



**Datar**



## COESIONET

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### Minutes: “Cross-Border Cooperations” Workshop

15 March 2011

#### 1. Parliamentary Mission on Cross-Border Cooperation. Borders and Their Territories

Etienne Blanc, Member of Parliament

##### *A Diagnosis of Cross-Border Regions*

Because the deputies of the cross-border territories emphasized the fact that cross-border territories in France were facing specific competitiveness problems in comparison with neighbouring countries, the French Prime Minister launched a study of cross-border territories in 2009.

The first finding was that 340,000 French people commute to a neighbouring country for work whereas only 10,000 citizens of neighbouring countries commute to France. The commuting trend has reversed in less than 50 years. 20% of France’s territory and 10 million French people are affected by such cross-border phenomena and the decisions taken by neighbouring countries. Two phenomena, in particular, are worth noting: the need for cross-border investment in transportation and economic relocation to neighbouring countries, which creates serious difficulties for local public authorities. The fact that fiscal and social systems are different across the border and often more favourable in neighbouring countries explains why many companies decide to relocate.

France is unable to use its assets to negotiate the use of large spaces, which are sorely lacking in neighbouring countries such as Switzerland. France does not know how to take advantage of the economic and demographic dynamics of cross-border regions in terms of regional development and management strategies. Local authorities take some initiatives to discuss issues of common interest with neighbouring countries but state strategies are not very visible. Indeed cross-border populations present many problems in terms of reimbursement of medical care, training, social security and unemployment benefits and these are all challenges to the French system.

##### *Proposals of the Parliamentary Mission*

19 proposals have been made to develop a cross-border strategy:

- First package of proposals: to build means and strategies to develop a cross-border economy



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- Second package: to meet the service needs of cross-border populations in transportation, communication, water supply, health care, recycling, etc.
- Third package: to make simplify spatial planning, organisation and use of cross-border territories by signing common agreements.

### **Conclusions**

It is therefore necessary:

- To develop a fair system for financing cross-border infrastructure;
- To create a real governance of cross-border issues at the government level;
- To develop a strategic observatory of cross-border experiences to help develop a more global vision.

EGTC may represent a good tool for reinforcing the territorial governance system of cross-border regions.

The French state and territories must be better organised and competences must be more clearly defined.

### **General Discussions**

- What can the European level contribute to solving the common questions?
- How to act at the European level to avoid social and fiscal dumping?
- How to modify state aid systems when European Funds intervene?
- What have been the consequences on cross-border regions of Switzerland's inclusion in the Schengen area two years ago?
- What about the next programming period: can it be more territorialised to take into account cross-border needs?
- How to apply Article 174 of territorial cohesion including cross-border areas?
- How can France and Switzerland jointly influence the European Commission?

## **2. Cross-Border Transport and Dynamics: The Challenges of Scale**

Hervé Joan-Grangé, Code

On the basis of experiences in several cross-border regions, three main elements turn out to be essential for local authorities:

- They must know how to define their positions;
- They must understand and know the other partners;
- They must build a collective approach.

Cross-border regions in Champagne-Ardennes, Lorraine, Picardie and Wallonia present important economic differences and raise the issue of territorial cohesion. This makes it relevant to create bounds with cross-border partners.

The example of the construction of the TGV between France and Spain shows how the building of exchange systems drastically transforms the territories. Partnership relations evolve in terms of distance and space in Europe. One objective of transport connexions is to develop the economy, to gain market shares and to be part of the European and international markets. The Barcelona-Lyon TGV line was launched:

- Within a complex institutional context;
- On the basis of abundant cooperation but lack of governance;
- Without any common or shared vision.

These particulars explain why there have been a large number of initiatives but no global or strategic vision.



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It is therefore necessary to express a community of interests within a European framework to increase the competitiveness of the territories. Tools have to be developed in different sectors to coordinate cross-border actions and make cross-border territories more attractive (Transcards Eurocorridor in the transport sector, Metropolis card in culture and tourism, etc.).

### ***General Discussion***

- Isn't there bias in the multi-level governance system? It is not enough to bring regions together because the state also intervenes; territories are involved both horizontally and vertically.
- Interest for a global vision exists but decisions are taken at the highest level of the state. What is the impact of political changes on such a global vision?
- What is the importance of "proximity" compared to a "global vision"? Doesn't proximity always prevail?
- Can we conclude that territories are in competition against each other?
- Despite the increasing links between territories and despite the fact that times of growth and competitiveness are reduced, the phenomenon of periphery remains. In such a situation, what does accessibility and cohesion mean?
- How could a Mediterranean area be defined?
- What type of conditionalities exist?
- Do we have to focus funds on the economic motors or favour the regions facing difficulties? Can it be concluded that there is a tendency to concentrate on certain territories to the detriment of others?
- Doesn't the Grand Paris Express project show that the existence of multiple approaches can meet different but complementary needs?

### ***References***

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