate in a common purpose? We need to offer them elements enabling them to build themselves in otherness and to commit to the creation of values on both sides of the border.

An ecological value because today we can no longer talk about creating citizen value without this dimension. The IPCC and Jean Jouzel in his introduction have clearly demonstrated this. Citizens must create ecological value.

A social value as well, i.e. a value that makes it possible to fight against extremism, violence and intolerance that may lurk around our borders.

Finally, an economic value to generate and share wealth in a world that has to fight poverty.

It is fundamental to bring citizens closer together wherever they are and wherever they are located, in all areas, be it housing, work, consumption, health, education or culture. Whether the impact is felt on one side or the other of a border, within the catchment area, we could say that "it's for the better": the more resources there are to generate an activity creating ecological, social and economic value, the more we weave real spaces of cooperation in which the cross-border concept is diluted and only the territory matters.

Marianne Malez: What is the future of our cross-border territories? How do you imagine cross-border cooperation in 20 years' time?

Carlos Moreno: I am a convinced Europeanist. We need more democracy in Europe. I dream of a democratic Europe in which we could elect a president. I dream of a European life where speaking a language x or y is no longer an obstacle but an asset. I dream of a Europe in which cities play a major role. The President of the United States Conference of Mayors said: "The 19th century was the century of empires, the 20th century was the century of nation-states, the 21st century will be the century of cities". But without citizen participation this will never be possible. Democracy, tolerance and respect for others must be strengthened.

Pia Imbs: Our territory has known deadly wars, which were very difficult to bear. I can only imagine a future in peace, with greater consideration for climate issues. The climate issue is linked to urban, transport and mobility issues. This is what we must prepare today in cross-border cooperation for a sustainable territory. There is a well-known figure here in Alsace, a worrying projection, which is that in 2050 it is expected to be 50 degrees in Alsace, and therefore also in Kehl, Freiburg or Karlsruhe. It is a question of survival for our territory where the question of the border does not even arise.

Nathan Sourisseau: Taking into account climate issues is indeed fundamental. In order to respond to these issues, we need to resolve the question of different operating modes on both sides. The difficulties lie here. We need more harmonisation, to tend towards a Europe that is a little more federal and homogeneous in its functioning. The issue of harmonization of standards illustrates this, as illustrated by a concrete project between Besançon, Le Locle and La Chaux-de-fonds: a cross-border railway line, the "watchmakers' railway line", is faced with major problems of standards that differ on both sides of the border. In a few years' time, trains may no longer be able to cross the border because of this. The general idea is to imagine a Europe with integrated cross-border spaces.

Roland Theis: Our hope in the cross-border field is that we will be able to implement the spirit of the Treaty of Aachen. All too often we are in situations where we have to explain to our citizens that we are sorry that we cannot make faster progress or that we are not able to carry out this or that cross-border project. Article 13 of the Treaty of Aachen provides for the possibility of derogating from national legislation in order to build joint services and projects in border regions, with the application of the same rule on both sides.

We must have this freedom to operate as cross-border citizens without having to wait for the solutions of Berlin or Paris. This is the freedom we need if we want to be these "laboratories of tomorrow's Europe", the "Europe of the citizen", and the "Europe of the practical".

Question from the audience: Does the "Climate Plan 2030" strategy of the Strasbourg Eurometropolis include a cross-border dimension?

Pia Imbs: Not enough. This aspect needs to be clearly reinforced. We are working to better understand the climate plans of our neighbours, to coordinate them and move forward together. Other subjects that we must address together concern water, air quality and renewable energies. We share this conviction with the Mayor of Strasbourg that we must do more on these subjects on the scale of the Upper Rhine living area.

Question from the audience: How can we better involve private network operators (energy, water, waste) on both sides of the border?

Pia Imbs: Each elected representative knows his or her companies, his or her network of locally established companies that can be mobilised on these themes. This is the case on the territory, particularly in terms of waste treatment. But we must help to make these business networks better known on both sides of the border. The eco-neighbourhood projects have demonstrated this. The nearby German projects also inspired us in the metropolis.

Roland Theis: There are many projects that bring together private operators in a wide variety of fields, such as the "Sydeme" project in Morsbach in Moselle, which uses waste from French and German households to produce electricity. There are others, for example in the fields of energy or wind power, which bring together French and German companies. We also have a Saarland bank which has as its priority to finance renewable energy projects in the French market. On the other hand, if we look at the daily traffic jams on the A31 linking Metz and Luxembourg or between Metz and Saarbrücken, mobility linked to cars and not to ecological transport, we can measure how far we still have to go. It is time to move forward.

Question from the audience: How can these much-discussed obstacles be removed in order to move towards greater cross-border integration, particularly in the area of health?

Roland Theis: It's complicated because there are many legal and financial issues involved. Health insurance systems and welfare systems are not the same. For our citizens, the aim is to receive better care in the shortest possible time. This is a flagship issue of cross-border cooperation which very clearly demonstrates its usefulness and necessity. We have learned from the start of this health crisis, and we have drawn lessons from it. Today we are already better prepared and better coordinated in the reception of French patients, to implement a cross-border solidarity mechanism. Even in exceptional times, if we take the right reflexes, cooperation can be very effective. In any case, it has never been as close, or marked by such mutual trust, as during the months we have just spent. We must keep this spirit in mind for our future projects.

ROUND-TABLE #6

"Cross-border mobility and attractiveness, back to the borders?"

Every day, almost 500,000 cross-border workers in France commute to a neighbouring country. The Covid-19 health crisis, border restrictions and controls and the widespread use of teleworking are having an impact not only on mobility practices but also on the organisa-

tion and attractiveness of cross-border territories, making the interdependencies and links between neighbouring territories more visible.

Speakers

Pierre Cuny, Vice-President of Pôle métropolitain européen du Sillon Lorrain, Mayor of Thionville, France

Frédérique Bonnard-Le Floc'h, Vice-Présidente of Finistère Department, Vice-Présidente of Brest Métropole

Serge Dal Busco, State Councillor of the Republic and Canton of Geneva

Thierry Mallet, Chairman and CEO of Transdev

Luciano Caveri, Regional Minister, Assessor, Autonomous Region of Valle d'Aosta, Italy

Moderator: Marianne Malez, Director of mission, FNAU (French National federation of urban planning agencies)

Marianne Malez: Thionville is only 12 km away from the border; within the Sillon Lorrain, around 110,000 border workers cross the France-Luxembourg border every day. How to better organise the mobility of thousands of workers? How to involve the neighbouring country? What are the tools and funding solutions?

Pierre Cuny: The Thionville catchment area is located in a truly border area, characterised by the presence of a "suture" border, with serious problems: the natural interlocutor of the Grand Duchy is the French State, through its Regional Prefect; and in terms of mobility, it is the Regional Council. The local authorities are a source of proposals, in particular the two metropolitan clusters: the "Sillon Lorrain" (conurbations and metropolises of Epinal, Nancy, Metz and Thionville) and the "Nord Lorrain" (representing 356,000 inhabitants living on the border strip). These movements mean that the territory has become a "collateral victim" of European integration with transport axes that have not been adapted for decades. Regional, HST and freight trains (85 of the 135 daily trains directed to Luxembourg) use the same railway line. The impact of teleworking has been very heavy: already in 2018, at the intergovernmental conference between the two countries, I had already pleaded for an increase in 'detached' working time to 29 days.

Today, teleworking is very common between the two countries. It is one of the beneficial collateral elements of this crisis, having suddenly made possible what was previously impossible to boost.

Traffic lanes, which usually experience flows similar to those on Paris' ring road, are now free from traffic congestion. In Thionville, 50% of the working population works in Luxembourg.

The wage differential between the two countries is 1 to 3. In the midst of the Covid crisis, we have seen a major defection of health workers who are now leaving to work in Luxembourg. At the same time, this highlights the fragility of Luxembourg which, if its borders were closed, would see 90% of its hospital staff unable to reach it. The battle we are waging with the two metropolitan centres is to make the sharing of wealth more equitable, not in the form of a "retrocession", but in the form of "harmonious co-development". Luxembourg is today a victim of its own success and weaknesses: many Luxembourgers are settling on the French territory in search of real estate at more affordable prices.

Marianne Malez: In the Greater Geneva territory, 90,000 border commuters pass through every day, and you recently inaugurated the Léman Express in December 2019. How does such an equipment work and how is it financially supported?

Serge Dal Busco: There are many similarities between the situation in Northern Lorraine and the Franco-Vaud-Geneva region. The Canton of Geneva is a "peninsula" within the French territory, which the vagaries of history have separated from the city centre. On the cantonal territory we have 500,000 inhabitants but the functional urban area counts more than 1 million. Of the 380,000 jobs counted on the cantonal territory, 140,000 are jobs occupied by cross-border commuters (90,000) or by Swiss people living

ROUND-TABLE #6

in other cantons.

During the first wave, the situation was complex: 60% of the staff working in Geneva's university hospitals are border workers. Fortunately, there was no blockage or hindrance to the movement of border workers. Other strategic sectors (services, IT, raw material trade) are largely occupied by cross-border commuters and the issue of mobility is therefore crucial.



A few weeks before the crisis, we witnessed a paradigm shift throughout the region with the commissioning of the "Léman Express": a cross-border RER (Regional Express Railway Network), the largest in Europe, with 230 km of interconnected networks.

