

Expertising Governance for Transfrontier Conurbations (EGTC)

Baseline Study Abstract

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Introduction

Since the signature of the Treaty of Rome 50 years ago, the Member-states of the European Union have deepened progressively the spatial integration of the Union. Successive agreements have been taken in favour of the disappearance of the internal borders of Europe. The impact of that integrative process has been felt more greatly in border regions than in territories located far away from national frontiers. Because of the facilitation of flows (people and goods), some functional cross-border territories have emerged.

Because cities are the areas where the majority of the inhabitants in Europe live, they are centres of economic growth, but face at the same time concentrations of social, environmental and economic problems. The main issue for urban areas, and all the more since for cross-border conurbations, is to put in place the most efficient governance system in order to articulate in an efficient way all relevant levels (local, regional, national and European), stakeholders (public/private, politicians/technicians) from both sides of the border so as to elaborate and implement common strategies and policies for the sustainable development of cross-border conurbations. This system should lead to a shared development benefiting to both sides of the borders and, consequently, generate attractive nodes in the competitive international urban network.

The EU institutions have promoted different tools facilitating the emergence of local governance. A recent governance instrument, the European Grouping of Territorial Co-operation (EGTC), enables the articulation of the actions between local actors and regional and national levels. However, formal tools are only one aspect of governance and cross-border conurbations need to exchange views, ideas and expectations about the implementation of successful partnerships. Consequently, the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT) and six European cross-border urban areas have decided to put in place the “EGTC” project (“Expertising Governance for Transfrontier Conurbation”) within the framework of the URBACT II Programme (2007/2013). The project, taking place between October 2008 and May 2010, will stimulate locally-based cross-border governance systems and participate to the dissemination of good practices on spatial cross-border partnerships all over Europe.

1. The characteristics of the “EGTC” URBACT project partners

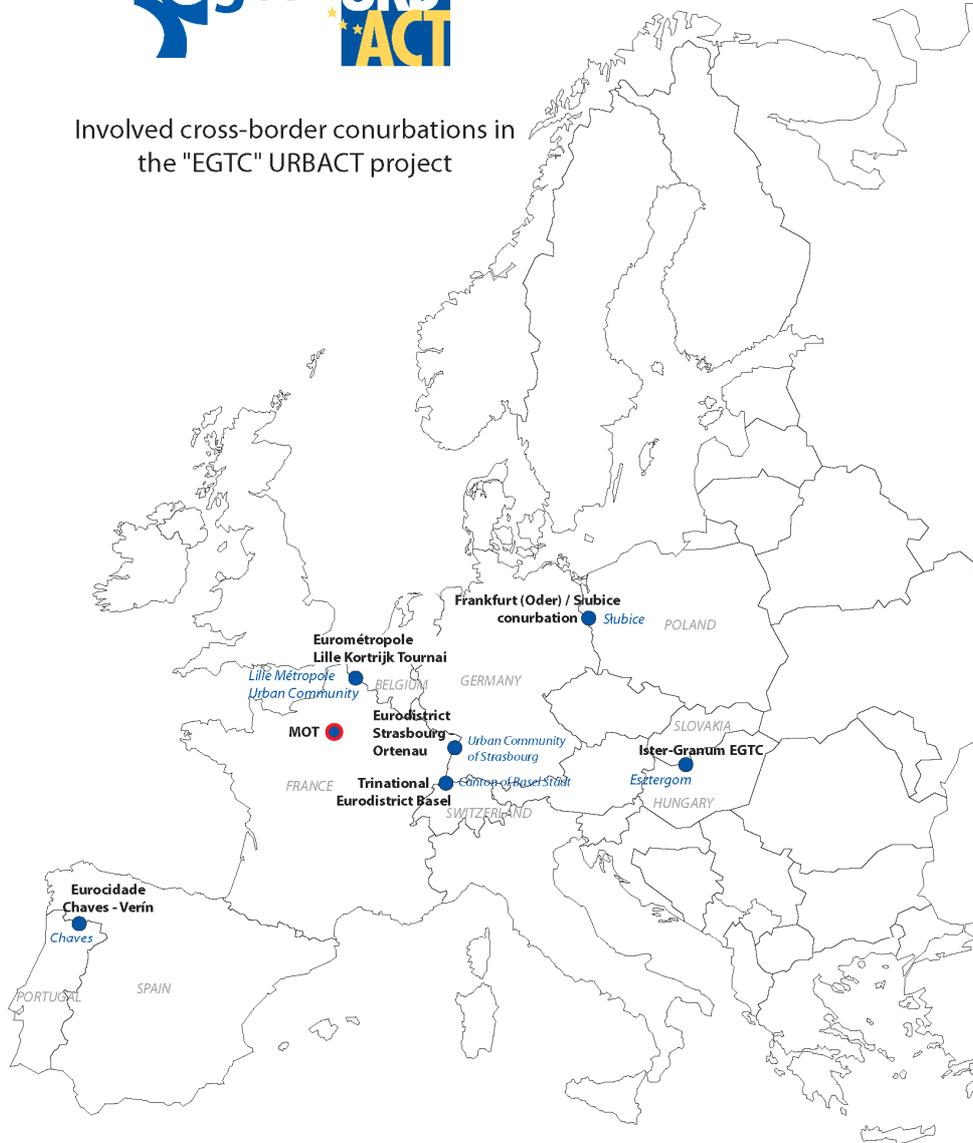
1.1. Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière, a network on cross-border cooperation

