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THE CROSS-BORDER LABOUR MARKET: A PRIORITY IN THE EURODISTRICT PAMINA

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the activities of the Eurodistrict PAMINA in the cross-border labour market, including the associated training measures. Here the concrete needs and practice-oriented approaches of a dynamic labour market region meet the complex challenges of a multi-level system, the governance of which is not fully developed. This is a constellation that has obstructed the implementation of a number of promising ideas. The Eurodistrict PAMINA lies at the interface between national and cross-border metropolitan regions and within the area of the greatest commuter flows in Europe (Upper Rhine and Greater Region), where PAMINA is testing a local strategy based primarily on bringing together the qualified actors and improving coherence between measures and funding policies.

Keywords

Cross-border labour market – joint action plan – multi-level governance system – governance – INTERREG Upper Rhine – Eurodistrict PAMINA

1 Introduction?

The Eurodistrict PAMINA is a cooperation area consisting of three sub-regions: southern Palatinate, the Middle Upper Rhine and North Alsace (France). It was founded in 1988 with the signing of the Weißenburg Declaration of Intent, after which the cross-border partnership continued to develop, resulting in 2003 in the establishment of a cross-border local special purpose association under the Karlsruhe Convention (*Karlsruher Übereinkommen/accord de Karlsruhe* 1996) based in Lauterbourg; the original entity, REGIO PAMINA, was renamed Eurodistrict PAMINA in 2008. The cross-border local special purpose association was finally transformed into the legal form of a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) (EU Regulation No. 1302/2013) on 15 December 2016 – a hitherto unique process in Europe. The Eurodistrict PAMINA EGTC aims to promote cross-border cooperation for the benefit of the 1.7 million citizens in its territory.

The cross-border region is characterised by rising unemployment on the French side and a shortage of skilled workers on the German side; the Eurodistrict PAMINA has been actively engaged in improving the employment and labour market situation since the INTERREG III programme phase (2000–2006). As early as 1991, the cooperation area offered an innovative instrument for the labour market with the launch of an information and advisory office for cross-border workers (INFOBEST), which was subsequently copied in the following years by numerous other cooperation areas (INTERACT 2015). The questions submitted by cross-border workers to INFOBEST PAMINA are mostly of a practical nature and concern the move to the neighbouring country, child benefits, social security, pension taxation or similar matters. With more than 2,000 enquiries per year, the figures have been stable since the founding of INFOBEST PAMINA, although a slight increase was noted in recent years (Eurodistrict PAMINA 2010–2015).¹ The information and advisory office has been an integral part of the special purpose association and EGTC since 2003.

Furthermore, in 2009 the Eurodistrict PAMINA contributed to the Green Paper on ‘Promoting the learning mobility of young people’ (European Commission 2009). In their opinion, the Eurodistrict proposed to establish a cross-border plan to develop mobility in the Upper Rhine region (support as needed for mobility projects offered by companies providing vocational training, development of bilateral cross-border partnerships for education, training and mobility, coordination of cross-border mobility networks with the aim of concerted action) (Eurodistrict PAMINA 2009).

In the coming years, the promotion of employment and labour mobility will be two priority issues at the European level, be it for the European Commission as part of the EUROPE 2020 Strategy (European Commission 2010) and the Regulation in support of European Territorial Cooperation (EU Regulation No. 1299/2013), or for the Committee of the Regions (CoR 2013) – and the same applies to the Upper Rhine. Within the framework of the INTERREG IV A programme in the Upper Rhine region (2007–2013), two projects have already been devoted to cross-border training

¹ This is also proven by internal surveys conducted by INFOBEST PAMINA, which collects all enquiries and presents the figures in their annual reports to the relevant committees and financing partners.

(focusing on the period before and after individuals achieve their German university entrance qualification [*Abitur*]).² Both mobility and bilingualism must be emphasised for both projects, as they are representative of the obstacles encountered at the territorial level. The results of the project led to a German-French framework agreement, which will be discussed in more detail at a later point.

With its 2020 Strategy, the Trinational Metropolitan Region of the Upper Rhine (TMO)³ also pursues the objective of a permeable labour market and proposes measures aimed at gradually removing the remaining obstacles and developing common structures and processes for facilitating cross-border occupational mobility (TMO 2013: 10).