The last section, which had been awaited for a century, was completed in December 2019. If we had wanted to write a "disaster scenario" to bring this RER into service, we could not have imagined a worse situation (strikes in December-January, then lock-down in March). The customers were nevertheless there in February, proving the success of this infrastructure allowing people from Annecy or Evian to get to the heart of the Geneva conurbation without breaking the load. Despite the difficulties that have arisen with the crisis, this new offer exists and constitutes a credible alternative to the use of private cars, which is very common on both sides of the border. The financing of the Léman Express is complex: the SNCF and the CFF have created a joint venture to manage the network. This joint management is not simple but the approach is very promising. Each has contributed to the investment costs according to what was expected on either side of the border, and each participates in its operation.

Marianne Malez: In the Aosta Valley territory, the border is beautiful but difficult to cross. How is cross-border mobility organised in the presence of Europe's highest mountain, the Mont Blanc? And why have you invested so much in European regional programmes?

Luciano Caveri: We are currently living through a real tragedy: our region has been hit hard by the Covid-19.

The neighbouring countries (France and Switzerland) have adopted different strategies, which shows that borders are still very much present.

For a long time, our small Alpine region was in the same kingdom as Savoy. Since the birth of the Italian

state, the French-speaking Aosta Valley has remained somewhat isolated. The setting up of "European Territorial Cooperation" at European level was a fundamental step for us. And in 1965, the Mont Blanc Tunnel, inaugurated by General De Gaulle, enabled us to break out of a "dead-end" logic by enabling us to create real cross-border links.

The current period is paradoxical: here, the border is blocked, with no possibility of travelling to Switzerland or France. At the same time, videoconferences on the new programming period 2021-2027 are taking place.

The future cohesion Policy is our great hope: we are looking at the future in a different way with the eyes of the current drama.

We must now go further. I am thinking of two possibilities offered by the EU. On the one hand, the AlpMed Euroregion, for which we have worked a lot, is an interesting device: we must relaunch this idea, which is a return to history. On the other hand, a second important notion is that of "mountain range". Today we are working within the framework of EUSALP (EU Strategy for the Alpine Region), to protect this common good that goes from Slovenia to the Côte d'Azur. This macro-regional scale is essential. We must encourage more dialogue between the inhabitants of these areas, not only between politicians, but also between youngsters for greater proximity.

Marianne Malez: Let's now move on to the maritime borders. The maritime space can also be a link beyond a border, a place of mobility. How do we act on these spaces, particularly at the time of the Brexit?

Frédérique Bonnard-Le Floc'h: The power and consistency of the geographical realities are worth emphasising for Finistère. This specific geography brings a different point of view to national governments since we live in realities, those of the Atlantic and the English Channel, which are our own Mare Nostrum.

We have no borders, we have a sea in common.

There is an "Atlantic" cultural identity, practices and a very deep inter-knowledge that play on institutional divisions. The peninsular situation of this territory makes it the "advanced port of Europe in the West". We thus share a maritime border with the British Isles. We are 160 km as the crow flies from the United Kingdom, while we are 250 km from our regional capital, Rennes. This cooperation is therefore one of proximity. Ferry lines connect us to the British Isles, thanks to Brittany Ferries, a public-private company: a sort of "local capitalism" which was born out of the reality of economic and citizen exchanges. Brittany Ferries, a French company, connects the port of Roscoff to Plymouth, but also to Cork (Ireland). Today, 80% of passengers are British and freight represents about 20% of the company's turnover. We are in no hurry to become a closed border region again and we certainly do not want the Atlantic to become a border again. It should also be remembered that today maritime borders are killing people, between Dover and Calais, just as in the Mediterranean.



Relations with the British Isles, with this identity of Celtic countries, are very numerous and very old. We are, with the regions of the Atlantic coast, as far as Portugal, in a notion of an Alliance of territories.

We have agents from the Department who have been going for immersions in Cornwall Council for many years and we have had a formal co-operation for 30 years.

However, this peninsular position has certain handicaps: without sufficient inclusion of our territory in the strategic European and national logistics nodes, the Breton roads are not integrated into the central TEN-T network, which is detrimental to our access to European funding. The question of rail accessibility is lacking, with a high-speed line that currently stops in Rennes. The issues of maritime-rail-air interconnection are also central. Moreover, Brexit is a disaster for our territory and for our fellow citizens. Some rural municipalities in Central Brittany have more than 15% of British citizens who are permanent residents. Brittany Ferries is in danger of disappearing. Fishing, tourism and agricultural trade are also in danger.

What is being called into question with the Brexit is also this long and ancient, very fruitful cooperation, which allows us to innovate. Most of our cooperation projects are financed thanks to INTERREG: Brexit is the negation of our territorial reality.

Marianne Malez: Transdev, more than 11 million passengers per day are transported, with an emblematic project in a cross-border territory: the Öresund railway line between Copenhagen and Malmö. Could you tell us about it?

Thierry Mallet: Transdev has been supporting the Öresund rail link between Denmark and Sweden for almost 10 years. This link is organised with original governance: a

dedicated company has been created. It brings together both the Danish transport organising authority and six Swedish ones. Although the route in the Danish capital area is fairly limited, this link goes inland in the Swedish part of the country (270 km). This system incorporates the equivalent of the French regional trains, with trains every half hour, but also the RER, which crosses the border every quarter of an hour. It is an integration and a fine service of the territory organized in a rather original way. Today, 50,000 to 150,000 people are transported every day. The challenge of this connection, which has also suffered from Covid, lies in the changes in crossing regulations between the two countries: the border control systems have not been the same; they were much more constrained in the direction Denmark > Sweden, to prevent the arrival of illegal migrants. Controls thus became systematic for a certain period in one direction, but not in the other. It is very useful to have a single organisational entity to be able to operate the cross-border living area.

One of the impacts of the crisis, which I would like to emphasise, is this notion of the "catchment area". The LOM law had already identified this issue, with catchment areas that do not correspond to administrative territories.

In the case of cross-border logics, the border is very "physical": the challenge is to organize mobility at this living area scale by inventing new ways of operating.

In the context of the LOM law, the question will arise between regions and metropolitan areas. At cross-border level, it is clear that several border conurbations have emerged across national borders, hence the real challenges of structuring governance to enable the emergence and funding of projects.

The first observation is to identify the catchment area, the second is to set up an organising authority at the right level, then if necessary to develop services, by bus, tram or even train (which requires a longer investment).

ROUND-TABLE #6

Marianne Malez: What kind of financial equalisation should be applied for heavy infrastructures, such as the Nancy-Luxembourg metropolitan RER project? Especially when you are a neighbour of a country such as Luxembourg, whose financial and fiscal system is very different from ours?

Pierre Cuny:



We are in border regions with different prisms. In our case, we are closer to the Geneva model, in terms of the number of border workers and the solutions proposed. The main difference: in the Canton of Geneva, a tax retrocession introduced more than 40 years ago allows a reversion of the tax levied on frontier workers to communities in neighbouring French territories. This is not the case in Luxembourg, where the wealth generated is entirely retained by the Grand Duchy.

The model of fiscal retrocession can concern us, even better if it were to materialise in the form of "co-development", with infrastructures that can be financed on both sides.

In a similar way, and with regard to environmental issues, I think that rail but also electric transport are solutions for the future. Rail is the most plausible solution for us today: the A31 is going to have an additional track, a third one, with financing carried solely by the French side. But this third track will only upgrade infrastructures that should have been upgraded in the 20th century. On this 2x2 lane, transit is not only local, but also regional, macroregional and international. The solution for the future would be to do what was done in the Greater Geneva with the Léman Express.

In terms of taxation, the question of sharing arises. A first step was taken during the Franco-Luxembourg intergovernmental conference, since today 110 million euros have been put on the table by Luxembourg to finance railway infrastructures, to increase the pace, and 10 million to help us develop car parks. Nevertheless we must go much further. I pleaded, within the framework of the great European recovery plan, part of which is focused on mobility, for European financing of a metropolitan RER, between Nancy and Luxembourg. A second track concerns teleworking. Today we have gone from 21 to 29 days but we are still in a logic of "detached" work. We should achieve a level of teleworking of 56 days a year. Beyond that, social security contributions would return to France. Taxation (from 0 to 56 days) should be neither French nor Luxembourgish, but should be paid into an "equalisation and distribution

fund" aimed at developing mobility infrastructures, especially as the territory is still poorly endowed. There are currently 110,000 French cross-border commuters. In 2030 the prospective studies announce an exponential increase, to 170 000. These infrastructures should also enable Luxembourgish companies to set up on the French side of the border, with taxation to be considered.

Marianne Malez: The question of territorial rebalancing therefore arises. Also, how do you set up, on the territory of the Greater Geneva, this form of financial equalisation or solidarity? How can we avoid having dormitory towns on one side and a more attractive territory on the other?

