

# First “BORDERS FORUM” and the 10th EGTC Platform meeting



On 9 and 10 November 2020, the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT) is hosting the first edition of the [BORDERS FORUM](#) and the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual meeting of the EGTC Platform in cooperation with the European Committee of the Regions and the European Commission in Paris. The event will gather high representatives from the local, regional, national and European level including Commissioner Elisa Ferreira, CoR President Apostolos Tzitzikostas and ministers from France, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Luxembourg and Poland. The event is organised under the high patronage of the President of France, Mr Emmanuel Macron.

The COVID-19 crisis has put borders back at the centre of political debate when European internal borders were abruptly closed due to the pandemic. This had huge effects on border regions as cross-border territories comprise about 40% of Europe and more than 2 million Europeans daily cross a border to get to work

The objective of the Borders Forum is to create a place for discussion and a far-reaching political sounding board to highlight the needs of cross-border territories. It will bring together local, national and European players involved in cross-border cooperation, and will reaffirm their shared ambition and their place in political debate, as well as consolidate a European cross border citizens' Alliance.

This event comes at a time when Europe is celebrating the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its Interreg\* cooperation programmes, the 10 years of the EGTC\*\* Platform, and the implementation of the Aachen Treaty, a bilateral agreement between France and Germany on closer cooperation and integration.

For more information please visit: [www.bordersforum.eu](http://www.bordersforum.eu)

## **Note to the editor:**

\*[Interreg](#) is one of the key instrument of the European Union supporting cooperation across borders through project funding. Its aim is to jointly tackle common challenges and find shared solutions in fields such as health, environment, research, education, transport, sustainable energy and more.

\*\*[European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation](#) are an European legal instrument designed to facilitate and promote cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation. It allows entities from different member states to come together under a new entity with full legal personality.

## **Contact:**

Carmen Schmidle  
Tel. +32 (0)2 282 2366

## [Recommendations adopted by CORLEAP in view of the Eastern Partnership leaders' video conference](#)



☐☐ [CORLEAP recommendations](#) adopted in view of the Eastern Partnership leaders' video conference on 18 June 2020 reflect the main messages from various reports that CORLEAP has adopted since the last EaP summit. The message is based on a well-documented evaluation of the situation, carried out at the level of governance closest to citizens.

CORLEAP recommendations welcome the Joint Communication on Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020, in particular its inclusion of the proposal to set up an Eastern Partnership School of Public Administration, which would meet specific needs identified by local and regional authorities. CORLEAP members agree that sustainable economic development requires good governance at all levels, and should be underpinned by a new impetus for decentralisation reforms and generate more funding for local and regional authorities. Furthermore, CORLEAP remains committed to consolidating resilience at local level, by showcasing the success and potential of territorial cooperation, and by explaining and highlighting the benefits of Eastern Partnership policy for citizens.

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## [Press release – New rules allow EU consumers to defend their rights collectively](#)



The new rules introduce a harmonised model for representative action in all member states that guarantees consumers are well protected against mass harm, while at the same time ensuring appropriate safeguards from abusive lawsuits. The new law also aims to make the internal market function better by improving tools to stop illegal practices and facilitating access to justice for consumers.

**“Europe must become a shield that protects the people”**

Rapporteur [Geoffroy Didier \(EPP, FR\)](#) said, “We have sought to strike a balance between the legitimate protection of consumer interests and the need for legal certainty for businesses. Each member state has at least one entity qualified to exercise a remedy, while at the same time putting in place safeguards against abusive recourse. Europe must become a shield that protects the people. This new legislation offers new rights to consumers in their daily lives and shows that Europe is making a difference.”

**Main elements of the agreement:**

- Each member state will have to name **at least one qualified entity** (an organisation or a public body) that will be empowered and financially supported to launch **actions for injunction and redress** on behalf of groups of consumers and will guarantee consumers’ access to justice;
- On **designation criteria** for qualified entities, the rules distinguish between cross-border cases and domestic ones. For the former, entities must comply with a set of harmonised criteria. They have to demonstrate 12 months of activity in protecting consumers’ interest prior to their request to be appointed as a qualified entity, have a non-profit character and ensure they are independent from third parties whose economic interests oppose the consumer interest;
- For **domestic actions**, member states will set out proper criteria

consistent with the objectives of the directive, which could be the same as those set out for cross-border actions;

- The rules strike a balance between access to justice and protecting businesses from abusive lawsuits through the Parliament's introduction of the "**loser pays principle**", which ensures that the defeated party pays the costs of the proceedings of the successful party;
- To further avoid abusive lawsuits, Parliament negotiators also insisted that courts or administrative authorities may decide to **dismiss manifestly unfounded cases** at the earliest possible stage of the proceedings in accordance with national law;
- Negotiators agreed that the Commission should assess whether to establish a **European Ombudsman for collective redress** to deal with cross-border representative actions at Union level;
- The **scope** of collective action would include trader violations in areas such as data protection, financial services, travel and tourism, energy, telecommunications, environment and health, as well as air and train passenger rights, in addition to general consumer law.

