

Theme: “Cross-border conurbations: Empowering internal governance” – March 2009

EUROCIDADE CHAVES – VERIN (PT/ES)

1. Mobilization of the people dedicated to cross-border cooperation

1.1. Present situation

At the political level, the Eurocity Chaves-Verín has a political body. This body – the Working Group - includes regional (all involved in the cross-border cooperation management) and local authorities:

- Commission for Coordination and Development of the North of Portugal Region (CCDR-N) - PT
- Galician Autonomous Government (Xunta de Galicia) - ES
- Working Community of the Euroregion North of Portugal and Galicia – ES/PT
- Diputación de Ourense - ES
- Eixo Atlântico Association – PT/ES
- Municipality of Chaves - PT
- Municipality of Verín - ES

At the political level the articulation for action is complete, especially between mayors. All activities are discussed and approved by both of them. The other elected representatives of the municipalities were involved in the drawing of the Strategic Agenda and participate in the support groups within the areas of their responsibility.

At the technical level, the work is assumed by two bodies: the Joint Technical Secretariat (composed by two persons of the two municipalities) and the Technical Office (composed by different technicians with different expertise, Portuguese or Spanish ones).

These bodies are responsible for the implementation of all the activities included in the Strategic Agenda and are supported by the Support Commission (in charge of identifying, studying and proposing solutions for the barriers that the project faces).

There are also meetings of occasional support groups for developing specific common themes or activities such as on sports, cultural or scholar activities. These groups normally include elected representatives, civil servants, local institutions and socio-economic agents.

The Joint Technical Secretariat and the Technical Support Cabinet develop a daily work together (most of it develop by internet). The support group has meetings each three months to assure the follow-up of the on-going reflections since the last meeting and to introduce new ones on barriers to overcome.

The number of meetings of the occasional support groups depends on the activity they are in charge of (for example, the sports support group has weekly meetings to prepare the first foot race of the Eurocity Chaves-Verín that will take place in April).

Nowadays, every municipality departments are involved in action or projects of the Eurocity (namely tourism, culture, sports, environment, European funding, protocol, media, economic development, renewable energy).

The articulation at the technical level is growing and intensifying as activities are developed in the thematic support groups.

The Joint Secretariat is studying the best way to get together civil servants of both municipalities for brainstorming meetings about the Eurocity project and for joint training. The exchange of civil servants is another issue to be studied.

1.2. Improvements planned

The Eurocity project is a very recent one. Consequently, all activities are new experiences on cross-border cooperation.

The need for specific training for representatives and technicians is very important as well as the research and benchmark of the best European practices on cross-border cooperation.

The approval of the Interreg IVA project supporting the Eurocity Chaves-Verín will assure a high level technical support and at the same time some funding for 3 years of activity.

This European support is also fundamental for the development of activities so as to increase the eurocitizenship.

The continuity of supra locals authorities support is a key-issue for the sustainability of the Eurocity project not only at political level but at the field level with projects such as the cross-border youth agency (developed by Xunta da Galicia and IPJ – Youth Portuguese Institute).

2. Formalization of cross-border cooperation

2.1. Present situation

The Eurocity Chaves-Verín is, for the moment, a project without legal structure.

The Joint Technical Secretariat is working on the constitution of a European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), as voted by the Working Group.

Other forms and legal features for cross-border cooperation are not excluded.

2.2. Improvements planned

The Eurocity Chaves-Verín is a long-term project aiming to assure social and economic development for its population. In the next years, with the EGTC set-up, the Eurocity will take care of the management of the Eurocitizen card, the labor and enterprise platform, management of EU funding projects, ..., as well as pursuing the work of eliminating barriers to cross-border cooperation.

