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APPLYING ACCESSIBILITY TOOLS TO ADDRESS URBAN AND TRANSPORT PLANNING

**The case of the Eurocity of Valença - Tui and the Euroregion
of Galicia-Norte de Portugal**

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Eurocity and Euroregions: a new concept with wide implications

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Abstract

This chapter deals with cross-border cooperation. It points out the reasons that created the need for cooperation and describes its evolution through the last 30 years. This chapter highlights two kind of cross border cooperation through the analysis of case studies, those who refer to a regional level (Euroregion) and those who refer to a municipal level (Eurocities). The information collected in this chapter sets the background and institutional framework of the case study area of the remaining chapters of this publication, which is the Euroregion Galicia-North Portugal and more specifically the Eurocity of Tui-Valença...

Keywords: Cross-border cooperation; Cross-border regions; Euroregions; Eurocities; EGTC.

1 Introduction to the particularity of border regions and natural co-operation

The European Union in its current state is a virtually border-free area in which people and goods have freedom of movement. There are, however, differences between theory and practice, since there is evidence that state borders still influence our society and economy. The way in which current state borders in their present form came into being explains their impact in practice.

Borders in Europe were redrawn consequent to wars, attacks and compulsion following two major dramatic events in the continent, the First World War, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Consequently, current borders do not essentially accompany ethnic divisions. On the one hand, this has caused the

relocation of a huge number of individuals. On the other hand, we now have some frontiers dividing communities that used to live together until then.

With the current European integration, the importance of the border as a barrier for movement has largely disappeared among the EU Member States, especially within the Schengen area. However, despite the free movement of people and goods, state borders remain very much in existence as frontiers between areas with different prices, salaries, working conditions, availability of labour, financing, taxation and legislation.

Nowadays, there are many areas which used to be united and are now dichotomous. These areas still share socio-economic, environment, historical and cultural features that complement each other (e.g. supply / demand for labour, means of transport, health services, and so on). It is in these areas where borders are not barriers anymore but bridges that enhance opportunities for cooperation.

Opportunities for co-operation were early acknowledge and with the help of the EU's Territorial Cooperation projects, state borders are becoming increasingly porous and many cross-border cooperation (CBC) schemes have been established. In this regard, Buffon (2006) states that the borders have shifted from being the periphery, to being centres of economic activity. Examples of this were reported by Knippschild and Wiechmann (2012), who in an attempt to show the need for, not only regional cooperation but for supraregional cooperation, presents data that show the connection that derives from the flow of workers, products etc. on four large cross-border regions (CBR) along Germany's western border. In the last decades, teams working on cross-border collaborations in fields as diverse as medicine, agriculture, education and transport, as the integrated approaches of "Euroregion" arose all over Europe, The objective of this chapter is to unveil the challenges that border regions are currently facing, and the opportunities that are available to them in a cooperative environment. The chapter is structured as follows: next section presents a review of previous transnational co-operation between different types of regions in different countries; then, the more formal case of Euroregions is introduced, and finally we change the scale to Eurocities, thus setting the whole framework to the study area of this publication.

2 Transnational co-operation below the country level in the European Union

2.1 The need for cross border cooperation

Blatter (2003), expresses the opinion that the border regions have always been laboratories for international institution-building. CBC has the potential to transform a border into a possibility for development. This is particularly important in the case of border areas which have similar socio-economic structures – partly inherited from a pre-nation-state past as stated by Perkmann (2007). In Europe, the commissions for the protection of trans-boundary watercourses were the forerunners of broader environmental regimes, thus, becoming the primary way of transnational cooperation. There are a wide variety

of cross-border areas across Europe. Each type of area, (i.e. urban, rural and marine), requires specific approaches. The following subsections evidence the particularities of each type of area and some outstanding examples of transnational co-operation.

2.1.1 Rural areas

Rural areas are the most common type of territory in European borders. The vast surface of coastal, mountainous or lowland areas is subject to specific constraints related in particular to their limited financial, technical and human resources (they are usually inadequately populated). For these areas, transfrontier co-operation represents a unique path towards local development. This co-operation enables them not only to pool certain local assets, amenities and public services, but also to be identified more easily within a changing Europe. Also protected areas (preservation of flora and fauna, traditional landscapes etc.) play a very important role in defining an opportunity towards a new type of economic development based on business, tourism projects and concerted planning.