Serge Dal Busco: Over the years, we have put in place tools for collaboration and coordination, which allow us to move towards this rebalancing. We have a LGCC that manages and tries to harmonise public policies on both sides of the border. The rebalancing concerns in particular jobs (on the French side) and housing (on the Geneva side), to diversify this highly specialised territory. What led us towards this increased cooperation - the Confederation has played an important role - was the implementation of conurbation projects that coordinated public policies: their dimension, including financial ones, has been extended to the cross-border scale, which has been profoundly innovative. A recent example is the inauguration of the Annemasse-Geneva tramway, co-financed by the Confederation. Today we are in the fourth phase of development of the conurbation project. In the next phase we are planning a cross-border tram on the Ferney-Voltaire side.

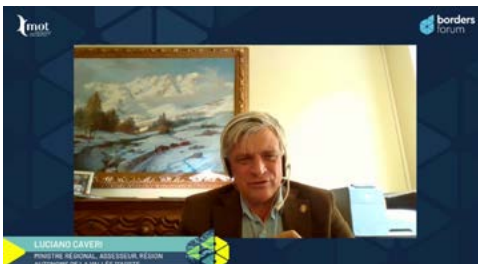
There are many similarities with Luxembourg and the taxation issues are just as central: we now have a retrocession which is equivalent to returning about a third of the tax mass (30%).

This is essential for balanced development on both sides. The question of telework is an opportunity but also a danger: we must of course support it for more responsible mobility (50% of jobs would be eligible to it) but the question of social charges and taxation comes up against limits and is crucial to avoid any imbalance and drift.

Marianne Malez: These issues also raise eminent political questions. Italy can be seen as a rather "divided" country politically. How can these cleavages influence your desire for Europe? What impact do they have on the mobility of people and goods transiting through the Aosta Valley?

Luciano Caveri: It is an Italian paradox. Following the creation of the European Union, great enthusiasm had marked the country. Today, the feeling that animates Italian public opinion is more "anti-European".

Borders are scars of history, but they are healing. In addition to goods and people, companies also have to be taken into account in this mobility. Several Valle d'Aosta companies are active in Switzerland and France. We also have common ski areas. There is a more favourable attitude to exchanges in these areas.



Nevertheless, this is more difficult on certain issues: the Mont Blanc Tunnel has aged. It should be doubled today. We are very worried by the very strong increase of heavy goods vehicles in our valley. We would be favourable to imagine more sustainable solutions for the transport of goods: we do not have an international railway line for instance. We are currently discussing possible solutions with the Swiss and the French. We have to be inventive.

We are in a moment of crisis that invites us to be visionary. After the Second World War, with the birth of the treaties, the international tunnels, there was a truly European vision. After this pandemic, will we also see a new impetus? We will have to be very attentive to this.

Marianne Malez: Brest is an advanced port of Europe but is not (yet) recognised as such. Is it a European or a French problem?

Frédérique Bonnard-Le Floc'h: It's a mischievous question to which I will answer maliciously: it's a European hope and it's a French problem.

Roscoff is the furthest point from Europe's "motorways of the sea", which is an absolute paradox. Because our national State considers only its ports of national interest, such as Le Havre or Marseille, with less consideration of bottom-up strategies coming from local actors, as is the case for us in Brittany. In Finistère, Brest has developed as a maritime port thanks to the national level and Roscoff in support of local agricultural sectors: we know perfectly how to combine these two scales and these two functions.

Finistère is excluded from high speed and we find it difficult to imagine combinatorial systems, as Europe is urging us to do, to take the step of rail logistics and combination with air transport.

For us, the hope is European because today mobility is excluded from the State-Regions plan contracts. This is a serious mistake because accessibility, for a territory such as ours, is the most important point.

We are counting on the European Recovery Plan to be able to make these massive investments which would give a very important boost to our territorial development but also to the French influence. What is happening in Finistère is an asset for France. Agriculture is a good example: 60% of European research on the Oceans is in Finistère. Our European hope also lies in integration into the TEN-T network and in the response to Brexit.

We are living a maritime reality that the French State finds very difficult to envisage, whereas we are "the world champion of the sea".

Marianne Malez: The attractiveness of territories depends on the mobility of people, but also on the mobility of goods and logistics issues. How can we coordinate a more virtuous organisation of goods transport and logistics in these border areas?

Thierry Mallet: Logistics is an important element in value creation. It allows us to serve local products and bring goods and products to certain territories. We've talked a lot about rail freight which, in France, remains a minority (< 10%), with an ambition to increase it to 20%. The challenge is twofold: solving congestion and facing the climate challenge.

When we talk about mobility, we cannot fail to mention the climate issues, and to move towards more "chosen" mobility. Teleworking can help. We will have to separate two levels: one level of urban distribution, in which space is very limited, with a cleaner distribution (notably electric); and on the other, long-distance mobility, for which we have no electric solution; we have rail, but the latter cannot exceed 20 to 30% in the best case. The objective, at the European level, would be to structure cleaner long-distance fleets, to create rallying points to break up this long distance for local distribution.



We will need a stronger framework for all forms of mobility so that they can be better controlled and more environmentally friendly.

There are many initiatives for greening fleets, whether in road or rail transport. The European recovery plan must help us in this. There is also a responsibility of the metropolises to take up the subject of urban logistics, with the challenge of controlling land use between bicycles, cars, pedestrians and public transport.

We will not be able to do without a trade-off in the use of these common areas, given the explosion of traffic. This will be one of the major challenges of tomorrow's development.

Marianne Malez: Enrico Letta recalled during round table 4 that "the place of territories is absolutely fundamental for the construction of a positive Europe". How can we ensure that the cross-border dimension is a positive vector of European construction? Which actors should be mobilised to move towards something better, to achieve this financial equalisation or this ecological transition in transport, or to work with British partners in the future?

Pierre Cuny: This is a fundamental question. Before 2010, with the French Blanc-Keller-Sanchez Schmid report, France considered that it had no borders.

The inhabitants appropriated these territories long before the policies.

For a long time, the inhabitants of Thionville, the Belgians and the Luxemburgish people have been crossing the border for shopping reasons and for their work. There has been a delay of recognition from the State, a contempt even, and an absence of interlocutor. The Ministry of European Affairs was not very visible in the 2000s. Today, things are changing a little. The Prefect of the Region has a diplomatic adviser, which makes the intergovernmental conferences move forward.

The territories know what they need. Teleworking, for example, has been taken up by the territories. Health is another issue: on my territory, there are as many people who receive treatment in Luxembourg as in France, but in terms of reimbursements, nothing is changing. The fact that the Prefect of the Region is once again becoming an interlocutor with his diplomatic adviser is an asset. The best level of reflection today is that of the regional space, to which structures such as metropolitan centres or local authorities are associated.

Luxembourg often reproaches us for having 10 interlocutors in a meeting instead of one. The Prefect of the Region and the President of the Region should be the two main ones.

Luciano Caveri: The right level is undoubtedly regionalism. For our Swiss friends there is no problem because they have a federalist system based on the cantons.

For us Italians or Swiss, there are a lot of difficulties when addressing French partners: we have big meetings that always end up with someone who cites the need to "make a phone call to the Prefect". Obviously, this "Napoleonic" figure of the Prefect appeals to us. I think we need more regionalism everywhere.

Frédérique Bonnard-Le Floc'h: In our relations with the British Isles, the Prefect is not always aware of the interests. What he can do above all is to "pull up" our infrastructure needs. I strongly believe in the Europe of territories because it is the one we live in. Local actors (Department, Region and Metropolis) "hunt in packs"; they work together with local and European, as well as national, funding.



Europe has a better understanding of the challenges facing peripheral territories and is helping to break the deadlock.

We have more allies in the European Parliament and the European Commission than at the French national level, which is quite paradoxical. Today, Brittany Region is developing intense diplomacy, with the dream of creating a Euroregion with the British Celtic territories, notably Wales, Ireland, and English Cornwall, even if, with the crisis, discussions have been somewhat suspended.

The dimension of networks is also very important: we are active within the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR), the Conference of Atlantic Cities, Eurocities and, recently, within the MOT. All the European networks enable us to put forward our needs, to be enriched by good practices, to set up more effective lobbying structures than at national level, even if networks such as Urban France help us to advance this idea of the Europe of territories.

This Europe of territories creates value for our country. Territorial bottom-up approaches and multi-level governance must be better recognised.

Marianne Malez: Does this lack of clarity and this multiplication of interlocutors affect cooperation between Swiss and French partners?

Serge dal Busco: The European idea is broken down just about everywhere; it is also broken down here.

How can we revive this feeling, while at the same time ensuring the construction of a cross-border metropolis?

It is by taking concrete action at the local level. It is by seeing what we are capable of doing on both sides of borders, particularly between totally different systems. If we manage to make the daily life of citizens easier, by force of circumstance, we will advance the European idea. And all this without going through great theories or great directives. Relationships, which involve not only the function but also the people (friendly relations), make things much easier. Our relations with the representatives of the French state, these Napoleonic figures, are excellent, but what I regret is that the term of office of the Prefect is not always long enough to establish solid long-term relations.

ROUND-TABLE #7

"Cross-border areas, differentiated areas?"

The 3D law has three main objectives: better deconcentration of state services; strengthening decentralisation; and differentiating territories to better take into account their specificity. In many respects, and particularly because of the relationships they establish with their neighbours, "trans border" territories are the first to be concerned by this

differentiation. What do border communities expect from this 3D law? How can the pioneering experience of the future European Community of Alsace, and its cross-border competence, be inspiring?