3. Budget

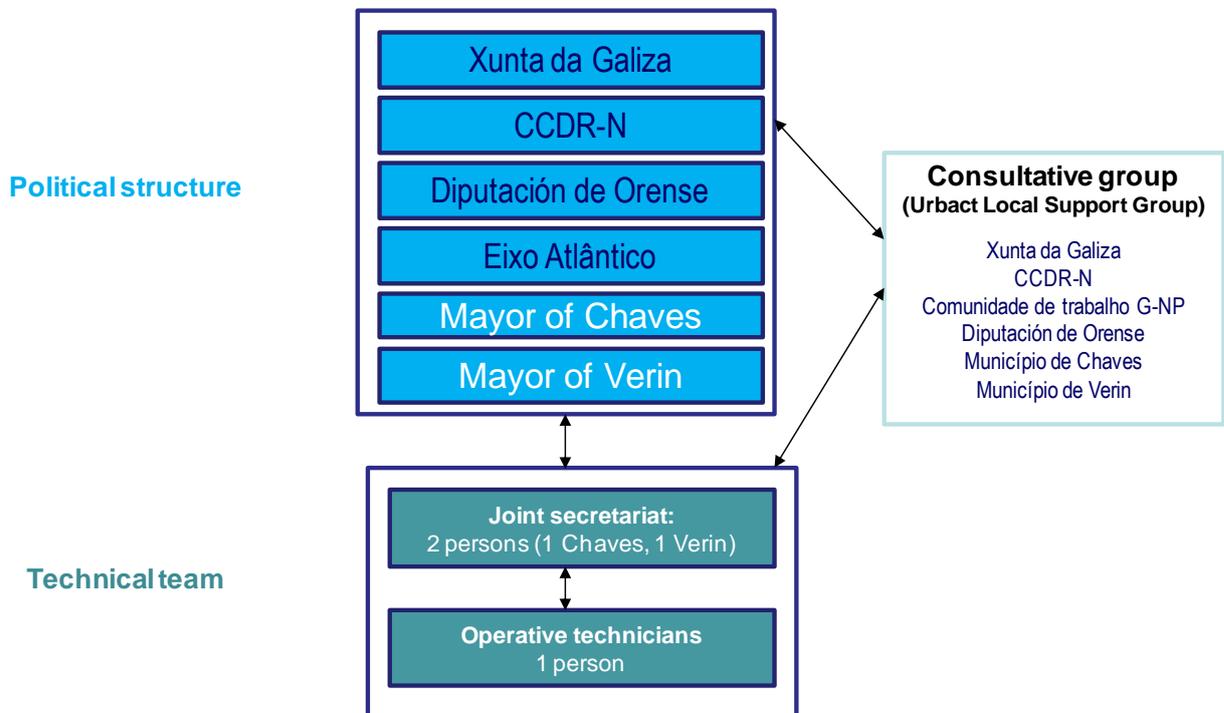
3.1 Present situation

The Eurocity Chaves-Verín activities are financed by the two municipalities and by the POCTEP programme (INTERREG IV A), by the URBACT II programme (i.e, the “EGTC” project) and by the authorities involved in the Working Group.

3.2 Improvements planned

Because of the approval of the POCTEP project the Eurocity Chaves-Verín has assured funding for its activities for the next two years.

Eurocidade Chaves-Verin Internal governance scheme





Project-sheet



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ISTER-GRANUM EGTC (HU/SK)

1. Mobilization of the people dedicated to cross-border cooperation

1.1 Identifying problems

Before establishing the Ister-Granum EGTC (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation), its predecessor, the Euro-region had 8 professional committees, 6 of them functioned well, actively. These committees included decision-makers, professionals and members of the civil society. During the transformation from the euroregion to the EGTC, the committees put-up their operation. According to the Hungarian regulation applied to EGTC, only representatives of the municipalities are allowed to participate with vote in the work of the committees; professionals and NGOs are not. **The mayors have lost interest in these new committees.** Despite the fact, at the beginning, the committees were marked out for preparing important decisions, now it seems their role must evolve with regards to the context.

Mostly because of the occlusion for long time – and also as a consequence of their involvement in national politics and administration - the leaders living on both sides of the border, have only **superficial knowledge on the way the political, social or legal systems of the other country operate.** It is a real obstacle against the cooperation.

