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Workshop: Local cross-border territories at the service of citizens

06 October 2009, 14:30-16:15

Organiser: EUROMOT – European network of cross-border local authorities

Chair: Jose PALMA-ANDRES, European Commission, Regional Policy DG

Speakers: Dr. Hans-Günther CLEV, Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière, EUROMOT
Peter UDVARDI, EGTC Ister-Granum (Hungarian-Slovakian border), URBACT “EGTC” project
Klaus BALDAUF, City of Frankfurt/Oder, Germany (German-Polish border), City Twins Association, EUROMOT
Andy POLLAK, Center for Cross Border Studies, Northern Ireland (Republic of Ireland-Northern Irish border)

Outline

Jose PALMA-ANDRES introduced the EUROMOT workshop on local cross-border territories at the service of citizens by stating the importance to collect the point of view and the needs of local actors for the current discussions on territorial cohesion and the future of cohesion policy at the European level.

To make the process of European integration better shared and supported by the citizens, it must find its response in the concrete and visible results. In local cross-border territories, services to the citizens are precisely a very good example, as highlighted the testimonies of the workshop, on subjects such as transport, information services, health and training. Discussions focused on the challenges of how to maintain common cross-border services in the long run, how to organize the needed multilevel governance and how to involve citizens in the cooperation process.

Debate

Dr. Hans-Günther CLEV first presented the example of public transport as a major factor for integration in cross-border territories and pointed out the important number of daily commuters on European borders. Several promising projects of cross-border transport services are underway, but public transport still needs to be promoted in a multilevel governance approach in order to find solutions to the many difficulties that remain, especially concerning joint operation, financing in the long term run, interoperability, etc.

Peter UDVARDI presented the setting up of the Ister-Granum EGTC on the Hungarian-Slovakian border, second EGTC in Europe. He highlighted the experience of one of EGTC organs for an innovative project financing. A solidarity fund, based on a percentage of taxes perceived by local governments on one side, has been set up for investment projects on the other side in areas such as schools, culture and education at the service of the citizens.

Klaus BALDAUF outlined the experience of the city twin Frankfurt (Oder) / Slubice at the German-Polish border, which is an excellent example of organizing common networks serving citizens from both sides of the border. Last June a conference on the common future of the city twin helped to involve citizens and civil society in the building up of a "common vision", basis of a cross-border local action plan for 2010-2020 in the context of the URBACT project "EGTC".

Finally, the example of the Northern Ireland/Ireland border presented by **Andy POLLAK** has shown that one of the major difficulties for cooperation in a political sensitive context is the difficulty of institutionalizing cooperation, even if the actors are implementing many very concrete and advanced single projects in areas such as health (exchanges between hospital), training, planning or information for citizens (common platform).

Conclusions

Jose PALMA-ANDRES concluded the workshop by summing up the discussions as follows:

- The workshop tried to show how local cross-border territories may use the European integration process and what common responses can be found to meet the needs in terms of "services to citizens".
- However, setting up concrete projects in a cross-border context remains still a complex exercise.
- The examples put in evidence that stakeholders at different levels of competency need to organize a multi-level governance in order to develop adapted cross-border solutions.
- The presented projects finally showed the strong will of local actors to progress. It is therefore necessary at the EU level to find adapted ways to meet their needs.

More information:

Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière: www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu

EGTC Ister-Granum: www.istergranum.hu

City of Frankfurt/Oder: www.frankfurt-oder.de

Center for Cross Border Studies: www.crossborder.ie / www.borderpeople.info

Urbact "EGTC" project: www.urbact.eu/egtc

Quote

"Local cross-border territories are the places par excellence of European integration, visible for the citizens via common cross-border services."