

Memorandum of Understanding Creation of the Straits Committee

The DÉPARTEMENT DU PAS-DE-CALAIS (France), with headquarters in rue Ferdinand Buisson 62 018 Arras Cedex, represented by Mr Jean-Claude Leroy, President,

The KENT COUNTY COUNCIL (United Kingdom), with headquarters at County Hall, Maidstone, ME141XQ, represented by Mr Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member for Economic Development,

The DÉPARTEMENT DU NORD (France), with headquarters in 51 rue Gustave Delory, 59 047 Lille Cedex, represented by Mrs Sylvie Labadens, Vice-president,

The PROVINCE OF WEST FLANDERS (Belgium), with headquarters in Koning Leopold III-laan 41, 8200 Sint-Andries, represented by Mr Jean de Bethune, Member of the Provincial Executive

and

The PROVINCE OF ZEELAND (the Netherlands), with headquarters in Abdij 6, 4331 BK Middelburg, represented by Mrs Anita Pijpelink, Member of the Provincial Executive.

Hereinafter called « the Parties », decide to create a « Straits Committee » (« Comité van de Kanaalzone aan de Noordzee », in Dutch), (« Comité du Détroit », in French).

Considering that the cross border relations, as they are today formalized in bilateral cooperation agreements and cross border cooperation structures¹, constitute a real added value to the development of our territories, as can be seen from more than 30 years of numerous joint initiatives and projects ;

¹ Bilateral cooperation agreements: Cooperation agreement between Région Nord-Pas de Calais and Kent County Council (1987), Cooperation agreement between Département du Nord and Provincie West-Vlaanderen (1989), Cooperation agreement between Département du Pas-de-Calais and Kent County Council (2005), Interdepartmental convention 59-62 (2013), Memorandum of Understanding between Provincie West-Vlaanderen and Kent County Council (2014), Memorandum of Understanding between Provincie West-Vlaanderen and Département du Pas-de-Calais (2014), Memorandum of Understanding between Provincie West-Vlaanderen and Provincie Zeeland (2014).

Cooperation structures: Euregio Scheldemond (1989), GECT Eurométropole Kortrijk-Lille-Tournai (2008), GECT West-Vlaanderen/Flandre-Dunkerque-Côte d'Opale (2009), Vlaams-Nederlandse Delta (2011).

Noting that the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union is of particular importance for our territories given our geographical proximity and connections and implies a need for strengthening the cross border cooperation in the aforementioned area, through a multisectoral approach ;

Recognising that, while the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union will change the framework within which we work together, this does not affect our commitment to cooperation ;

Believing that closer cooperation between the areas bordering the Dover Strait area and their near neighbours in the Channel-North Sea region offers a genuine chance to create new opportunities for our residents, businesses, local stakeholders and communities ;

In a concern of not duplicating the existing administrative cross border structures, but to reinforce the cooperation on the level of the involved executive bodies.

The following has been agreed:

Article 1 - General Aim

The Parties launch a flexible and efficient form of cooperation between the areas bordering the Dover Strait area and their near neighbours in the Channel-North Sea. This will allow the pursuit of lasting, good-neighbourly relations and will reinforce the contacts between these territories in order to :

- (1) Develop and implement a shared vision, using an agile and appropriate structure of governance that encourages practical and efficient joint working in order to ensure territorial development;
- (2) Identify challenges and opportunities for the participating areas that arise during and beyond the period of negotiation of a future relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union, where cooperation may achieve tangible results;
- (3) Realise concrete projects.

Article 2 - Implementation

To this end, the Parties create:

- (1) an **Executive Committee**
 - a. comprising the elected officials of the involved Parties ;
 - b. whose mission is to develop a shared vision and strategy, seek support from higher authorities to implement this vision, and realise concrete actions/projects in the field, with particular attention for the future relationship and fluidity of trade between the UK and the European Union ;

- c. in which every Party can put concrete innovative project proposals on the agenda, in particular within the framework of an action plan on the priorities **economic development and fluidity of trade, climate change and clean growth**, and **young people**. These priorities should not prevent the Executive Committee from working on other themes ;
- d. proposing to the Parties any arrangements for implementing joint activities through the Straits Committee, including the setting up of other groupings or project groups, notably a general assembly ;
- e. whose work will be supported by the policy officers and assistants of the Parties.

(2) a **General Assembly**

- a. organised accordingly to the prescriptions of the Executive Committee and hosted by the Parties in the form of a rotating annual conference;
- b. open to participation from stakeholders drawn from a wide variety of fields.

Article 3 - Principles

This Memorandum of Understanding does not replace any of the existing cooperation agreements. In taking part, each individual Party will have to comply with its own governance.

Article 4 - Duration of the Memorandum of Understanding

This Memorandum of Understanding is concluded for an open-ended period. Every Party however may terminate its participation in the aforementioned committee at any given time, provided it gives six months' notice.

Article 5 - Notification

This Memorandum of Understanding will be submitted for approval by the Parties to their authorities concerned.

Other Parties can be invited to sign the Memorandum of Understanding, most notably

The PROVINCE OF EAST FLANDERS (Belgium)

The RÉGION HAUTS-DE-FRANCE (France).

Arras, 5th of February 2020

drawn up in five original copies, in English, French and Dutch

On behalf of the DÉPARTEMENT DU PAS-DE-CALAIS

Mr Jean-Claude Leroy, President

On behalf of the KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

Mr Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member for Economic Development

On behalf of the DÉPARTEMENT DU NORD

Mrs Sylvie Labadens, Vice-president

On behalf of the PROVINCE OF WEST FLANDERS

Mr Jean de Bethune, Member of the Provincial Executive

On behalf of the PROVINCE OF ZEELAND

Mrs Anita Pijpelink, Member of the Provincial Executive.