An example of an area which had traditionally an informal cooperation, out of necessity, which eventually culminated with formal co-operation, is the case of the mountain area straddling the border between Romania and Ukraine. Communities of different ethnic origins (Ukrainians, Hutsuls, Russians, Romanians, Poles, Slovaks, Czechs and Hungarians), which are mostly small upland farmers, have traditionally lived together in harmony. They face the same problems that are encountered in other mountain regions in Europe: low soil fertility, sloping terrain, a harsh climate, few jobs, low incomes, a high poverty rate among the rural population, poor road infrastructure, isolation, transportation difficulties etc. This traditionally spontaneous cooperation was made official through the Phare 2004 CBC programme between Romania and Ukraine, supported by the European Union, which focussed on the education for sustainable development through agrotourism.

2.1.2 Marine areas

Water was for years a link between areas and also a natural barrier. This particular condition together with the special nature of marine authorities makes it necessary to dedicate special attention to this type of areas. Maritime cross-border co-operation can be defined as relations between local communities or authorities on maritime borders, focusing on common activities. The two main barriers for maritime regions co-operation are related to low inter-accessibility and lack of border culture. Decreased accessibility between the areas makes the cooperation difficult, enhances the feeling of division and it also stresses the lack of a common culture. Still, these areas share many opportunities for cooperation, like maritime transport connections, improving harbours and urban areas, economic development, tourism and collaboration on tourism and culture, preserving the marine environment, integrated management of coastal zones, etc. A successful case is Lake Constance in the Upper Rhine Valley, where joint land-use planning is taking place, and common visions for economic development have also been proposed. The Central Commission for Navigation

on the Rhine River, one of the oldest and still operating international organizations, was created at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, despite the military conflicts just a few years before (Blatter 2003). The Transmanche cooperation is another good example. Church and Reid (1996), describe how it started as a local and Regional initiative, and how the cooperation now includes both the Central government in the UK and France. The cooperation started informally in 1986 between Nord-Pas-de-Calais regional council and the more local Kent County Council informally. This collaboration was sealed with the signing of a Joint Accord in 1987. This attempt for a wider cooperation in commerce, education, transport, tourism and economy came in response to the Channel Tunnel and evolved into an internationalised cooperative initiative in the form of the Transmanche Region and the Transfrontier Development Programme (TDP).

2.1.3 Urban areas

Integrated cross-border urban areas are the cornerstone of CBC. The life in borders has so far received little attention from politicians and from European and national legislation. These urban areas have special problems due to the fact that their position increases the complexity of their problems: the movement of workers towards cross-border industrial and business areas, road congestion, land use and property interactions, additional costs of non-urban centre areas and cross-border institutional, administrative and legal differences

The Swiss city of Basel managed the “border effects” and now is an example of a fragmented trinational urban centre involving Swiss, French and German authorities. It lies at the centre of an economic and cultural area. This European metropolis recently designated itself as the Basel Trinational Eurodistrict.

2.2 Tools to enable cross border cooperation

The European Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs in 2008 argues the development of transfrontier cooperation as an essential precondition for the economic development of border regions and their political and social cohesion, and reports the strong geographical aspect of transnational cooperation. This increasing need for transnational co-operation below the country level and for social cohesion evidenced the need for institutional tools within the EU framework. In this regard, the European Council issued the "Guiding Principles for Sustainable Spatial Development" as an effort to harmonize and strengthen transnational cooperation. In addition, a series of institutions were created in order to facilitate and coordinate transnational cooperation.

MOT (“Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière”) is a French interministerial and associative structure having for principal objective to facilitate the realization of cross-border projects. Most initiatives share an international structure, like the “European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation” (EGTC) that allows public entities of different Member States to get together under a new entity with full legal personality. EGTC was established by Regulation (EC)

1082/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council; INTERREG, which is a well-known program for co-financing joint projects in border regions within the European Union (EU); or the European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion (ESPON), which launched a programme (ESPON 2013) that aims to “Support policy development in relation to the aim of territorial cohesion and a harmonious development of the European territory by providing comparable information, evidence, analyses and scenarios on territorial dynamics and revealing territorial capital and potentials for development of regions and larger territories contributing to European competitiveness, territorial cooperation and a sustainable and balanced development”².

