

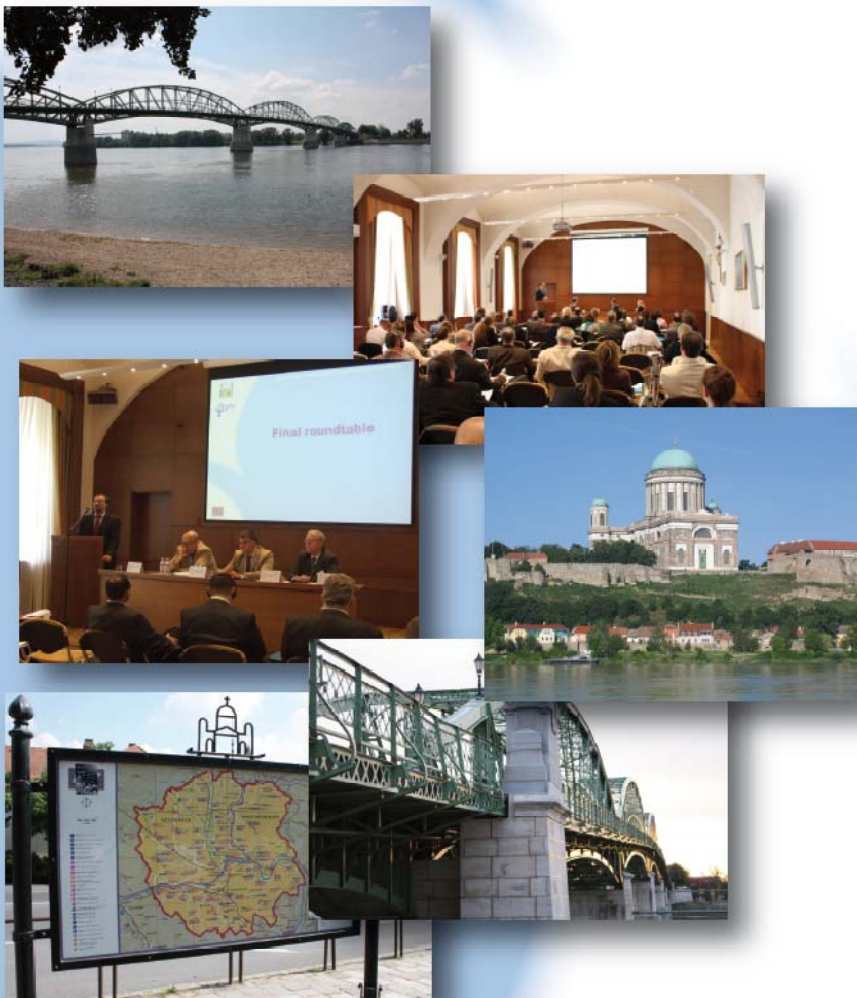
Expertising Governance for Transfrontier Conurbations

Final conference of the URBACT "EGTC" project

Minutes

Esztergom (Hungary)
6-7 May 2010

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SUMMARY OF THE MINUTES

At the Final Conference of the “EGTC” URBACT Project in Esztergom, Hungary, on 6 and 7 May 2010, the cross-border conurbation partners, together with the MOT as lead partner, tabled **the results of the work they have been carrying out on cross-border governance for nearly two years**. They also discussed ways in which they would like to see the project evolve in future.

Following the invitation of one of the partners, the Ister-Granum EGTC, around 80 people from 16 border regions in Europe convened at the conference, including representatives of European institutions such as the Commission, the Committee of the Regions, and the Council of Europe.

The debates were open to other partners (such as the AEBR) and cross-border agglomerations.

Results on the ground

First result: each conurbation presented its "Local Action Plan" aimed at improving the way in which its own cross-border governance is organised. All the sites underscored their willingness to put this work to good use at the local level and to capitalise on the leverage afforded by the project and the URBACT programme more generally.

The project also showcased the local challenges shared by all partners, i.e.:

- The need for a strong political determination to sustain the cooperation
- Projects to be adapted to the scale and needs of each particular conurbation: in highly urbanised areas, issues such as transport, employment, education, economic development, the environment, etc., predominate, and here creating a governance structure such as the EGTC, which brings legal and financial stability to “weighty” projects, can be very useful. The pooling of the “critical mass” for justifying new facilities (for sports, health, etc.) is another challenge facing the development of cross-border territories, some of which are less urbanised.
- One question emerged among all the partners across the board: the importance of involving civil society. Indeed, it is essential to carry out cross-border work not just “for”, but also “with” the inhabitants, and examples of participatory cross-border democracy were highlighted throughout the project. The need to highlight and identify the cross-border cooperation and territory to everyone emerged almost as a prerequisite for the success of the project as a whole.

