



*The "EGTC"<sup>1</sup> URBACT project officially launched on 19th November in Strasbourg, France*

## The cross-border agglomerations are networking at European level

The "EGTC"<sup>1</sup> URBACT project on the governance of cross-border conurbations in Europe has officially been launched on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> October, during a conference at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, in presence of Michel Delebarre, President of the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT), Roland Ries, Mayor of Strasbourg, Vice-President of the Urban Community of Strasbourg and Alain Lamassoure, MEP, Vice-President of MOT.

The project brings together MOT as the lead-partner and six cross-border conurbations in Europe<sup>2</sup> with the objective to **exchange experiences and promote best practices of cooperation**. It is fundamental for cross-border agglomerations (that represent almost 25 million people in Europe) to define methods and tools to coordinate their policies in order **to give concrete answers to the needs of their inhabitants** in fields such as urban development, transport, employment, public services, health and environment.

**Michel Delebarre** underlined that urban matters are crucial and concern **80% of the European population**. The development of a common technical and political governance is essential for those urban areas that are situated on borders. In this context, cross-border conurbations may become **areas where local, national and European policies converge at a local scale**. They constitute **motors for European integration and European citizenship**.

**Roland Ries**, who made the Eurodistrict "Strasbourg-Ortenau" a main objective of his programme, expressed his will **"to move from cooperation to codecision"**. Cross-border cooperation "is [indeed] not easy" because it involves different political and administrative systems. He also stressed two main objectives to promote the cooperation: it first requires a better **involvement of the citizens** in order to demonstrate that the construction of Europe is not an independent process undertaken by specialists ; it is also necessary to work actively on **the new European legal tool, the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)**, that provides a strong framework for structuring the conurbations on a cross-border level.

**Alain Lamassoure** concluded the conference by referring to the report he submitted in June 2008 to the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, which identifies the shortcomings of a **"Europe of citizens lagging behind"**, while ten million citizens live in a European country other than their own. During the conference he stressed the necessity to sustain cross-border cooperation that makes Europe more concrete and brings it closer to the people. He also **proposed, within the framework of EUROMOT, to settle an "interparliamentary conference"** bringing together Members of the European, national and regional Parliaments to find answers to overcome obstacles to the daily life of the inhabitants in cross-border territories.

### Agreement signed between Frankfurt (Oder) (Germany) and Slubice (Poland)

The Mayor of Slubice, Ryszard Bodziacki, and the Lord-Mayor of Frankfurt (Oder), Martin Patzelt, signed during the conference a new cross-border agreement that provides a basis for an intensified cooperation for their Polish and German cities. This symbolic agreement seals a common future for the two cities which have been separated by the history for a long time.

<sup>1</sup> Expertising Governance for Transfrontier Conurbations

<sup>2</sup> Eurometropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai (France/Belgium), Francfort on Oder/Slubice conurbation (Germany/Poland), Eurocidade Chaves-verin (Portugal/Spain), Ister-Granum EGTC (Hungary/Slovakia), Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau (France/Germany), Trinational Eurodistrict Basel (Switzerland/Germany/France).

## Presentation of the “EGTC” project

### The URBACT programme

URBACT is a European programme which aims to **encourage the sharing of experiences between European cities and to disseminate knowledge on sustainable urban development**. The second cycle of the Programme, URBACT II (2007/2013), follows in the footsteps of URBACT I (2002/2006).

### Issues of the “EGTC” URBACT project

The development of **cross-border conurbations** and **the improvement of the quality of life of their inhabitants** call for an innovative approach to go beyond national boundaries.

There are cross-border conurbations on many European borders<sup>3</sup>. The main challenge of cooperation for them is to give **concrete answers** to the needs of the inhabitants in fields such as **urban planning, public transport** (border worker movements), **public services, economic development, environment, health**, etc. For this purpose, they may establish cross-border governance tools: setting-up of a common structure in order to lead urban, economic, social and cultural policies on either side of the border, implementing work programmes, etc.

To respond to this challenge, the “EGTC” URBACT project aims to enable cross-border conurbations to exchange on innovative governance tools based on a partnership that brings together, on the same territory, the competent authorities necessary to the development of common objectives.

### The objectives

The partners will work on the **promotion of innovative governance instruments on a sample of cross-border conurbations in Europe**. They will identify the relevant protagonists and analyse how the cross-border conurbations develop joint diagnostics, strategies and organisation plans. The objective is to identify best practices, define a methodology and analyse how the structural funds, other public funding and legal instruments, such as the European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) can be used to help them in their development.

The project will give cross-border conurbations in Europe the opportunity to identify **concrete results**, success and failure, the causes of such results, and to transfer those good practices into other cross-border conurbations, so as to improve their governance system. Whereas some cross-border agglomerations are quite in advance in this process, other ones, especially from the new Member States, **need good practices as models**.

The **European grouping of territorial cooperation** is today the only legal tool allowing multi-level governance including national authorities when necessary. This project will aim to study **how it could become a European tool of reference to support governance of cross-border agglomerations**.

### Duration

October 2008 – May 2010

### Further information

On the project: <http://www.urbact.eu/egtc>

On MOT: <http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu>

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<sup>3</sup> 60 cross-border conurbations have been identified in Europe.

