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8 Civil society and cross-border cooperation



Mission
Opérationnelle
transfrontalière

guides

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LEGAL TOOLS: POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITS OF DIRECT INVOLVEMENT

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR CIVIL SOCIETY CROSS-BORDER INITIATIVES

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Editorial



In the past lines of confrontation or, in contrast, walls separating the living areas of communities preferring to remain apart from one another, borders are becoming the principal melting pot in which the citizens themselves are inventing the Europe of tomorrow. Is it generally realized that almost a third of the European population lives in cross-border areas?

To stimulate and guide this cross-border development, the European Union has set up funding programmes and legal frameworks. After several years of experience, the time has come to update them.

Funding. 7.75 billion euros have been allocated to territorial cooperation for the 2007-2013 period. Instruments such as the INTERREG or the URBACT programmes, with the "EGTC"¹ project, enable neighbouring regions and European partners to get to know each other better, compare themselves with each other, share their respective experiences and conduct joint projects. The European Commission has recently carried out an initial assessment of these actions.

Legal frameworks. To encourage partnerships between public-sector entities and some private-sector entities, a new legal instrument, the European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC), has provided a consistent legal basis on all intra-EU borders.

EGTCs, flexible, versatile and operational, can integrate the various aspects of cross-border life, including transport, healthcare and education.

Here also the time has come for an initial assessment. Despite the merits of the formula, the EGTC has not been as successful as expected, and everyone involved agrees on the need to facilitate participation by third countries and the need for technical assistance.

As emphasized by the European Parliament in its resolution voted on 7 October 2010 on the cohesion policy after 2013, above all the implementation of EU policies must be simplified.

Many cross-border areas still lack strategic and operational vision. But everywhere, at grass-roots level, the demand of civil society is growing. After the first initiatives taken in western Europe, central Europe should be the epicentre of the most innovative projects: there history has sometimes left still-painful wounds, resentments, memories of nightmares that are difficult to set aside. By organizing daily life together, on both sides of what is no longer a border but a common space, the ghosts can be warded off for good. Europe is not being built solely, or even principally, by agreement between the leaders but at the grass roots, through reconciliation between the peoples. ■

Alain Lamassoure,
Member of the European Parliament,
Chairman of the European Parliament Committee on budgets,
Vice-president of the MOT

1. « Expertising Governance for Transfrontier Conurbations », cf. page 12.

Introduction

The question of the role of civil society in cross-border cooperation is crucial. It is a return to the sources, an increasing awareness of the very purpose of cross-border cooperation and, in a broader sense, of the construction of Europe.



*By Dr. Hans-Günther Clev,
director-general of the MOT*

This publication covers civil society both as a player in cross-border cooperation and as a recipient of public-sector projects or a consumer of cultural and information provision – a civil society still suffering every day from administrative and legislative obstacles and at the same time benefiting from the opportunities in terms of diversity of supply or price differentials offered by a border situation.

A combat fought every day

As in any publication of limited size, choices have had to be made, and the reader may be disappointed to find relatively little on culture, on school exchanges or leisure encounters. Often precursors, today their visibility suffers to some extent from a normality that has been established, the feeling that crossing borders has become commonplace in some way. Thanks to the process of European integration, what was exceptional in the past has become normal today. Even though it goes without saying that this is a success in itself, care should also be taken to avoid losing impetus and to persevere in reducing the remaining obstacles, whether legal (a school bus that is no longer insured when it crosses the border, for example), in mind-sets (what is the benefit to me of cooperating?) or in priorities in a globalized world (English preferred to the language of the neighbour by parents).

Like the construction of Europe, cross-border cooperation, which is a major element in it, would be well-advised to bear in mind its beginnings and the enthusiasm already shown both by the political founders of Europe and by the citizens on the borders soon after the end of the second world war. Like the first poppies appearing on fallow

land, initiatives by members of civil society were the precursors of cooperation: students coming from all over Europe storming the border and demanding “Europe” (1950), artists and writers designing a new European capital (“Bourg Blanc”/“Weiße Burg”) on the French-German border (1952-54), firemen improvising connections for their hoses so that they could help each other, etc.: spontaneous cooperation, meeting a wish and a need, sometimes at the limit of the laws of the time.

A complex interaction of stakeholders

The States first set up cooperation arrangements with each other, then moved beyond a phase when cooperation was perceived as being the exclusive remit of foreign policy, towards an extension to local authorities of options for cooperation (Madrid Convention and its successors). Cooperation backed above all by the public authorities has developed, driven by the PACTE and then INTERREG programmes.

Despite the undisputable successes that this has achieved, there are still gaps. Gaps related to the fact that life is not determined by the public authorities alone, a trend reinforced by the European policies of open markets, competition and privatization of services. How can areas of life not organized by the public sphere, such as businesses, universities, cultural players, the world of sport, associations and other NGOs, be included? Both the European Union and institutions have understood the importance of showing the citizen the practical added value of such policies for their day-to-day life and, if possible, not only including them in these processes but also making them active participants—this time with the objective of broad participation and with an emphasis on democratization and on making use of the creativity that members of civil society can contribute. Meanwhile, the role of the States in the future is likely to be more that of facilitators than of controllers.

Perhaps the term “cross-border activities” should be used rather than “cross-border cooperation” when the participants are members of civil society, since in general there are no formal or symbolic acts, but rather things of day-to-day life: attending a concert of the Euroclassique festival or buying products at the cross-border farmers’ market.

A multi-faceted reality

The Upper Rhine Metropolitan Region has not only become aware of the need to involve civil society in cross-border cooperation, but also made the choice of formalizing such involvement and giving active support to such participants, as illustrated in the area of sport. The example of the Institute EuroSchola shows an interesting approach intended, among other things, to establish links between the civil society participants, NGOs in this case, still too often acting in a piecemeal way, each in its own area of interest (page 7).

This need for self-organization takes one of the most developed and professionalized forms in Europe in the example of the GTE (European cross-border grouping) which operates on the French-Swiss border; an example which also shows the political weight and the economic impact that the citizens can achieve if they organize themselves to overcome border-related difficulties (page 8).

Developing complementarities, synergies and an attractive package both for students and for businesses in border areas is the objective in university cooperation and in research: providing prospects for young people and a highly-qualified workforce with an international outlook for businesses are key elements for the economic development of border areas (page 9).

Nevertheless, many civil society entities have difficulty obtaining funding for their cross-border ideas and projects, as the INTERREG mechanisms are often too complex and too cumbersome for them, so simple funding instruments are needed. Things would be easier if on all borders there were foundations funding small projects, as the FEFA (Fondation Entente Franco-Allemande) does in a way involving very little bureaucracy (page 10).

The example of the border between Galicia and Portugal's Norte Region gives an idea of the economic potential blocked by the borders and which needs to be released: even with limited financial support, strong growth of exchanges benefiting businesses and employment

on both sides of the border is possible (page 11).

There are a variety of ways of involving civil society in the decision-making processes, from informal councils to 'civil parliaments' or to dialogue tools. This involves not just dialogue with the public authorities but also, and above all, between each other: blogs (such as Øresunddirekt) are encountering a great success (page 15). Moreover, the role of the press and the media (page 16) should not be underestimated if the objective of involving civil society is pursued seriously. That is true both for the 'conventional' press and for specialized providers—initiatives often on the margin between a commercial production and the work of volunteers, with all the funding difficulties that implies.

What civil society need today is financial support with limited constraints so that they can experiment and breathe life into their ideas for projects. This would enable civil society to be an active partner in the construction of Europe. ■



Civil society, a pillar of the sustainable development of the cross-border territory

“The Upper Rhine trinational metropolitan Region is looking for its bases”



*by Jürgen Oser, delegate,
Upper Rhine trinational metropolitan
Region, Regierungspräsidium Freiburg,
Baden-Württemberg (Germany)*

With an area of 21,000 square km, 6 million inhabitants, an economy worth 202 billion euros per year, 90,000 border workers and 370 successful cross-border projects, the Upper Rhine Region is particularly suitable for experimentation with new cooperation models. The challenge is to position the region in the front rank in European and international competition.

The Upper Rhine Region lives on the differences between its territories, which together form an attractive area to live. Day after day, thousands of citizens benefit from the multiple opportunities provided by the neighbouring country and consider this ‘culture hopping’ as the expression of a certain quality of life.

On 9 December 2010, in the presence of high-level representatives of the foreign ministries of France, Switzerland and Germany and of DG Regio, the “Upper Rhine trinational metropolitan Region” was officially inaugurated. This will bring together in synergy all the present cross-border participants and projects in the areas of politics, economics, science and the universities.

However, this project will not be able to come to life without the active participation and the commitment of the citizens. Contracts, agreements and cooperation between experts will not be enough to give this territory an identity beyond its borders, nor generate a feeling of belonging together.

That is why three “citizen forums”¹ are now being organized in the form of “workshops of the future”² in Strasbourg, Karlsruhe and Basle, on the following issues addressed to the citizens: what characteristics

must the Upper Rhine metropolitan Region have? What makes it live? How can I identify with it? What are the opportunities, the risks? What is missing? Who is taking part in it and how can I take part in it personally? How can I create a space without borders with my neighbours? What are my political expectations?

The citizen forums aim to mobilize civil society to position it as the ‘fourth pillar’ of the metropolitan Region, alongside the political, economic and scientific representatives. They are tasked with integrating these participants into the discussions and the sharing of responsibilities.

Other subjects, such as associations and full- or part-time voluntary work, are just as important. In the region there are some 8000 sporting associations, representing two million members, one third of the population. Just a few years ago these associations were still not



The first trinational citizen forum in the Upper Rhine space was held on 16 October 2010 in Strasbourg.

networked. In this context, the sports officers of the partner regions have formed the Regio-Sport working group within the Upper Rhine Conference, between France, Germany and Switzerland. Its objective is to facilitate cross-border sporting encounters and to network the associations, sports groups and the authorities. It will be open to all the citizens of the region. For example, the interactive map on the web site³ can display details of 250 associations. Each year the best projects will be awarded the Upper Rhine Sports Award. ■

1. www.metropolregion-oberrhein.org ; 2. Run by an independent institute ;
3. www.regio-sport.eu

NGOs cooperating to develop mutual confidence

Cross-Border Cooperation Strategy of Non-Governmental Organizations of the Tesin Silesia Euroregion



*By Dorota Madziová
and Hynek Böhm,
project coordinators,
Institute EuroSchola
(Czech Republic)*

The project aims to deepen the existing cross-border cooperation in the Tesin Silesia/Ślask Cieszyński Euroregion, which is located at the eastern end of the Czech-Polish border. The cross-border cooperation in this region has been intensive since the fall of Iron Curtain in 1989. It was institutionalised in 1998 when the Euroregion was founded.

The Euroregion is composed of municipalities from both sides of the border. Taking into account the relatively high level of autonomy of self-administered municipalities in both countries, we can speak about bottom-up integration. Yet the civic dimension and the massive involvement of non-governmental organisations have been missing from cross-border cooperation in the region.

This was the reason why two principal NGOs from the region – Stowarzyszenie Być Razem from the Polish side and Institute EuroSchola from the Czech side – invited other NGOs operating in the Euroregion to take part in a joint exercise aimed at defining a joint cross-border cooperation strategy for the non-governmental organisations.

The project activities managed to involve 27 NGOs. The aim of the strategy was to agree upon the basic principles and guidelines of NGO cooperation. In addition to these general guidelines, more practical project proposals have been identified. The work was organised in three working groups in the following fields: education/culture, leisure-time/culture and social services. Each of the groups held five meetings during spring 2009, which worked on the project core, the strategy itself.

The project produced clearly positive results: for the first time since 1989 cross-border cooperation by NGOs has been brought under one strategic umbrella in the Tesin Silesia Region.

It immediately resulted in significantly more cross-border cooperation projects being prepared by the NGOs and also initiated new partnerships that were unlikely to appear without the project.

For example, the “children from both sides of the Olza river” project aims to facilitate access to leisure activities provided on one side for the children living on the other side. The “travels on the other side” project deals with the organisation of joint trips to the places of interest of the Euroregion. The project is financed exclusively from the NGOs’ own funds.

The obstacle encountered in the first phase of the project was what could be described as a hesitant acceptance of the project by the Czech part of the Euroregion, which was basically caused by its fear of losing “the cross-border monopoly” in the region.

The NGOs are staying on the cooperation track, both with and without INTERREG funds. The extent of their planned activities clearly shows the potential to bring civil society, from both banks of the river Olza forming the border, closer together. ■



An association defending the interests of border workers

© GTE / Lucien Fortunati



Questions to Michel Charrat, president of the GTE (European cross-border grouping)

In your opinion, why is the involvement of civil society a major challenge in the development of cross-border territories?

The challenge is to enable an osmosis between the cross-border populations living on a given territory and working on both sides of the border. The objective is to favour all the elements that enable people to live together in a living area and in a space where employment is cross-border. The involvement of civil society provides practical solutions to all the problems encountered by cross-border populations in matters relating to social or tax law, employment, housing, transport, healthcare, etc.

What progress and difficulties have you been able to observe in this area?

Significant progress has been made in cross-border cooperation over the last five years, but the difficulty remains the same over time: convincing the political sphere on both sides of the border to share common development objectives, setting aside the individual defence of the national domain and the protectionist temptation of each territory.

What are the expectations of the citizens? How do you satisfy them?

The expectations of the citizens are many and wide-ranging, and it is for this very reason that we have developed the cross-border centres and the employment service within the GTE.

The European cross-border centres are one-stop shops for cross-border information. They bring together French and Swiss partners, all specialists in a cross-border issue. These partners are on duty at certain times and give talks on topics as diverse as employment, starting a business, consumer affairs, housing, training and transport.

The employment service provides information to the members of the association on the job market and working conditions in Switzerland and puts them in touch with Swiss employers looking for personnel. The members of the cross-border grouping can apply for job vacancies in

The Groupement transfrontalier européen (GTE)

The GTE (European cross-border grouping) is a non-profit association established in 1963 and working on the French-Swiss border. Its objective is better integration of border workers on either side of the border and representation and defence of their interests. In 2010 the GTE has 31,000 members, a hundred militant volunteers and 26 employees. The GTE has been a member of the MOT since 2008. www.frontalier.org

Swiss companies, post their CV on line and attend talks and workshops. Today the Swiss population and the EU population inhabiting this territory are trying to eliminate this border and are counting on active associations such as the GTE to meet this need.

The objective of the GTE is to establish synergy between the Swiss and French authorities and provide opportunities for meetings between them, for example at the annual cross-border workers show or at the cross-border employment forum, where Swiss and French businesses can talk to each other and meet the same public.

How can civil society and the public sphere be linked?

Civil society must be integrated into all the development projects of territory. That is what is happening, in an embryonic form at present, in the context of the local council for the development of the Geneva region and the Bellegarde basin. ■

GTE stand at the cross-border employment forum in Annemasse on 14 and 15 October 2010.



© GTE / Lucien Fortunati

University networks for greater cross-border mobility

“Eucor, driver of Rhineland university cooperation”



© Jean Isenmann, ADEUS

by Jacques Sparfel,
secretary-general
of Eucor

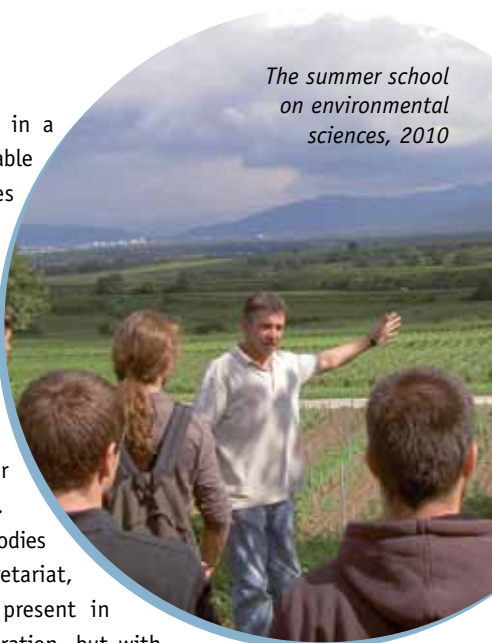
Eucor, the European confederation of Upper Rhine universities, founded in 1989, brings together the five universities of the Upper Rhine Region: Basle, Freiburg-im-Breisgau, Strasbourg, Karlsruhe (KIT) and Haute-Alsace. The confederation is a French-German-Swiss meta-network covering a territory located between the Vosges and the Black Forest. Within this 21,500 square km basin shared by nearly 6 million inhabitants, the Eucor universities with their 103,000 students and more than 11,000 teaching and research staff account for the major part of its research and higher education potential.

By introducing a common university card, the founding convention of Eucor from the start gave practical form to the idea of a trinational campus without borders. It grants any student the same rights in each of the universities, allowing them to take courses there, and enables lecturers and researchers to teach and conduct research there.

This initiative has resulted in a number of networks and remarkable projects in both the sciences (neuroscience, biotechnology, environment, climatology) and the humanities (ancient history, Scandinavian studies). Research, training programmes, summer schools, conferences and sporting and cultural events constitute the cross-border programme of the confederation.

Structured with governance bodies assisted by a permanent secretariat, the cooperation operates at present in the manner of European cooperation, but with many residual obstacles (languages, university calendars) and without yet fully exploiting the potential of its establishments. Local cooperation, in the absence of an appropriate regional system and language policy, suffers from the competition of more exotic horizons with which the term “mobility” is associated spontaneously.

The Upper Rhine metropolitan Region project gives a second wind to regional policy. Within this political initiative, Eucor is certainly an essential structuring element for contributing to its success and to its European and worldwide influence. ■



*The summer school
on environmental
sciences, 2010*

A Mediterranean Euro-campus

Representing 180,000 students and 12,500 teaching and research staff, the **PRES¹ euro-méditerranée**, founded in 2008, brings together six French and Italian universities². Its objective is to federate higher education and research institutions in a cross-border campus. The scope of its action is broad, including training and research, vocational integration, and technology transfers to SMEs, and focuses on a major multidisciplinary scientific project on the topic of the sea. It is based on two major priorities: mobility of

students and of teaching and research staff, and the establishment of a digital campus. In June 2010 the partners announced their intention to set up an EGTC named “Euro-campus méditerranée”. The financial commitment of the six partners is 2 million euros, and the construction phase should be completed in 2011.

It should be noted that another cross-border PRES, **PRES Perpignan-Méditerranée**, was established in March 2010 in the Catalan cross-border area between five French and Catalan universities.

1. **What is a PRES?** “Several higher education and research establishments, [...] may decide to group all or part of their activities and their resources, for example in research, in a Pôle de Recherche et d’Enseignement Supérieur (research and higher education cluster) [PRES] in order to conduct projects of common interest together.” French programme act for research of 18 April 2006

2. The universities of Corsica, Genoa, Nice Sophia Antipolis, Pierre et Marie Curie (Paris 6), Sud - Toulon Var and Turin.

Solutions for financing micro-projects

“The Fondation Entente Franco-Allemande and civil society”



by André Bord,
former minister,
president of the FEFA

The approach of the *Fondation Entente Franco-Allemande* (FEFA) is resolutely citizen. FEFA has set itself the objective of bringing together the active participants in society: boost and promote cooperation between France and Germany, between French and German economic, social and cultural protagonists. To date, the foundation has dealt with 677 grant applications and more than 500 projects have received financial support, affecting several thousand persons in France and in Germany.

In consequence, 5.726 million euros have been distributed for French-German projects favouring the development of French-German cooperation and backed by civil society entities (associations, foundations, schools, etc.). All categories of the public are involved: young people, adults and senior citizens. All areas are considered: cultural, social, scientific, economic, sporting, etc. For example, the foundation supports Baal Novo, an authentically French-German theatre company based in Strasbourg and Offenbourg. It also supports a French-German on-line cross-border news website, *2 Ufer/2 Rives*.

Recently the foundation has started to not only dispense individual financial aid to French-German projects but also sponsor projects itself: it is organizing the first Strasbourg German Days. A prospective study on bilingualism at work is being conducted, with its results to be published in 2011. A major meeting of business leaders of the cross-border region is planned. A French-German supplement has been published in January 2011 in the regional press of Alsace, Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate and northern Switzerland. There is no lack of actions, all with the same goal: bringing the citizens together. ■

www.fefa.fr



Day of discussion between architects, technicians and elected representatives with responsibility for urban planning within the Catalan cross-border area

Catalan cross-border area

A joint support fund

Three years ago the *Generalitat de Catalunya* and the *Conseil général des Pyrénées-Orientales* set up a joint fund for the development of cooperation micro-projects on the territory of the Eurodistrict between the Girona Region and the Pyrénées-Orientales department, on the French-Spanish border. This fund results from the linkage of two coordinated calls for projects, each managed by one of the authorities. In 2010 about thirty projects received grants, including sharing of good practices between urban planners, language training for business leaders, and a website for promoting cross-border cooperation between associations.

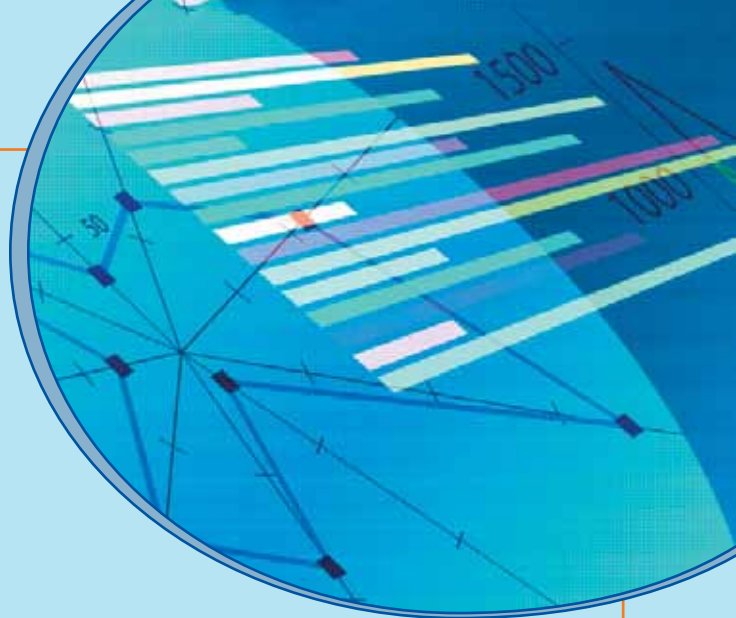
Mulhouse

Call for cross-border projects

Mulhouse city council has issued a call for cross-border projects, intended to support cooperation initiatives by Mulhouse civil society. The projects, which could be submitted up to 15 October 2010, were required to bring together the citizens of the trinational area and provide better knowledge of the culture and the language of the neighbour. Particular attention was paid to projects involving participants from the cities of Freiburg (Germany) or Basle (Switzerland) or from the territory of the Eurodistrict Region Freiburg/Centre and South Alsace. Mulhouse council can fund up to 50% of the total project budget.

[www.mulhouse.fr/fr/appel-a-projets-transfontaliers](http://www.mulhouse.fr/fr/appel-a-projets-transfrontaliers)

Funds for developing cross-border cooperation of businesses



“A Galicia/Norte Portugal cross-border venture capital fund”

On the border between Spain and Portugal, the Galicia/Norte Portugal cross-border venture capital fund is an investment resource intended to promote business development and economic relations between Norte Portugal and Galicia.

It was set up by the Galicia/Norte Portugal working Community, formed by the northern Portugal coordination and regional development Committee (Ministry of the environment and spatial planning) and the Galicia regional government, with financial support from the European cross-border cooperation programmes between Spain and Portugal: INTERREG IIA (1994-1999) and IIIA (2000-2006).

Two funds are participating in this initiative: “Inovcapital” and “Xesgalicia”, reputable venture capital companies in Portugal and in Galicia.

The areas of intervention

This venture capital fund invests in the establishment of industrial units and in commercial expansion activities, through control of distribution networks or the launching of brands.

The following situations are covered:

- investment in Galicia by businesses or entrepreneurs from the Norte Region of Portugal,
- investment in the Norte Region of Portugal by businesses or entrepreneurs from Galicia,
- joint projects between entrepreneurs from the Norte Region of Portugal and from Galicia, developed in this geographical space, or in another territory if they benefit the economies of the two regions.

The target businesses

The targets are economically and financially viable SMEs, whether industrial, commercial or service providers. These SMEs must have their head offices on the territory of the Galicia/Norte Portugal Euroregion.

The forms of participation

The capital investments are made jointly by “Inovcapital” and “Xesgalicia”, with identical amounts and terms, or individually by either of these funds. The holding may be up to 45% of the share capital of the business, for a period of up to 10 years. These investments may also be supplemented by medium- or long-term loans.

In 2009 this fund invested in projects developed by five companies, to a total of 4 million euros, in sectors as diverse as textiles, heat treatment, steelmaking and soap manufacture. ■

The example of Eurefi

Eurefi is a venture capital fund set up on a joint initiative of the European Union and a group of Belgian, French and Luxembourg private partners. The fund is intended to contribute to the establishment of cross-border mini-groups by guiding businesses that want to move into neighbouring markets and are considering developing an activity beyond borders by means of a branch, a partnership or an acquisition. The present capital is 22.265 million euros.

www.eurefi.eu



Governance and civil society: an issue at the core of the URBACT "EGTC" project¹



Between November 2008 and June 2010, the seven partners² of the URBACT "EGTC" project worked in a network on the topic of the governance of cross-border conurbations. There were a number of objectives: share experiences, capitalize on best practices, put forward potential improvements of the systems of cross-border governance of the partner sites, issue recommendations at national and European Community levels, etc.

During these two years of work, the accounts and discussions have shown the importance of the involvement of civil society in such cross-border processes. This involvement was even defined during the project as "one of the conditions for the success of a cross-border territory project". Some examples highlighted during the project are given on the following pages.

All the results of the URBACT "EGTC" project and the seminar in Tournai (February 2010) on the involvement of civil society are available on the website :

www.urbact.eu/egtc



PROJECT PART-FINANCED
BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

"One of the conditions for the success of a cross-border territory project"...

1. Expertising Governance for Transfrontier Conurbations

2. MOT (lead partner), Lille Métropole Communauté Urbaine (France/Belgium), Słubice city council (Poland/Germany), Chaves city council (Portugal/Spain), Esztergom city council (Hungary/Slovakia), the Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg (France/Germany) and Bâle-Ville canton (Switzerland/France/Germany).

Civil society integrated into the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis



Development council of the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis, the forum of the Eurometropolis is a means of including civil society in the discussions and the various work carried out by the first European grouping of territorial cooperation.

The forum consists of 60 representatives of civil society (30 French, 15 French-speaking Belgians and 15 Flemish-speaking Belgians). These representatives are members of the consultative bodies of the cross-border territory: the Lille Métropole development council, the Walloon Picardy development council and Transforum. Economic entities, trade unions, associations, cultural organizations, sports clubs, citizens, etc., are represented in the forum. On 28 September 2009 its members elected Patrick Peugeot as their president for a two-year term. The president convenes a meeting of the Bureau every month to organize the work of the forum and maintains links with the other development councils, thus favouring the interactivity of these bodies.

The forum participates in cross-border discussions, issues opinions and formulates project proposals for the Eurometropolis. Close collaboration has been established with the six topic-based working groups of the Eurometropolis (mobility-accessibility, services to the population, tourism, territorial strategies-sustainable development, economic development-employment and culture). The forum will be able to give its opinion and submit practical proposals. Several cross-border projects have already been initiated by civil society collaboration, such as the Eurometropolis employment forum.

Civil society has already set up two working groups: Santé-médico-social and Transfrontalia. Submitted to the INTERREG Committee, the project of the Transfrontalia group aims to implement multiple actions to introduce the culture of the neighbours, learn their language, and get to know the respective territories. Civil society should thus form a genuine source of proposals within the Eurometropolis. ■

www.lillemetropole.fr/index.php?p=986

A cross-border civil parliament in the Ister-Granum Euroregion

The Ister-Granum Euroregion brings together the Hungarian and Slovakian towns of its territory, the two largest of which are Esztergom in Hungary and Sturovo in Slovakia. In 2006 the institutional partners of the Euroregion wanted to give a place to civil society in the cooperation and established a 'civil parliament'. Taking the form of an association, this entity is tasked with representing the world of the associations and enabling representatives of NGOs and associations to work on strengthening links. It represents the interests of the associations within the Euroregion and federates these participants, which individually would not have enough weight to influence the decision-making process. The civil parliament also runs a service network providing technical and legal assistance to civil organizations for setting up projects.

However, this parliament still has to find its place in the decision-making process of the EGTC of the Euroregion, established in 2008, even though it is already reinforcing its 'bureau of experts'. Eighteen representatives of the economic world from either side of the border also sit on a regional development council, a consultative body. ■

www.istergranum.hu

Frankfurt (Oder) and Słubice in 2020: acceptance by the citizens of the cross-border cause

In June 2009 the border towns of Frankfurt (Oder) in Germany and Słubice in Poland organized the "Conference of the Future 2020" for the cross-border conurbation. Two hundred citizens from either side of the border and from all sectors of society took part in it, wanting to build a common vision of the future. The German and Polish inhabitants debated in mixed groups and identified strategies and practical projects to improve their cross-border life.

Most of the ideas were incorporated into the Frankfurt (Oder)-Słubice 2010-2020 action plan, adopted by the two municipal councils in April 2010. Here are a few examples:

- "so that when primary school finishes for the day all the children can communicate with their neighbours in their own language, it is proposed to introduce, from 2013, one hour of Polish and German in all the intake classes of the schools located in the two towns";
- "in order to conduct the public debates on the cross-border cause and inform the population about cross-border life, it is planned to organize an annual meeting with the citizens and to set up a joint cooperation and coordination office (project which is going to be implemented).

In culture and the arts, cooperation between the two towns is not yet very developed. Nevertheless, civil society entities promoting initiatives in this area are supported financially by the two towns. This has resulted, for example, in the setting-up of a music festival, Transvocale, and German-Polish concerts by students from the university of Viadrina. ■

www.slubice.pl



Citizen participation in the Conference of the Future in Słubice in June 2009.

PARTICIPEZ ! CONSTRUISONS NOTRE AVENIR ENSEMBLE
 MACHEN SIE MIT: GESTALTEN WIR ZUSAMMEN UNSERE ZUKUNFT

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 Les trois dernières contributions des forums français:

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Discussion en direct jeudi (14 octobre) avec le Vice-président de l'Eurodistrict Frank Scherer
 Chères participantes, chers participants, Avant

The interactive platform

Dialogue with the citizens, a priority for the Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict

Since its establishment in 2005, the Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict wanted to place the citizen at the centre of its project and its action. Civil society was first mobilized through events aimed at the general public, such as the European Picnic, the Bicycle Festival and the Hiking Day, as well as the Solidarity Kilometre mobilizing schoolchildren on both sides of the Rhine.

The inauguration in 2004 of the Jardin des Deux Rives, a cross-border landscaped park between Strasbourg and Kehl, has made a broad contribution to establishing these events among the major festive and popular occasions of this territory, attracting several thousand participants each year.

This spontaneous popular acceptance has played an important part in the determination of the Mayor of Strasbourg and the leaders of the Eurodistrict to conceive a participation system which founds a new cross-border governance. The establishment of the Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict EGTC on 4 February 2010 has facilitated the initiation of discussion on citizen involvement, in order to give citizens their say on their expectations, queries and proposals regarding the Eurodistrict, contributing to enriching its project and raising awareness of it.

An interactive on-line discussion platform (www.mon-eurodistrict.eu) was introduced in October 2010, in partnership with a specialized agency. It is a forum for feedback and discussion dedicated to the Eurodistrict. Planned to have several sections, this platform will also be a means of defining practical projects which will be submitted to the Eurodistrict Council by their initiators. This overall approach prefigures the application of a cross-border citizenship consistent with the ambition of a cross-border intermunicipality for the Eurodistrict. ■

www.eurodistrict.eu

With the Mimram footbridge, the Jardin des Deux Rives between Strasbourg and Kehl is the meeting point of the Eurodistrict.



The Øresund Region gives the floor to the citizens



**Questions
to Lars Whitt,
bureau head,
Øresunddirekt**

Would you consider the web forum as a successful experience?

Working with the cross-border information website www.oresunddirekt.com, we have found open and personalised information to be of great importance to citizens. We provide public information through around 1,000 articles about tax regulations, social security, labour markets, etc. But that is only one side of life in a cross-border region. We also wanted to provide the citizens with a tool enabling them to communicate with each other across the borders. Our experience is that citizens tend to help each other with “everyday” questions, such as how to find a babysitter, where to park the car, etc. Since it was launched, thousands of citizens have used our forum to answer such small but important questions.



From your experience, what perception do the citizens have of cross-border cooperation?

Before the Øresund bridge opened in 2000, there was a high degree of public resistance to the project. But the public attitude has changed since then, and the concept of the “Øresund Region” is becoming commonplace. Nowadays, most citizens have positive feelings about the bridge and the cross-border region. As they have found out, it has the potential to improve their day-to-day lives, and has provided them with new opportunities.

What lessons can you draw from your experience?

The most important lesson is to always take the target group – the region’s citizens – extremely seriously. If you do not provide them with the information and the tools they need in order to live in a cross-border

The Øresund Region and the creation of Øresunddirekt

The Øresund Region consists of the county of Scania in Sweden, and the counties of Copenhagen, Frederiksborg, Roskilde, Sealand Occidentale and Storström and the regional municipality of Bornholm in Denmark. To prepare the arrival of the bridge - tunnel between Copenhagen and Malmö (in 2000), the Øresund Committee was established. It is a political forum bringing together national, regional and local institutions.

To facilitate the life of the inhabitants from both sides of the border, Øresunddirekt was established in 2005 in order to provide a chat forum and an information service to the citizens in various fields: culture, public services, etc.

www.oresunddirekt.com

region, the advantages of living in the region will not be accessible to the general population but only to a few. The most important lesson is to always take the target group – the region’s citizens – extremely seriously. If you do not provide them with the information and the tools they need in order to live in a cross-border region, the advantages of living in the region will not be accessible to the general population but only to a few.

Could you highlight some key cross-border projects led by the civil society in the Øresund Region?

«Øresundsborger» (Citizens in the Øresund Region) is a politically neutral organisation that aims to improve the conditions for cross-border commuters. Its main focus is the development of a democratic structure for the citizens in the Øresund Region.

«AndrasidanSundet» (On the other side of the strait) is a mainly Swedish community website for Swedes who live in Denmark. Its articles and features take a humorous approach to the national differences, and aim to help the Swedish understand the Danish better. ■



The emergence of cross-border media

The media can play an important role in the construction of a cross-border identity and in the emergence of a feeling of belonging to the territory. Of course they provide information about local cross-border projects and policies, but they are of particular interest to the citizens when they cover initiatives that have a direct impact on their everyday lives.

Furthermore, experiments show that the interest of the population in cross-border issues is real and is reinforced when the media provide opportunities for free expression and direct discussions between the citizens of the cross-border area.

Despite this, the initiatives in this area are still isolated and disparate. This raises the question of an 'audiovisual public service requirement' in cross-border territories which would enable development and funding of sustainable cross-border media projects.

Here are some examples of initiatives on French borders. ■

Cross-border developments in the Catalan Eurodistrict media



In the Catalan cross-border area, cross-border matters are attracting growing interest from the media. The French-Catalan bilingual digital general news media "La Clau", started in 2005, covers both local (Pyrénées-Orientales department and Girona province) and regional (from Barcelona to Montpellier) news. Other local or national media have appointed correspondents based on the other side of the border: Catalan television, based in Barcelona, has a correspondent and an office in Perpignan, as does the Catalan national radio Catalunya Ràdio, while the Perpignan daily "L'Indépendant" has a correspondent based in Barcelona.

A radio for the Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict



The first French-German web radio, Radio Eurodistrict (ReD), was started up in Strasbourg in 2004 by a team of French and German journalists. ReD describes itself as a media bridge between the two banks of the Rhine through bilingual and independent news production, and intends to bring the citizens of the Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict closer together.

www.radioeurodistrict.com

No Télé and its cross-border programmes



No Télé, the regional television of Walloon Picardy, in Belgium, has been developing cross-border projects with its French counterparts for some fifteen years. One collaboration has been established with Flemish television to set up a project of weekly cross-border programmes: "Transit" on the economy, "Transactua" on politics and "Trans'Art" on culture. These programmes, co-funded by INTERREG IVA, are broadcast on the three regional channels. "Trans'Art", for example, promotes cultural activities and has a strong boosting effect on the development of cultural activities in the three regions.

www.notele.be

The example of the "2Ufer/2Rives" daily news



This on-line French-German daily, started in 2009, targets the whole population of the Upper Rhine. Its objective is to provide a media in two languages, favouring a bilingual approach to the region and establishing an element of identity common to the Upper Rhine. The website emphasizes a cross-cultural perspective, highlighting topics that have little coverage on the other bank. About 2,000 persons per day are now showing an interest in cross-border topics.

www.2-rives.com

The tools for involving and supporting civil society participation

Legal tools: possibilities and limits of direct involvement

The importance given to direct civil society involvement in cross-border arrangements is accepted and is today becoming substantial in a number of territories. As shown by the examples highlighted in this publication, initiatives involving civil society are diverse and meet various needs.

The issues of better governance and more optimal functioning of cooperation are raised and lead the participants to give their partnerships a formal framework. Reinforcement of these partnerships must be based on a good linkage between civil society, with its knowledge of the terrain and representative of societal needs, and the institutional stakeholders, with the means to act and democratic legitimacy.

The European Union now has a legal toolbox for cross-border cooperation between territorial authorities¹. What is the situation regarding the possibility of involving civil society in cross-border affairs?

Formalization of cross-border relations may involve the conclusion of a simple convention or the establishment of a joint structure possessing legal personality, having the capacity to act for all its members, recruit personnel, manage its own budget and issue call for tenders. It is always possible to involve civil society representatives in a cross-border process as associate members, as part of working groups or in a consultative body.

Civil society participants can now make use of a number of instruments in French law to set up cross-border organizations:

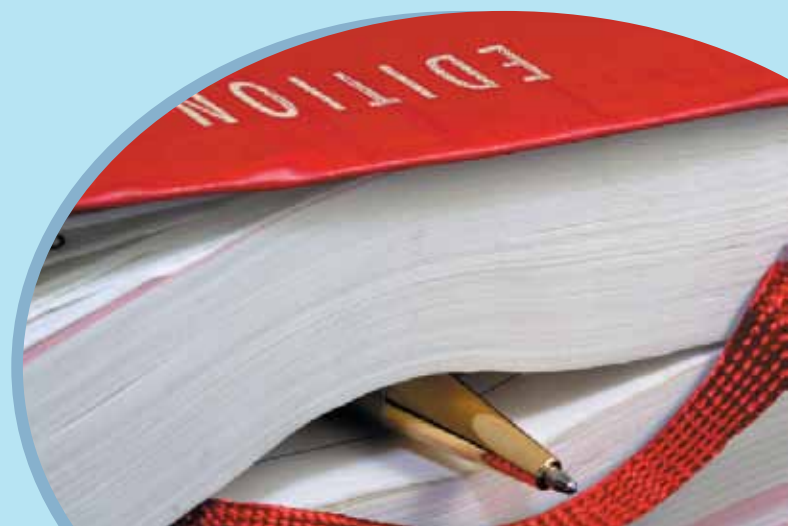
- The convention (INTERREG funding conventions, for example), which defines the contractual relations between the stakeholders.

- The association, for tasks of general interest (for example the GTE, page 8).
- The European economic interest grouping (EEIG), the preferred instrument for economic activities. Note the example of the Forespir EEIG on the French-Spanish border for forest management: it brings together associations of businesses, territorial authorities, individual persons and other entities.
- In 2006, European Community regulation 1082/2006 introduced the European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC)², an instrument for use on the borders of the 27 Member States of the European Union. The EGTC can bring together a very broad partnership from both sides of the border: civil society participants can be included, for example universities in some Member States. Nevertheless, these participants must fall within the category of “contracting authorities”, legal persons subject to public contracting rules and the condition that the tasks of the EGTC correspond to their competencies.
- In 2009 the Council of Europe opened Protocol no. 3 to the Madrid Outline Convention, on Euroregional cooperation groupings (ECGs), to signature by its Member States. This protocol, which will come into effect after four ratifications, introduces a cooperation instrument similar to the EGTC, open to any establishment with legal personality set up specifically to meet needs of general interest, including some civil society participants.

The choice of a legal instrument must therefore depend on the purpose of the project and on the partnership involved. ■

1. Refer to the Guide to cross-border projects, MOT, January 2010.

2. Refer to The European grouping of territorial cooperation, The MOT Guides no. 7, MOT, May 2008.



Financial support for civil society cross-border initiatives

Civil society encompasses a diversity of entities, including associations, businesses, universities and others, with very disparate technical and financial capacities. The setting-up and tracking of cross-border arrangements requires very specific skills and financial resources in addition to those used for the conventional activities of these entities. In this context, institutions have rapidly become aware of the need to support such cross-border actions by introducing dedicated financial mechanisms.

Since its introduction in the 1990s, the cross-border strand of the INTERREG programme has provided support for actions contributing to the development of the territory. The principle of co-funding on which this mechanism is based has had a strong lever effect on other funding sources. Nevertheless, project sponsors are still confronted with cumbersome administrative procedures, the obligation to advance the total amount of the funds and the often long European reimbursement times.

Innovative local initiatives have been introduced on several borders to mitigate these constraints and facilitate access to funding for civil

society: some territorial authorities have set up specific programmes based on their own funds (refer to the experiences of the municipality of Mulhouse and the Catalan cross-border area, page 10), others have considered mechanisms using European funding enabling the application of more flexible rules on civil society participants (refer to the box below). Private initiatives have also emerged (for example the *Fondation Entente Franco-Allemande*, page 10).

The success of such initiatives depends on the information provided to the target public, the prior existence of cross-border partnerships within civil society and their capacity to formalize their projects. ■

The Regio Pamina Eurodistrict involves the citizens in the development of its territory

Since the establishment in 1988 of cross-border cooperation on the territory known as Pamina, on the French-German border, the citizens have always been involved in the various actions intended to support bilingualism, mobility of young people and pooling of infrastructure, as well as cross-border meetings (sporting, cultural, touristic, educational, etc.). Within the framework of the INTERREG IVA programme, the Eurodistrict has developed an innovative approach enabling associations to benefit from ERDF funding intended for the organization of meetings: the Eurodistrict advances the ERDF reimbursements to the associations out of its own funds (on justification of the expenditures), so that the associations are not dependent on the sometimes long reimbursement times of the European funds.

This specific programme, Pamina 21, enables:

- citizens to submit their project ideas, which the Eurodistrict examines with a view to being able to put them into practice by identifying suitable partners,
- associations, schools and local authorities to apply for co-funding for their meeting projects.

The overall annual ERDF envelope of 200,000 euros provided support for 12 projects in 2010 and enabled 35,000 citizens to participate directly in various activities. This approach is supplemented by the organization of topic-based territorial conferences for establishing dialogue with the citizens and subsequently contributing a lasting element through the setting-up of cross-border networks dedicated to meetings.

www.eurodistrict-regio-pamina.eu

The MOT members in 2010



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