Speakers

Frédéric Bierry, President of the Bas-Rhin Department

Daniel Gibbs, President of Saint Martin Regional Authority

Fabienne Leloup, Professor at the Catholic University of Louvain

Christophe Arend, Deputy of Moselle

Moderator: Giuseppe Bettoni, Professor at the University of Rome, Expert in Geopolitics

Giuseppe Bettoni: The title of our round-table discussion evokes the idea, well known in geography, that changes are made by "contamination". Border territories are confronted with diversities. Change happens at the borders and sometimes will change the whole structure of the country with which it comes into contact. However, France has, at its borders, territories with highly differentiated, decentralised, regionalised and federal institutional structures. This can have an impact in France, asymmetrical relationships between territorial authorities on a border?

Frédéric Bierry: Cross-border cooperation is in the DNA of Alsace. The Rhine area formed by Alsace bordering Germany and Switzerland represents 6 million inhabitants and 60 000 cross-border workers. It is long-term work between local elected representatives on both sides of the border to create links, facilitate mobility, learn the neighbour's language, the economy (the Bas-Rhin department is in the Technology Region of Karlsruhe), the development of Eurodistricts, etc.

Beyond facilitating the daily life of the inhabitants, there is the challenge of creating a real community of destiny through the Rhineland humanism which brings together and federates on both sides of the Rhine.

Two current projects demonstrate this: the networking of the Rhine castles, and the development of health policies: 40% of the world's pharmaceutical production takes place in

the Rhine area.

All this was progressing well before the crisis. The crisis has made us aware of the good fortune of living in a region where mobility is easy. But the first border closures have led to difficulties: the Bund has made choices without listening to the border territories. But it should also be stressed that it is the quality of the existing links that has made it possible to welcome Alsatian patients in German clinics.

All this has shown both the potential of cross-border cooperation but also that achievements were not always guaranteed in the event of a major crisis.

In Alsace, there are tools whose potential can be exploited:

- **the Eurodistricts**, major daily tools that create relationships on both sides of the territory on scales of living areas that make it possible to be concrete and reactive in the face of problems. They can for example be tools in the area of health: in Wissembourg, maternity care is not very viable on the French scale of North Alsace, but if it is made to work on a cross-border scale it gives meaning to the healthcare provision;
- **the European Collectivity of Alsace (CEA)**, which will come into being in January 2021, brings together the Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin departments with new competences, reinforced cross-border competences with the capacity to act on this scale. It is a form of prefiguration of territorial differentiation;
- **the Cross-Border Cooperation Committee (CCT)** set up by the Treaty of Aachen in 2019 should make it possible,

ROUND-TABLE #7

through joint action by French and German MPs and executives, to simplify the law when legislative or regulatory constraints prevent the strengthening of ties. For example, the conditions for taking part in a cross-border marathon are different on each side: a medical certificate is required only in France, which blocks German runners from taking part in races in Alsace. Similarly, for maternity, a certain number of obstacles related to the reimbursement of French and German social security must be addressed.

Giuseppe Bettoni: From Alsace, we are going to make a jump across the Atlantic. Saint-Martin is a small territory but with a particular context. What does it mean to be a cross-border citizen when you are "outermost", with a Dutch neighbour and with the vulnerable nature of an island? What instruments do you need?

Daniel Gibbs:



"Outermost" is an unfortunate term, as if St. Martin was excluded from a system only to be reintegrated into it sparingly. St. Martin is a very atypical small island made up of two nations, one territory under French aegis, and another under Dutch aegis with a symbolic border, and a passage resulting from a 1648 concordat which allows the free circulation of goods, merchandise and financial flows, but with two different systems, because the French part is integrated into Europe as an "Outermost Region", while the Dutch part is excluded as an "OCT" (Overseas Countries and Territories) : two different statuses that complicate institutional relations. European regulations do not protect the French side, because the neighbour has fewer constraints and can compete with the French side, which is obliged to apply European regulations.

Since 1648, Saint-Martin has been "Europe before Europe", because a European territory coexists with a non-European territory: "complexity in advantage and advantage in complexity".

It was not until the advent of the Collectivité in 2007 that Saint-Martin was given more autonomy. It is now governed by Article 74 of the French Constitution, which gives it powers in all areas except the regalian areas and the environment. This autonomy now allows it to adjust its policies in relation to its neighbours.

Saint-Martin has all the ingredients of an experiment territory.

But France as a State has maintained its leadership in terms of cooperation, because it is a question of international relations.

Since 2010 Saint-Martin has been working on the creation of a structure to harmonise the institutional differences on the island: the "United Congress", in order to be able to cooperate at the local level, to legalise and institutionalise cross-border cooperation.

The objective is to ratify the study made by the MOT on this institution on 11 March 2021, the anniversary date of the 1648 concordat: to formalise cooperation between the two parts of the island on common policies such as tourism (the territory lives at 95% of tourism) or on topics such as multiplication of the road network (today only one road goes around the island), electricity, water (desalination is very expensive). It is a question of pooling financial and technical efforts for greater efficiency over a territory of 75 km².

The two local executives will sit in the "United Congress", to take decisions in the event of political instability, while ensuring the administrative and political continuity of the decision-making process. Today, the only exchanges and agreements are based on "memoranda of understanding" which only commit the President of the Local Authority and the Prime Minister of Sint Maarten.

Giuseppe Bettoni: Having heard our first two speakers, what reaction does this evoke for a MP and member of the Franco-German Assembly?

Christophe Arend: Today, the question of borders is a crucial issue in the construction of Europe, but we must not limit ourselves to seeing this through the local level alone. The presence of a border is an obstacle to the daily life of citizens. Therefore, in order to respond to the European promise to be "united in diversity", French and German members of parliament have adopted a parliamentary resolution which has led to the creation of a working group of nine French and nine German members of parliament, which I chair. This group participated in the drafting of the Treaty of Aachen, an entire chapter of which, for the first time, is devoted to cross-border issues. This treaty established the Cross-border Cooperation Committee (CCT) to work on cross-border matters, as well as the Franco-German Parliamentary Assembly.

The challenge is to go beyond this vision of Europe built on the sharing of resources, to move towards a Europe that meets the deep aspirations of its citizens, especially those living in these "buffer zones".

One of the tasks of the CCT is to find the relevant level to solve the problems of cross-border cooperation. All levels are represented: municipal and intermunicipal executives, EGTCs, national executives and legislators. Within the CCT it is possible to discuss between the different levels of the same country, but also between countries. Not all problems have to go through the lawmaker.

A first notable result in the management of the Covid crisis: during the first containment, Germany closed its borders

⁽⁷⁾ Formerly, Saint-Martin was a commune integrated into the Department of Guadeloupe. Institutional and administrative relations were complicated (triple penalty of being detached from France, attached to Guadeloupe, with a cross-border side).

unilaterally. During the second, it did not close them and consulted with France.

Cross-border areas are coherent living areas where economic, cultural and health resources must be used together. One of the successes during the crisis was the transfer of patients from the Moselle to Saarland, or from Saarland to France.

The next step is now in France in the "3D" law, which should be able to contain a chapter on cross-border matters, because the ingenious solutions found on the border with Germany are transposable to all French and European borders.

Giuseppe Bettoni: When we decentralize, we sometimes fear that we will lose solidarity. But does decentralisation constitute a loss of solidarity of territories?

Fabienne Leloup: The challenge is to find out how the border can be a resource in relation to a different system of governance, and to rethink centralisation, i.e. the way of managing certain issues in Europe, with a recentralisation towards certain poles and a standardisation of decisions. For example, national or European calls for projects force operators to fit into certain frameworks and the solutions will therefore be similar.

When borders arise, the political-administrative systems are partly opposed to each other. They reveal their differences, because they have been built in a logic of coherence within the national territory. A balance must be found between what is done within the country and what is done across borders.

The "spill-over" effect has worked in a number of cases across borders. Operators have discovered other ways of doing things on the other side of the border, testing and experimenting with them. There is a great capacity for innovation in decentralised and deconcentrated bodies, including in centralised systems.

European instruments such as INTERREG are important because cross-border cooperation is not easy. They are "incentives" for actors who wish to engage in this way, and tools to convince them of the interest of crossing the border.

Sometimes behind administrative difficulties we will find difficulties of another kind (for example, the turnover of administrative managers which slows down the implementation of projects, or even questions of people).

While "differentiation" and "solidarity" are often contrasted, it is rather a balance between the capacity for experimentation and flexibility and the upholding of the collective interest that needs to be found. This balance must be thought of in terms of cohesion within the States and Europe.

Frédéric Bierry:

Differentiation should make it possible to improve public action. If the administrative brakes on the French-German border are removed, 10 GDP points are gained on cross-border territories.

This produced wealth, this improvement in the effectiveness of public action must also benefit other borders. We are going beyond "regionalism" here. Things must be managed from the territories, close to citizens; in this way, public action responds best to the population's issues and this makes it possible to revive democracy.

The effectiveness of public action is a major issue today. If citizens are to embrace it, they need to see the impact of public action in their daily lives.



ROUND-TABLE #7

Giuseppe Bettoni: With the tool of the United Congress, how far can autonomy and delegation of powers go?

