



Cross-border agglomerations: towards a better governance

The “Expertising Governance for Transfrontier Conurbations - EGTC” URBACT project (2008/2010)

Final results of the project



Key issues:

There are **more than 60 cross-border agglomerations in Europe today**, in which 25 million people live. They are model areas where **multiculturalism and European citizenship** are expressed in practical terms.

Their specificities entail a need to define **experimental governance models** and **common integrated strategies** leading to sustainable development.

Cross-border agglomerations have engaged in a **process of institutionalization** in order to develop efficient policies. **The involvement of the civil society** in this process will ensure the **legitimacy** of such policies, thus leading to **strong partnership models**.

1. Paris - MOT
2. Eurometropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai (EGTC)
3. Eurocidade Chaves-Verín
4. Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau (EGTC)
5. Frankfurt (Oder)-Slubice conurbation
6. Trinationaler Eurodistrict Basel
7. Ister-Granum Euroregion (EGTC)

Key results:

> **Improve the governance models** of cross-border agglomerations: **a local action plan** has been drawn up for each partner. It will be used as a tool for improving their partnership system.

> Provide **technical support** to partners: the local action plan was drawn up in collaboration with the lead expert and the lead partner, **with input from the cross-border local support group**.

> Identify and spread **best practices**: the **thematic seminars** enabled the partners to share and capitalise their experiences at European level.

> Develop valuable outcomes in Europe: the **European action plan** and the **Handbook** are tools that will be used at European level to promote cross-border agglomerations.

Lessons learned

The “EGTC” project partners intended to learn from each other regarding the establishment of efficient and legitimate partnerships that are capable of addressing cross-border territorial cohesion issues. Two seminars were organized on these topics.

How can public leaders and cross-border organizations frame and implement efficient policies?

- GOVERNANCE INSTITUTIONALIZATION**
To create and adapt a specific cross-border institution to each cross-border agglomeration (e.g. European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation) with the aim of structuring the dialogue and decision-making process used by public leaders.
- POLITICAL LEADERSHIP**
To develop an ambitious project requiring in-depth political involvement.
- EFFICIENT TECHNICAL WORK**
To set up a team dedicated to the cross-border agglomeration, with skills adapted to its needs
To define communication channels between the cross-border staff and the institutions within the cross-border agglomerations.
- FINANCIAL MEANS**
To develop financial solidarity mechanisms at cross-border level to support cross-border projects.



Ponte Romana, Chaves

More than 100 participants met in Chaves, Portugal, on 12 March 2009 for the first thematic seminar organized on “the means of strengthening the internal governance of cross-border conurbations”.

How can the involvement of the civil society guarantee the legitimacy of cross-border agglomeration policies?



- PROJECTS DEDICATED TO CITIZENS**
To develop projects dedicated to citizens, and public services that answer to their needs, with the aim of mobilizing citizens as active participants.
- COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA**
To communicate to citizens concrete information relating to their daily life as cross-border citizens.
- PARTICIPATIVE DEMOCRACY**
To develop discussion and consultation platforms involving institutional and socio-economic players.

The second thematic seminar, held in Tournai, Belgium, on 11 February 2010 brought together 120 participants to discuss the involvement of civil society within cross-border conurbations.

Success stories

One of the main objectives of the project was for the partners to identify best practices and share their expertise in order to improve the governance of cross-border conurbations at both local and European levels.



JOÃO BATISTA, MAYOR OF CHAVES (PT):
“European citizenship cannot be imposed by treaties but is founded on the day-to-day life of citizens. The contribution of Chaves and Verin to ‘New Europe’ is demonstrated by specific measures involving the people and their wish to walk together in the present and the future. For this purpose, strong partnership with the regional and national administrations from both sides of the border and the Eurocidade Chaves-Verin – technical and political support, coordination of cross-border strategies at all levels – motivates us to overcome new and demanding challenges.”