In line with the EUROPE 2020 Strategy, the Upper Rhine Conference (*Oberrhein-konferenz, ORK*) has made promoting inclusive growth a priority in order to create the necessary framework conditions for high employment in the economy at cross-border level, as stated in the Bonn Agreement (*BGBI. [Federal Law Gazette] 1976 II: 194 et seq.*). Together with the TMO, the Upper Rhine Conference has identified the current state of education, training and employment (*ORK/TMO 2013*). This document, in turn, served as an orientation for the preparation of the INTERREG V A Upper Rhine Operational Programme, in particular for the comments on employment therein (INTERREG Upper Rhine 2014). Priority axis C of the programme entitled 'Integrative growth in the Upper Rhine region – Promoting employment across borders' and, in particular, investment priority (i) 'Promoting sustainable and high-quality employment and supporting labour mobility through the integration of cross-border labour markets, including cross-border mobility, joint local employment initiatives, information and advisory services and joint training' (INTERREG 2014: 78) pursue a dual strategy based on the specific challenges of the Upper Rhine region identified in the evaluation of the programme area. These relate to increasing the number of cross-border employment relationships, for example by reducing barriers to employment in the neighbouring country or by enhancing the qualification of the relevant target groups along the Upper Rhine, as well as to expanding employment opportunities throughout the border region, both qualitatively and quantitatively (INTERREG Upper Rhine 2014: 68). Against this background, the priorities focus on specific economic sectors and locations, which were identified based on studies already carried out and existing strategies.

2 The INTERREG IV A projects B45 on 'The Upper Rhine: from education and training to a joint labour market' and B26 on 'Binational and dual studies integrated with practice in Alsace and in Baden-Württemberg'.

3 The Trinational Metropolitan Region of the Upper Rhine (TMO) was founded on 10 December 2010 as part of the Offenburger Declaration. It is not a new cooperation structure, but a project to bundle the existing networks in the Upper Rhine region.

Thanks to the EURES-T partnership along the Upper Rhine,⁴ the Labour Ministers of France and Germany, Michel Sapin and Ursula von der Leyen, signed a cooperation agreement on job placements for French and German jobseekers in Kehl, Baden-Württemberg, on 26 February 2013. This agreement was part of the celebrations for the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Elysée, also known as the German-French Treaty of Friendship (see the paper by H. Peter Dörrenbächer in Part 4 of this volume). The German-French commuter figures from the cooperation areas of the Greater Region and the Upper Rhine show that there is a need for such an organisation: 46,000 workers from the *Région Grand Est* (Grand Est région) work in Germany,⁵ of which around 17,500 are from the Sarreguemines and Forbach areas and around 6,800 are from the Wissembourg area (INSEE [National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies] Alsace-Champagne-Ardenne-Lorraine 2016).⁶ In the other direction, the flows are much smaller, due to the labour market situation and the pay gap: in the Upper Rhine region, just under 4,000 workers commuted to France in 2012, for example (Hochstetter 2013).

Based on this agreement, the Landau and Karlsruhe-Rastatt employment agencies, as well as their French counterparts, the employment agencies of Haguenau and Wissembourg, signed a local cooperation agreement on 20 September 2013 in Landau on the German-French employment service to create a corresponding service office, which, unlike the Kehl office, is not structured in a centralised fashion but set up as a network.

EURES-T Upper Rhine also implements numerous measures and projects related to employment in the Upper Rhine region, in particular for networking stakeholders (organising workshops on the comparability and recognition of qualifications in the Upper Rhine region, implementing a best practice comparison with specific target groups and organising an annual conference on current cross-border employment issues), for placing jobseekers (meetings with EURES advisors, workshops to support job searches, internships at companies in the neighbouring country, attending EURES-T employment exchanges and fairs, ‘job matching’ events along the Upper Rhine, organising the ‘European Job Days’), for advice and information (creating ‘mobility packs’ for employers and employees as well as organising expert seminars on labour, social and tax law and seminars for companies), for cross-border training (promoting the Euroregion certificate by the ProMOA project and a cooperation

4 The EURES-T partnership in the Upper Rhine region, which was established in 1999, brings together public labour market organisations, trade union and employer organisations and the territorial authorities in the region and thus constitutes an important networking structure. A steering committee with representatives of the 22 partner organisations meets three times a year to outline common strategies and activities for the development of cross-border employment services and for improving the permeability and transparency of the labour market. All partner organisations and all countries are represented in a balanced manner in the steering committee, which is the central decision-making committee.