3 Euroregions as a way of institutionalization of transnational cooperation at the regional level

A Euroregion or a CBR is a territorial unit that comprises contiguous sub-national units from two or more nation states, as defined by Perkmann and Sum (2002). The Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) sets some criteria for the identification of Euroregions, which they define as an association of local and regional authorities on either side of the national border, sometimes with a parliamentary assembly. An Euroregion could also refer to a transfrontier association with a permanent secretariat and a technical and administrative team with own resources; either of private law nature, based on non-profit-making associations or foundations on either side of the border in accordance with the respective national law in force or of public law nature, based on inter-state agreements, dealing among other things, or with the participation of territorial authorities.

3.1 Legal Framework

Institutional designers in European border regions try to stimulate joint activities by highlighting a common cross-border regional identity, as pointed out by Blatter (2003). By working together, these regions can jointly identify and address the specific challenges and opportunities presented by the border between them. Interestingly, Perkmann (2003) stresses the fact that until 1980, cross border co-operations were relatively informal agreements based on “twin association”, whereas formal agreements between municipalities and districts were only developed after an association under their own national legal systems was formed. The very first example is EUREGIO, a CBR between Germany and the Netherlands which involves approximately 140 local authorities with a total population of 3.2 million. Its creation followed the 1957 Treaty of Rome, where all member states declared their willingness to strengthen the unity of their economies and to “ensure their harmonious development by reducing the differences between the various regions and the backwardness of the less favored

² ESPON 2013 Programme, http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Programme/.

regions” as cited in Faludi 2009. The EUREGIO has established itself as a legitimate and competent agency responsible for cross-border matters in the specific geographic area, as the local actors realized that their constituencies suffered from various border effects due to the marginalization within their respective national economies.

This CBR was the driving force for the development of a European legal framework. In 1980 the Council of Europe took the first steps towards establishing a specific legal framework for transfrontier co-operation by adopting the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities (the “Madrid Convention”). This Convention declared the importance of entity and cooperation between the nations, highlighting the efficiency from transnational horizontal cooperation and also emphasizing that the national laws should be obeyed during the composition of a transfrontier cooperation. According to this Convention, it was clear that CBR will not exercise their political powers, instead they will be confined only on the responsibilities of the authorities that constitute them.

Afterwards, the Committee of Ministers subsequently adopted the 2002 Vilnius Declaration on Regional Co-operation and the Consolidation of Democratic Stability in Greater Europe and the 2003 Chisinau Declaration on Transfrontier and Interterritorial Co-operation between States in South-Eastern Europe. In 2006, the Madrid Outline Convention was supplemented by an Additional Protocol on Transfrontier Co-operation³ due to lack of operational provisions. The purpose of this protocol is to strengthen the convention by recognising: “the right of local and regional authorities to conclude transfrontier co-operation agreements, as well as the legal force under national law of measures taken and decisions adopted under a transfrontier co-operation agreement and the legal entity status of any co-operation body set up under such an agreement”.

In July 2006 the European Union adopted a Regulation (Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006) on a EGTC, the only instrument available in the in the then 25-member European Union that regulates and promotes CBC. The EGTC contributes to a strengthening of the principles of multi-level governance in that it will bring together the protagonists of transfrontier co-operation at all levels while recognizing the “Council of Europe acquis”. This transfrontier co-operation body vested with legal personality may be composed of local authorities and public-law bodies, but its real contribution lies in the participation of state authorities. This fact opened up new areas of co-operation, and it allowed states to be protagonists in transfrontier co-operation and not merely its regulators. These groupings are open to entities from third countries, including state authorities, but only under certain conditions. This regulation is amended by the COM(2011) 610 final/2, which came in power in 1/1/2014 stating that “new legal bases are employed to permit regions and bodies in non-Member States to be members of an EGTC, whether the other members are from one or many Member States”. Changes exist in other parts of the Regulation

³http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/Doc/XrefViewHTML.asp?FileID=11799&Language=EN - P189_24513

also, concerning the establishment and operation of an EGTC. Finally the eligibility of membership of bodies under private law is clarified and all the criteria for approval or rejection of national authorities are specified. The new regulation also provides solutions concerning tax and social security regimes for employees of an EGTC and clarifies the new state on any provisions adopted to implement the EGTC Regulation by Member States, which requires informing the Commission. This applies also to the new EGTC, which should inform the Commission of its purpose and membership, in order to publish it in the Official Journal

Additionally, the interest of the EU in promoting transnational cooperation was enhanced in 2008 with the publication of the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion. This document pays particular attention to cross border cooperation between EU and new and non-EU members.