Underscoring the need for national and European support

The project emphasized that the local sites had a very definite need for genuine support and involvement on the part of national and European players. Indeed, it is an expectation that came through clearly in the recommendations drawn up by the partners. At the European level those recommendations are three-fold:

- Adapt European policies to the needs of cross-border conurbations
- Improve the dialogue with the European Commission
- Ensure a better understanding of cross-border challenges and provide technical support at the European level to cross-border conurbations.

The representatives of the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions, the Council of Europe present in Esztergom all underlined the quality of the work, their determination to monitor the results and to work with the partners on the best means for implementing the project's recommendations. Meetings are to be scheduled soon.

A brochure with the results of the project has been published (available on request from the contacts below). It contains a CD-ROM with all the documents including a *Handbook* on the methodology, good practices, the local action plans, the European recommendations, etc.

A second project in the offing?

In conclusion, the partners wish to pursue the exchanges and even broaden the partnership.

With the support of the URBACT programme, which also commented favourably on the quality of the work and the project, the partners mentioned the possibility of setting up a second URBACT project, with a broader partnership. This project might focus on a more precise issue: that of employment, addressing in particular the cross-border links to be promoted between the training and educational institutions, the needs of businesses, and the workers on either side of a border.

So the project is by no means over, with the follow-up already proving just as interesting!

Powerpoints and final documents of the "EGTC" URBACT project are available on the following website: <http://urbact.eu/egtc>

MINUTES

First day: Presentation of the final results of the project URBACT " EGTC "

I. Introduction

Dr. Hans-Günther CLEV, Director General of MOT

The sustainable development of cross-border agglomerations passes by the implementation of joint policies between urban continuous areas on both sides of the border. The real stake is to promote common solutions and answers to common problems and to meet at best the needs of populations.

Although being of different sizes, and anchored in heterogeneous socio-cultural, institutional, political and historic contexts, the six partners of the URBACT working group " EGTC " share similar problems in the fields of healthcare, transport, of employment, etc. It is a question for these cross-border agglomerations of improving their governance, the modalities of their partnership to bring to a successful conclusion integrated cross-border policies. Cross-border cooperation is a means and not an end and constitutes also the cheapest tool of promotion of the economic development of border territories.

The "EGTC" URBACT project has allowed to capitalize the needs of some and the others by an exchange of experience and a common learning on this question. Due to the requirements put by the URBACT II programme, the project also allowed to strengthen, even to adapt, the already existing frames of discussion and concertation on a cross-border local scale, which involve the main actors, "the hard core" of the cross-border cooperation: the local support groups, gathering the public actors but also in certain cases the actors of the socioeconomic world and of the civil society more generally.

This work of two years allowed to reach concrete results : six local action plans in which the cross-border agglomerations identify actions and strategies to improve their governance, thematic seminars, a handbook presenting the good practices on cross-border governance, the methodology followed by the partners throughout the project as well as the main lessons learned, and an European action plan which presents the recommendations to raise to the various levels (regional, national, community).

Framework by the Lead expert, Christian LAMOUR (researcher, CEPS/INSTEAD, Luxembourg)

The "EGTC " URBACT II project covered two themes: the organization of a cross-border leadership to advance the territorial cooperation (internal governance) and the implementation of a community schedule of nearness allowing to engage the civil society in the cooperation.

The exchanges held on the internal governance allowed first of all each territory to estimate its partnership processes to conceive operating modes always more effective. It was about how to define innovative organizations and in particular the functioning of the European tool EGTC.

In terms of community, the attention concerned to three central questions: the development of actions with an immediate impact for the local populations; the planning of physical exchanges between the political sphere and the civil society about the cross-border cooperation; the organization of a media schedule to communicate with a widened platform of resident from the cross-border spaces.

Every territory developed an internal debate on the "community supplement" to be engaged after having measured steps realized on each of these points. A will is outlined in several spaces in favor of the projects having a popular constituent. Besides, the cyberspace and the opportunities which it gets to re-configure the relations between elected representatives and the citizens appear as a potential platform of participative democracy beyond States. It can be complementary to the physical meetings, of type "Conferences of future" to open up the debate on the future of the cooperation.