The Ister-Granum EGTC has no well-funded contact network neither with higher level technical experts nor with higher level of the administrations, neither in Hungary nor in Slovakia. As a consequence, the specific **purposes and needs of the EGTC can hardly be taken into account in national and regional strategies.**

1.2 Solutions

The decision-makers of the municipalities participating in the work of the EGTC are interested mostly in projects that have a tangible benefit for them. It is even more acutely at the time of crisis, when the main purpose for the leaders is to guarantee the liquidity of local budget. While during the preparation of the EGTC the aim of cooperation was quite tangible – the establishment of a new, efficient structure after a long time of isolation – by now, purposes of the cooperation became a bit less visible for the participants. In parallel to this phenomena, an unprecedented amount of European funding has been made available for local municipalities through national Operational Programmes and, understandably, local leaders concentrate more on developing fundable projects that bring these tangible benefits on the short-run instead of putting more efforts on creating long-term cooperation for long term benefits.

The mayors are willing to participate in bodies or committees preparing and implementing, real, tangible projects. This led to a suspension of the work of the professional committees, which are to be replaced by committees organized around projects or group of projects, in which the mayors are involved. These committees can also discuss “strategic” issues. After a while when – expectedly – project will raise concrete results in an improved and more experienced

partnership and – expectedly, again – the need of strategic planning will become visible again (e.g by linking availability of national or European funding to strategies), committees will be operational again.

In order to diminish lack of knowledge regarding the administrative and legal systems of other country we intend to organize **training for the decision-makers and administrators** working in the region. The Slovak participants will study the Hungarian legal, bureaucratic and political system and vice versa. In a closing workshop series they can compare the two systems and **formulate proposals concerning the various elements of the system to be changed** in favour of improving cross-border institutional cooperation.

The EGTC has to build-up a political and high level professional's network in both countries. In order to make this network more stable, our aim is to create an **EGTC lobby club** including decision-makers, professionals, leaders of big companies and branch banks situated in the region. This club unifies people dealing with development of the EGTC. It ensures the promotion of the specific interests of the EGTC on higher level. At the same time, this instrument can serve as a framework for new projects initiatives and specific professional or thematic cooperation networks.

The Local Action Plan has to contain an itinerary – based on an **updated analysis of various stakeholder interests** – on addressing decision makers and decision-preparatory bodies on regional and national level in both countries.

2. Formalization of cross-border cooperation

The objective is to deepen and optimize the functioning of the EGTC.

2.1 Identifying problems

Most of the mayors do not understand what EGTC means in practice. They have unclear ideas about the real purposes, the opportunities and the responsibilities of this instrument. They are enthusiastic about the cooperation but they do not see what the benefit of this cooperation is in the daily life.

While in General Assembly all the municipalities have equal vote, the executive agencies of the EGTC belong to individual municipalities. The Hungarian regional development agency (the Ister-Granum RDA) is owned by 2 Hungarian municipalities and the EGTC has no vote in the Slovakian regional development agency. As a consequence, **Esztergom has got a decisive influence** on the work of the agency that has been criticized by the member municipalities.

2.2 Solutions

The Local Action Plan suggests elaborating **a medium and long-term vision for the Ister-Granum EGTC.** While the EGTC has got a development plan, it shall be updated **in a way that involves local communities, to the most possible extent, to the planning process.** Updating shall also include the formulation – or reinforcement – of visionary objectives of the EGTC. In working out this vision, the mayors got a perspective on the nature and the possibility of further development of the EGTC, becoming more committed into the EGTC's objectives. The present situation – a strong willingness to cooperate - gives great opportunities that can only be developed and sustained with a clear and widely assumed vision. **Results of strategic planning can influence post-2013 development strategies regarding the use of European funding of both countries.**

The leading role of Esztergom cannot be abolished, but it can be reduced. The aim is that **all the institutions working for the EGTC shall be supervised by the EGTC itself***. If the EGTC owns the institutions, Esztergom would have one

vote only, not the whole leadership. Leaders of other settlements can feel then that these institutions work for them, too. That means a specific type of **common financing model** has to be agreed.

* The Ister-Granum EGTC intends to create and operate several institutions (currently in planning phase: Health center and service network; energy agency; regional HR-management office network; regional public transport association; regional service network of NGO's) and enterprises (regional tourist destination management offices; company for developing logistical-industrial services in the region) and a joint news agency. Institutions and enterprises will be directly linked to the decision-making structure of the EGTC.

