



Conclusions from the 1st Congress on Smart Cooperation

**“Cities and regions cooperating across
borders: an opportunity to overcome crisis”**

25-26 June 2012

A Coruña, Spain

Introduction

Nearly 400 participants met on 25 and 26 June at A Coruña in Spain at the "1st Congress on Smart Cooperation - Territorial Cooperation fostering European integration: Cities and Regions linking across borders", organized by the CECICN (Conference of European Cross-border and Interregional City Networks)¹. Many personalities² and stakeholders from all decision levels, local, regional, national and European, have come to A Coruña.

The conference confirmed the importance of raising the following five key ideas on smart cooperation in order to put European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) at the core of the debate on future Cohesion Policy:

- ≡ Financing Territorial Cooperation in Cohesion Policy
- ≡ Improving the strategic dimension of cooperation
- ≡ Reinforcing governance
- ≡ Developing the tools
- ≡ Contributing to the Single Market

The European representatives have been particularly receptive to the proposals issued by the strategic document prepared jointly by the CECICN and the AEBR³ and discussed in the workshops of the conference. This document demonstrates that the European Territorial Cooperation has proved its European, political, institutional, economic and socio-cultural added value.

Discussions also showed that European Territorial Cooperation gives life to projects designed to meet the needs of the territories and their inhabitants, and to boost local and regional economies. The challenges that Europe is facing today cannot be solved without a sustained cooperation, and that the message has to be brought to all levels (European, national, regional and local). It is essential to place the European Territorial Cooperation both at the heart of the EU 2020 strategy and the revival of the single market. It is cohesion policy itself that defined it as "vital" to get out of the crisis.

¹ The CECICN was born in 2010. Its objective is to promote territorial cooperation among border cities in Europe and to reinforce the message concerning the importance of territorial cooperation. CECICN involves six cooperation networks that represent more than 500 cities in border regions and 37% of European population: the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT), the Union of Baltic Cities (UBC), the Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities (FAIC), MedCities, the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities (CAAC) and the Iberian Network of Cross-border Bodies (RIET).

² Among them: 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 MARKET. See also program of the conference.

³ Association of European Border Regions.

Some key messages from the plenary sessions

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

Michel Delebarre, President of COTER (CoR), summed up **“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 a greater association of local stakeholders as Europe needs to be built on its territories.

Ana Miranda, representing the EP, emphasized the commitment of the European Parliament for regional development: **“Cohesion policy 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”. The budget for territorial cooperation was considered too low by the European Parliament who wished to raise it from 3.48% to 7% of the total budget for cohesion policy.

Further key messages have been put forward by the participants of the Conference:

- To overcome the current crisis cohesion policy needs to be implemented in **all policy sectors**, not only the economic sector.
- A **multi-level dialogue needs to be promoted** more than ever, both "vertically" (between the local, regional, national and European levels) and "horizontally" by putting in place a solid link to civil society.
- There is a **necessity to "simplify" the management of the European programs and projects**.
- **European and cross-border strategies should systematically take into account local experiences**. In this sense the experience of governance structures like the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) is particularly innovative and should serve as an example to advance the European framework.
- **Cross-border territories** are the ideal **laboratories for the European construction**, as borders encounter difficulties (legal, administrative, linguistic, etc.) but also offer untapped development potential for their inhabitants and businesses, on a daily basis.
- A **better coordination between the operational programs and the local projects** needs to be organized, border by border.
- A **support for "small projects"** must be maintained as they are essential to forge the cross-border territorial identity and as they allow to implication of the inhabitants.

