Joël Giraud
Vice-president of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (PACA) region
MOT vice-president

What are the principal issues and objectives of the Alps-Mediterranean Euroregion?

Looking beyond common development issues, the Liguria, Piedmont and Aosta Valley regions in Italy and the Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur and Rhône-Alpes regions in France have formed strong historical, economic and cultural links. Nowadays the problems common to the five regions are bringing them closer and leading to the development of cooperation actions on topics related to the living conditions of their inhabitants, such as transport, environment, employment, training and economic development. Cross-border cooperation has thus been established between the regions of the Alps-Mediterranean Euroregion, which benefits from the developments accomplished within the framework of the various generations of European programmes. This experience has resulted in the opening of a joint office in Brussels and established a culture of cooperation which the new 2007-2013 programming will be able to amplify.

The main objective of the Alps-Mediterranean Euroregion is to raise the profile of the five regions as seen by European institutions and thus affirm the role of the regions in the European area. The Euroregion is defending the central position and the specific characteristics of the Alpine and Mediterranean territory in the context of an expanded European Union. It is building interregional and transnational cooperation spaces, giving the regions greater influence over the major policies of the states and the European Union and enabling them to better defend their interests.

Why have you chosen the form of an EGTC to structure the framework of your cooperation?

The formation of an EGTC will confer legal existence on the Alps-Mediterranean Euroregion, providing it with an indispensable basis for its development. By enabling different levels of government (national, regional, local) to work together in a cross-border context while accepting the division of competences, this instrument will allow us to manage a Community programme financed by the structural funds, but also to conduct cross-border, interregional and transnational cooperation projects outside the Community programmes, including with the Principality of Monaco.

The Alps-Mediterranean Euroregion

Located on the French-Italian border between the Alps and the Mediterranean, the Alps-Mediterranean Euroregion encompasses the Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur (PACA), Rhône-Alpes, Piedmont, Aosta Valley and Liguria regions. Inaugurated in January 2008, it covers a vast territory of 110,000 sq. km and 17 million inhabitants.

Following an initial declaration of understanding in July 2006 in Turin, the first step of the Euroregion was taken on 18 July 2007 with the signature of a memorandum of understanding that officially established the Alps-Mediterranean Euroregion. The aim was to form a cooperation space intended to intensify exchanges and strengthen economic, social and cultural links between the five regions.

The Euroregion functions based on a rotating presidency held in turn for six months by the partner regions. Five working groups have been formed to cover the five priority action areas: Accessibility and transport, Innovation and research, Environment and risk prevention, Culture and tourism and Education and training.

In order to base the Euroregion on sound legal foundations, the five regions have undertaken to prepare a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). In this context the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière has provided legal and technical support for the formation of this EGTC, within the framework of a study initiated under the presidency of the PACA region in June 2008.

In late January and early February 2009, respectively, the Rhône-Alpes and Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur regional assemblies approved the draft convention and statutes of the EGTC. The location of the registered office, in France, remains to be defined, then the EGTC can be formally established by a decree of the prefect of the region concerned. The new structure will then be able to implement its development strategy for the Euroregion territory. To help the partners manage this, in autumn 2008 the MOT also conducted a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis covering the whole territory. This analysis resulted in an inventory of the territory and provided the regions with a better understanding of each others’ strengths, weaknesses, competencies and opportunities to work together.

Developing trade between Corsica and Italy

Backed by Livorno province*, the “Pim-Ex” project was approved by the Interreg IVA France-Italy “Maritime” programme in January 2009. It aims to develop trade in goods between the ports of Haute-Corse and Tuscany.

The Italian mainland is a local space for Corsica. However, the large majority of the island’s trade takes place with Marseille and the French coast.

The “Pim-Ex” project aims to strengthen trading links between French and Italian businesses and develop their economic activities, mainly within the associated ports, which are the real maritime borders and entry gateways between Corsica and Italy.

This objective depends on the implementation of logistic facilities enabling development of shipping traffic and reducing goods feeder costs.

The project therefore highlights two practical actions:
- the establishment of an import-export office tasked with developing the trading potential of SME/SMIs, providing incentives to businesses to open up export markets and encouraging relations between Italian producers and supermarket distribution in Corsica.
- the establishment of one or more logistics platforms: as the supermarket distribution market is expanding in Italy, the establishment of a platform (the first would be in Bastia) will strengthen trading links, reduce feeder costs for food products and speed up flows while making them more reliable.

* The other partners of the project are the Haute-Corse chamber of commerce and industry (P), Lucca and Massa Carrara provinces (I) and Savona, Olbia and Cagliari municipalities (I).
First thematic seminar on the "internal governance"

More than 100 participants met in Chaves, Portugal, on 12 March 2009 for the first thematic seminar of the "EGTC" URBACT project, organized by one of the six partner conurbations of the project: Eurocidade Chaves-Verín. Welcomed by the mayor of Chaves, João Gonçalves Batista, and the mayor of Verín, Juan Manuel Jimenez, the participants discussed the means of strengthening the internal governance of cross-border conurbations. Other public figures present included the Portuguese secretary of state for regional development, Rui Nuno Baleiras, the President of the Diputación de Ourense, José Luis Baltar, and elected representatives of the Frankfurt (Oder)/Slubice cross-border conurbation.