3. Budget

3.1 Identifying problems

The members of the Ister-Granum EGTC cover the contributions of the projects by the number of their inhabitants. The bigger settlements finance more than smaller villages. There are two problems regarding this system: at first, several leaders would like to increase the membership fees in order to secure pre-financing of projects. Other ones prefer the extra pay, but only in case of successful tendering. But there is **no solution for the pre-financing of projects**.

Secondly, this mechanism does not enable the EGTC to advance funds to the projects implemented. Consequently, for the first phase of projects implementation, either the city of Esztergom has to finance the projects or the EGTC has to make a loan.

The Ister-Granum EGTC has been recently created. It has a small budget. As a result, **there are no employees working for the EGTC yet – except the Director**. The administrative tasks and the development activities are performed by two regional development agencies on both sides of the Danube. Recently, these agencies have been operating for a minimal fee paid by the EGTC. This situation cannot be sustained for a long-term but seems to be useful in overcoming difficulties at the beginning of the process.

3.2 Solutions

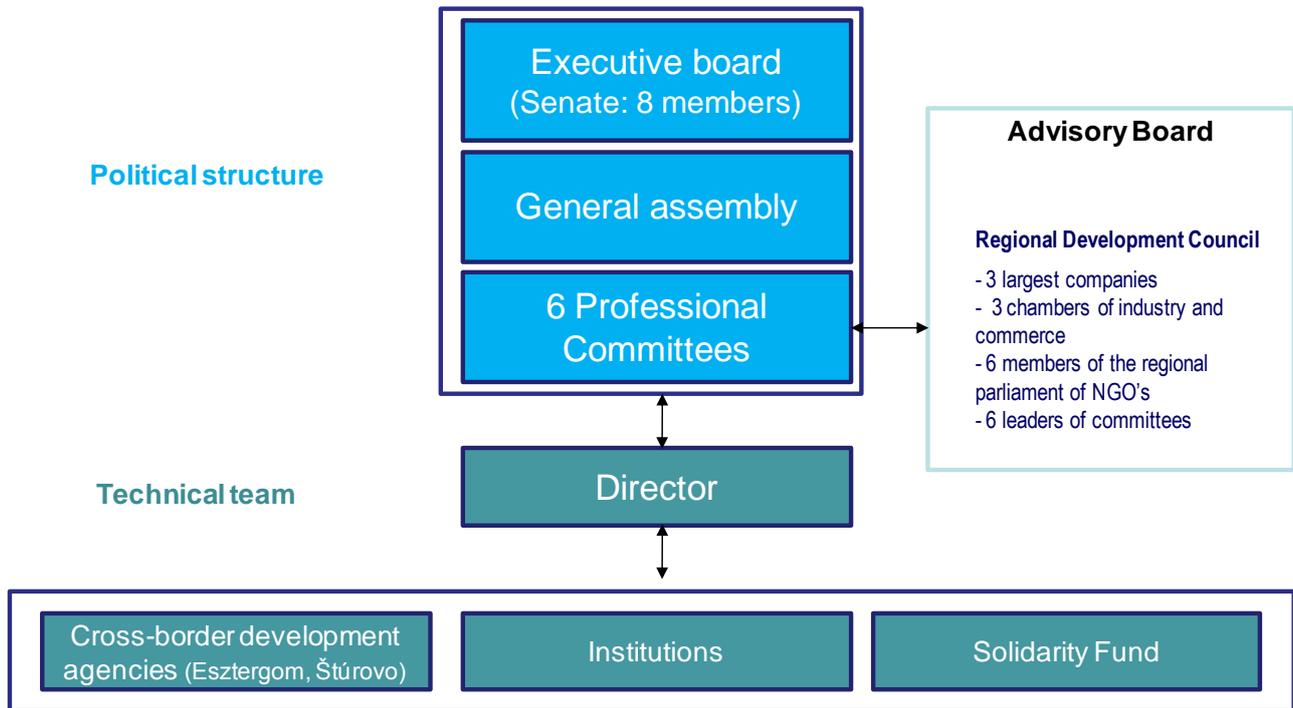
In the interest of financial stability, it would be beneficial to set up a **regional development fund**. This fund will finance projects at the starting phase, before first payment. It will play a crucial role by financing institutions created by the EGTC.

