



Generalitat de Catalunya



Flanders
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Meeting of the Flanders-Catalonia Joint Cooperation Committee

Brussels, 10 June 2022

MINUTES



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The 5th Meeting of the Flanders-Catalonia Joint Cooperation Committee was held in Brussels on June 10, 2022, chaired jointly by the Secretary General of the Flanders Department of Chancellery and Foreign Affairs, Julie Bynens, and the Secretary for the Government's Foreign Action, Government of Catalonia, Gerard Figueras.

After the customary greetings, the Flemish and Catalan parties presented the results of the last working programme that were established since the 4th meeting of the Joint Committee, which took place on April 4, 2019 in Barcelona.

In addition, the Catalan side pointed out that, since the last meeting, certain events have altered the political scene. Indeed, general elections were held on 14th February 2020, which led to the victory of the same coalition. However, the political changes did not prevent the two administrations from maintaining good relations during the period 2019 - 2021. Of course, the pandemic that scourged Europe during the years 2020 and 2021 made it impossible to carry out concrete joint activities.

Both parties continued political exchanges during the period 2019 -2021 some in the form of missions from both sides. The Flemish Minister-President Jan Jambon travelled on July 20 2020 to Barcelona to meet with the President of the Catalan Government Pere Aragonès and the Vice-president of the Catalan Government Jordi Puigneró. The Flemish Minister-President visited Barcelona again on November 16, 2021 when he met with the Vice-president of the Catalan Government Jordi Puigneró and his team for a working session about digitalization. On 4th of February 2022 both the Catalan Minister for Foreign Affairs, Victoria Alsina and the Catalan Minister for Justice Lourdes Ciuró had a meeting with Flemish Minister-President Jan Jambon at the residence of the Flemish Government, Hotel Errera.

During the meeting, both parties also presented and approved the orientations and priorities for the next 2 ½ years (Annex) and reaffirmed their interest in maintaining their cooperation in priority sectors or areas that respond to the needs or concerns of Flemish and Catalan societies.

To this end, the co-chairs acknowledged the vitality of exchanges in the areas of digitalization, marine sciences, culture, research and innovation, economic development, education, health; social affairs, and agreed that these sectors would remain priorities for the next biennium. They stressed that especially the policy area of digitalisation, Flanders and Catalonia can take big, important and relevant steps forward by joining forces.

In the area of institutional cooperation, priority will be given to the exchange of expertise and knowledge concerning the functioning of the Flemish and Catalan foreign offices.

It was agreed that the 6th Meeting of the Flanders-Catalonia Joint Cooperation Committee will be held in Barcelona in 2024.



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The secretary General of the Flanders Department of Chancellery and Foreign Affairs, Julie Bynens, closed the 5th Meeting of the Joint Committee by reiterating her thanks to the Catalan side for its interest in cooperating with Flanders, and the Secretary for the Government's Foreign Action, Government of Catalonia, Gerard Figueras expressed his thanks for the warm welcome and his willingness to continue the cooperation with Flanders.

Done in Brussels, on 10 June 2022, in English

For Catalonia

Gerard FIGUERAS
Secretary of the Department
of Foreign Action and Open Government
of the Generalitat de Catalunya

For Flanders

Julie BYNENS
Secretary General
of the Flanders Chancellery
and Foreign Office

COOPERATION PROGRAMME 2022 – 2024

IMPLEMENTING THE COOPERATION AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNEMENT OF CATALONIA AND THE GOVERNEMENT OF FLANDERS

The Government of Catalonia

and

the Government of Flanders

(hereafter referred to as the 'Parties'),

Considering the previous Cooperation Programmes and with a view on implementing the Cooperation Agreement between the Government of Flanders and the Government of Catalonia, signed in Barcelona on February 20, 2008, and pursuant to the outcome of Catalonia – Flanders Joint Deliberations held in the first half of 2022,

Have agreed as follows:

PRIORITIES FOR COOPERATION 2022 – 2024

1. INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION IN INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPEAN UNION AFFAIRS

Both Parties agree on organizing regular contacts between the competent authorities and specifically among those dealing with the European Union and International Organizations. Among other issues, they agree to exchange information and experiences regarding issues such as general aspects of the model of representation abroad, collaboration between the delegations of both territories in third countries, coordination between their departments of Foreign Affairs, and management of their respective delegations.

Both Parties also agree on promoting joint lobby actions at the European institutions on issues of mutual interest.

Both Parties will promote regional policies within the framework of the global agenda and the global networks to which they belong in the field of climate change and biodiversity, as well as seek cooperation and capacity building on the multilateral sphere, in particular, in the framework of UNEA and in the implementation of the Agenda 2030. The list of these issues is not exhaustive and can be complemented or amended with other considerations later on.

2. DIGITALIZATION

Digital transformation

Corona has also hit Flanders hard. That is why, in the coming years, it will invest 4.3 billion euros to restore its economic and social fabric. Flemish Resilience' is the most ambitious investment plan ever realised by a Flemish government. A major ambition and challenge is to transform Flanders digitally in a smooth, safe and privacy-compliant way. During this corona crisis, technology has made our lives better and more bearable. We must seize this moment to be at the forefront of this digital revolution.

