

European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs) with French participation:

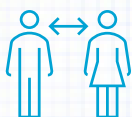
20 years on – An overview and future cross-border prospects

Introduction

Reflecting its long-standing interest in EGTCs, the MOT's flash study, conducted between January and July 2026, provides **an overview of cross-border EGTCs with French participation**, twenty years after the first regulation on EGTCs. Building on this assessment, the report also sets out future prospects for this flagship instrument of territorial cooperation.



Study Methodology



Interviews

- 6 EGTC directors
- Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs
- European Commission
- European committee of the Regions



Qualitative analysis

- Activity reports
- Statutes



Questionnaire

- Sent to EGTCs on French borders



Workshop

- With the EGTCs in May 2026



What is a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)?

Established by Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006, an EGTC is a legal instrument of the European Union. As a legal entity, it enables stakeholders from different Member States to carry out joint projects and territorial cooperation initiatives.



A study set in a broader European context...

- In 2022, the Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives (CESCI) published its 'Snapshot of EGTCs with Hungarian participation'. The aim of this study was to examine the EGTCs with Hungarian participation over a ten-year period.
- In 2026, the ISSiRFA, linked to the Italian Prime Minister's Office, presented a comprehensive report on the state of all EGTCs with Italian participation.

The local institutionalisation of cross-border cooperation

In French border regions, this cooperation has been unfolding since the 1970s

As early as the 1970s, cross-border cooperation began to take shape along several French borders, aimed at addressing shared challenges. From the 1990s and 2000s onwards, these initiatives received growing political support at the national level. The creation of Eurodistricts and discussions on the legal and institutional barriers to cooperation gradually highlighted **the need for a more structured framework**. This development thus paved the way for **the creation of EGTCs, designed to facilitate cooperation between actors operating within different administrative frameworks and areas of competence**.

The legal framework for EGTCs under the 2006 and 2013 regulations: a European ambition to strengthen territorial cooperation

Established by European Regulation No 1082/2006 and reinforced in 2013, an EGTC constitutes a legal framework intended to facilitate territorial cooperation between actors from different states. **Endowed with legal personality and its own budget, it may, in particular, sign contracts, employ staff, and implement actions or manage cooperation projects or programmes on behalf of its members.**

However, an EGTC does not create any new powers: its activities must remain within the scope of the powers held by its members. Its value therefore lies in its ability to bring together, within a single structure, stakeholders from different institutional levels and to facilitate the delivery of joint projects.

The use of EGTCs at borders, building on previous cross-border cooperation

In France, cooperation stakeholders were quick to embrace EGTCs as a tool, with the creation as early as 2008 of the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis. **In most regions, EGTCs do not create new cooperation, but rather provides a legal and institutional framework for existing cross-border initiatives.**

As of April 2026, 25 EGTCs include French participation, 19 of which were cross-border in nature. Present along all of France's land borders, they illustrate how firmly established this instrument is in border regions. Six other EGTCs operate on a transnational or interregional basis, at broader levels of cooperation.



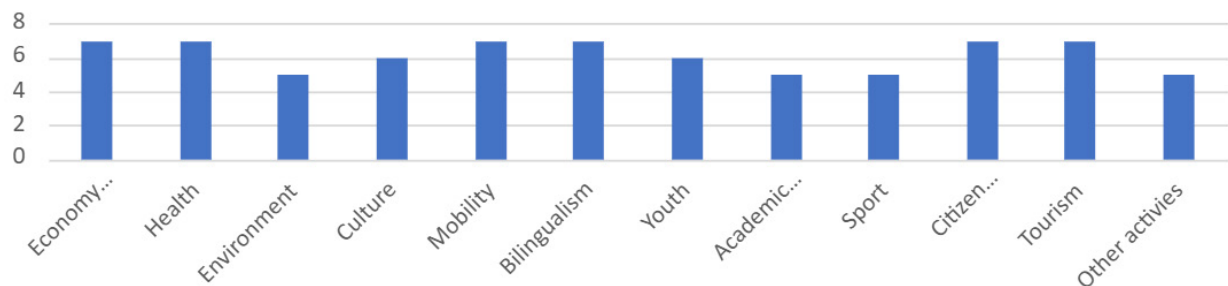
Cross-border EGTCs with French participation: cooperation structures addressing a wide range of issues

EGTCs: eclectic cross-border structures

Cross-border EGTCs vary greatly, both in terms of the composition of their members and the scope of their activities. Their capacity for action depends directly on the powers held by the bodies that make them up: the presence, or conversely the absence, of certain administrative levels can therefore have a tangible effect on the projects they are able to undertake.

Areas of activity of cross-border EGTCs

(based on responses to the questionnaire – 11 responses – multiple answers were possible)



This diversity is also reflected in their statutes. **Some EGTCs specialise in a specific area**, such as higher education or heritage promotion. **Others, described as generalist, opt instead for deliberately open statutes** so that they can adapt their priorities and areas of intervention to the needs of the region and the aims of their governance.

EGTCs for cross-border cooperation

General-purpose EGTCs

- Eurodistrict PAMINA
- Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau
- Eurodistrict Eurhena
- Eurodistrict SaarMoselle
- EGTC Pirineos Pyrénées
- EGTC Euroregion Pyrenees-Mediterranean
- EGTC Euroregion Nouvelle-Aquitaine-Euskadi-Navarra
- EGTC Pirineus-Cerdanya
- Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis
- EGTC West-Vlaanderen / Flanders Dunkirk Côte d'Opale
- EGTC Alzette Belval
- GECT Secretariat of the Greater Region Summit



Multi-border

Specialised EGTCs

- EGTC Maritime Alps-Mercantour European Park
- EGTC International Marine Park of the Strait of Bonifacio
- EGTC Hospital of Cerdanya
- EGTC Pays d'Art et d'Histoire transfrontalier des Vallées catalanes du Tech et du Ter
- EGTC European Nature Park of Scarpe-Escaut Plains
- GECT INTERREG Greater Region Managing Authority
- EGTC Eucor





Inter-EGTC workshop on May 4th, 2026, at the MOT, as part of the study

For some EGTC management teams, this flexibility is one of the tool's main strengths. However, it does not mean that these bodies can act without restriction: their actions remain constrained by the powers of their members as well as by their human and financial resources. An EGTC thus remains, above all, an instrument for coordination, networking and the implementation of joint projects. **The question of a possible transfer of specific powers is currently the subject of debate amongst the various EGTCs.**

EGTCs and their funding: financial situations under strain

EGTCs rely on fragile financial balances, even though their budgets remain broadly stable. Their resources come mainly from contributions from their members, European funds and, in some cases, surpluses from previous financial years. For the majority of them, membership fees form the bulk of their funding.

Main obstacles identified by EGTCs

(based on questionnaire responses – 11 responses – multiple answers were possible)



Increasing financial contributions remains a delicate task, given the severe budgetary constraints weighing particularly heavily on local authorities. EGTCs are therefore developing various strategies to continue their activities with the same resources, for example by broadening their partnerships or by adjusting the arrangements for allocating contributions amongst their members. These financial choices may also raise issues of governance and balance amongst partners.

European funds can act as a real catalyst for the strategies pursued by EGTCs, but their use remains highly uneven across different regions. As EGTC status does not, in itself, guarantee preferential access to European funds, access to funding depends on the specific practices of various programmes and cross-border regions. **Depending on the borders involved, EGTCs thus observe varying degrees of openness on behalf of monitoring committees and managing authorities towards these structures,** with some reporting reluctance in the allocation of funding or a lack of understanding of specific characteristics of EGTCs.