The Hungarian and Slovakian agencies should be owned by the EGTC. With regards to the financial situation of the EGTC, this change can only be done gradually.

3.3 Good practice

In Hungary the local governments collect local business tax from the enterprises that operate there, the sum of which for Esztergom was 16 million EUR in 2007. Since the employees of these companies are primarily not from Esztergom, the local government of the City made the decision to return 1 % of this tax to the member settlements of the EGTC to enable them to realise their smaller developments. To this end, a **Solidarity Fund** has been established and municipalities were invited to submit project proposals in an open system of calls. In 2007, 14 projects were selected. The fund is considered as a good instrument to strengthen involvement of smaller and resource-deficient villages.

Ister-Granum EGTC
Internal governance scheme





Project-sheet



Theme: “Cross-border conurbations: Empowering internal governance” – March 2009

FRANKFURT(ODER) AND SŁUBICE (PL/DE)

1. Mobilization of the people dedicated to cross-border cooperation

1.1. Present situation:

At the political level, since 2009, the members of the Steering Committee and the technical level are participating in the Assemblies of the Joint City Council Committee for Frankfurt (Oder) and Słubice. As a next step, politicians will be invited to the meetings of the Working Groups.

At the technical level, the organization is based on the work of 4 employees of the municipal administrations (two on the German side and two on the Polish side) supported by an external expert working partly on cross-border issues.

1.2. Improvements planned

Frankfurt (Oder) and Słubice hope to receive a positive decision about their Interreg IVA project application “Joint City Marketing”, which would allow as recruiting common staff (11 bilingual persons) on cross-border issues in a common office.

While establishing the Interreg IVA project “Joint City Marketing of the European City Frankfurt (Oder) & Słubice 2009-2012”, Frankfurt (Oder) and Słubice will integrate city, tourism, investment, culture and event marketing within one office (project under approval).

Hopefully in January 2010 – with the support of another Interreg IVA project - political and administration representatives will put more efforts in learning the neighbour’s language (Polish or German) or a common language (English). Overcoming the language barrier would make much easier daily cooperation on the technical level.



2. Formalization of cross-border cooperation

The objective of Frankfurt (Oder) and Słubice is to enhance the cross-border governance, possibly by setting-up a European grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). Other legal tools will be assessed.

Frankfurt (Oder) and Słubice do not have any common legal body as an EGTC for their cross-border governance. For about 15 years, both Mayors have met regularly and both City Councils have hold common City Council meetings once a year. A Joint City Council Committee meets from 4 up to 6 times a year (see the scheme below).

Frankfurt (Oder) and Słubice also cooperate with each other under the common (informal) roof of Euroregion Pro Europa Viadrina and within projects such as the "EGTC" URBACT project or the "Common City Marketing Frankfurt (Oder) Słubice" Interreg IVA project (under approval). Both cities are also members of the legal body of the City Twins Association, joining currently 10 border cities or towns.