### Next steps

Parliament as a whole and the Council will now have to approve the political agreement. The directive will enter into force 20 days following its publication in the Official Journal of the EU. Member states will then have 24 months to transpose the directive into their national laws, and an additional six months to apply it.

### Background

The Representative Action Directive is a part of the [New Deal for Consumers](#), launched in April 2018 by the European Commission, to ensure stronger consumer protection in the EU. It includes stronger consumer rights online, tools to enforce rights and compensation, penalties for violating EU consumer law and improved business conditions.

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## [Remarks by President Charles Michel after the 22nd EU-China summit](#)



I am pleased that we could speak by video conference to discuss important

topics for both the EU and China today. In fact, our diplomatic relations are 45 years old this year and evolving. Our discussions today were open and substantive and we discussed many topics, topics we agree on, but, of course, we also discussed topics we disagree on.

We focussed on four important areas. The first one, COVID-19 and the economic consequences, the economic recovery. The second one is the EU-China relationship. The third one is Hong Kong and the important question for us of human rights. And the fourth topic is related to international issues.

Concernant le premier aspect, le COVID-19 et ses conséquences, nous avons eu l'occasion d'exprimer l'importance pour nous de tirer les conséquences en toute transparence de la réaction internationale sur ce sujet. Nous avons aussi eu l'occasion de rappeler à quel point nous sommes mobilisés, s'agissant de la question des vaccins qui, pour nous, doivent être un bien commun, accessible pour tout le monde et également à un prix abordable. Et nous considérons qu'une relance ambitieuse sera extrêmement importante sur le plan économique. Nous avons eu l'occasion d'expliquer aussi le processus européen en lien avec le budget européen et le fonds de relance que nous souhaitons mettre en place pour soutenir l'activité économique.

We had also the occasion to discuss the EU China relationship, and we stressed the need to implement the commitments made at the 2019 EU-China summit. More particularly, we discussed very concrete topics.

The first one is trade. We have a dynamic trading relationship with China. We trade on average over one billion euros a day. It's huge and the EU is China's first trading partner. But progress is needed in many areas to rebalance this relationship. And we made clear that we need to resolve concrete problems such as market access, subsidies, regulatory issues, public procurement, forced technology transfers, level playing field and WTO reforms.

Nous avons aussi eu l'occasion d'exprimer de part et d'autre le souhait de continuer à négocier de façon intense sur la question de l'accord relatif aux investissements. Nous avons aussi constaté les progrès réalisés s'agissant des accords sur les indications géographiques pour lesquels nous avons bon espoir de pouvoir clôturer dans un délai rapproché les discussions. Nous avons eu bien sûr l'occasion, c'est un thème essentiel pour nous vous le savez, de mettre en évidence l'importance à nos yeux du changement climatique et de la mobilisation internationale qui est nécessaire sur le sujet pour faire en sorte que l'on puisse travailler à la stabilité, parce que le changement climatique est une menace pour l'humanité, pour le monde. Et parce que nous considérons qu'il y a aussi un lien avec la question économique et la question commerciale. Il faut aussi travailler pour éviter qu'il y ait des concurrences déloyales qui soient possibles sur le plan international en lien avec ces ambitions climatiques. Vous connaissez notre ambition pour 2050 et le travail que nous devons mener afin d'identifier les objectifs en lien avec 2030. Nous considérons aussi que nous devons agir sur ce terrain là, dans les enceintes internationales, dans les enceintes multilatérales pour faire en sorte qu'il y ait une mobilisation plus générale sur le plan international en lien avec le changement climatique. On a aussi eu l'occasion de discuter de

l'agenda digital et de l'importance, dans ce cadre là, de garantir la confiance. Garantir la confiance signifie que l'on doit lutter contre les menaces pour la cybersécurité, que l'on doit lutter contre toutes les techniques de désinformation qui minent la confiance, qui est un élément et un facteur totalement indispensable.

The third point was Hong Kong and human rights. We expressed our grave concerns about the proposed national security law for Hong Kong. We called on China to follow the promises made to the people of Hong Kong and to the international community regarding Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy and guaranteed freedoms.

Je voudrais ajouter que nous soutenons naturellement le principe un pays, deux systèmes, que nous notons que 50% des investissements européens en Chine transitent par Hong Kong. Nous notons qu'il y a 1.600 entreprises européennes qui sont actives à Hong Kong et nous considérons qu'on doit respecter la neutralité politique de ces entreprises, nous n'acceptons pas les pressions qui seraient faites pour mettre en cause la neutralité politique de ces entreprises européennes qui sont ancrées à Hong Kong. Nous avons eu l'occasion aussi, plus généralement, d'évoquer la question des minorités et d'évoquer la question des droits de l'homme en mentionnant expressément des cas: un citoyen suédois, d'une part, deux citoyens canadiens d'autre part. Vous connaissez les cas en question pour lesquels nous pensons que les détentions semblent être arbitraires.

Enfin, nous avons eu l'occasion d'évoquer des questions internationales, aussi bien la question de l'Iran, nous avons échangé nos points de vue sur ce sujet, la question de l'Afghanistan, la question de la péninsule coréenne. Nous avons appelé à être mobilisés, engagés pour favoriser des solutions pacifiques dans un cadre multilatéral.

On a eu aussi l'occasion de mettre en exergue l'importance de la sécurité du transport maritime. Vous savez que 90% du transport international transite par voie maritime, et la question de la mer de Chine méridionale est une question naturellement importante d'un point de vue stratégique pour la sécurité du transport et donc du commerce, et donc du développement économique.

Vous l'avez compris, nous avons eu des vidéoconférences qui ont été l'occasion de mener des échanges intenses, approfondis sur l'ensemble des sujets qui sont des sujets d'ordre international et multilatéral, mais aussi dans le cadre de la relation bilatérale. Ce type de vidéoconférence est l'occasion de promouvoir les valeurs européennes auxquelles nous croyons: la démocratie, l'État de droit, le respect des droits humains, la protection et la défense des minorités. Nous avons mené ce dialogue sans tabou, sur un ton direct, franc. Nous avons aussi eu l'occasion d'envisager les points sur lesquels nous souhaitons pouvoir progresser en matière commerciale, en matière économique.

C'est l'occasion de mettre en évidence de façon concrète, pas avec des mots, mais avec une action que l'on veut entreprendre, cette question de l'autonomie stratégique de l'Union européenne, qui est un enjeu extrêmement

central à nos yeux.

Et enfin, nous considérons que cette relation doit être fondée sur la transparence, sur la réciprocité. C'est le message qui a été donné et dans cet esprit là, nous avons l'intention de poursuivre de manière régulière ce dialogue politique à haut niveau. Cela devrait être le cas après l'été puisque nous aurons de nouveau, après l'été, l'occasion de poursuivre ce dialogue, de faire le point sur l'état d'avancement des différents sujets qui ont déjà été évoqués et de revenir sur des sujets, y compris sur des sujets difficiles.

Et vous savez que ce sommet de Leipzig, qui était prévu au mois de septembre, n'est pas possible, une annonce a été faite sur le sujet. Mais nous gardons le souhait, dès que les conditions le permettront, de tenir un sommet qui rassemblerait les autorités chinoises avec l'ensemble des 27 chefs d'État et de gouvernement européens. Voilà quelques éléments que je souhaitais partager avec vous cet après midi.

[Visit the meeting page](#)

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**[Press release – EU Strategy on COVID-19 vaccines must guarantee safety and accessibility for all](#)**



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When presenting the new [European strategy](#) for COVID-19 vaccines to the Committee for Environment, Public Health and Food Safety on Monday, Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides underlined that a joint EU Strategy is the most efficient and solidary way to develop, manufacture and distribute a safe COVID-19 vaccine accessible for all. She also said that all 27 member states expressed their support for the Commission to secure Advance Purchase Agreements with vaccine producers via the [Emergency Support Instrument](#).

### **Temporary derogation from clinical trials on GMOs**

To facilitate the development, authorisation and consequently availability of COVID-19 vaccines and treatments, the Commission proposal from 17 June proposes to establish a temporary derogation from certain rules for clinical trials of drugs involving GMOs.

While Members welcomed the need to adapt the rules, they stressed that standards for vaccine quality, safety and efficacy must be maintained.

### **The Vaccine Alliance by France, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands**

Some MEPs asked about the division of labour between the EU and its member states and enquired how the Commission viewed the Vaccine Alliance created by France, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands, which aims to secure the supply of a potential COVID-19 vaccine for Europe. The Commissioner replied that the Vaccine Alliance was an inclusive initiative by four member states and open to all.

### **Public hearing**



A public hearing on “How to secure access to COVID-19 vaccines for EU citizens: clinical trials, production and distribution challenges” is tentatively scheduled to take place by videoconference before the summer recess.

Watch the full recording of the debate [here](#).

## **Background**

The EU and member states are closely cooperating in the race to find safe and effective vaccines to counter the spread of COVID-19. In the world, there are over 50 different vaccines under development.

On 4 May, the EU hosted the [Coronavirus Global Response pledging event](#), which until now has raised close to 10 billion EUR to boost the work on vaccines, diagnostics and treatments against the virus.