Daniel Gibbs: We have sufficient powers to function alongside the State, which retains its regalian powers (education, immigration, armies, justice...). We wish to demonstrate that we know how to be responsible. Within this local institution, only the local authorities will have the right to vote in the areas of their own competences in which cross-border cooperation will be deployed. The two states could be included as observers. This would make it possible to ensure the legality of procedures in areas where local authorities are not competent.

Local elected representatives, resulting from the exercise of democracy by citizens, are elected to take decisions together with the other elected representatives of the territory. With a "turnover" of prefects every 3 years, the true legitimacy of the decision belongs to the local elected representatives, whose deliberations must be put back at the centre of the discussions.

Beyond the land border with Sint Maarten, we have maritime borders: with Saint-Barthélemy (French sister island 15 minutes by plane), Anguilla (British island 15 minutes by boat, the only ultramarine territory facing Brexit) the post-Brexit situation will be complicated, as this island is only accessible by St-Martin. The situation is therefore very complex on Saint-Martin with these different borders and statuses of the neighbouring territories. Management must necessarily be carried out at local level.

Giuseppe Bettoni: The turn-over of the deconcentrated State, represented by the prefects, is indeed an important issue. Could we imagine in France an Italian-style prefect who would only deal with civil protection and who leaves more capacity to act to local actors?

Christophe Arend: It turns out that we have been several local elected representatives to request the granting of a "prefect for Franco-German revival", to coordinate actions in Franco-German and European languages, even if this project has little chance of succeeding.

The border metropolitan departments, which represent 128 of the 577 deputies in the National Assembly, have a considerable power potential. These 128 deputies must unite in a transparent manner and draw on the work of the MOT to demand that the border situation be better taken into account in the 3D law.

If we manage to "Decentralise",
"Deconcentrate", "Differentiate" and
"Decomplexify" on the borders, it is
in everyone's interest: Europe, States,
communities, citizens.

Daniel Gibbs: The law of 23 March 2020 has given more powers to the prefect in the context of the sanitary measures related to Covid-19, in consultation with local authorities. However, consultation on Saint-Martin is limited to information on the implementation measures. We are

listened to without being heard, while the population turns to us.

The relationship between local authorities and representatives of the State in the region relies too much on the human aspect and not on the role, and we are dependent on the quality of this relationship. This is why economic, social and educational powers must be given to local authorities.

Fabienne Leloup:

Cross-border cooperation means that
something new has to be invented.

This diversification requires cross-border governance to do things differently, through new mechanisms. This cooperation involves compromises, such as the participation of the Belgian state in the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis EGTC, a presence desired by France, whereas in Belgium it is the region that has this competence. Governance does not only mean short-term management, it is about having a vision, a "community of values" to act together in the long term. The various examples of cross-border cooperation that work have succeeded in identifying common values. It is the specificity of cross-border cooperation and of the territory that will give it its richness and generate different processes compared to another territory. But it is also necessary to maintain overall cohesion to avoid "localism" and closed territories. Cross-border and protectionism are contradictory.

Question from the audience: Why did you abandon the EGTC project with Sint Maarten?

Daniel Gibbs: On the contrary, on the advice of the MOT, we are going to propose to our counterparts in Sint Maarten to create the United Congress in the form of an EGTC. This is indeed the chosen legal instrument.

Question from the audience: Will the new CEA have a "Germany Strategy" just as Saarland has a "France Strategy"?

Frédéric Bierry:



It is fundamental to build a community of fate on the Rhine area, which also relies on the role of Strasbourg as European capital. To this end, all cross-border issues are addressed: mobility, language learning, higher education, etc.

Through the tools presented, the strategy must be taken to the Rhine scale by doing "bottom-up" work. The public sphere must be built from the living areas and their reality in order to function well.

The 3D law can be a major tool: deconcentration, if the prefects really have the capacity to listen to the territory; decentralisation, if local authorities have real fiscal and action autonomy; and differentiation, because our realities are very different from those of other departments.

Starting from the specificities of each territory, it is possible to build a public policy that serves the entire nation and is more effective.

Question from the audience: What are the expectations of the 3D law for your territory? By becoming 4D, won't the 3D law give even more powers to the prefect?

Christophe Arend:



The prefect does not have enough powers, particularly in the health sector where the decision-making power lies with the ARS, but also in matters of education, public finance, etc.

A prefect is expected to be able to act while taking into account the particularities of his territory, whether or not he is a borderer.

For example, the Prefect of Moselle has to act taking into account Luxembourg, Germany and Belgium because of the daily flows in this area. The idea is to have at the head of the Greater Region someone who has an overall vision and who can take decisions in the direction of European construction within a coherent living area, without dispossessing the States of their powers.

Question from the audience: On a border territory, does differentiation not mean "standardising" its cross-border living area?

Frédéric Bierry: The whole issue of differentiation is how far one can go in terms of regulatory autonomy. France has difficulties with this flexibility.

A major step forward is this draft organic law on experiments: these will no longer have to be generalised to all collectivities at the same level. With regard to "differentiation", it is a question of taking into account the realities of the territories. We must leave more regulatory flexibility to the prefect and local authorities. The way in

which the law will be implemented in the territories must vary according to the realities and specificities of each territory.

Christophe Arend: Objective indicators are needed to describe the situation of a territory and, on the basis of these data, to define homogeneous living areas, which may be cross-border, where the degrees of specification and differentiation are very high. Today, it is very difficult to compare and imagine innovative systems on the scale of cross-border living areas.

Frédéric Bierry:

Europe, often criticised, will perhaps be with Covid our salvation plank. In cross-border work, we have the opportunity to show the relevance of Europe.

The CEA will have the opportunity to set up a Cross-border Cooperation Scheme that will further strengthen the link, based on the realities on the ground, with all the public spheres on both sides of the border.

Fabienne Leloup: What is important and what emerges from Franco-German cooperation is the need for a long-term perspective, which is often lacking in political action. When we talk about experimentation and flexibility, we must also talk about stabilisation (and not standardisation) by setting rules, values and actions on the basis of which we want to work together.

The idea is to build a system that will make it possible to perpetuate, stabilise and make progress in the places where the citizens who cross the border live, and not simply a political construction disconnected from the field.



One of the major characteristics of cross-border cooperation is above all the "territory" behind which the differentiation is made, which makes sense if it enables projects that are not in opposition to projects in other territories to be carried out.

ROUND-TABLE #8

"Metropolises, mountains, rural areas: What kind of cross-border cohesion?"

Cross-border territories are multifaceted territories: sometimes metropolitan, sometimes rural, sometimes mountainous, sometimes coastal; they even have distinct profiles depending on the side of the border on which we are located. So how can the need for cross-border solidarity and cohesion of

these territories be met? How can the National Agency for Territorial Cohesion (ANCT, France) - established in January 2020 - and in particular its national programmes, respond to this need? How do local engineering tools understand these cross-border needs and how do they try to meet them?

Speakers

Yves Le Breton, Director of the National Agency for Territorial Cohesion (ANCT, France)

Louis Nègre, Deputy President of Nice Côte d'Azur Metropolis

Annie Genevard, Vice-president of the National Assembly, Deputy of Doubs

Patrick François, Interregional Director, Grand Est Region, Caisse des Dépôts, France

Patrice Vergriete, Deputy President of the FNAU (French National federation of urban planning agencies), Mayor of Dunkerque, France

Alexandre Cassaro, Mayor of Forbach, representative of Villes de France

Moderator: Giuseppe Bettoni, Professor at the University of Rome, Expert in Geopolitics

Giuseppe Bettoni: The National Agency for Territorial Cohesion (ANCT) was created recently, on the 1st January 2020. However, it has ancestors, such as the CGET (Commissariat général à l'égalité des territoires) or the DATAR (Délégation à l'Aménagement du Territoire et à l'Action Régionale). What remains of the CGET and the DATAR in the ANCT? What is behind the word "cohesion"? Territorial cohesion is a major element. How can it be achieved in the sense understood by the European Commission? How can it be achieved when we have mountains, rural areas and metropolitan areas?

Yves Le Breton:



Created on the 1st of January 2020, the ANCT is heir to a long administrative tradition. There is nevertheless a distinction between the logics of the DATAR and those of the ANCT today. The DATAR dates back to the 1960s, a time when France remained a highly centralised State, with a vision of the territory projected from Paris towards the local authorities. Since the 1980s, we have seen four decades of decentralisation. The Head of State wanted to take this evolution into account when creating the ANCT, which

thus starts from a different vision: territories have projects, a clear vision of their future; the State is there to support them. The ANCT is therefore positioned at the service of local authorities. The State plays a role in the territories with the Prefects of the Departments who are the territorial delegates of the Agency.

With regard to the more specific cross-border issue: border territories, especially metropolitan, mountain and rural territories, are a priority for the action of the ANCT, in particular to support communities with an engineering need. They are included in the agency's statutes.

The ANCT can thus call upon several partnerships, for example with the Banque des Territoires. It is there to support the projects of cross-border territories by taking into account their constraints and opportunities. The opportunities are numerous and may be of the order of a movement of population from one territory to another; the constraints may also be strong, related to a difference in development between the territories (for example in northern Lorraine, or the Modane municipality, which has suffered greatly since the Schengen agreements and with which the ANCT is involved).

The MOT is a historical partner of the ANCT; the DATAR is at the origin of its creation. Cross-border cooperation has therefore long been a matter for the State.