MOT, lead partner of the “EGTC” URBACT Project, has been created in 1997 to facilitate the emergence and the implementation of structuring local cross-border projects. Its objective is to support spatial cohesion strategies in cross-border functional areas. It is an association bringing together local authorities and their groupings, associations, cross-border entities, major companies and other organisations involved in the development of cross-border projects. At the moment, the network counts more than 50 members in 10 European countries from which 8 are in the European Union. At the same time, it is strongly supported by the French government in its achievements. Consequently, over the past 10 years, the association has become a strengthened European platform of exchange and a centre of interdisciplinary expertise used by local cross-border territories and European entities such as the Council of Europe. Given its expertise and its will of European opening, MOT has created the network EUROMOT with two other founding partners, Eixo Atlantico and City Twins. This new network involves 19 European countries¹.

¹ Andorra, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Monaco, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Netherlands, United-Kingdom



Involved cross-border conurbations in the "EGTC" URBACT project



- Lead partner (LP)
- Cross-border conurbation
Project partner (PP)



1.2 The six cross-border conurbations: a high potential for valuable exchanges of experience

The cross-border conurbations involved in the EGTC URBACT project are:

- Lille Métropole Urban Community (France) for the Eurométropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai (France/Belgium)
- City of Slubice (Poland) for the Frankfurt (Oder) - Slubice conurbation (Germany/Poland)
- City of Chaves (Portugal) for the Eurocidade Chaves-Verin (Portugal/Spain)
- City of Esztergom (Hungary) for the Ister-Granum EGTC (Hungary/Slovakia)
- Canton of Basel Stadt (Switzerland) for the Trinational Eurodistrict Basel (Switzerland/Germany/France)
- Urban Community of Strasbourg (France) for the Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau (France/Germany)

These areas, located in different regional environment, represent a good sample of European cross-border conurbations (Cf. map). The progressive integration of countries in the EU, the end of communism in Central Europe and the long-term political integration at the communaury scale meant an intensification of flows in the six areas involved in the URBACT project. Migrations were also made possible because of the building-up of bridges and motorways very often financed with the support of the European Union. However, EU regulations facilitating transnational mobility and public infrastructures are not enough to organise cross-border sustainable conurbations and the locally implementation of the Lisbon/Goteborg agenda. A local cross-border governance system is still needed in favour of territorial cohesion as public space is not yet fully integrated at a cross-border level.