II. Presentation of the local action plans by the partners of the "EGTC" URBACT project

Dr. István FERENCSEK, responsible for the project for the Ister-Granum EGTC (Hungary/Slovakia)

The main result achieved by the Ister-Granum EGTC within the framework of the "EGTC" URBACT project was the development of the local action plan for the Euroregion. The URBACT project allowed giving a stronger impact to the cross-border cooperation, new ideas of actions as well as a bigger visibility. It is useful to reinvent to improve.

In two years, the difficulties faced and the obstacles to be surmounted were many before coming to an agreement for the whole cross-border territory while strengthening the implication of the populations in the cross-border cooperation. So, the communication and the territorial marketing were pointed as being decisive elements of this process.

The cross-border center of information and the cross-border center for the youth of Eurocidade Chaves-Verin constitute good practices which could inspire the partners of the Ister-Granum EGTC.

Today, the partners of the Ister-Granum EGTC wish to make a commitment in: the search for operational modes of organization in particular to make the EGTC as functional as possible; the continuation of the exchanges of experiences and the valuation of the good practices (in particular the cross-border solidarity Fund); the launch of new expertises to renew the operational programmes; the improvement of the implication of the civil society in the governance of the EGTC; the intensification of the communication on the activities led by the GECT.

Margarida PIZZARO for the Eurocidade Chaves-Verin (Portugal/Spain), technician of the municipality of Chaves

The URBACT project "EGTC" allowed to structure and to refine the composition of the local support group, the role of which is to identify the obstacles to cross-border cooperation and to formulate propositions of actions to the municipalities, and regional and national authorities, in order to overcome them.

The following problems were identified: need to structure more the cooperation between both municipalities of the Eurocidade, to provide for Eurocidade a structure endowed with the legal entity and with a dedicated team, to raise to the proper authorities the legal obstacles for the creation of common infrastructures and the development of common public services (e.g. the possibility for the fire and emergency entities to intervene indifferently on both sides of the border), to overcome the asymmetry of the competencies between Chaves and Verin, and to remedy the skepticism of the citizen towards cross-border cooperation.

The local action plan contains some ideas of actions which could be implemented in the future: develop a common social zone defining a cross-border perimeter within which all the inhabitants would have access to public utilities according to the same conditions, and formalize the implication of the civil society in the governance of the Eurocidade.

The Eurocidade was able to benefit from exchanges of experiences with the other project partners to refine its propositions: the formalization of the cooperation of the Eurocidade towards an European grouping of territorial cooperation, the intensification of language courses and participation of the civil servants in the activities of the Eurocidade, the promotion of sports activities (the bicycle day of the Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau), as well as the activities targeting specifically the young people (Km solidarity of the Eurodistrict). It is planned to present these actions in a future INTERREG IVA project. Today, the Eurocidade works on the writing of the statutes of an EGTC.

Jean-Baptiste SCHIBER for the Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau (France/Germany), responsible for the Eurodistrict and cross-border networks in the Urban Community of Strasbourg

The works led within the framework of the URBACT project "EGTC" allowed the partners of the Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau to identify clearly the added value of a common structure endowed with the legal personality such as the EGTC. So in February, 2010 was created the EGTC of the Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau. The Eurodistrict has from now on a greater legitimacy, an unified and arranged political expression (a unique presidency) and a strengthened political responsibility (decisions taken with the majority). Given the fact that the structure must follow the strategy and the actions, the local action plan identifies the first actions of the EGTC: consolidate the popular events contributing to the emergence of a cross-border consciousness (Km solidarity, picnic of the Eurodistrict), the launch of an internet platform to associate the citizens in the definition of the future strategy of the Eurodistrict and the intensification of the relations with the media.

Some good practices stemming from the other sites drew the attention of the Eurodistrict: in particular Geoportail of TEB and the Forum of the Eurometropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai (consultative structure consisted of the representatives of the civil society of the cross-border territory). The perspectives for the Eurodistrict are today to make operational the EGTC by the end of 2010, to

widen the perimeter of intervention as well as to integrate new members, of whom the French State. The Eurodistrict will also work on a better positioning on the European stage (contribution to the European consultations) and will plead for making of the Eurodistrict a territory of experiment of the cross-border subsidiarity, integrated in the Upper Rhine Metropolitan Region.