Giuseppe Bettoni: If it benefits from the status of "Metropolis", the Nice Côte d'Azur Metropolitan area is a territory with different faces. Its northern part in particular is a mountainous territory, representing the border territory of the Metropolis with Italy. How does the Nice Metropolitan Council organise itself with its potentially more fragile mountainous territory?

Louis Nègre:



The City of Nice encompasses 350 000 inhabitants and the Metropolis around 550 000. It is a mix between a dense urban area (Côte d'Azur) and a rural and mountainous area. On the territory, the Mercantour national park borders an Italian national park. Out of the 49 municipalities of the metropolis: eight are coastal, 19 are rural and agricultural, and 22 are mountainous with also ski resorts. Christian Estrosi, President of the Nice Côte d'Azur Metropolis, had this vision of cohesion of the territory that encompassed beyond the seaside. We have built "a concrete space of solidarity between the urban and rural areas" that works. Today, other municipalities want to integrate the Metropolis because of this solidarity, for example the metropolitan solidarity grant in favour of municipalities, or the Council of Mayors (49 mayors, with one vote per mayor). The metropolis also has a charter in which it is stated that the municipality is the cornerstone of the metropolis. The municipalities form a cohesion for all cross-cutting competences. A good example of this is transport, for which we have not opted for free transport.

On the other hand, we lack a cross-border structure worthy of the name. The Treaty of Aachen opens up a perspective, but since the European Union came into being, we have been moving too slowly. Monaco has voted a budget of 4 million euros for the Nice Metropolis and for the municipalities devastated by the recent storm "Alex". The Italians also helped. We have reached an agreement with Italy and with Monaco. But we are not allowed to organise ourselves without the States, although we would like to go further. We must be given the means to act.

Giuseppe Bettoni: The Doubs Département borders a mountainous non-European Union area (Switzerland). How can we work with this reality?

Annie Genevard: The Haut-Doubs is indeed a border territory of a non-member country, so cross-border partnerships cannot be conducted as in the EU. Moreover, it is a mountain territory populated by small municipalities, which makes it more complex to build collaborative projects. The mountain being an obstacle, the question of mobility and crossing the massif is therefore essential.

Elected representatives have always been working on this issue. One of the characteristics of the territory is the commuting: every day thousands of workers cross the border. Switzerland is the leading provider of jobs in the region; inhabitants benefit from qualified Swiss jobs (e.g. watchmaking). We live in France, we work in Switzerland. The two territories are interdependent, they have a common destiny, with a spatial specialisation.

There is an asymmetry of responses and means: each territory has its own forms of governance. France is a Jacobin country, whereas Switzerland leaves a high degree of autonomy to local authorities, so that the responses provided differ according to the topic. It is difficult to compensate for the imbalances. In particular, the Haut-Doubs is home to a population from other regions who have come to work in Switzerland, with a strong demand for public services. Although workers are well paid in Switzerland, the local authorities are not richer thanks to cross-border workers, because they do not benefit from their tax system. There is another asymmetry related to the fact that the French territory has few resources to build roads, whereas in Switzerland, where they are more prepared to invest billions of Swiss francs, this is not the case.

Border territories are not sufficiently recognised for their contribution to the nation's prosperity.

Despite the fact that all these territories are prosperous, Paris struggles in recognising them. Bilateral agreements are concluded at national level, but without ever consulting local authorities. When I was Mayor of Morteau, we developed strong institutional relations with the Swiss to revitalize the territory, worked on the development of a cross-border nature park, and created a French-Swiss cross-border conurbation with a Local Grouping for Cross-border Cooperation (LGCC).

Giuseppe Bettoni: Mr. Vergriete, as a former director of an urban planning agency, Deputy Chairman of the National Federation of Urban Planning Agencies, and mayor of a border municipality, what is your opinion on cross-border cooperation?

Patrice Vergriete:



I was first director of the Dunkirk Urban Planning Agency, a structure at the heart of cross-border cooperation, then Mayor of Dunkirk, and President of the Urban Community of the Côte d'Opale Metropolitan Pole, then Co-President of the cross-border cooperation structure. This experience,

ROUND-TABLE #8

technical then political, taught me several lessons. Cross-border cooperation was first excellent for the Flemish people. We had begun to set up working groups, to bring the structures (hospitals, security services) closer together. This first phase, very rich and informal, led to the establishment of an EGTC, which showed the strength of cooperation between northern France and western Belgium. The town planning agency was the supporting structure of the EGTC, alongside the local authorities.

However, little by little, political will, administrative burden and a lack of address to the population have prevented people on either side of the border from coming together. The EGTC has become an institutional burden. It was also complicated because there was not the same set of political stakeholders on either side, nor the same political timing. Finally, of the last ten years of cross-border cooperation, apart from INTERREG projects, little has actually happened in real terms. This is a disappointment.

There is a twofold challenge in developing cross-border cooperation: we need a strong and structured technical engineering tool, and a political will based on the desire to build a common cross-border identity.

The urban planning agency has been a tool at the service of cross-border cooperation. It has helped to develop a debate on cross-border data and to provide elected representatives with a cross-border observatory. It has also helped to acquire a common vision and has carried out a number of INTERREG projects (on topics such as mobility and employment). Looking at the network of urban planning agencies, it is clear that it is highly developed in cross-border territories (in the Grand Est, Hauts de France, Burgundy-Franche-Comté) but also abroad (Netherlands, Catalonia). This network is at the disposal of cross-border cooperation; it should enable us to go much further, in connection with the work done by the MOT. The ANCT must be able to take advantage of these two networks to develop cross-border cooperation, also taking advantage of the German presidency of the EU and the will of local elected representatives.

Giuseppe Bettoni: We have just been talking about technical engineering, but also about investments and concrete actions. How does the Caisse des Dépôts group intervene on the territory? How do you apprehend territorial cohesion in cross-border matters, particularly in the Grand Est, which has 750 km of borders, of which 450km with Germany?

Patrick François:



Our mission of general interest, almost militant, is to intervene with local authorities to help them fight against all the imbalances (economic, social...), to advise them, and to develop territories. We intervene via considerable means in engineering aid to accompany territories in their projects, and by financing large infrastructure projects (digital, transport, hospital, social housing...). And more broadly, we intervene in the investment sections of all local authorities, often to enable projects to see the light of day. The fields are varied: ecological transition, social support, digitalisation, etc. However, as investors, let us acknowledge that it is really very difficult to support local authorities in the field of cross-border cooperation because there are few subjects, apart from rail transport, culture and tourism. It is difficult to implement national policies.

The Bank of the Territories considers that a large part of the European Recovery Plan will be carried out via the border, through the capacity of Europeans to build-up projects together.

However, it is difficult to associate the protagonists on either side of the border in a business project, in a project for equipment, in a coworking space..., because there are two legal glacies, imbalances at the level of workers, fiscal imbalances. Until the concrete implementation of what is brought about by the revision of the Elysée treaty - i.e. the power given to prefects to adapt the law on a limited territorial strip, to enable local actors to "plan" and adopt a common rule on either side - cross-border cooperation will remain difficult to implement.

Alexandre Cassaro:



The cross-border topic also occupies a great deal of the action of Villes de France, a network which represents towns of 10,000 to 100,000 inhabitants. We defend a European Union "of projects, of the tangible", considering that the construction of Europe is not only the business of the EU itself but that it is the result of the multiplication of cross-border actions. It is in this way that we will not have a European construction "above ground". These cross-border spaces are the laboratories of European construction. To develop it, local elected representatives have three main tools: EGTCs, city-to-city relations, and cooperation within civil society itself.

EGTCs are a fairly recent and original creation in the history of local authorities. They enable territories to set common objectives and provide themselves with the means to achieve them, following the example of the "Saar Moselle" EGTC, which is working on the mobility offer and is setting up cross-border bus lines. In this territory we also have a

common cultural policy (very strong industrial tourism in Forbach with the Mining and Steel Museum, cooperation between the theatres of Forbach and Saarbrücken). For city-to-city relations, we have numerous twinnings between towns on both sides of the border. If they are well constructed, they can lead to very concrete projects. For example, between Forbach and Volklingen there is a German and French language course and a correspondence system between schoolchildren. Finally, if these co-operations are sufficiently mature, they create a favourable ecosystem to the emergence of other cooperations within civil society. Another example of twinning is the health cooperation between the hospitals in Forbach and Volklingen. However, there are still obvious areas for progress, and we could go further on the health aspect, such as what was done on the French-Belgian border.

Giuseppe Bettoni : The ANCT has been questioned several times by the different speakers. How do you react to this? And to take the example of a specific case (question of the public), how can we ensure the cohesion of the Northern Lorraine territory with its Luxembourg neighbour, and what role can the ANCT play there?

Yves Le Breton: One of the means of action in these territories is the implementation of partnerships. The FNAU and the ANCT have just signed an agreement to this effect. The relationship with the EU is also fundamental: ANCT is the national coordinating authority for INTERREG programmes and European funds. I agree with Patrick François on the question of the need to have projects that justify the intervention of public authorities. But one main obstacle remains: the law is not the same on both sides of the border. At the level of the ANCT, we have two levels of approaches: management of the border phenomenon at the national level (the ANCT intervenes with programmes such as "Action Cœur de Ville" or "Petites Villes de Demain" (Small Towns of Tomorrow) programme in which the cross-border issue is present); and management at the local level. In the case of Northern Lorraine: there is both a state-to-state relationship between France and Luxembourg and a subject of organization of territorial authorities and responses to concrete local problems. I recently had discussions with the President of the Metropolitan Border Pole of Northern Lorraine and the Prefect of the Grand Est Region on how the ANCT could intervene.