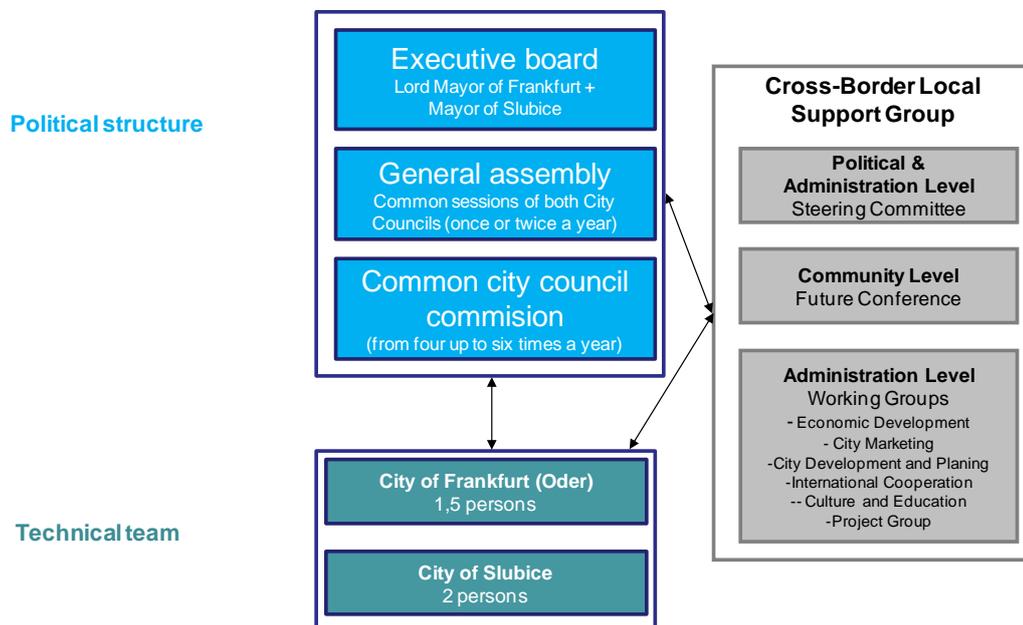
Beside the existing organs - Steering Group, Working Groups, Future Conference, project management - Frankfurt (Oder) and Słubice are about to launch a common reflection and political discussions on the establishment of a common legal body (EGTC, association or European Economic Interest Grouping) , e.g. for the common city marketing.

3. Budget

Two employees from the German side and two employees from the Polish side, supported by one external expert, are working in the municipal administrations partly on cross-border issues. Each side has a small budget for daily work, but not for co-financing projects nor does exist a truly common budget for a continuous and professional coordination of cross-border cooperation. For each new project idea, one has to apply for co-financing on both sides. In the past common projects were realized mainly in Interreg IIIA, IIIC and "Europe for citizens" programmes.

This context, as well as structural, cultural and economic differences, led in the past to a lack of long-term strategic thinking and planning on cross-border issues. The reflection within the "EGTC" URBACT project, with the setting up of a Local Support group and the development of the Local Action Plan, will lead to a crucial change.

Frankfurt (Oder) - Słubice Internal governance scheme



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EURODISTRICT STRASBOURG – ORTENAU (FR/DE)

1. Mobilization of the people dedicated to cross-border cooperation

1.1. Present situation

At the political level, the composition of Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau includes:

- Two spokesmen: a French one and a German one,
- a Eurodistrict Assembly of 14 members (mayors and Landrat on the German side, President of the Urban Community of Strasbourg and town councillors on the French side), at least two meetings a year,
- a Eurodistrict Follow-up Committee involving higher levels of administration and both states, at least one meeting a year.

At the technical level, the organisation is based on:

- Two secretariats:
 - on the French side: technicians of the Department of International Affairs of the Urban community of Strasbourg,
 - on the German side : technicians of the Department of International Affairs of the Landratsamt Ortenaukreis and of the City, whose Mayor or president is spokesman (City of Kehl for the year 2009),
 - the technicians of the two countries build the coordination group that meets twice a month.

The key problem: the technicians are working on other cross-border themes and do not have enough time to work for the Eurodistrict.

- Groups of experts for the specific fields of activity of the Eurodistrict: these groups meet irregularly and are sometimes difficult to mobilize as their members also have a lot of work to do within their respective administrations.

1.2. Improvements planned

The setting-up of a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) for the Eurodistrict might lead to a stronger involvement of political and technical levels on a long-term basis.

At the political level:

- Stronger participation of the representatives in the Assembly of the EGTC (48 persons versus 14 actually)

- Common management of the budget of the EGTC
- Common election of the president and the vice-president of the EGTC
- Common designation of the members of the executive body
- Development of actions leading to a stronger policy of communication between CB politicians (policy of exchanges)

At the technical level:

Establishing the EGTC aims to change the working conditions by ensuring a better flow of communication through a common general secretariat. This means:

- Putting together the two separate secretariats under the same roof with one general secretary assisted by a technical staff
- Having technicians who are working exclusively for the EGTC
- Creating a job dedicated to the management of the Interreg funds for micro projects
- Setting-up the general secretariat at a symbolic place on the border of the two countries (the City of Kehl)

1.3. Solutions

It is planned to organize language and intercultural trainings for the employees and to set-up cross-border courses and studies dedicated to the administration of cross-border conurbations at the national levels.

2. Formalization of cross-border cooperation

2.1. Present situation

A convention between 7 partners from both sides of the border was signed in 2005. It has no legal status. Through this convention, the Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau pursues three aims: becoming a pilot-territory in Europe; contributing to the sustainable development of the region and playing a strong role within Europe; improving the daily life of the citizens living on its territory.

2.2. Improvements planned

The aim is to create a cross-border legal institution. The creation of a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) was chosen as the form of governance for different reasons (see above). The EGTC is the best legal instrument available at the moment in the European Union: it is the best instrument to handle EU funds, its legal structure is flexible and open to other partners such as EU member states and other public bodies. The EGTC allows possibility for an enlargement of the geographical area. And finally, the EGTC gives a very good visibility of the structure for the citizens of the district and at national and international levels.

2.3. Recommendations

The main recommendation from Eurodistrict Strasbourg Ortenau addressed to the European level is to create other legal tools empowering local institutions.

For the regional and national levels, the organization of meetings between different cross-border conurbations for the exchange of good practices within a region or a country is recommended.

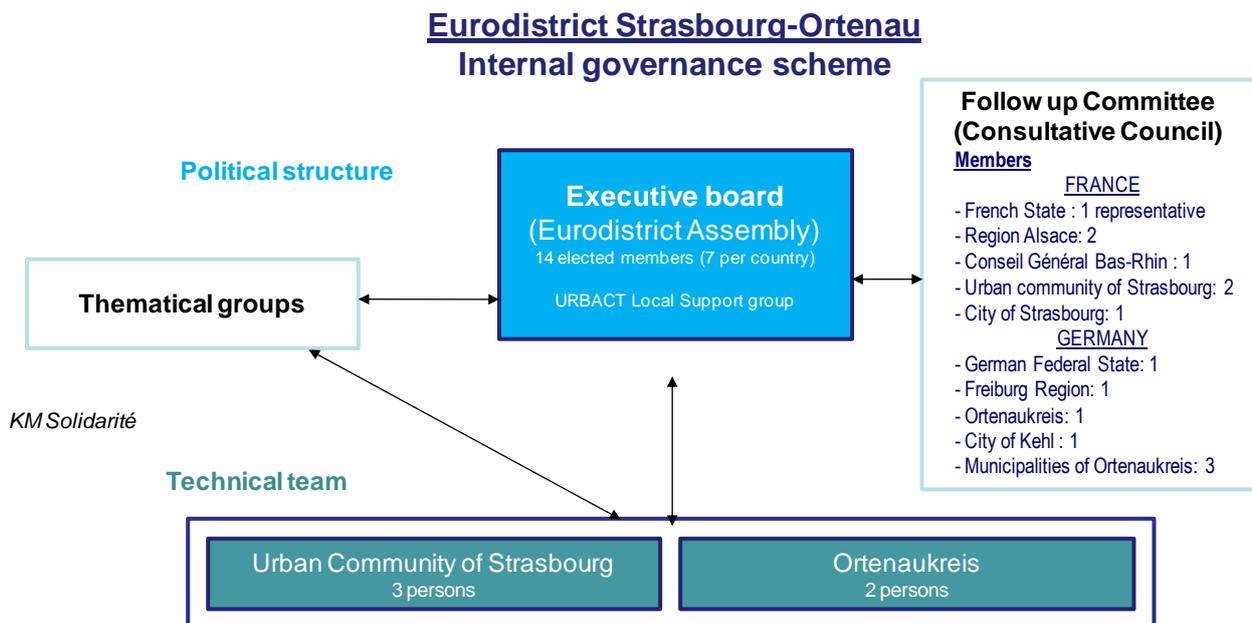
3. Budget

3.1 Present situation

Concerning the financing of the coordination of the cross-border cooperation, the technicians are paid by their own administrations. The cross-border projects are financed by the local bodies (50% / 50%) and by other sources of funding (Interreg).

