

Position of the MOT on the consultation of stakeholders about the future URBACT program 2014-2020

Version of
2 September 2013



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I. Introduction

The URBACT program has launched a stakeholder consultation about the future URBACT program 2014-2020.

The network of the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT) would like to participate in this consultation, in particular on aspects linked with cross-border cooperation.

Therefore the present documents contains two parts, one about the specificity of cross-border cooperation within the future 2014-2020 URBACT program, and a second part, in response to the questions of the URBACT secretariat.

Presentation of the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT - Transfrontier Operational Mission):

The Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière, created in 1997, is both an association and a French inter-ministerial structure, which has the main objective of facilitating cross-border projects. Its missions are operational assistance to leaders of cross-border projects (project development, legal structures, studies, etc.), networking, assistance in the definition of overall strategies in cross-border cooperation, and implementation of European projects. The MOT brings together within its network sub-national authorities and their groupings, associations, cross-border structures, large corporations, states, etc. involved in cross-border cooperation and situated on both sides of the border. It has about 60 members, from 11 European countries.

To date, the MOT has concentrated its work on cross-border proximity cooperation and assistance in the definition of policies regarding cross-border territories.

Website: www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu

II. The MOT contribution

II.1. Cross-border cooperation in the future URBACT program 2014-2020

The Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT) has much appreciated the URBACT program in the present programming period 2007-2013. The MOT was lead partner of the "EGTC" working group, for "Expertising Governance of Transfrontier Conurbations" (<http://urbact.eu/fr/projects/metropolitan-governance/egtc/homepage/>), and found the program user-friendly and stimulating.

For the next programming period, the MOT's basic expectation (as stakeholder representing cross-border territories), with regard to the URBACT program, is that urban cross-border territories, and not only their national sub-parts, can build European networks with the support of the program.

Within the URBACT "EGTC" project, due to the program rules, Lille Metropole Urban Community (FR) represented the Eurometropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai (France/Belgium); the City of Słubice (Poland) represented the Frankfurt (Oder)/Słubice conurbation (Germany/Poland); the City of Chaves (Portugal) represented the Eurocidade Chaves-Verin (Portugal/Spain); the City of Esztergom (Hungary) represented the Ister-Granum EGTC (Hungary/Slovakia); the Urban Community of Strasbourg (France) represented the Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau (France/Germany); and the Canton of Basel-Stadt (Switzerland) represented the Trinational Eurodistrict of Basel.

The 2014/2020 regulations now acknowledge the legitimacy of territorial integrated approaches also in a cross-border context, with the possibility of using ITI (Integrated Territorial Investment) or CLLD (Community-Led Local Development) approaches. For instance for ITI, the regulation says that:

“For cooperation programs, the intermediate body to carry out the management and implementation of an Integrated territorial investment referred to in Article 99(3) of Regulation (EU) No./2012 [CPR] shall be an EGTC or other legal body established under the laws of one of the participating countries provided that it is set up by public authorities from at least two participating countries”.

The consequence of this is that EGTCs (European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation) or equivalent bodies (e.g. the GLCT Grand Genève (local cross-border cooperation grouping or LCCG, in French: groupement local de coopération transfrontalière or GLCT), etc.) should be allowed to take part in URBACT as full lead partners, or partners.

Public organizations such as the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT) should also be able to lead or take part in URBACT projects, as has been the case in the past.

In addition, the MOT suggests that the participation of cross-border territories of an “urban rural” nature (e.g. some of the existing eurodistricts) also be made possible in URBACT projects.

II.2. Responses to the questions of the URBACT secretariat

What are the most important urban challenges faced by cities like yours? How can transnational exchange networks support cities in addressing these challenges?

The document “Cities of tomorrow” of the DG REGIO (http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/citiesoftomorrow/citiesoftomorrow_final.pdf) well identifies these challenges, which also concern cross-border cities and agglomerations (see points 4.3.2 and 4.6).

Networking projects allow an exchange of best practices among cities. This is even more important for cross-border cities or cross-border territories, commonly confronted with similar challenges while building their cross-border common strategies.

What kind of capacities and skills should be strengthened at local level to translate the lessons from URBACT networks into concrete action (e.g. in terms of city management, of policy instruments, policy areas related to urban issues, etc.)?

It is important to emphasize the relevance of the local action plan approach for creating added value within the cross-border conurbations. The results in the “EGTC” project were very promising in this regard. The idea is to assure the sustainability of these local action plans.

How could the program cater to these needs in terms of capacity-building activities?

The program should focus more on best practice transfer and exchange between similar URBACT projects.

The future URBACT program should also increase the synergies with the other network-programs: INTERREG C (which should address the territorial dimension of the cohesion policy and not only the thematic dimension), ESPON and INTERACT.

Which are the main obstacles for cities to participate in the URBACT program?

One of the biggest obstacles concerns the insufficient funding with regard to the work to be realized within the projects.

The experience of the “EGTC” URBACT working group showed that the initial 4-month development period in phase I was very short, especially for realizing the baseline study. It should be possible to extend the phase I, in particular in regard with the baseline study, e.g. from 4 months to 8 months.