5 This refers in particular to the directly adjacent federal states of Saarland, Rhineland-Palatinate and Baden-Württemberg.

6 Workers from the Sarreguemines and Forbach areas commute in particular using the services of the Saarbrücken regional association, while no geographic polarisation is apparent for commuters from the Wissembourg labour market area towards Rhineland-Palatinate or Baden-Württemberg (INSEE Alsace-Champagne-Ardenne-Lorraine 2016).

project between the Upper Rhine Conference, the Alsace région and the Regional Directorate for Companies, Fair Trade, Consumer Affairs, Labour and Employment of Alsace [*Direction régionale des entreprises, de la concurrence, de la consommation, du travail et de l'emploi d'Alsace*] for the further development of cross-border training) and for a better understanding of the territorial context (development of labour market monitoring) (Eures-T 2013).

The Framework Agreement on Cross-border Vocational Training in the Upper Rhine Region, which was signed on 12 September 2013 by 28 representatives from politics and business, allows applicants to pursue a type of cross-border training in which the theoretical component is completed in the home country and the practical component in the neighbouring country (Framework Agreement on Cross-border Vocational Training in the Upper Rhine Region 2013). This arrangement was adopted and extended by the Lorraine region and introduced in the form of a similar agreement with Saarland in June 2014. On this basis, a framework agreement on cross-border vocational education and training in the Greater Region (see the paper by H. Peter Dörrenbächer in this volume) was signed in Trier on 5 November 2014. This event was attended by politicians from the partner regions responsible for employment and vocational education and training, coordinators of public employment agencies and professional chambers, regional trade unions and municipalities, the latter represented by the interregional and parliamentary institutions.⁷

2 The PAMINA labour market

The in-depth work on the PAMINA labour market began a few years ago with the launch of a cross-border, forward-looking jobs and skills management scheme (*Gestion Prévisionnelle des Emplois et des Compétences Territoriale – Transfrontalière*, GPEC-T) – an extension of the regular GPEC-T which was previously limited to France (Michun 2012).⁸ The analyses and studies carried out at the time enabled the tools and instruments needed to make progress on these tasks to be identified and put in place. It was noted, for example, that the measures taken in connection with cross-border employment since 1999 and the establishment of the EURES-T Upper Rhine had been limited almost exclusively to improving advisory and information services for beneficiaries. The Eurodistrict PAMINA has also drawn attention to the problem of the

7 The agreement focuses on the following issues in the Greater Region: integration of the labour market; occupational mobility, especially for young people; combating youth unemployment, especially as part of the Youth Guarantee; qualification of employees; information on cross-border vocational education and training; elimination of legal barriers (Framework Agreement on Cross-border Vocational Training in the Greater Region 2014).

8 GPEC-T in the classic, non-cross-border sense is a French instrument for securing careers and improving employment opportunities in areas affected by change. Both bodies under private law (business associations) and public bodies (territorial authorities, employment agencies, etc.) can sign the corresponding partnership agreements with the French authorities (Michun 2012). The GPEC-T in the Eurodistrict PAMINA comprises various partners from all three sub-regions, including the French state, education and training institutions, EURES-T, schools, local and regional territorial authorities, the employment agencies, chambers of industry and commerce, chambers of the trades, and social enterprises and associations.

fragmentation of public funds⁹ and the risk of duplicating funding in the sense of how the funds are used. This also applies to European funding, as both ESF and INTERREG funds are available for employment-related issues within the Eurodistrict (Baden-Württemberg, Alsace, Rhineland-Palatinate).

In view of these findings and the existing labour market situation, with a high level of unemployment on the French side and a shortage of skilled workers in the German sub-regions, the Eurodistrict initiated a process to consider the creation of a 'platform for bringing together the qualified actors' (author's note) in this area.

Political representatives and the administration of the Eurodistrict have also met several times with the programme authorities of the various EU funds active in the PAMINA area in order to achieve a coordinated use of funds for their territory, in particular through centralised calls for projects. The pilot project planned in 2013 was based on an instrument from the new text of the regulation for a common strategic framework called the Joint Action Plan (Chapter III EU Regulation No. 1303/2013) and was presented at the OPEN DAYS 2012 (INTERACT Newsletter 2013: 25)¹⁰ and 2013 (CECICN [Conference of European Cross-border and Interregional City Networks] 2013: 11 et seq.) in Brussels. The project was rejected in 2014 because the 'multi-fund management' (ESF/ERDF) approach would have presented both programme authorities and the Eurodistrict with many problems that would be extremely difficult to solve.

The very constructive contacts with the Commission and with the four programme authorities (INTERREG Upper Rhine; ESF Alsace région, Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate), which were established in the course of the work, led to a new strategy based on two building blocks (Eurodistrict PAMINA 2014a):

- > Implementation of a territorial call for projects under the INTERREG V A Upper Rhine programme aimed at employment, education and training, which relates to the PAMINA area.¹¹
- > Coordination and monitoring of the projects selected through a call for projects by the Eurodistrict with simultaneous coordination with the programme authorities (INTERREG V A Upper Rhine, ESF Baden-Württemberg, ESF Rhineland-Palatinate, ESF Alsace) to generate complementary measures, in particular cross-border/transnational ESF projects.

9 In some places, funds are distributed according to the 'watering can principle' based on a non-prioritised, blanket distribution of funds, instead of being specifically bundled for important concerns.

10 'An interesting example is supplied by the EURODISTRICT PAMINA, who set up on the border between France and Germany, in the programme area of a cross-border ETC programme. This territory is planning to submit a JAP to the Commission where they will bundle the ERDF of the cooperation programme with the regional ESF of the participating regions to jointly tackle the challenges of cross-border mobility and employment. We shall see if the Commission considers this proposal regular and effective and gives the green light.' (INTERACT Newsletter 2013: 25).

11 Following the themed call for 'Science Offensive' projects within the framework of the INTERREG IV A Upper Rhine programme and building on the integrated approach to territorial development in Chapter 4 of the INTERREG V A Upper Rhine Operational Programme (INTERREG Upper Rhine 2014).

This comprehensive strategic approach, if successful, was to be transferred to a joint action plan at a later stage, possibly as a pilot project with less public funding, as envisaged in the text of the regulation.¹² Yet this approach also had to be abandoned after the programme authorities expressed further concerns and were unable to provide the necessary funding outside of the project-based funding. Nevertheless, the preliminary considerations and the work that had already been carried out provided a sound basis for the further development of the platform aimed at bringing together qualified actors.

These, in turn, were enriched by the activities of GPEC-T, which included an assessment of the current conditions, a SWOT analysis and the definition of the territorial challenges in the PAMINA labour market. In 2014, the Eurodistrict PAMINA identified around 50 actions to promote employment and cross-border mobility in its territory (Eurodistrict PAMINA 2014b). These cross-border measures, which are devoted to the training of young people, the vocational reintegration of people over 45, mobility and access to the labour market, have been subdivided at the internal work level into four groups:

- > Information, advice and exchange – Vocational guidance for young people
- > Discovering, trying out and experiencing – Raising young people’s awareness of different occupations
- > Cross-border vocational education and training – Cross-border, dual training courses and cooperation to promote cross-border cooperation and to implement the Framework Agreement on Cross-border Vocational Education and Training in the Upper Rhine region
- > Reintegration into the labour market – Projects beyond the vocational education and training of young people

The measures covered by the four categories will be implemented in complementary ways on the basis of existing possibilities. The large number of actions, which are often independent of each other, must be taken into account within a relatively small space, which underlines the need for meaningful selection and bundling.

In parallel with this work, the Eurodistrict has implemented a transnational ESF project (ESF Baden-Württemberg) for the reintegration of people over the age of 45 into the PAMINA labour market in partnership with the *Neue Arbeit* social enterprise.¹³ The project and its results were presented to the public on 27 November 2014. This was also an opportunity to discuss the future challenges of cross-border employment and

12 ‘For the implementation of a pilot project, the minimum public expenditure allocated to a joint action plan for each operational programme may be reduced to €5,000,000.’ (Article 104(2) EU Regulation No. 1303/2013).