That is why it is our ambition to establish a Flemish Data Utility with that specific mission during this legislature. We must climb to the top of the world league of nations that use technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics and Internet of Things to make society better. To get that data flowing, we want to get 5G up and running as soon as possible.

A key focus will be international data spaces, a true market for data, open to data from around the world and where personal and non-personal data, including sensitive business data, can be securely exchanged. In addition, cross-sectoral actions should lead to the development of common data spaces in strategic economic sectors and areas of general interest, such as manufacturing, agriculture, healthcare and mobility.

Such data spaces should facilitate the emergence and growth of a data ecosystem (composed of government, business, civil society and individuals) that creates new products and services based on more accessible data. Within each of these future data spaces, Flemish enterprises also play an important role as suppliers and users of data. In this respect, we wish to cooperate with strong partners, including the UK. In this way, we can give maximum shape to future bilateral cooperation with England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Flanders wish to focus on the following spearheads:

1. Self-Sovereign Identity, where citizens have control over their own data so that they can share it more easily and securely and thus create a Self-Sovereign digital identity. Flemish citizens wrestle with the data paradox: on the one hand, they love the ease of use that data-driven services offer them, but on the other hand many of them are wary of the opacity with which 'big tech' companies handle their personal data. By building an innovative platform for personal data vaults based on the global Solid standard, this paradox is bridged and privacy is guaranteed.

2. Flemish Sensor Data Space: offers an answer to the challenges posed by the expected flood of (real-time) data from all kinds of sensors, particularly with regard to the cost-efficient distribution of the extremely large volumes of data, dealing with the high speed of data change, and the need for a data warehouse.

3. The Flemish Data Utility Company is an intelligent data changer that provides a level playing field for all public and private players within connected data ecosystems and offers an

answer to the challenges of a data-driven economy. The Flemish Data Utility Company strengthens citizens' trust in the data economy by putting the privacy of the Flemish people first, enabling active consent management that makes citizens more aware of the risks of sharing data and offering the possibility to share digital data more proportionally than is possible.

3. STATISTICS

The Statistical Institute of Catalonia (IDESCAT) and the Flemish Statistical Authority (VSA) will collaborate in the field of regional statistics (coordination, development, production and dissemination) and data science for official statistics mainly based on big data and/or new sources (e.g. twitter sentiment, web-scraping innovative firms, ...).

4. CULTURE

A variety of activities for potential cooperation have been detected on both sides in order to foster and promote cultural exchanges in multiple areas.

Catalonia and Flanders will promote joint projects with theatres, festivals and cultural centers in both territories in visual arts, performing arts, (early) music and architecture. Several organizations and institutions in both regions expressed their interest.

The Parties will enhance the mobility of artists and artists' residencies. Furthermore, both regions are willing to cooperate on film, digital culture and videogames"

In the area of literature, the translation of contemporary literature will be fostered in both ways, from Dutch into Catalan and from Catalan into Dutch.

Both parties will investigate the possibility to organize a mutual study tour with cultural actors during the course of the period of the working programme.

Both Parties agree to exchange information (strategies and policies) on heritage and sustainable development (sustainable tourism, adaptive re-use, digitization, climate adaptation and mitigation ...).

5. YOUTH

Both Parties agree on pursuing collaboration in the area of youth policy and youth work. They express the willingness, according to the interest of the other participant, to exchange information and documentation regarding youth policy and youth work strategy, to exchange high level and/or mixed delegations for study visits to elaborate youth (work) policy at all levels

-local, regional, national and European- and to promote the democratic participation of children and youth in society.

High-level visit to Flanders in order to exchange best practices. High-level visit between the two governments to exchange knowledge on strategic youth(work) plans, youth needs, and post-COVID-19 adaptation and recovery projects.

Technical missions. Technical visits to exchange information and documentation in relation to youth(work) policies and youth strategy: Mental Health, Social Entrepreneurship, Youth Participation and Sustainability, and Transversality of diversity and gender at the national level.

6. SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Both Parties will exchange best practices on experience with community-based programmes and integrated services for families with children, taking into account accessibility and diversity. They will also exchange information, knowledge, experiences, documentation and/or tools in the domain of preventive healthcare, wellbeing of young children, childcare concerning target groups and social vulnerable families, and family benefits.

Families

Guidance and Support Services (SOAF) - Exchange good practices on experiences with integrated services for families. In Catalonia, we promote the Family Guidance and Support Service (SOAF), as a preventive and universal service, integrated into the Catalan Social Services System, as a complementary service to the Basic Social Services Teams. The purpose of the service is to actively enhance parenting skills and provide strategies to promote healthy family environments, minimize potential risk factors in family relationships and prevent possible situations of violence or maximum vulnerability, thus complementing other services of the Network. Social Services.

Homelessness

Action plan to tackle homelessness 2022-2025. The Flemish government is developing the Homelessness Care Plan 2020-2024, which also focuses on the implementation of the Housing First methodology and has much in common with our Framework for Action.