Participatory workshops in the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis

The human and civic dimensions of EGTC cooperation

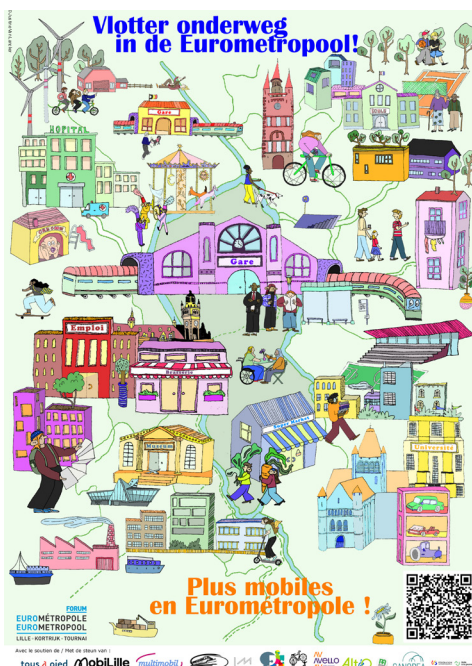
Beyond legal and institutional frameworks, **cross-border cooperation relies above all on the commitment of the individuals** who bring it to life. The involvement of elected representatives is crucial and, with each election, **EGTCs strive to engage new representatives in cross-border cooperation**.

This human dimension is reflected in language use: **despite the promotion of bilingualism and multilingualism, varying levels of proficiency can complicate cooperation** and create imbalances between partners.

Human resources also present a significant challenge. EGTC teams are generally small, and **recruitment can be hampered by differences in labour law, taxation or social security systems between countries**. These difficulties are currently fuelling discussions about **a specific status for EGTC staff**, which will be the subject of a working group within the European Cross-Border Platform.

Finally, EGTCs are seeking to **increase civil society's involvement** through participatory mechanisms. However, their visibility remains limited, particularly amongst young people, making communication and public engagement a key challenge in their own right.

Public meetings organised by the Alzette-Belval EGTC →



Brochure produced by the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis (Europe's first EGTC) Forum

Future Prospects – better understanding of the unique nature of EGTCs: 8 recommendations

A partnership between the State and EGTCs that needs clarifying

Following the study, several options have emerged to help better recognise the specific characteristics of EGTCs, strengthen their links with central government and facilitate their work in support of cross-border territories:

- **Recommendation No. 1:** On the suggestion of relevant authorities (Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, Ministry of the Interior, etc.), establish and mandate an EGTC observatory with French participation to ensure the regular collection of data on these groupings; this monitoring could be carried out by the MOT.
- **Recommendation No. 2:** Establish a ‘forum for EGTCs on French borders’ to serve as a channel for exchange between EGTCs, with the aim of promoting the sharing of best practice and facilitating the rapid and straightforward identification of obstacles encountered by these cross-border bodies; this channel could be coordinated by the MOT.
- **Recommendation No. 3:** Encourage the French State to develop an ‘EGTC doctrine’ clarifying the terms of the French State’s participation in EGTCs.
- **Recommendation No. 4:** Extend the power of Prefects to grant exemptions to facilitate administrative exemptions for the benefit of EGTCs.
- **Recommendation No. 5:** Invite the French State and the States participating in bilateral committees to systematically involve EGTCs, as well as any cross-border entity that politically represents cross-border living areas, in their meetings.

Within Interreg monitoring committees, place greater emphasis on the specific nature of EGTCs

Interreg programmes already offer EGTCs specific opportunities, but implementation remains uneven across different borders. Several measures could help ensure greater recognition of their role in driving territorial cooperation:

- **Recommendation No. 6:** During the 2028–2034 programming period, allocate dedicated Interreg funding for the examination of applications under BridgeforEU.
- **Recommendation No. 7:** For Interreg programmes, ensure that the provisions of Interreg regulations which allow EGTCs to act as sole beneficiaries of projects are better implemented.
- **Recommendation No. 8:** Promote the widespread adoption of functional areas amongst Interreg programme authorities, as well as the management of functional areas by cross-border bodies such as EGTCs.

The full study is available in French to MOT members:

<https://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/publications/>



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