3.2 Euroregions spatial and thematic distribution

There are many reasons underneath the creation of cross-border cooperation, as well as a variety of results. The Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) identified some main thematic categories of Euroregions, like those founded on the basis of economic, environmental, cultural, transport, service to population (health, education) issues.

3.2.1 Economic

Some Council of Europe member states face specific economic difficulties on some particular borders. The introduction of new international borders is perceived as a serious obstruction to commercial and economic co-operation between neighbouring communities which had been taking place for centuries until then, for example between Azerbaijan and Russia and between Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. On the other hand, there are cases of co operations as the above mentioned EUREGIO between Germany and the Netherlands which formalized the situation that was going on for several years in order to favour the inhabitants, as well as stopping the activities of those who were making a profit from this situation. This is what Terlouw 2012 refers to as *border surfers*, with the case of the Hollandgänger (an early example of *border surfers* profiting from price differentials across borders).

3.2.2 Environmental

The essential seamless nature of the environment particularly requires the co-operation between the organisations and individuals involved on either side of the administrative borders, as well as an increased responsibility on their part in order to guarantee the preservation of cross-border areas. In the case of the Rhine river, the countries concerned – Germany, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland – set up the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR) in order to deal with increased shipping on the Rhine, pollution,

the risk of chemical spills as well as to promote the restoration of the quality of the water of the river and the protection of its flora and fauna Another example is the Mesta-Nestos Euroregion developed around Nestos or Mesta River which flows across Bulgaria and Greece.

3.2.3 Socio-Cultural

Cultural cooperation programs are a key factor for a common cross-border identity. Such an identity is essential for any cross-border cooperation to have sound bases. It also represents a milestone for intersectoral development on other areas of co-operation such as tourism, economic development, the environment etc. In the TriRhena Euroregion (France, Germany and Switzerland), the “Upper Rhine Encounters” project aims to put people at the centre of transfrontier co-operation, by carrying out joint projects to make everyday life easier in the cross-border area, and bringing people together from both sides of the border. This initiative has its continuation with the "Upper Rhine Encounters II" which is a framework project in the “INTERREG III A” programme intended to support cross-border projects carried out “by and for” the inhabitants.

3.2.4 Transport

Cross-border public transport is central to the daily lives of border living areas. An intermodal cross border network will help the mobility of workers; reduce road congestion in many borders and related pollution and also to solve security problems. However, provision of cross-border transport is still at a low level in Europe. The difficulties in implementing this issue are technical, legal and organizational. The Egreensis Euroregion (Czech Republic and Germany) managed to overcome the obstacles and to become a pioneer in this field as it set up the Egronet, a cross-border transport infrastructure in order to enable the region to develop harmoniously. The transport network Egronet is a comprehensive network of public transport (bus, train, tram), with common fares, thus offering an efficient and high quality services to users in the states of Bavaria, Saxony and Thuringia (Germany) and the region of Karlovy Vary (Czech Republic). Similarly, the Euregio of Helsinki-Tallinn (Finland and Estonia) conducted a 2 year-project with the objective of a common transport, urban and regional planning.

3.2.5 Service to population (health, education)

Health issues are vital for people living in the European borders. Despite the recent transnational cooperation agreements on health, much effort is still needed to address the barriers and to meet the cross-border areas needs. A positive work is that of Cerdagne border hospital in the Pyrenees- Mediterranean Euroregion, which is designed to provide the region between France and Spain medical facilities for the isolated mountainous region, with 30,000 inhabitants, as well as to the visitors and tourists that rise the population of the area to 150,000 during the holiday season.