13 The PAMI45+NA project was implemented by the social enterprise *Neue Arbeit gGmbH* in 2010–2014. The Eurodistrict PAMINA was a project partner and informally supported the project in terms of content and organisation. The funding was based on a transnational call for projects from the Baden-Württemberg ESF programme.

education/training in public with political representatives.¹⁴ This public discussion raised awareness of the internal considerations and strengthened the negotiating position with regard to those organisations and bodies that still needed to be convinced of the course of action. In general, transparency and regular communication with the qualified actors proved to be crucial, as employment and education/training are extremely sensitive areas of activity in which political sensitivities and potential competitive situations must be taken into account.

The broad support provided by the strategic approach of a platform for pooling and bringing together qualified actors can thus be attributed not only to the considerable preparatory work, which was also associated setbacks that did however prove enlightening. It is also based on the fact that the Eurodistrict PAMINA does not seek to replace established structures or institutions or to seize powers. The aim is rather to provide the qualified actors in Germany and France with the ideal framework for coordination and cooperation in the sense of tangible cross-border added value. In this way, existing resources and instruments can be used more efficiently and synergy effects can be created through complementarity.

Under the title ‘Bringing together the qualified actors for a cross-border labour market – Lifelong learning and employment in the Eurodistrict PAMINA’, the strategic approach described here was presented to the Committee of the Regions in Brussels on 3 March 2015.¹⁵ Compared to the labour market activities of other cross-border regions, it is again apparent that the focus in other areas is still very much on informing and advising cross-border workers and relatively simple ‘matching’ measures, e.g. cross-border ‘job dating’, while strategies beyond that are scarcely pursued due to their complexity or the absence of a dedicated cross-border employment area. Such measures have been common practice in the Upper Rhine region and in the PAMINA area for many years and are scarcely perceived as an innovation, but this does not change their fundamental usefulness or necessity.

3 Excursus: INTERREG V A projects for vocational education/training and employment in the Upper Rhine region

European funding from the INTERREG A programmes continues to be an important mechanism for implementing cross-border measures. INTERREG A funding has also proved to be a true driver of cross-border regional development in the Upper Rhine region; it is in its fifth programme phase since 2015 and, like many other programme areas, it has seen a steady increase in funding over the years (INTERREG Upper Rhine 2007: 115; INTERREG Upper Rhine 2014: 101-102). For example, around 63% more funding is available in the Upper Rhine region for the 2014–2020 programming peri-

14 In addition to representatives of the chambers and the relevant ministries, the panel discussion was attended by Martine Calderoli-Lotz, Vice President and Chair of the Committee for Occupational Reintegration at the Alsatian Regional Council, and Karl-Heinz Lambertz, Chair of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) and Vice-President of the Committee of the Regions.

15 5th Annual Meeting of the EGTC Platform of the Committee of the Regions: The EGTCs and the Employment.

od compared to the INTERREG IV A programme (2007–2013).¹⁶ Against this background, there are new opportunities for support, particularly in the area of cost-intensive projects, which may also concern employment and education/training measures under priority axis C. In view of these new, comprehensive funding opportunities and the political and social context, the Alsace région, as the largest French territorial authority in the Upper Rhine region, decided in 2015 to launch an INTERREG V A project for cross-border employment.¹⁷

The main co-financing partners of this project are the federal states of Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate, in addition to other structures and institutions that take part and account for smaller amounts and/or act as associated partners. The project budget for the ‘Success without Borders’ INTERREG application amounts to a total of €4 million (INTERREG Upper Rhine 2016).

