

## Trans-Jura Conference / Conférence transjurassienne

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The *Conférence transjurassienne* (Trans-Jura Conference) aims to foster cross-border collaboration in the Jura region (*Arc jurassien*). This French-speaking region covers a range of medium-altitude mountains and is crossed by a 230-kilometre border between France and Switzerland. In its institutional definition, the Jura region gathers four Swiss cantons (Jura, Neuchâtel, Vaud, northern part of Bern) and four French departments of the Franche-Comté region (Doubs, Jura, Territoire de Belfort, Haute-Saône). It holds a population of 2.4 million individuals. Haute-Saône was removed from this perimeter with the French territorial reform of 2016. The topographic definition of the Jura region is narrower with only 640,000 inhabitants.

The main urban centres are located in low land areas outside the core of the region (e.g. Besançon, Belfort, Lausanne, Neuchâtel). The region is, thus, mainly rural with some small- and medium-sized cities such as La Chaux-de-Fonds (38,000 inhabitants) and Pontarlier (19,000). The density and demographic growth are globally higher on the Swiss side. A focus on the border shows, however, a higher growth but of low density in French municipalities that attract cross-border commuters. Economically, the Swiss Jura is more dynamic. The region has retained its industrial specialization (about a fourth of the labour force). It exports products worldwide and is highly praised for its watch-making industry, micro technologies and machinery sector (e.g. Swiss-made label).

The border was delineated in 1815 by the Congress of Vienna and has become more porous over the last decades. The most visible phenomenon is the steady growth in cross-border commuting. In 2015, almost 50,000 French residents worked in the four Swiss cantons. They represent more than 40% of the residents and labour force of some municipalities. Their growth is explained by the Agreement on the free movement of persons between the European Union and Switzerland (2002), the dynamics of the Swiss economy and salary differentials. Cross-border commuting is almost exclusively dependent on cars which has led to congestion at the few points of entry defined and restricted by topography. The growth in the number of cross-border commuters and their purchasing power, generates a high demand and puts upward pressure on housing prices in the French border areas.

Other forms of mobility are observed. Swiss residents buy goods and services (dental care, optical glasses) in France due to price differentials. To a lesser extent French residents may go to Switzerland to benefit from the variety of services offered in bigger urban centres. Cross-border residential mobility is rather limited. The Swiss part attracts mainly young and highly educated adults from other French regions than the Jura. Some of them, cross the border at a

later stage of their life for the schooling of their children or to access to home ownership in France.

The Jura region faces several challenges given the border and its peripheral location. Cross-border commuting raises the issue of the regulation of motorised traffic and urban sprawl. The specialisation in residential economy of the French side (or in productive economy for the Swiss side) may lead to difficulties to retain employees (and respectively customers) and risks of exclusion on the housing (and respectively labour) market(s). Finally, a higher degree of collaboration would be required to tackle the lack of mutual knowledge and to build a stronger sense of belonging beyond utilitarian considerations such as cost differentials.

Cross-border governance in the region was institutionalized in 1985 with the foundation of the *Communauté de Travail du Jura* (CTJ; Working community of the Jura) on the initiative of the cantons of Bern, Jura, Neuchâtel and Vaud as well as of the Franche-Comté region. Initially many studies were carried, but real instances of cross-border collaborations remain few and far apart.

An important study on the urban and economic structure of the Jura region identified a dozen of priority actions. It defined four areas of local cooperation that are still used today. These areas are from North to South (see map): Delle-Boncourt, PACTE that is now called *Agglomération urbaine du Doubs* (AUD; urban agglomeration of Doubs), Mont d'Or-Chasseron and Haut-Jura.

In the 1990s the CTJ was asked to address various issues such as education, transportation, agri-tourism, social actions and planning. It relies on working groups that regularly meet and are more or less active. The CTJ actions notably concern the implementation of a cross-border planning scheme, the technical, legal and financial evaluation of an improvement in train connections, the cooperation between the actors organizing a cross-border feast, the coordination of cross-border itineraries and their markings, and the protection of cross-border grazing.

In the early 2000s cross-border governance began to falter due to a lack of a clear political vision. The arrival of the French State in the CTJ (that adopts the new name of *Conférence Transjurassienne*) helped to maintain a dynamic that stayed rather weak. Nevertheless, cross-border collaboration was facilitated by the growing importance of Interreg funds that gave rise to many projects. Cross-border mobility grew fast thanks to the Agreement on the free movement of persons and various differentials due to the presence of the border.

The monitoring of this fast-paced evolution required harmonised data and indicators. In 2005 a statistical observatory (*Observatoire statistique transfrontalier de l'Arc jurassien*) was founded under the supervision of several French and Swiss institutions. Thanks to its regular publications, cross-border collaborations and the subsequent dynamics are better documented. The CTJ has since adopted more of a role as initiative coordinator and discussion platform. It addresses issues related to the cross-border mobility scheme (2009), industrial innovation (2010), the constitution of an institution connecting French and Swiss universities (*Communauté du Savoir*; 2011) and the publication of a tourist guide (*Guide du Routard*; 2014).

2015 marked the beginning of an in-depth reflection based on a wide territorial diagnosis. It led to a renewed strategy on cross-border collaboration. Former themes (such as mobility, economic development, and environment) continue to be of interest. The issues of social cohesion and mutual knowledge is now brought to the fore in the four areas defined in the

1990s. Among them AUD has become a local grouping for cross-border cooperation (*Groupement local de coopération transfrontalière*). The creation of a support fund for small cross-border projects highlights the move toward a more grass-root steering with new governance that gives priority to reinforced links within the areas of local cooperation and a more marked support to local actors both in public authorities and the civil society. The CTJ is now organized around a board (decision-making body), a general secretariat (administration) and a council of cross-border territories (technical consultation platform). The internal organization relies on two distinctly identified technical entities (arcjurassien.ch and arcjurassien.fr) which unfortunately do not possess the necessary human resources to meet the challenges faced by the Jura region.

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