Results from the six workshops and two parallel sessions

The Conference has been organized around 6 workshops and 2 parallel sessions of which each has worked on its specific conclusions:

- ≡ Workshop 1 – Macro-regions, coordinated by Xunta de Galicia
- ≡ Workshop 2 – Smart Cross-border Cooperation, coordinated by RIET
- ≡ Workshop 3 – Cooperating in the EU external borders, coordinated by MedCities
- ≡ Workshop 4 – Cooperation contributing to smart growth, coordinated by UBC
- ≡ Workshop 5 – Cooperation contributing to sustainable growth: An Atlantic Strategy to reduce carbon footprint emissions, coordinated by the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities
- ≡ Workshop 6 – Tools for cooperation, coordinated by MOT
- ≡ Parallel Session 1 – Multilevel Governance of cross-border cooperation
- ≡ Parallel Session 2 – Macro-regional Strategies: the future of the Atlantic Area

Workshop 1 - Macro-regions

The first workshop focused on macro-regions. Macro-regions are a new open tool which is not yet fully defined. First one needs to identify common issues and solutions on a given territory. Cooperation has to be organized, local and regional actors linked, and policies and funding aligned. There are no new laws, no new financing and no new institutions (3 No's), but cooperation has to be coordinated and a networking has to be launched. The workshop put forward the role of the European Commission in the setting up of macro-regions. In order to succeed territorial cohesion and a European integration, several principles need to be followed: cross-sectoral work, subsidiarity, multi level governance and decentralization. Challenges are linked to the fact that all actors want to be involved and that not all states involved are Member States. In the future programming period all operational programs should prioritize operations deriving from macro-regions and should assure the link between the different cooperation levels. The workshops concluded that more macro-regions are about to come (Adriatic, Ionian, Alpine, North Sea, Mediterranean, South West, Atlantic etc.).

Workshop 2: Smart cross-border cooperation

The second workshop on smart cross-border cooperation put forward its added value and its good practices, as for example within the Eurocity Chaves Verin. Cross-border cooperation can act as a laboratory of the second generation cooperation (smart cooperation) to advance the single market, via a common use of public resources in sectors as health, education, culture etc. Several examples were presented on euro-citizenship (involvement of citizens), sustainable development and a joint economic development (advancing entrepreneurship, optimized public resources). Weaknesses still remain because of the risk of imbalance between Member States on a given border. In the future there is a need for simplification and a better management of cooperation. This is valid for programs but also for projects. European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) has to be present in strategic documents and synergies shown between ETC and regional Operational Programs. Furthermore the role of regions has to be confirmed in the field of cross-border cooperation. On large EU borders a decentralized management with global grants and sub-programs is supported, in order to avoid a re-centralization. The European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) is an interesting tool, but it needs sufficient resources. The workshop summed up that more resources are needed for ETC, an increase of the co-financing rate up to 85% and an increase of private funding.

Workshop 3: Cooperation on external borders

External cooperation raises high interest where it is implemented, as have shown more than 3,000 project proposals within the call for proposals of ENPI-CBC programmes, 40 large scale projects submitted for the Commission’s approval and over 500 projects awarded. Therefore cross-border cooperation programmes along the external borders of the EU have to be continued and improved. Following concrete recommendations have been developed on this large and multifaceted subject:

- ≡ The funds involved (ENPI-CBC, IPA CBC, ERDF and EDF) have to be coordinated to create synergies and to ensure cross-fertilization of good practices and lessons learned.
- ≡ Long term territorial strategies should be developed across borders with the support of the EU funded programmes. Currents programme’s coordination and integrated macro-regional strategies, as pioneered in the Baltic Sea and the Danube regions should be extended to other areas, such as the Mediterranean or the Atlantic.
- ≡ The EU support should focus on more capacity building for local and regional authorities, on decentralised cooperation, on more citizens’ participation and involvement of private actors, and on the support of cities associations. It should furthermore focus on an integrated approach on urban policies and on the interplay between rural and urban territories. It should also pay attention to climate change, to energy efficiency, to mitigation of settlements and to natural disaster risks, etc.
- ≡ For a better cooperation between local authorities it is recommended to focus on demand driven cooperation projects and public-private-partnerships. Relevant strategies should be focused: (i) Transform States’ legal and regulatory framework to improve decentralization, municipal autonomy and to increase its financial and personnel means; (ii) Build and implement participated holistic city development strategies (CDS) based on transforming projects to reach a city desirable vision and; (iii) Build and implement planning of sectorial strategic challenges.
- ≡ The next ETC programmes, such as MED, should accept to include the rule of 10% of expenditure outside the European Union without restrictions, even if incurred by partners from Member States.
- ≡ Regional cooperation of outermost regions, such as the Caribbean should build a new European policy of wider neighbourhood, by implementing the effective measures for greater synergies between the EDF and the ERDF or even the ENPI in areas such as Canarias, Açores and Madeira.