The INTERREG V A project ‘Success without Borders’ is dedicated to vocational education and training for three core target groups (students, trainees, unemployed) and will be divided into four priority areas, which ensure a comprehensive approach to the cross-border labour market in the Upper Rhine region based on past experience and actions:

- > Raising awareness about cross-border education and training opportunities
- > Ensuring that applicants are given the right assistance for their individual situation
- > Coordinating and better correlating education services with companies’ needs for skilled workers
- > Improving the coordination and development of cross-border education and training services

Various aspects such as language skills (intensive courses, subject-specific language courses), individual support for applicants and trainees (classification of skills, workshops and trial internships, support before, during and after training, sponsorships in companies), continuing training and qualifications (tailored options, recognition of qualifications) or raising awareness among young people (communication campaigns, company visits, trade fair appearances) are taken into account and imple-

¹⁶ For the period 2007–2013, the available ERDF funds amounted to around €67 million, which at a co-financing rate of 50%, means that the programme provided opportunities to invest around €134 million in the Upper Rhine region (INTERREG Upper Rhine 2007: 115). More than €109 million is available under the INTERREG V A programme until 2020, with the co-financing rate remaining at 50%; the only exception being priority axis D of the Operational Programme, which has a funding rate of 60% (INTERREG Upper Rhine 2014: 101-102).

¹⁷ In this context, it should be noted that the geographic and political situation has changed considerably since 1 January 2016 due to the French territorial reform and the resulting merger of the Alsace région with the Lorraine région and the Champagne-Ardenne région into the Grand Est région (see the paper by Patrice Harster and Kristine Clev in the appendix to this volume). It remains to be seen to what extent these developments will have an impact on how the cross-border labour market is viewed and steered politically. The INTERREG funding requirements for the Upper Rhine region and the Greater Region remain unaffected by the changes for the time being.

mented through concrete measures. In addition, a joint fund for the financing of occupational mobility is being set up in cooperation with the Franco-German Youth Office (Grand Est région 2016).

The Eurodistrict PAMINA participates in the project as an associate partner and is thus involved in various measures which concern the territorial dimension of its area. The Eurodistrict has access to the local network of employment and education/training stakeholders and has an important cross-border interchange function between the Upper Rhine and the local level. Originally, an even closer involvement of the Eurodistrict was envisaged, which would have also included the responsibility for implementing measures, but this would have further increased the already considerable complexity of the project and thus would have made managing the project in a focused manner in accordance with the INTERREG requirements more difficult.

Nevertheless, the large number of project partners – 20 partners prior to the start of the project – could also present problems in connection with the ever more complex requirements of the INTERREG programme. The innovative, comprehensive approach of the project could fail due to the formal requirements of the programme. It remains to be seen to what extent the tightened rules in the area of targets (outputs) and project indicators¹⁸ will further complicate the implementation of the project. This is, moreover, a development which contradicts the requirements and official announcements of the European Union: the latter explicitly calls for simplifications of an administrative and financial nature (European Commission 2012; European Commission 2013). It should come as no surprise, then, that none of the levels involved in programming – whether at the European, national or regional level – wants to take responsibility for this increasing complexity. A simpler analysis of this problem would not do justice to the multiple, diverse layers of interests that are affected, but to elaborate these any further would exceed what is possible here.

In order to compensate for the more difficult application and additional challenges in relation to project management, the INTERREG V A programme authority in the Upper Rhine region has introduced the use of simplified cost options in the form of flat rates for personnel costs and indirect project costs (electricity, telephone, heating costs, etc.).¹⁹ This approach promises a remedy, at least for expenditure accounting, and should make project realisation easier in this regard; in addition, compliance with European requirements provides the corresponding legal certainty (Article 67 EU Regulation No. 1303/2013).

Given that the Eurodistrict PAMINA or the territorial level as a whole does not play an active steering role in the ‘Success without Borders’ INTERREG project, an alternative has been developed to pursue the integrated territorial approach set out in the

18 These include both common indicators set out in the regulatory framework and specific indicators defined at programme level.

19 The application of the flat rate for personnel costs is optional (there are other options); it represents up to 20% of the other direct costs that are eligible for funding. The flat rate for indirect project costs or office and administrative expenses is also calculated on the basis of direct, eligible personnel costs and amounts to 15%.