ROLAND RIES, MAYOR OF STRASBOURG (F), PRESIDENT OF THE EURODISTRICT STRASBOURG-ORTENAU:
“The Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau is more than mere cross-border cooperation; it is a genuine “European lab”. Several events organized throughout the year have led to an identification of the people with the territory. A soon to be organized large-scale consultation of the population will contribute to the emerging cross-border identity and sense of belonging.”



GILLES PARGNEAUX, VICE-PRESIDENT OF LILLE METROPOLE (F):
“We have established a structure that is representative of the cross-border civil society, the ‘Forum of the Eurometropole’. With 60 voluntary members from the economic, social and cultural spheres, it gives our political entities a strong voice as regards the definition of our cross-border strategy, and an outstanding platform for civil involvement in the building of Europe.”



RYSZARD BODZIACKI, MAYOR OF SLUBICE (PL):
“Since 2008, we have intensified collaboration with Frankfurt(Oder) at the administrative, political and civil society level. The ‘2009 Future Conference’, which was attended by the civil society from Frankfurt(O) and Slubice, gave local actors the opportunity to draw up a shared vision for 2020 for both cities. The next step is to involve them in the Cross-border Cooperation Center in summer 2010 in order to ensure ongoing dialogue.”



TAMÁS MEGGYES, MAYOR OF ESZTERGOM (HU):
“The enterprises registered in Esztergom employ not only local inhabitants but also commuters from the cross-border region – mainly from Slovakia; tax revenues from business activities remain in Esztergom instead of in the municipalities where the employees live. The City decided to set up a solidarity fund comprising 1% of the business tax and, operating a tender system, redistributes it between the Hungarian and Slovakian municipalities, which are members of the EGTC. This successful experiment reflects the solidarity between EGTC city partners.”



DR. GUY MORIN, REGIERUNGSPRÄSIDENT KANTON BASEL-STADT (CH):
“In 2009, the Trinational Eurodistrict Basel adopted the ‘Spatial Development Strategy 2020’. Its aim as regards cross-border governance is to strengthen democratic decision-making and bring about the greater involvement of civil society and economic partners. In this sense, functional cross-border cooperation is a network of regional, national and supranational key players at various institutional and spatial levels.”



DR. HANS-GÜNTHER CLEV, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF MOT:
“MOT aims to facilitate cross-border cooperation: from technical assistance to cross-border territories and their projects for overcoming obstacles, and the definition of strategies, to training and networking. MOT’s role is also to provide a platform for local, national and European players and public and private stakeholders. This model is unique in Europe and serves as a source of inspiration for other countries wishing to support sustainable development through cooperation.”





Graphic design: paterko.com - April, 2010 - Photos: Service Photos CoSB, Ernest Laginmel/CUS, TEB-ETB, Max Lerouge/LMCU

RECOMMENDATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE EUROPEAN LEVEL

Internal organization of the European Commission

- 1 Organize a dialogue between cross-border agglomerations and the inter-service group for the urban dimension led by the DG REGIO, which covers cross-border urban issues.
- 2 Designate a Commissioner in charge of cross-border cooperation.

The European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)

- 3 Make sure that the European network of EGTCs led by the Committee of the Regions will address the specific needs of EGTCs in charge of cross-border territorial strategies.
- 4 Establish a linkage between the European network of EGTCs and the Euroregional Cooperation Grouping, the new instrument of the Council of Europe, in order to share experiences.
- 5 Open participation in EGTCs to third countries without any restrictions on partnership and clarify the conditions of participation.

Post-2013 cohesion policy

- 6 Guarantee the access to structural funds for cross-border territories for the period post-2013.
- 7 Establish a direct management of structural funds by EGTCs that cover cross-border territories, and have a cross-border integrated strategy (under pre-defined conditions).
- 8 Develop statistic data on cross-border agglomerations within the European tool Urban audit.
- 9 Promote the creation of a specific ERASMUS programme, which supports the exchange of elected representatives and technicians from a cross-border conurbation with another cross-border conurbation.



European Union
European Regional Development Fund

For more information: <http://urbact.eu/egtc>

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