Giuseppe Bettoni: What tools does the Nice metropolitan Council use to work on cross-border issues?

Louis Nègre: There is an EGTC between the Mercantour park and the Alpi Maritime park on the Italian side. We have just voted in the Metropolitan Council a strategy of cross-border cooperation with Monaco and Italy. The essential thing is first of all to have a political will and a desire for more Europe. This is currently seen in the reflections on a Franco-Italian treaty. In addition, in the INTERREG committees, the regions and departments are present, but not the Metropolises. If we want to do more cross-border work, we are up against the glaci.

We would like to be able to set up a working group between Italy, Monaco and France

in coordination with the State, a liaison committee which would enable us to discuss internationally. The State and Europe must have more confidence in local elected representatives.

Yves Le Breton: Concerning the constitution of the Steering Committees within the INTERREG programmes, the Nice Metropolis has indeed the vocation to be a stakeholder in this cooperation. It is a subject that we must look closely at the ANCT, in connection with France Urbaine.

Giuseppe Bettoni: At the border with Switzerland, are the issues and needs similar?

Annie Genevard: As mentioned earlier, it is indeed difficult to build projects; those that emerge are locally made. They are generally "smaller", because of the asymmetry with Switzerland.



We need to get out of the "observation" stage and move on to the "project" stage.

Finally, there is a difficulty in getting the particularity of our singular territories recognised, which is still relevant today. Two examples prove it: the issue of mobility, which is essential in cross-border territories; and the financial issue. In France, there is an equalisation fund for inter-municipal and communal resources which "ruins" the local authorities of the Haut-Doubs, because of the criteria adopted, which mixes the resources of the authorities and the resources of the inhabitants. In this context, the specialisation of spaces is no longer an asset but an obstacle. Certain subjects seem to me to be priorities, such as mobility, funding, training and health.

Yves Le Breton: These subjects are particularly acute in border territories, especially commuting mobility. However, as far as the sovereign state is concerned, this is not within the competence of the ANCT. Nevertheless, the agency can propose tools: the programmes set up and already mentioned, engineering assistance, and contractualisation: it would be possible to imagine customised contracts that would allow these cross-border issues to be taken into account specifically. The government has mentioned stimulus contracts for the ecological transition, for example, which are globalizing contracts. These can be interesting tools for dialogue between the territorial representatives of the state and the territorial authorities on concrete projects carried by the authorities.

Giuseppe Bettoni: We manage to develop urban planning agencies internationally. But how can urban planning agencies be made truly cross-border? How can a cross-border identity be built? What are the most suitable solutions for implementing cross-border cooperation on your territory, apart from the EGTC?

Patrice Vergriete:

Cross-border cooperation is not yet sufficiently mature for the investment component of projects.

Two things are being done in cross-border projects: first of all we are trying to build a common identity, by going beyond the extremely structuring national borders in our minds (we can imagine that organising a football match between Dunkirk and Bruges would help the inhabitants to build a common identity, which is something we need to think about); secondly, we are producing "coherence", by bringing together facilities on both sides by producing a common cultural policy... But these two things do not generate investment: building an identity and producing coherence is "soft". Practically no cross-border story has reached the higher level of saying: we will build our public facilities together. Sometimes our legislation does not even allow us to do so (e.g. in football, a French club cannot play in a stadium abroad, because the location of the stadium determines the championship in which the club plays). Finally in the field of engineering, joint structures should be created, joint tools should be developed, such as an urban planning agency for example, or even cross-border commercial land holdings.

Patrick François: Indeed, one needs immaterial things first, the desire to be together before imagining investment. But at the material level, the Bank of territories is among the main actors of the "Action Cœur de Ville" and "Petites Villes de Demain" (Small Towns of Tomorrow) programmes. It provides support in engineering, financing, operation and investment. And on the example taken concerning land, I say let's go, these are interesting ideas! If we take the example of the Fessenheim power station, the Bank of the Territories proposed to create a Franco-German publicly

owned society (SEM), capable of intervening in the field of development and investment on land on both sides of the Rhine, we are on the verge of achieving this, but it will have taken a year and a half of work.

Alexandre Cassaro:

Cross-border cooperation ultimately creates opportunities for the territory. It is a laboratory of European construction.

It also enables our territories to spread their influence: for example, the proximity of Thionville to Luxembourg, and Forbach to Saarbrücken enables these territories to be attached to another metropolitan dynamic outside the French territory.

Question from the audience: Who currently monitors cross-border issues between France and Switzerland?

Annie Genevard: First of all, they are local cooperations. The LGCC was created by local elected representatives from France and Switzerland. It is clear that if there is no local dynamic, there is no visibility of the border territories. We remind you that these territories must be given specific attention because they are specific. There are now ambassadors in the regions, regional diplomats who deal with these issues with their counterparts, but with varying results depending on the territories and the people in charge. For the moment, the right level of interlocutor is the Prefect, but we are still struggling to find interlocutors.

Progress is too often based on the good will of individuals, but we should succeed in making cross-border work on a "hard core" basis.

Even more since our models need to evolve drastically. Why not imagine areas of economic collaboration? All this is difficult. Tourism is an area where cooperation could be easier, since the border could be promoted on this occasion.



CONCLUSION OF THE 1ST BORDERS FORUM

By Christian Dupessey

President of the MOT,
Mayor of Annemasse,
President of the Metropolitan
Pole of the French Genevois



I am particularly pleased to be able to conclude this first Borders Forum with pride.

Happy, because despite the difficult situation we are going through, preventing us from meeting up physically, we still managed to organise this new French and European event, this new "rendez-vous".

Prepared for more than a year by the MOT, we had to rethink its format in just a few weeks due to the resurgence of the epidemic. I would like to warmly thank the MOT team, our European partners, our media partner (France Média Monde), the organisers and the technical service providers for this prowess. These two days have enabled us to uphold our ambitions: demonstrate the central role of cross-border territories, convince our national and European partners to place them at the heart of their public action, and to bear witness to an ambitious France on the European stage - the participation of two of our ministers reflects this.

I am also proud as, having already been the Vice-President, I have the honour and pleasure of chairing the MOT for two months, and I am proud of the success of this new event that the MOT has organised for you. Your very numerous participation is a prime demonstration of this.

More than 700 participants attended these two days, with more than 40 countries represented, from all over Europe, but also from South America and Africa.

The quality of our discussions is further proof of this. We were able to initiate the debate on the Future of Europe, alongside the European Commission, the European Committee of the Regions, but also our partners, AEBR and CESCO, co-authors of our European Cross-border Citizens' Alliance. This Alliance is certainly our initiative, but it is above all the work of all of us, and the result of your contributions. We must take ownership of it, support the action that the European Committee of the Regions will undertake, and rely on cross-border actors to give it the scope and impact it deserves. 2021 will be decisive.

We have also demonstrated that local border and cross-border actors have a role to play in public policy, alongside national and European actors, including at a time of crisis such as the one we are experiencing. In order to achieve cohesion, we must play "collectively",

in other words, in our technical-political jargon, act on a "multi-level". All the players have and should have their part to play: Europe, States, local authorities, civil society and citizens. Cross-border cooperation is the property of no one, it is the prerogative of all.

Much remains to be done, as these two intense days have shown us. The weeks, months, and perhaps years to come, as we know, will be difficult. The changes we are facing, whether health, economic, social or climatic, as Jean Jouzel said so well this morning, will tomorrow challenge all of us to an even greater extent than in the past.

The period that is now beginning is also a time of hope. It encourages us to be more supportive, it confirms our convictions that the closure of our borders is not and will never be the answer to our problems.

It is not the answer to epidemics. It is not the answer to the climate challenge. We must be able to work together, we must be able to network, we must be able to create cohesion. The solution lies in our cross-border hands.

The MOT will be there, at your side, to meet these challenges. We will continue to speak out loudly for cross-border territories as we have done for 23 years; we will continue to do so at the local, national and European levels, to network for you, to seek and find solutions to cross-border obstacles, to promote innovative solutions beyond our borders. And we will continue to foster the debates we have had during these two days of the Forum, in particular through our partner France Média Monde, which will organise televised debates to continue these exchanges.

Our territories are said to be on the margins of our respective States. But let us not forget that the margins are what link pages together. So we need to mobilise our cross-border margins to link the pages of our European history.

See you in two years' time for the next Borders Forum, during which, I hope, we will be able to meet physically and share more than just screens.

CONCLUSION OF THE 1ST BORDERS FORUM

By Jacqueline Gourault

Minister of Territorial Cohesion and Relations with Local Authorities, France



First of all, I would like to welcome the initiative of such an event. We are, as everyone knows, at the heart of an unprecedented health crisis.

Borders are at the heart of many analyses, which are not always well-intentioned. Some even make this crisis the consequence of their excessive opening, and deduce that they should be restricted or even closed, in order to curb the spread of the virus. This is obviously not the approach we are taking collectively.