Operational Programme: the territorial level implements its own INTERREG projects for locally limited and cross-border labour markets, thus serving the employment sector in addition to the training sector. With the ‘Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau: a 360° open labour market’ project, the employment and training centre for the Strasbourg Basin (*Maison de l’Emploi et de la Formation du bassin de Strasbourg*), in cooperation with the Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau, has already launched such a project (Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau 2017). It aims to implement an employment strategy. This includes measures to inform jobseekers from Strasbourg about employment opportunities in Ortenau, the establishment of a territorial network of experts to mobilise Strasbourg residents, especially young people from priority neighbourhoods, as well as actions to mobilise employers from Ortenau to better integrate cross-border workers (Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau 2017).

Such an integrated territorial approach to promoting employment in the cross-border labour market in the PAMINA area was also launched by the Eurodistrict PAMINA, now converted into an EGTC, in the form of another INTERREG project entitled ‘Skills Alliance PAMINA’. In this case, the focus is on the professional reintegration of over 45s,²⁰ the targeted matching of companies and candidates and cross-border occupational reintegration in sectors with increased demand for personnel, in particular nursing (Eurodistrict PAMINA 2016). These focal points are based on both the policy priorities and the specific practical challenges of the PAMINA labour market, with the platform for pooling or bringing together qualified actors playing an important role in defining them. The corresponding application for funding from the INTERREG V A Upper Rhine programme was approved on 8 December 2016.

The INTERREG V A Upper Rhine programme in general, as well as the vocational education and training project for the Alsace région and the Grand Est région in particular, are important building blocks and general factors in the labour market strategy for the Eurodistrict PAMINA; hence, it is all the more important that the measures are tailored to complement each other and do not compete with each other. At the same time, this will involve an increased coordination effort to ensure maximum coherence.

4 Conclusions: No successful development of the cross-border labour market without functioning multi-level governance

When coordinating or agreeing on measures at the Upper Rhine level and in the Eurodistrict PAMINA, it will be important to not only interpret the aforementioned subsidiarity vertically, i.e. from top to bottom, but also to intensify the horizontal coordination processes between equal levels. This is the only way due account can be taken of the diversity of stakeholders and institutions involved. In fact, the competences and policies at the European and Upper Rhine level, as well as at the level of the Eurodistrict PAMINA, are complementary in many places. It is important to adopt a unique approach to governance in this regard based on multi-level governance and looking at cross-border cooperation from a 360° perspective.

²⁰ This is a continuation, intensification and geographical extension of the former ‘PAMI45+NA’ ESF project.

The Eurodistrict PAMINA is actively committed to this approach and formally confirmed this on 19 September 2014 with its declaration of accession to the Charter of Multi-Level Governance in Europe.²¹

Beyond the question of determining the best level of implementation with the greatest proximity to citizens, it is also a question of the equal involvement of partners at all levels of administration or governance, who must meet on an equal footing in strategic matters and take joint decisions. In view of the considerable diversity of the actors involved, these strategies and plans are at the heart of the path to territorial cohesion. This is true both for the labour market and for many other aspects of cross-border cooperation.

Wherever dynamic network structures meet, the usual hierarchical control and policy mechanisms can only fall short. In this sense, the cross-border labour market strategy, with its platform for bringing together qualified actors, provides a significant opportunity to test and implement better multi-level governance.

This strategy for the PAMINA labour and training market will also include activities aimed at ‘stimulating’ employment on the French side, in particular by encouraging the establishment of German enterprises. Examples include the German companies SEW-Usocome and SIEMENS, which are both based in the French city of Haguenau. In this respect, the Eurodistrict PAMINA relies primarily on cooperation with the PAMINA Business Club, an association of different business promoters from Baden, Alsace and the Palatinate.²² The long-term objective is and remains to balance the three sub-regions of the Eurodistrict PAMINA, which does not mean that all three should have the same level of development in the future, but that they complement each other in a meaningful way and thus offer a cross-border living space which is able to enrich the lives of its citizens.

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21 This states: ‘Aware of our INTERDEPENDENCE and ever seeking greater EFFICIENCY, we believe that there is significant potential to further strengthen innovative and efficient political and administrative cooperation between our authorities based on their competences and responsibilities. This Charter, drawn up by the Committee of the Regions of the European Union, aims at connecting regions and cities across Europe, whilst at the same time promoting ACTION AT ALL LEVELS with actors from society such as social partners, universities, NGOs and representative groups from civil society (CoR 2014: 1).

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