3.2 Improvements planned

The aim is to secure a yearly financing of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC): each member participates in the budget and each country's contribution amounts to 50 percent of the general budget. The budget should enable an easier handling of EU structural funds and in some cases a direct management (i.e. interreg funds for micro projects).





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TRINATIONAL EURODISTRICT BASEL (TEB) (CH/DE/FR)

The free movement of persons, and especially cross-border commuters’, has facilitated the emergence of cross-border conurbations. The emergence of a tri-national functional urban space spreading into three states requires new systems of governance in order to provide an efficient platform of complex networks engaged in spatial cohesion.

1. Mobilization of the people dedicated to cross-border cooperation

Mobilization of leading politicians is strong all over the TEB conurbation. Politicians meet on a regular basis, from 3 to 4 times a year. However, efforts have to be made to involve the representatives of small and medium-sized municipalities.

The TEB has a dedicated technical staff composed by a director and two other permanent staff, supported by a project officer. The TEB technical staff collaborates narrowly with the TEB coordination group (one of the general committees) composed by the technicians representing the public authorities involved in the TEB. Some thematic working groups (such as the spatial planning group) exist alongside specific project groups and direct cooperation of technicians.

Cooperation is focused on spatial planning, transportation, environment, and – to a lesser extent – health. The results of the technical cooperation are presented regularly to the politicians who approve or adjust the working programme of the technical level.

The TEB structure also cooperates strongly with the INFOBEST Palmrain, which is in charge of providing information to the inhabitants on cross-border matters.

The number of technical staff for TEB and INFOBEST will probably increase in a short term.

Large projects, such as the International building exhibition IBA Basel 2020, require additional project staff. An INTERREG IVA application was presented at the end of 2008 in this perspective.

Knowledge of French and German is a must at the technical level, at the political level translation sometimes has to be provided.

2. Formalization of cross-border cooperation

TEB is a formally structured cooperation platform, as an association of French law.

In order to improve the present cross-border legal institution three options exist:

1 – Maintaining the structure of an association according to French local law:

This means that certain partners will not be able to become a member of TEB, e.g. the French state. The law applicable remains French.

2 – Transforming the existing structure into an European grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC):

The French and German partners of TEB could create an EGTC and invite the Swiss partners to participate. All levels, from municipality to nation state, could become members.

The EGTC could be located in France or in Germany –accordingly the law applicable would be French or German.

3 – Searching for alternatives:

Alternative options are offered by the Karlsruhe Agreement. However, this would not solve the question of how to include nation states. Institutions according to Swiss law can be envisaged only if the use of European funding by Swiss stakeholders is facilitated in the future.

3. Budget

The TEB is based on three financial sources:

1 – Membership fees are very low and should be raised, if at least a minimum of service should be guaranteed. Indeed, long-term stability of funding is not guaranteed at present.

2- The main partners subsidize the TEB: 50% Swiss funding, 25% French funding and 25% German funding.

3- Projects attract more funds, mostly in the framework of INTERREG projects that are co-financed by the partners to a specific project. These partners usually in addition figure the European Commission (by means of structural funds) and the Swiss Confederation (by means of the new regional policy funds).

A need to change the budget lines in order to strengthen the consultative body of the TEB (“district council”) is likely in the future.

It is important to ensure optimum operating conditions for cooperation. Therefore the TEB sees itself as a cross-border governance structure and interlocutor for the European Commission. It is necessary to establish the simplest possible approval and administrative procedures, in order to ensure that these do not tie up additional resources; the corresponding arrangements with third-party states across external EU borders need to be pragmatic, and cannot be overly answerable to the local and regional level.

What is more, the encouragement of cross-border governance projects requires open support criteria, which also enables private-sector protagonists to get involved. Interfaces with support programmes set-up by neighbouring states need to be covered as effectively as possible.

**Trinational Eurodistrict Basel
Internal governance scheme**