As a conclusion, the workshop stated that the main challenge is to keep interest in external cooperation.

Workshop 4: Cooperation contributing to smart growth

The workshop showed that the challenges of globalization, the current financial and economic crisis, and the urban age, can only be countered successfully by allowing smart growth. Therefore an economically strong and politically united Europe is needed. European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) is a mandatory requirement as it aims at overcoming the economic situation, by contributing to the creation of growth and jobs, along with the other Cohesion Policy goals. ETC needs a larger budget, but also a more integrated and strategic approach, it must be part of all strategic documents. Finally to create jobs and growth, cooperation requires a multilevel governance approach as well as a more territorialized approach and a strengthened partnership with cities and regions representing the level of proximity of daily life, both in the context of cross-border territories and macro-regions.

Workshop 5: Cooperation contributing to sustainable growth

Sustainable growth means a strategic benchmarking analysis of carbon-footprint causes, effects and alternatives, rooted in local knowledge and real partnership. Therefore European Territorial Cooperation is the necessary tool. According to the experience and results of the CLIMATLANTIC project⁴ (within Atlantic Strategy), as well as other European projects like the Straits Initiative⁵, several aspects of sustainable growth have been brought up:

- ≡ The importance of a multilevel governance approach to enhance roles of each actor, its capacities and its accountability.
- ≡ The polycentric spatial planning which aims at equity and integration of territories, which takes into account the urban-rural sprawl.
- ≡ An energy strategy that has to be locally managed and focused on renewable energies.
- ≡ An informed mobility adapted to diverse flows and territories.
- ≡ A new approach to integrate sea policies based on untapped potential of façades and straits (see especially Atlantic and Channel areas) and of harbor development.
- ≡ The social dimension (for example society is aware and actively involved in participatory sustainable living).
- ≡ The importance of knowledge economy and “intelligent territories”.
- ≡ The importance of an all-inclusive conceptual framework for the territories, as for example for the macro-regions, the Atlantic Area Strategy, etc.
- ≡ The rising human ecological footprint that has to be tackled and whose results should also look for competitiveness.

To sum up the discussions, it is of final importance to come from research to action via capitalization of best practices.

Workshop 6: Tools for cooperation

The workshop 6 on tools for cooperation focused on the following concrete needs for making cooperation function:

- ≡ The need to develop evidence base within cross-border territories, so as to monitor the development of the territories, with the support of Operational Programs and EU-Member States statistical offices.
- ≡ The need to support development of cross-border projects and territories through integrated territorial approaches in cross-border Operational Programs (Integrated Territorial Investments - ITI, local development, etc.), and by involving citizens, civil society, economic partners, etc.
- ≡ The need to give a sound basis for governance of cross-border projects and territories, with appropriate legal tools such as European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), etc.
- ≡ The need to develop capitalization and transfer of thematic and territorial cross-border good practices with the support of EU network programs (Urbact, Interact, ESPON, Interreg C, etc).

⁴ The CLIMATLANTIC project is funded by INTERREG IVB Atlantic Area. <http://atlanticprojects.ccdr-n.pt/> ; www.climatlanticproject.eu

⁵ www.pasdecals.fr/ESI

The following schema shows the necessity for the next programming period to combine the thematic dimension (concentration on Europe 2020 objectives) with the territorial dimensions and a focus on new governance mechanisms, like ITI, etc.

Entry point for programming

Concentration on Europe 2020 objectives



Parallel session 1: Multilevel governance of cross-border cooperation

The first parallel session, focused on multilevel governance of cross-border cooperation, illustrated the need to take European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) into account within strategic documents (Common Strategic Framework, Partnership Agreements). All Operational Programs, as well as national and regional programs, may contribute to ETC. In this sense, ETC Operational Programs can act as catalyst.

The following policy recommendations have been put forward:

- ≡ **The need to coordinate Partnership Agreements across each border** in order to develop synergies between national policies, above Operational Programs.
- ≡ **The need to coordinate regional and local strategies and plans** across borders. **ETC Operational Programs need also to be coordinated with other Programs.**
- ≡ **The need to support territorial approaches**, as for example cross-border ITI set-up via European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), or equivalent instruments.
- ≡ **Develop support for cross-border cooperation at different levels.** These levels may concern Euro-Institutes on borders, as well as national tools (example of the Budapest platform, a European platform of support structures for cross-border cooperation bringing together actors from France, Hungary, The Netherlands and Portugal) or European tools (Interact etc.), in close cooperation with representative networks such as CECICN.

Parallel session 2: Macro-regional strategies

The second parallel session focused on macro-regional strategies, via the example of the Atlantic Arc region. Within the territory it is the matter of an integrated, territorial approach within a polycentric development. The strategy of the Atlantic Arc should not be limited to maritime affairs but focus on a larger macro-regional strategy. This strategy has to be mainstreamed in Partnership Agreements, Operational Programs and sectorial policies. All levels have to be addressed in a multilevel governance approach, especially including on an equal footing the local level. Concerning the action plan, there is a need to assure the consistency between the integrated approaches proposed by the Common Strategic Framework (CSF) and on-going initiatives like RESOE macro-region (Regiones del Sudoeste Europeo). Finally, the Atlantic forum should be kept as consultation mechanism and should integrate local authorities. Here, existing networks will have their role to play.

Several thematic topics of importance for the Atlantic Arc were pointed out:

- ≡ **Urban dimension:** A more urban approach means an engine for growth.
- ≡ **Transport:** One needs not only to focus on connection to the centre of Europe but also on connections between regions and cities, as well as within cities. Special attention needs to be paid to port cities. The Atlantic Arc is the international gateway to Western Europe.
- ≡ **Eco-system:** The Atlantic Arc has to be considered as a whole with its biodiversity, its fragile environments (rivers, estuaries, etc.), its cities and challenges linked to climate change.
- ≡ **Knowledge economy:** When talking about knowledge economy, smart specialization in marine field needs to be mentioned.
- ≡ **Economy of proximity, social and cultural dimension:** The attractiveness of the territory has to be pointed out (including identity and heritage questions).
- ≡ **Participation of citizens:** The participation of citizens may be guaranteed via Local Action Groups.
- ≡ **External dimension:** Relations with other Member States and Neighboring countries (example of Outermost regions) have to be taken into account.

Final conclusion and next steps

The President of the CECICN, Per Bødker Andersen concluded that CECICN must continue to contribute to a Europe of growth, jobs and a better quality of life for its citizens. **CECICN will therefore continue to claim the contribution of European Territorial Cooperation to the EU 2020 strategy, the Single Market and Cohesion Policy,** and this:

- ≡ At European level together with the Directorates Generals of the European Commission concerned (as for example in link with the Urban and Territorial cohesion Inter-service group, etc.).
- ≡ At European level as partner of the Committee of the Regions (as for example concerning the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation Platform, etc.).
- ≡ At European level as partner of the European Parliament.
- ≡ At national level together with the Member States, for example concerning the process of territorial and urban agendas.
- ≡ And concerning all levels within the strategic follow up of Cohesion Policy.

