

# Press release

Objectives reached during the  
« 1st Congress on Smart Cooperation »  
25 and 26 June 2012, A Coruña (Spain)

28 June 2012

**Nearly 400 participants met on 25 and 26 June at La Coruña in Spain at the "1st Congress on Smart Cooperation"<sup>1</sup> organised by the CECICN<sup>2</sup>.**

A lot of personalities were present: **Michel Delebarre**, President of COTER, Committee of the Regions and president of the MOT, **Per Bødker Andersen**, President of the CECICN and President of the Union of the Baltic Cities, **Carlos Negreira**, Mayor of A Coruña, **Alberto Núñez Feijóo**, Regional President of Galicia, **Marta Fernández Currás**, Spanish Secretary of State for budget and expenditure, **Ann-Sofi Backgren**, AEBR Vice-President, **Ana Miranda**, MEP, Representative of the Parliamentary Committee on Regional Development, **José Palma Andrés**, Director of European Territorial Cooperation, DG REGIO and **Henrik Morch**, Head of Unit, DG MARKT.

In his address, **Michel Delebarre** summed up the issues of the conference: "We know that the current European and international context is one troubled by the debt crisis." "I have the deep conviction that the response to this crisis is more Europe, more cooperation between cities and regions across borders". In addition to the need for a sufficient budget for the European cohesion policy, he emphasized the importance of finding mechanisms to allow for "a greater association of local stakeholders": "**We need a Europe built on its territories**".

**Nearly 196 million European citizens, or 37% of the population, live in the border regions.**

Discussions showed that **the challenges that Europe is facing cannot be solved without a sustained "cooperation"**, and that the message has been brought to all levels (European, national, regional and local): it is essential to **place the European territorial cooperation at the heart of the EU 2020 strategy, the revival of single market and cohesion policy** itself defined as "vital" to get out of the crisis.

**José Durão Barroso**, president of the European Commission, confirmed in a video message the increase in the budget for the cohesion policy for the next programming period, a sum of 12 billion euros. It will be debated by the Member States in the autumn.

**Ana Miranda** emphasized the commitment of the European Parliament for regional development: "We stand for a strong cohesion policy, which must play a critical role to promote the creation of employment and to promote social inclusion, particularly in border regions, often isolated and less well connected in comparison to non-border territories".

She also announced that the budget for territorial cooperation was considered too low by the Parliament and that it wished to raise it from 3.48% to 7% of the total budget for cohesion policy. This proposal will be considered in the autumn,

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Further information:

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<sup>1</sup> "Territorial Cooperation fostering European integration: Cities and Regions linking across borders".

<sup>2</sup> The Conference of European Cross-border and Interregional City Networks involves the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT), the Union of Baltic Cities, the Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities, MedCities, the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities and the Iberian Network of Crossborder Bodies. Its objective is to boost territorial cooperation among border cities in Europe and to reinforce the message concerning the importance of territorial cooperation. CECICN members represent more than 500 cities in border regions and 37% of European population.

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among the 300 amendments proposed by Parliament, which demonstrates the richness of the parliamentary debates.

In this context, the conference sent this message to Europe, "it is by smart cooperation that we have a smart Europe".

**European representatives have been particularly receptive to the proposals issued by the strategic document prepared jointly by the CECICN and the AEBR and discussed in the workshops of the conference. This document demonstrates that the territorial cooperation has proved its European, political, institutional, economic and socio-cultural added value.**

**Giving visibility to the process of European integration, the territorial cooperation gives life to projects designed to meet the needs of the territories, the more susceptible to boost local and regional economies.**

#### Some key messages were put forward by participants:

- ≡ **It is necessary to "simplify" the management** of the European programmes and projects. According to **José María Piñero Campos**, Director-General of the European funds (Spanish Ministry of finance and public administration): "**We can not manage 21st century projects with 20th century tools**".
- ≡ **The multi-level dialogue must be promoted more than ever**, both "vertically" (between the local, national and European levels<sup>3</sup>) and "horizontally" by putting in place a solid link to civil society.
- ≡ **European and cross-border strategies should systematically take more account of local experiences.** According to **José Antonio Ruiz de Casas**, DG Regio, the experience of the EGTC in Europe is particularly innovative and should serve as an example to advance the European framework.
- ≡ **Better coordination between the programmes and the local projects** is to organize, border by border.
- ≡ **Support for "small projects"** must be maintained as they are essential to forge cross-border territorial identity.

#### In conclusion

The President of the CECICN, **Per Bødker Andersen**, stressed in conclusion its satisfaction with the work done. "This very constructive conference raised many questions in workshops, to which the findings have brought a series of responses". "The work of the CECICN must contribute to a Europe of growth, jobs and a better quality of life." "They have opened a new chapter in the coordination of networks in the CECICN".

And the Mayor of La Coruña, **Carlos Negreira**, concluded: "cooperation is the word of the 21st century".

<sup>3</sup> Represented by the CECICN for these three first levels.