Debate with the audience :

On the modalities of implication of the civil society in the governance of the EGTC, the representative of the Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau notes that the populations on both sides of the border aspire to a bigger implication in the activities of the Eurodistrict. Beyond their participation to concrete projects, the Eurodistrict planned to launch a participative internet platform, an idea inspired by the German experience. The partners of the Eurodistrict share the will to strengthen the implication of the civil society but the concepts, the administrative cultures and models are different and call for a cross-border consensus.

On the point of knowledge if it is possible to reconcile different national systems, the representative of the Eurodistrict reminds the relevance to create social free zones which would authorize the access to public utilities to the whole population of the same cross-border area and would allow using the applicable legislation on the other side of the border. The cross-border territories call for specific modalities and adaptation of the principles of internal law to be able to overcome the border effect: "The border should not be an obstacle but a chance".

Simon JODOGNE for the Eurométropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai (France/Belgium), Director for the Euro-metropole and European partnerships in Lille métropole

During the URBACT project "EGTC", the EGTC of the Eurometropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai, the first EGTC created in Europe, was equipped with a consultative structure consisted of 60 representatives of the civil society on both sides of the border, the Forum of the Eurometropole.

The challenge for the Eurometropole is to establish a stronger link between the Forum and the institutional organs of the EGTC. The recruitment of the team of the EGTC has also been finalized. The 2020 IBA Basel project (in English, "international exhibition of architecture") drew the attention of the Eurometropole: this project aims at stimulating and initiate the emergence of urban projects carried out by the local actors in very diverse domains such as architecture, urban development, mobility, education etc. Some of them will have a cross-border dimension.

Nowadays, the Eurometropole wishes to strengthen its relations with the European authorities, to pursue its activities on the cross-border governance and to constitute a zone of experiment for the European policies (signature of a specific contract with the EU).

Sören BOLLMANN, Project manager for Frankfurt (Oder) – Slubice (Germany/Poland)

The local Action plan includes a common vision shared for the next ten years (2010-2020): 24 strategic objectives, 7 domains, 14 projects. As an example the development of a common territorial strategy of marketing passing by the creation of a cross-border network of small and medium-sized

enterprises, a policy of revitalization and development of the urban zones through an integrated urban development plan for the cross-border agglomeration, the learning of the language of the neighbors by the youngest via the construction of a German-Polish nursery school in Slubice.

The exchanges of experiences allowed Frankfurt (Oder) - Slubice to identify certain number of good practices such as the implementation of an advisory board involving companies or implication of the regional, even national authorities, in structures of cross-border governance (EGTC Eurometropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai, EGTC Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau).

Beyond these exchanges of experiences, which fed the reflection of both cities, the "EGTC" URBACT project played a crucial role in the consolidation of the political and technical working frameworks (the local support group, based on the structures already in place, collaborated narrowly in the elaboration of the local action plan and the technical team on cross-border cooperation was strengthened), allowed the holding of the "2020 Conference of future" which joined together 200 persons stemming from the civil society on both sides of the border, offered a bigger visibility of the cross-border agglomeration and a strategic shared document (the local action plan).

The Local action plan was politically validated on April 29th, 2010 as well as the competence and communication center of Frankfurt (Oder) – Slubice project (INTERREG IVA project), which will be in charge of its implementation. Besides, a new public conference involving the citizens will be organized in 2010 and the reflection on a EGTC on the scale of the Euroregion Pro Europa Viadrina could be launched.

**Véronique BITTNER for the Trinational Eurodistrict Basel (Switzerland/France/Germany),
Responsible for cooperation programme in Regio Basiliensis**

TEB already defined a common strategy. The stake which arises today is to assure an efficient lead of the actions of the TEB within this strategy and to rationalize and to simplify the structures of governance for a better legibility for the citizens and for a bigger synergy between the actors of cross-border cooperation. Thus, the local action plan recommends a better cooperation between the various structures of the Eurodistrict: an integration of the Infobest in the governance of the TEB and of MetroBasel as an economic advisory board, and a cooperation strengthened between the various structures of the Upper Rhine (Conference of the Upper Rhine, the eurodistricts). It is also planned to develop a more efficient cross-border communications strategy in the next months.

TEB learned several lessons from the URBACT project "EGTC": on the creation of a EGTC, its advantages and inconveniences, the difficulties to return the structure operational (the replacement of the existing association by a EGTC has not been acted), on the possible articulation with the French State on cross-border matters, on the financing of the cross-border structures and on the modes of implication of the population.

The local action plan was politically validated April 30th, 2010 and will be followed by an implementation of the actions defined in the document. TEB would like to pursue the exchanges with the other partners of the URBACT project "EGTC" on an informal plan.

Debate with the audience:

On the deficit of concrete actions led by the EGTC, Christian LAMOUR reminds that the created EGTCs are in a phase of experimentation. For the moment, sites are in full consolidation of the tool which will decide on these projects, even will lead them.

Questioned about the 2020 strategy of the TEB, Véronique BITTNER indicates that this document is not a legally binding document but that it is the object of a consensus between all the partners of the ETB who committed in carrying out the actions which are described in it. TEB, as an association, has no legal capacity to lead solely structuring projects; it will return to the municipalities to take the responsibility of the implementation.

Questioned about the reasons for creating a EGTC, the representative of Frankfurt (O)-Slubice underlines that such a tool would allow to realize important investments for all the members of the EGTC and de facto, to increase the common responsibility. For the representative of TEB, the associative form which allows having an appropriate legal entity (capacity to sign a contract, to own its own budget and staff) satisfies the partners of the TEB. The passage towards an EGTC could justify itself by the implication of the French State. For the partners of the TEB, the projects count more than the structure.

On the difficulty passing of the strategic phase in the realization of the projects, the representative of Frankfurt (O)-Slubice raises that the development of the strategy has to be made at the same time as the reflection on the implementation of the actions and not successively.

III. Conclusion on the final results of the « EGTC » URBACT project

Christian LAMOUR, Lead expert of the “EGTC” URBACT project

Every cross-border space produces, according to its own context, a series of partnership procedures and particular connections between the political sphere and the civil society. A variety of cooperative processes exceeding the frame of Nation-States is perceptible on the internal borders of the European Union. Besides, it is important to note that the construction of the Community market and the liberalization of the flows of persons allowed by the Schengen agreements did not lead to the disappearance of all the administrative and mental borders inherited from the State construction.

In this context, cross-border cooperation has not for objective to remove all these borders, but to generate “win-win” partnerships inferring an elasticity of certain limits. Finally, the spatial organization beyond the State does not lead to the gestation of exclusive regions in which would be dissolved the territorial entities built within every State. The cross-border regionalization worn by networks of governance with variable scale allows, above all, rethinking the spatial organization in an extrovert way by forging flexible associations around European spaces imagined in permanent reconfiguration.

In spite of the variety of approaches on cross-border cooperation from an European border to other one, we notice however a heavy tendency of deep institutionalization of the relations established

between the political actors. This institutional process can be appreciated as a will of the participants to develop reliable relations registered in the long time. The cross-border institution can be carrier of ossification of the exchanges, but it is another generator of empathy and slow construction of an European political identity of nearness.

The cyclic character of the exchanges inferred by the institutional organization and the structuralization of an agenda-setting, which it supposes, are so many elements favorable to a communicational supplement between decision-makers separated by the national borders. The construction of the tool EGTC and its progressive adoption by the elected representatives situated on the borders of the EU shows the will to pursue the initiative of decompartmentalization of the political confidence beyond States.

We can notice also that, at the same time in this informative process of Europeanization, a flow is established between territories which do not concern the same state environment. Structures such as Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière or specific projects such as the URBACT II " EGTC" project are systems of transfer of good practices allowing to increase the resources of inventiveness.

We can observe that the informative transfers related to the cross-border governance are multidirectional and polyphonic. The "EGTC" URBACT II project allowed a major upward flow (via in particular the common recommendations which are addressed to the national and European levels by the cross-border project partners), but also the development of a dialogue with States and Europe (and in particular within the framework of the conferences organized throughout the project).

In addition to that, it is necessary to highlight the contributions of the European organizations engaged in the cross-border field, whose opinions are sent both in the direction of the territories and the authorities of upper level. So, the Committee of the Regions, but also the AEBR (Association of European Border Regions), the City-Twins association and the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière appeared as key-organizations participating in the community mediation related to the cross-border territorial governance.

It is now a question for every territory engaged in the "EGTC" URBACT project to implement its local action plan defined during the last two years. The entrance to the concrete will be made via a deepening of the cross-border relations, but also through a long-lasting anchoring in the European networks having the European regionalization for core business.