Documents of the conference

Agenda

www.cecicn.eu/PROGRAM_EN_FINAL.pdf

Conclusions

Present document

www.cecicn.eu/presentations/DEF_CECICN_restitution_ateliers.pdf (powerpoint presentation)

Video message from the President of the European Commission José Durão Barroso

www.cecicn.eu/presentations/PRESENTACION_BARROSO.mpg

Strategic Document

www.cecicn.eu/CECICN_AEBR_report_12_03_12.pdf (report)

www.cecicn.eu/presentations/CECICN_doc_strategique_25_06.pdf (powerpoint presentation)

Parallel Session 1 – Multilevel Governance of cross-border cooperation

www.cecicn.eu/presentations/DEF_CECICN_parallel_session_avec_interventions.pdf (all powerpoint presentations)

Parallel Session 2 – Macro-regional Strategies: the future of the Atlantic Area

www.cecicn.eu/presentations/26junio_paralela2_Est_Macrorregionales_LUIS_DOMINGUEZ.ppt

www.cecicn.eu/presentations/Atlantic-Strategy-Coruna-June2012.pdf

www.cecicn.eu/presentations/Smart-Cooperation-MarcusAndersson-Tendensor.pdf

Workshop 1 – Macro-regions, coordinated by Xunta de Galicia

www.cecicn.eu/presentations/25JUNIO_TALLER_1_Mr_PALMA_ANDRES.pdf

Workshop 2 – Smart Cross-border Cooperation, coordinated by RIET

www.cecicn.eu/presentations/25junio_taller2_Joao_Batista.pdf

Workshop 3 – Cooperating in the EU external borders, coordinated by MedCities

www.cecicn.eu/presentations/Coruna_June_2012.pdf

www.cecicn.eu/presentations/D12_05_09_Diaporama_Coop_Reg_OM_ppt_Discours_en_anglais.pdf

www.cecicn.eu/presentations/D12_05_09_Diaporama_Coop_Reg_OM_ppt_IN_ENGLISH.pdf

www.cecicn.eu/presentations/Decentralized_cooperation_with_cities_of_Mediterranean_Region_CECICN_A_Corunha_June_2012.pdf

www.cecicn.eu/presentations/Presentation_prof_Turro_CECICN.pdf

Workshop 4 – Cooperation contributing to smart growth, coordinated by UBC

www.cecicn.eu/presentations/PPT_Coruna_Ferrario.pdf

www.cecicn.eu/presentations/PPT_Coruna_Hautamaki.pdf

www.cecicn.eu/presentations/PPT_Coruna_Jaadla.pdf

www.cecicn.eu/presentations/PPT_Coruna_Ronnmark.pdf

www.cecicn.eu/presentations/RIS3_Ignacio_Gonzalez.pdf

www.cecicn.eu/presentations/workshop_4UBC_smart_growth.pdf

Workshop 5 – Cooperation contributing to sustainable growth: An Atlantic Strategy to reduce carbon footprint emissions

www.cecicn.eu/presentations/Climatlantic_A_Coruna_DBR.pdf
www.cecicn.eu/presentations/Climatlantic_CECICN_25_26JUN_2012_RB_V2pdf
www.cecicn.eu/presentations/presentation_CEICN_Pas_de_Calais_Workshop_5_EN.pdf
www.cecicn.eu/presentations/Teresa_Lameiras_Atlantic_Area_Programme_TL_CONGRESSO_CECICN_25_Junho_2012.pdf
www.cecicn.eu/presentations/TTR_Social_behaviour_pillar_presentation_v10.pdf
www.cecicn.eu/presentations/w5_Energy-A_Coruna_june_2012b.pdf

Workshop 6 – Tools for cooperation, coordinated by MOT

www.cecicn.eu/presentations/DEF_CECICN_workshop6_avec_interventions.pdf (all powerpoint presentations)

Abbreviations

AEBR	Association of European Border Regions
CAAC	Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities – member of CECICN
CDS	City development strategies
CECICN	Conference of European Cross-border and Interregional City Networks
CSF	Common Strategic Framework
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
ENPI-CBC	European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument – Cross-border Cooperation
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
EDF	European Regional Fund
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
FAIC	Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities – member of CECICN
IPA CBC	Instrument for Pre-Accession – Cross-border Cooperation
ITI	Integrated Territorial Investments
MedCities	Mediterranean Cities – member of CECICN
MOT	Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière – member of CECICN
RESOE	Regiones del Sudoeste Europeo
RIET	Iberian Network of Cross-border Bodies – member of CECICN
UBC	Union of Baltic Cities – member of CECICN