The history of modern cross-border co-operation is relatively recent in the territories involved in the "EGTC" URBACT project. Most of the local cross-border collaborations have started in the 1990's. The Interreg programmes were a major tool inciting connections. They were used firstly to test bilateral relationships on single thematic objective. Progressively, cross-border projects uniting different organisations have increased. It has led to the creation of a stakeholders' web, the substratum of the current cross-cutting governance agenda.

The political will to structure the six cross-border conurbations is expressed in three different ways:

- 1) A commitment in terms of time and networking at political and technical levels from both sides of the border.
- 2) The drafting of a common cross-border strategy with the definition of concrete projects.
- 3) The creation of cross-border symbols such as the naming of cross-border territories and a communication strategy favouring the visibility of the cross-border conurbation.

The current strategies developed in the cross-border conurbations put some emphasis on three mains issues:

- 1) The central role of culture and citizenship to succeed territorial cohesion.
- 2) The public services response to the needs of the whole cross-border population.
- 3) Sustainability and territorial marketing agenda.

The implementation of these policies implies innovative partnerships, hence the interest of all the territories to participate into the "EGTC" URBACT Project to exchange ideas concerning their governance system.

2 Objectives of the "EGTC" URBACT Project in terms of governance of cross-border conurbations

2.1 To analyse two dimensions of spatial governance

The first aspect of governance analysed by the "EGTC" Project is the **leadership issues**, that is to say the functioning of the inner circle of partners powering the governance system over the frontiers and the choice of the institutional framework most adapted to the scale, the objectives, the strategies and the work programme defined by each cross-border conurbation.

Depending on the agenda set by the local stakeholders, the most appropriate formal system can be chosen among a wide range of tools created progressively by States and EU institutions.

The second key aspect of governance that is analysed is the **community issue**, the flexible and fluid ensemble of informal networks strengthening over time a sense of cross-border community and European “vivre ensemble”. Cross-border European governance requires the long-term building-up of a community through a renewed citizenship, a transformed sense of solidarity and a communicational agenda.

2.2 To stimulate governance through a web of multi-scale networks

An ever-more efficient governance system in cross-border conurbations can only be possible if the issues at stake are debated by decision-makers in two spatial arenas: the States/EU level and the local, cross-border one. Innovative processes to structure urban poles crossing the border depend on the facilities offered by Member States and EU legislations. It is also based on the ability of local leaders to seize opportunities offered by legal frameworks. Both arenas are interlinked.

Consequently, the “EGTC” URBACT Project will contribute to the strengthening of these multi-scales, public/private interconnections by setting-up 2 different groups of multi-level partnerships. A *Local Support Group*, associating legitimate key-players of cross-border governance, will be created in each of the six cross-border areas to define a Local Action Plan on governance (see below 2.3). At the same time, EU officials and National/Regional representatives involved in the six territories will be regrouped in a *European Support Group* to exchange good practices participating to an evolution of the EU and national frameworks in favour of these cross-border conurbations.

2.3 To develop valuable outputs for cross-border conurbations in Europe

The “EGTC” project has two major series of outputs, which aim to respond to the challenges identified by the project. The first one is the definition of the six Local Action Plans on cross-border conurbation partnership whose objective is to favour a strengthen Leadership/Community governance system and make sure the project’s conclusions will be integrated into local policies. These plans will be nourished by the good practices experienced by the project partners, and other cross-border conurbations, and by the renewed dynamic powered locally by each Local Support Group. Thematic seminars will be organised in the cross-border areas to facilitate face-to-face exchanges in down-to-earth environment.

The second series is linked to the dissemination of results. It will have two main aspects. The first one is the organisation of two major European Conferences on cross-border spatial governance to explain the objectives and results of the “EGTC” URBACT project to other European territories facing the same challenges. The second one is the publishing of a handbook on cross-border spatial governance with three main parts:

- 1) explaining the methodology followed by the seven partners to strengthen their partnership system,
- 2) displaying a set of good practices developed in Europe and
- 3) proposing EU level recommendations in favour of cross-border governance.

See the baseline study: <http://urbact.eu/egtc>