Second day : Identification of the future options and the opportunities based on the results of the "EGTC" URBACT project

The end of the "EGTC" URBACT project asks the question to know if follows-up can be given, in which measure the results can be capitalized and the exchanges pursued, even widened to other sites and to other themes. This reflection can be led to the local level with the implementation of the local action plans, and at the level of the European network with the continuation of the exchanges and the rise of needs to proper authorities (national and European). To exchange on this subject, representatives of the other cross-border territories, network and of the European institutions were invited to intervene.

I. Opening of the initiative to other cross-border territories in Europe

Ernest LIBIETIS, Head of projects and development Department of the City of Valka (for the agglomeration Valga/Valka, on the Estonia/Latvia border)

The cities of Valga and Valka are attached to the same border. This urban nearness and continuity naturally led cities to cooperate with the signature of an agreement of cooperation between municipalities in 1995 and the creation of a joint secretarial secretariat in 2005. Several concerted actions were led from then on: cross-border development plan, territorial marketing (logo, mascot), promotion of tourism (renovation of military buildings), sports and cultural activities, collaborations between services of emergency and fire on both sides, construction of an arts school opened to the pupils on both sides of the border...

The representative of the city of Valka expresses his strong interest in exchanging with other cross-border sites on those issues.

Martin Guillermo RAMIREZ, Secretary General of AEBR¹

It would be relevant to organize an exchange of experiences between cross-border agglomerations and Euroregions in Europe. The theme of the multi-levels governance could lend itself to it as far as most of the members of AEBR already deal with this question.

The process of cross-border integration is launched and cannot return behind. The results of the past INTERREG programmes are very positive and were profitable in border regions and in their populations. Besides, cross-border cooperation is an instrument to normalize relationships across

¹ AEBR is an European network of border regions created in 1971. In 2007, an agreement was signed between AEBR and MOT. More information : <http://www.aebr.net/>

borders and to add value to national measures for the development of very challenging areas, even outside Europe, as it has began to be the case in Latin America or Africa. These arguments plead for a continuation, a deepening of cross-border cooperation.

The cross-border governance of territories is confronted with the problems of asymmetry of the institutional, legal, cultural frames on both sides of the border. The European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) and the euroregional grouping of cooperation (ECG) promoted by the Council of Europe constitute common tools for all Europe to strengthen cross-border cooperation and networking. The cross-border question presents some specificity because of the proximity of actors located in different countries but with common challenges.

Cross-border cooperation constitutes a new dimension of local and regional development processes. The main obstacles to its smooth running are: the centralized governments, the differences of economic structures, the various levels of capacity of management, and the differences in the processes of decentralization.

The purpose of the cross-border cooperation is to allow border territories to realize economies of scale and to establish a more important critical mass to press on the national and European policies to invest in these areas. It is not a question of standardizing the cross-border territories but indeed of taking into account their varieties (languages, labour market, tourism, governance, etc.). The cross-border cooperation is so a perfect model for the practice of a "new governance".

Debate with the audience

The representative of the Euroregio Meuse-Rhine raises that the interest of the URBACT working group "EGTC" is that it did not only concern the tool EGTC, what would have been too restrictive. The entrance by the theme of the multi-level governance was more relevant. He suggests the idea to set-up a platform for the border territories which would like to exchange on multi-level governance and on the appropriate legal tools (not only the EGTC).

II. An European glance

- **“Cross-border governance and European territorial cohesion”, José Antonio RUIZ DE CASAS, Territorial cooperation unit, DG REGIO, European Commission**

The multi-level governance is a multi-face subject: it is a tool which gives a democratic weight to the policies as well as allows creating the cohesion on a given territory. It is the main means to strengthen the integration of the European Union. Given, the fact that the European integration must pass by an integration on the borders, cross-border governance plays a key-role in the European integration and territorial cohesion.

For the years to come, the European Commission settled three priorities for which the cross-border governance has a role to play, a role which must be highlighted:

First of all, the strategy Europe 2020: it promotes a sustainable, harmonious and well-balanced development. Territories have to use the existing tools to reach such a development: macro-regions, micro-regions, euroregions, EGTC, etc.

Then, macro-regions: Which scale and which role? Which is the place of regions and micro-regions in macro-regions?

And finally, the concept of diversity must be reconciled with the European idea. The cross-border territories are the agents of the European integration. Cross-border governance does not have to be a specialization of the territorial cohesion, which makes this process too stiff.

- **“Links with the European grouping of Territorial Cooperation”, Alfonso ALCOLEA MARTINEZ, Committee of the Regions**

The "EGTC" URBACT project allowed developing successfully a multi-level approach. The results of this project are very substantial and very coherent and are based on a "bottom-up" approach.

The EGTC is a tool of the cross-border governance, a flexible instrument, an instrument of European regulation.

Every year, the Committee of the Regions realizes an inventory of the created EGTC or in creation. As such, a consultation has just been launched on the website of the Committee of the Regions on the modification of the regulation 1082/2006 on the EGTC, which must intervene in 2011. The results of this consultation will be presented during Open Days, on October 6th, 2010.

It is a question today of finding synergies between the Committee of the Regions and the "EGTC" URBACT project. The project was of the most useful as for the added value constituted by the experience on the ground. It is henceforth a question, from the conclusions of the project, of transforming this group of experts into a solid network. If the partnership is pursued, he could supply to the Committee of the Regions an interesting feedback on the use of the EGTC instrument. To finance it, it would be useful to present a new URBACT II Project.

- **“Links with the Euroregional Cooperation Grouping”, Auke VAN DER GOOT, Vice President of the European Committee on Local and Regional Democracy (CDLR), Council of Europe**

Local authorities in Europe have a sample group of legal tools allowing them to formalize their cross-border cooperation. Why not to simplify this regulatory landscape at the benefit of a unique tool: the EGTC?

The Benelux Convention of 1986 (Belgium-Luxembourg-Netherlands), which will be modified in 2010 allows to set-up legal structures of public law, administrative agreements and joint structures of consultation. Besides, in the case of a common structure, this one can have several seats. The Benelux Convention offers a bigger flexibility than the EGTC regulation. The EGTC remains an optional tool and comes to complete the existing tools. It presents the innovative character to allow associating the State as full member. This innovation will be inserted into the revised Benelux Convention.

As for the ECG, this tool can be used on the scale of the 47 member states of the Council of Europe and is very widely inspired by the European regulation on the EGTC. For the moment only 9 countries have signed it and none of them has ratified it.

The Council of Europe could play the role of a relay to raise the recommendations addressed to the national authorities, stemming from the "EGTC" URBACT project.

The challenge of cross-border cooperation is to overcome the obstacles to cross-border projects at the local, regional and national levels. The constitution of a network of EGTC and ECG and other legal structures could contribute to it. It is also proposed that national networks of the actors of cross-border cooperation are launched in order to assure the link between the local and national levels. These national networks would bring a support for local actors willing to develop their projects (ex: Grenzmakelaar in the Netherlands).

III. Challenges of cross-border cooperation in Hungary

Dr. Jenő HAMORY, Head of department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Economic Relations Department, Hungary

Above all, it is necessary to congratulate all the partners of the Euroregion Ister-Granum on their pioneer role in the field of cross-border cooperation for several years. It is an example of cross-border cooperation for the whole of Central Europe.

Hungary is a country with numerous borders (Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Ukraine, and Slovakia) which had to learn to cooperate with its nearby countries. If certain national governments prefer not to deal with cross-border cooperation, the Hungarian government chose to cooperate with its neighbors and to put it the means. For the programming period 2007-2013, Hungary has approximately 1 billion euro intended for its cross-border policy. Hungary declared its vital interest to the European Commission to participate in the Danube Region Strategy from 2014. The new government which took office at the end of May, 2010, is set to modernize its objectives, including regional cooperation. Hungary wants to benefit from its geographical and regional advantages and hopes that the European Union can strengthen funds intended for territorial cooperation.

IV. Conclusions on the follows-up to be given to the "EGTC" URBACT PROJECT

- Will shared by the partners of the URBACT project "EGTC" to pursue the work undertaken since 2008: what partners? What financing? Possibility of a second "EGTC" URBACT project? A reflection must be led on this question.
- Certain participants expressed their interest to create a platform on cross-border multi-level governance.

- The partners of the "EGTC" URBACT project will organize a meeting with the representatives of the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions and the Council of Europe to exchange on the recommendations and raise them to the appropriate levels.
- MOT intends to accompany the other countries in the constitution of structures which will have vocation to bring a support for the local actors on the borders to develop their projects. Hungary thinks at the moment about the formalization of a network of border local authorities.
- It is also a question of organizing an articulation between cross-border agglomerations and Euroregions (link with the AEBR).

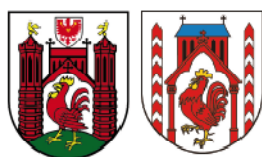
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