The seminar identified recurrent problems and common solutions for improving this “internal governance” of cross-border conurbations. Among the problems or obstacles encountered in the territories, the points highlighted by the partners included:
- cross-border conurbation projects do not receive sufficient recognition and consideration in overall policies at national and European levels;
- linkage between the political level and the operational level must be strengthened;
- the formation of a joint structure (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) for example) is not enough: the most difficult part is to make the instrument work on the basis of an overall strategy and structuring projects.

The need for a strong political commitment

The impetus imparted by political leaders is essential; their “cross-border vision” drives the cooperation. Political action is inseparable from the technical teams which implement the political decisions. The need for a stronger link between these two levels was strongly emphasized. The "EGTC" project partners recommended the organization of discussions at European level between elected representatives and civil servants of cross-border territories to strengthen this link and generate a genuine European and cross-border administrative culture.

"EGTC“ URBACT project

 sendMessage at the "internal governance"

More than 100 participants met in Chaves, Portugal, on 12 March 2009 for the first thematic seminar of the "EGTC" URBACT project, organized by one of the six partner conurbations of the project: Eurocidade Chaves-Verín. Welcomed by the mayor of Chaves, João Gonçalves Batista, and the mayor of Verín, Juan Manuel Jimenez, the participants discussed the means of strengthening the internal governance of cross-border conurbations. Other public figures present included the Portuguese secretary of state for regional development, Rui Nuno Baleiras, the President of the Diputación de Ourense, José Luis Baltar, and elected representatives of the Frankfurt (Oder)/Slubice cross-border conurbation.

The seminar identified recurrent problems and common solutions for improving this “internal governance” of cross-border conurbations. Among the problems or obstacles encountered in the territories, the points highlighted by the partners included:
- cross-border conurbation projects do not receive sufficient recognition and consideration in overall policies at national and European levels;
- linkage between the political level and the operational level must be strengthened;
- the formation of a joint structure (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) for example) is not enough: the most difficult part is to make the instrument work on the basis of an overall strategy and structuring projects.

The need for a strong political commitment

The impetus imparted by political leaders is essential; their “cross-border vision” drives the cooperation. Political action is inseparable from the technical teams which implement the political decisions. The need for a stronger link between these two levels was strongly emphasized. The "EGTC" project partners recommended the organization of discussions at European level between elected representatives and civil servants of cross-border territories to strengthen this link and generate a genuine European and cross-border administrative culture.

"EGTC“ URBACT project

sendMessage at the "internal governance"

More than 100 participants met in Chaves, Portugal, on 12 March 2009 for the first thematic seminar of the "EGTC" URBACT project, organized by one of the six partner conurbations of the project: Eurocidade Chaves-Verín. Welcomed by the mayor of Chaves, João Gonçalves Batista, and the mayor of Verín, Juan Manuel Jimenez, the participants discussed the means of strengthening the internal governance of cross-border conurbations. Other public figures present included the Portuguese secretary of state for regional development, Rui Nuno Baleiras, the President of the Diputación de Ourense, José Luis Baltar, and elected representatives of the Frankfurt (Oder)/Slubice cross-border conurbation.

The seminar identified recurrent problems and common solutions for improving this “internal governance” of cross-border conurbations. Among the problems or obstacles encountered in the territories, the points highlighted by the partners included:
- cross-border conurbation projects do not receive sufficient recognition and consideration in overall policies at national and European levels;
- linkage between the political level and the operational level must be strengthened;
- the formation of a joint structure (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) for example) is not enough: the most difficult part is to make the instrument work on the basis of an overall strategy and structuring projects.

The need for a strong political commitment

The impetus imparted by political leaders is essential; their “cross-border vision” drives the cooperation. Political action is inseparable from the technical teams which implement the political decisions. The need for a stronger link between these two levels was strongly emphasized. The "EGTC" project partners recommended the organization of discussions at European level between elected representatives and civil servants of cross-border territories to strengthen this link and generate a genuine European and cross-border administrative culture.

"EGTC“ URBACT project

sendMessage at the "internal governance"

More than 100 participants met in Chaves, Portugal, on 12 March 2009 for the first thematic seminar of the "EGTC" URBACT project, organized by one of the six partner conurbations of the project: Eurocidade Chaves-Verín. Welcomed by the mayor of Chaves, João Gonçalves Batista, and the mayor of Verín, Juan Manuel Jimenez, the participants discussed the means of strengthening the internal governance of cross-border conurbations. Other public figures present included the Portuguese secretary of state for regional development, Rui Nuno Baleiras, the President of the Diputación de Ourense, José Luis Baltar, and elected representatives of the Frankfurt (Oder)/Slubice cross-border conurbation.

The seminar identified recurrent problems and common solutions for improving this “internal governance” of cross-border conurbations. Among the problems or obstacles encountered in the territories, the points highlighted by the partners included:
- cross-border conurbation projects do not receive sufficient recognition and consideration in overall policies at national and European levels;
- linkage between the political level and the operational level must be strengthened;
- the formation of a joint structure (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) for example) is not enough: the most difficult part is to make the instrument work on the basis of an overall strategy and structuring projects.

The need for a strong political commitment

The impetus imparted by political leaders is essential; their “cross-border vision” drives the cooperation. Political action is inseparable from the technical teams which implement the political decisions. The need for a stronger link between these two levels was strongly emphasized. The "EGTC" project partners recommended the organization of discussions at European level between elected representatives and civil servants of cross-border territories to strengthen this link and generate a genuine European and cross-border administrative culture.