3.2.6 Cross-sectional cooperation

In addition to the above-mentioned thematic cross border co-operation initiatives, there are some examples of further integration in which cross-sectional co-operation takes place. One of them is the Euroregion Espace Mont-Blanc (France, Italy, and Switzerland) has four cornerstones: support upland farming, preserve natural areas and landscapes, encourage soft tourism and reduce the impact of transport. It represents an example for the sustainable and integrated development of a cross-border territory. The Galicia-North Portugal Euroregion, which is discussed in this book, is an example of cross-sectional cooperation, as the interrelations and the influences of the 2 regions are part of several thematic areas.

3.2.7 Spatial distribution and obstacles

The map of Euroregions in force is as seen below.

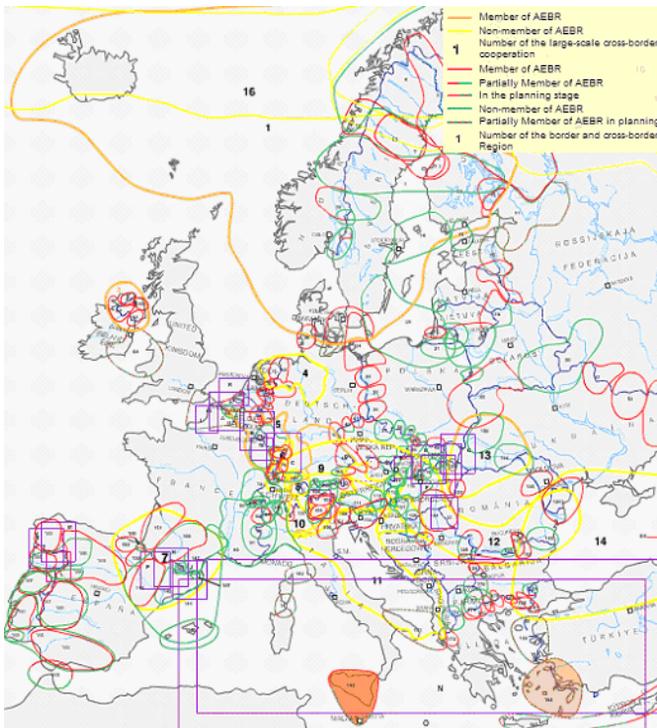


Figure 4.1 The map of Euroregions

Source: <http://www.aebr.eu>

Although there are many examples of regional cooperation, it is essential to state that there are major obstacles to this cross-border cooperation: wage, price and tax differences, linguistic, administrative and regulatory differences, differences

between employment systems, disparities between welfare systems, visa requirements etc.. As a consequence, there is the need to move from a culture of competition in a system of complementarities in order to achieve an adequate level of regional cooperation, as it is mentioned by Terlouw (2012). He also stresses the relevance of cooperation at a higher or lower scale than the regional one. A characteristic example is the Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai, the first EGTC in 2008, between France and Belgium that functions in a scale between regional and municipal cooperation. Similarly, Euroregions and Eurocities can be co-ordinately implemented, thus obtaining complementary visions from the combination of the local and regional scale in the same territory.

4 Eurocities within Euroregions

The Euroregions project began after noticing the need for cooperation in cross border regions due to the cross border dependencies. In a different scale, there are conurbations in many European borders that during the years have grown together and have created informal dependencies, and some of these settlements are subject to political cooperation projects. Eurocities are a new spatial concept built on the original concepts of cross border region but on a different scale. This new concept aims to eliminate borders in a more efficient way. Eurocities explicitly considers the concept of a city as it represents ancient and perceivable spatial relationships between populations and mixes different political, administrative institutional and cultural perspectives in a different and more effective scale than Euroregions.

4.1 European policy and Eurocities

Concerning the European policy, Eurocities cross border innovation promotes the key values of territorial and social integration and cohesion, and optimizes the use of public/national/European funds. This initiatives take place in areas that combine different European nationalities, and which spread over two and sometimes three countries. Particularly in these cases, the borders aggravate the complexity of the problems, which are faced in the view of “national innovation”, as well as the perspective they represent. In the case of cross-border conurbation, the main concern of the collaboration is to give specific answers to the needs of residents.