The proposed work plan consists of sharing and analysing successful experiences of tackling homelessness at the local level in different municipalities of Flanders and Catalonia to improve knowledge of the phenomenon and the effectiveness of the different measures adopted.

7. HEALTH

Both Parties agree on sharing experiences on various health-related areas as they already actively work together in European networks such as EUREGHA (European Local and Regional Authorities Network), WHO-EURO Regions for Health Network, the European Connected Health Alliance and the IFIC (International Foundation on Integrated Care).

Furthermore, the regions can exchange and learn from each other on the following:

- Regional indicators on health in the context of European cooperation amongst regions;
- Strategies in disease prevention and health promotion;
- Strategies for integrating social and health issues, digitalization experiences, medical records and, more particularly, learning about the integration of health and socio-economic data to identify the needs at population level and to better tackle health inequalities (this item can possibly be addressed soon with the support of the Structural Reform Support Programme);

8. INNOVATION AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

Both Parties agree to foster and increase their existent and long-lasting cooperation in the area of trade promotion, internationalization and innovation through their competent agencies, the Flemish FIT & VLAIO and the Catalan Acció & Prodeca, including their respective offices abroad (Acció in Brussels and FIT in Barcelona). For that purpose, they will exchange information regarding business and investment opportunities.

There are several specific areas of collaboration agreed between the Parties. Catalan and Flemish authorities will improve participation of companies in events on technology transfer; they will foster collaboration on RIS3 sectors such as advanced manufacturing, Agrofood, ICT, blue economy and creative industries; support companies' participation in international trade fairs that take place yearly in both territories; share cluster's information and perform comparative analysis of industrial security and management models.

At the request of the other Party, both authorities will also exchange information regarding their markets and sectors, useful contacts, experiences and knowledge concerning the promotion of international entrepreneurship.

9. SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

Both Parties will increase the knowledge of each other's research institutions and innovation models by upholding mutual visits and meetings between research centers that have expressed their interest in collaborating.

A mapping of all joint research projects will be performed in order to have a better knowledge of compatibilities and opportunities.

Existing agreements between Catalan or Flemish research institutes in the EU with other institutes will be explored to analyse if partnership may be enlarged with Catalonia and Flanders new institutions. In this regard, the bottom-up principle will be followed, allowing researchers, research groups or centers to decide about possible partnerships.

Furthermore, a new young researchers scheme for mobility between Catalonia and Flanders could be proposed to EU for funding under the umbrella of an MSCA EU project.

10. MARINE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION AND (SUSTAINABLE) BLUE ECONOMY

Both Parties will seek cooperation and exchange of expertise in the maritime field and blue economy between Flemish and Catalan institutions in areas such as the following:

- Marine data and information systems,
- Marine research infrastructures,
- Ocean literacy,
- Training and capacity building,
- Mapping marine research and innovation and marine knowledge outputs,
- Science in support of coastal and marine policy and management,
- Marine research collaborations in ocean-related areas.

Both Parties will also work closely with universities and research institutions from Catalonia and Flanders in the preparation of research proposals under Horizon Europe.

All the activities of the Flanders Marine Institute and the Catalan counterparts will align with the UN Ocean Decade and UNESCO's operation in this regard.

11. TOURISM

Both Parties encourage the collaboration and the exchange of information, experiences, knowledge and best practices in the field of sustainable, competitive, innovative and accessible tourism.

The modalities of implementation of this cooperation will be determined in the near future.

12. HOUSING

"Both parties agree to cooperate in the field of housing in order to inform and inspire each other and to exchange experiences. Topics may include management of social housing and policies to retrofit the existing housing stock by making heating and cooling installations more sustainable and stimulating the renovation of residential buildings to lower the energy requirement and increasing the general quality."

13. EDUCATION

Both Parties have the intention, to exchange good practices and innovative experiences aimed at encouraging technological and scientific professions. They also have the intention to foster the promotion of professional development plans and permanent teacher training programmes.

These initiatives would take place preferably in the framework of European programmes and without prior financial engagements.

14. ENVIRONMENT

Both parties agree to exchange knowledge and best practices in the field of environmental education and education for sustainable development.

Both Parties agree to exchange strategies and policies creating awareness and promoting landscape actions and strategies, such as landscape characterisation. Both Parties agree to exchange strategies and policies introducing a landscape approach and the landscape quality into sectoral policies (environment, agriculture, culture, ...) and spatial (territorial and urban) planning.”

GENERAL AND FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

Both Parties will agree bilaterally and on a case-by-case basis which financial and general conditions will apply to each specific action.

The provisions of the present Cooperation Programme do not preclude the possibility of implementing other activities, exchanges or projects that may be agreed upon by the Parties.

Any disputes concerning the interpretation or implementation of the present Cooperation Programme shall be solved by negotiation between the Parties.

The Cooperation Programme starts as in June 13 2022. and shall remain in force until December 31, 2024, unless stipulated differently in the present programme for specific policy areas.

The next meeting of the Joint Committee will be decided by the Flemish and the Catalan Parties.