Pandemics and economic crises do not respect borders. In these difficult times, solutions can only come from our ability to make cross-border areas places of convergence, trust and partnership.

Paul Valéry wrote beautifully that "what is deepest in man is the skin". The skin that protects, the skin that regulates and knows how to make the most of exchanges. Paraphrasing him, one could say that "the deepest thing for a continent is its borders". Borders which have been the crucible of European construction for centuries; territories with specific problems, particularly in terms of economic attractiveness and mobility; and, precisely for this reason, places for reflection, experimentation and implementation of fertile solutions.

Today, at a time when a historic European Recovery Plan has been established, and at a time when the Recovery Plan is being territorialized in France, it is up to us to turn our border areas into driving forces to concretely accelerate the major ecological, social, digital, economic and, I would add, tourist transitions, by giving full substance to "differentiation by the raising of ambitions" that the President of the Republic referred to as early as September 2017 in his speech on the future of Europe.

To do so, we must continue to build a common ambition for these spaces.

This Forum underlined the remarkable alignment of representations between all stakeholders: the very strong commitment of European stakeholders, and the strength of the interministerial dynamic in France. The presence of many ministers at this event is a good illustration of this. I would like to mention in particular the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs which, under the impetus of Jean-Yves Le Drian and

Clément Beaune, is currently carrying out major work to place the dimension of citizenship at the heart of these cross-border initiatives, particularly in the perspective of the French Presidency of the European Union next year. This is indeed an essential issue!

I would also like to emphasise the commitment of the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière, which is behind this outstanding event. For many years, you have been demonstrating that we are stronger together to face common challenges. In concrete terms, you encourage the many exchanges and mutual inspiration that make border areas strong; you participate in the construction of analyses and strategies at the service of territories; and you contribute to the dissemination of successful experiments and good practices.

We must take the measure of what cross-border spaces represent for our continent, particularly for France: 30% of the total European population; 2 million cross-border workers, a quarter of whom reside in France; extremely diverse spaces, in particular because of their geo-historical specificities: urban, peri-urban, rural but also maritime territories. For borders are changing: Brexit is a sad illustration of this. This is, by the way, what led the Finistère department to join the MOT recently.

That is why we must further intensify cross-border cooperation in the months and years to come.

To this end, we have built cooperation frameworks to agree on diagnoses and share a common strategy. I am thinking in particular of the SUERA, a macro-regional strategy covering the entire Alpine massif, of which France took over the presidency last February. I would add that France will retain this presidency for another year due to the health crisis, to continue to develop an ambitious work programme which aims to accelerate the ecological transition.

This strategy is exemplary in more than one respect: it involves the central State and/or the regions according to original modalities, adapted to the political context of each country; it is based on the coordination and synergies of existing financial resources, notably through the involvement of the European Alpine Governance II project; finally, it aims to identify and advance projects in six priority areas, from sustainable tourism to the preservation of biodiversity, via mobility solutions, to meet the challenges of major transitions.

I would add that the Treaty of Aachen, signed between

Germany and France, is also consistent with this approach, with the establishment of the Committee for cross-border cooperation (CCT) and the draft Commission regulation on the "European cross-border mechanism" (ECBM). This is what then enables us to construct appropriate responses to your needs.

The cross-border territories are, because of their many specific features, particularly suitable sites for territorial action that we have been implementing, at the instigation of the President of the Republic, for more than three years: that of the "tailor-made", of the "hand-stitched".

It should enable us to deal together with the major contemporary transitions, by constructing specific responses for each territory, as close as possible to their concrete needs and those of their inhabitants.

For it is no secret that territorial issues are not similar within the "Lorraine corridor", on the Pyrenean border and in the heart of Geneva.

In this sense, cross-border territories are also, if I dare say so, "scale 1" laboratories of the new stage of decentralisation that I have been advocating for several months: the possibility of experimentation, which opens the way to differentiation. It is no coincidence that our main success so far in terms of differentiation has been in a cross-border space, with the creation of the European Territorial Authority of Alsace.

I would like to stress that this differentiation meets the dual need for efficiency and proximity expressed by all the territorial actors in recent years; it will give you the means to be more dynamic, more "elastic", and so confirm the formidable inventiveness that you already know how to demonstrate, by giving you the means to express it to its full extent.

This is why we are going to enshrine differentiation in two pieces of legislation. In a first stage, the organic bill recently adopted by the Senate will facilitate experimentation and open the way to lasting differentiation. In a second stage, at the beginning of 2021, I will present to the Council of Ministers the second stage of this stage of decentralization, with the bill known as "3D", in which we are going to establish the three principles of differentiation, decentralization and deconcentration.

To turn these ambitions and common strategies into reality, we have put in place powerful support tools.

It is for this purpose, as you know, that we created the National Agency for Territorial Cohesion: to encourage the emergence of projects in a very concrete way and, above all, to provide the engineering necessary for their implementation.

This engineering is deployed in the framework of several programmes designed with and for local authorities, with the integration of a cross-border dimension: starting with Action Cœur de Ville, Petites Villes de Demain (Small Cities of Tomorrow) and soon

the Programme national montagne (national mountain programme).

For the ANCT, this support to territories is also expressed through its role as a coordinating authority for European funds within the framework of the European cohesion policy. The ANCT teams work hand in hand with the regions and prefectures to target and mobilise as well as possible the additional funds within the framework of the European Recovery Plan and the funds that come to top up the current generation of structural funds (React EU), but also to build the future ERDF/ESF and European Territorial Cooperation 2021-2027 programmes.

These INTERREG (ETC) programmes, which you know and whose European added value is undeniable, really enable us to develop solutions to local problems shared on both sides of borders and therefore strengthen the European integration of our territories. Moreover, we will discuss with regions the future outlines of the programming of the future territorial cooperation during the next State-Region committee in December.

And to implement the "tailor-made" within your territories, the ANCT teams already know that they can count on the MOT to enrich their action. This will involve strengthening engineering capacities within the territories, knowledge and know-how concerning the specific nature of cross-border spaces. In connection with the MOT, these programmes are enriched with services adapted to these specificities. I am thinking in particular, in the context of Petites Villes de Demain, of the introduction of a webinar to support these small centralities on a certain number of topics such as tourism or public facilities. This will also involve enriching all the programmes already mentioned with these concrete contributions in order to experiment with an offer of specific services, particularly through services that you are developing for small cross-border towns, especially to help them obtain European funds.

Your event is a beautiful symbol. After having been for centuries spaces of expectations, fears and conflicts, European borders are now the subject of a Forum, which brings us together to build common responses.

In the face of today's immense challenges, I believe that it is indeed more necessary than ever to work together, simply, in mutual understanding, trust and partnership.

To conclude, I would like to recall this thought of Paul Eluard: "the word border is a one-eyed word. Man has two eyes to see the world". To see it, but also to share it and change it.

Presentation of publications



"The Covid-19 crisis on French borders"

Written by the MOT, following a call for experiences issued to all of its members at the French borders, June 2020.

This publication analyses the consequences for cross-border territories of the health crisis. Organised in three main parts, it aims to set out the impacts, difficulties and initiatives linked to the management of the Covid-19 health crisis in cross-border territories.

In the first part, it recalls the border control measures employed. In the second part, it provides an assessment of the impacts on workers, patients, residents, families, retailers and local authorities that move around within these areas. The last section then sets out

an analysis of inhabitants' perceptions with respect to the crisis and the lockdown, in a context in which the closing of borders resulted in increased constraints and discriminatory situations that were specific to these populations.

MORE INFO

<http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/en/news/news/news/show/publication-de-la-mot-la-crise-du-covid-19-aux-frontieres-francaises/>

"Critical Dictionary on Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration"

Coordinated by Birte Wassenberg, Professor of Contemporary History, University of Strasbourg, and Bernard Reitel, Professor of Political and Urban Geography, University of Artois, in collaboration with the MOT; edited by Peter Lang, October 2020.

What is the role of borders in European integration? How does cross-border cooperation work in practice? Who are the main actors, their motives, objectives and tools? This major publication contains 209 articles by 124 authors from different countries and academic fields, along with 66 original maps produced by the MOT.

MORE INFO

<https://www.peterlang.com/view/title/65124>

"15 years of the EGTCs : Lessons learnt and future perspectives"

Published by Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives (CESCI), November 2020.

In 2021, the policy instrument of European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) turns its 15th anniversary that gives an opportunity to summarise the experiences and lessons learnt of the groupings; as well as to draft their future perspectives. Note: an article signed by Jean Peyrony, Director-general of the MOT.

MORE INFO

<http://legalaccess.cesci-net.eu/en/egtc-eu-legal-instrument/>

More information on the Borders Forum:

<https://bordersforum.eu/language/en/elementor-2382/>

To find the recordings of the 1st Borders Forum:

<http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/en/news/news/news/show/1er-borders-forum-communique-de-presse-et-videos-en-ligne/>

More information on the MOT – Subscribe to the monthly newsletter "Cross-border news":

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Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière

38 rue des Bourdonnais

75 001 Paris - France

Tel: +33 (0)1 55 80 56 80 - mot@mot.asso.fr

<https://twitter.com/reseauMOT> - <https://fr.linkedin.com/company/reseamot>

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