Cross-border urban areas, is the most direct example of cross border cooperation. Politicians, European and national legislation have not paid any attention to this scale of cross border life yet, despite their several and special problems due to their spatial position: the flow of workers across borders in the industrial and business areas, road congestion, land and property pressures, management of waste, energy, transport, broadband networks, health services and cross-border institutional, administrative and legal differences, problems similar to Euroregion’s problems but on a different scale.

4.2 Challenges and potentials

The challenge of a harmonious economic development appears as a recurring goal in border territories. The integrated management of economic development across borders is fraught with various issues: access to work for cross border workers, incompatible tax systems, non-equivalence of diplomas, etc. Another main issue in Eurocities project is land management. The real estate interactions and the cross-border access to housing require coordination. The cross border differences in housing prices causes the move of people within the side of the border in which they will find house in a lower cost, while continuing to work in their country of origin. This move of people is similar to the move of “border surfers” described by Terlouw (2012), at the region’s scale. The challenges concerning the accessibility and mobility of the inhabitants include relative road saturation as well as the development and management of transit on cross-border settlements infrastructure. Solutions to these issues need to struggle with the fact that typically cross-border workers are in their majority car users, mainly due to the lack of an integrated public transportation system. This non interoperability of urban transport plans raises the problem of coordination in transport, which needs to be undertaken.

Nowadays, the main focus of cross border conurbations is on strongly encourage intercultural exchange. Learning the language of the other, organising cross-border cultural events, creating partnerships between different cultural institutions, are the ways to transform the border from a barrier in a gate for formal cultural cooperation.

4.3 Examples of Eurocities

Eurocities, understood as cooperation initiatives between twin cities separated by an international border, are spread across Europe. For example, the cities of Haparanda (Sweden) and Tornio (Finland) have been working in harmony for many years. They have joint their education and health services and also their municipal amenities. They also co-organise cultural and sports events.

Other examples include the border towns of Gorizia (Italy) and Nova Gorica (Slovenia) reconstitute a cross-border conurbation, which also includes the Slovenian municipality of Šempeter-Vrtojba. Since May 2011, these three towns are joined in a common trans-border metropolitan zone, administered by a joint administration board, in order to have efficient solution for its problems. A particular case is the Swiss city of Basle, which, as previously mentioned is a segmented trinational conurbation involving Swiss, French and German authorities, in a trinational metropolitan area which is in part of the TriRhena Euroregion. It lays at the centre of an economic, industrial and cultural area with a total population around 800,000.

Focussing in the area of study of this publication, the Spanish- Portuguese borders offer 4 examples of Eurocities, which are based in a long relation of conflict and coexistence through years, and their own existence to each other as they used to be fortresses built in order to defend their borders against the other fortress: Elvas-Badajoz within the Alto Alentejo and Badajoz regions,

Ayamonte- Vila Real de Santo Antonio, Chaves-Verín situated within the Galicia-North Portugal Euroregion and Tui- Valença situated also in the Galicia-North Portugal Euroregion.

The Euroregion Galicia-North Portugal and particularly the Eurocity Tui-Valença are the object of a deep analysis on their accessibility needs and the challenges they are currently facing.

5 Conclusions

The geographical differences require different approaches during a construction of a transnational cooperation, but there are common aims in all co-operation initiatives. The MOT provides a detailed list that includes the improvement of daily life, well-being and the employment of citizens, particularly through the availability of service infrastructures and existing networks or those to be established, and also the development of the capacity to have people from different sectors, educational backgrounds and cultures to work together in order to create more added value, while maintaining the elements of differentiation.

Increased co-operation between local governments, business, training and research players is considered as a key factor towards a balanced economic and territorial development, which has been recognised in the parliamentary assembly of Council of Europe. In this regard, we agree with Dang-Nguyen et al., (1993) that at the European scale, such initiatives as the above are now seen as central to the role of the EU, which has been transformed from a state-centric bargaining system to a transnational policy network.

The effective abolition of borders made through Euroregions and Eurocities can become the growth engine of Europe since it eliminates the real obstacles for common and simultaneous development.

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Abbreviations

AEBR	Association of European Border Regions
CBC	cross border cooperation

CBR	cross border region
EGTC	European grouping for territorial cooperation
EU	European Union
MOT	Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière