

CECICN POSITION PAPER

PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY

Name: CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN CROSS-BORDER AND INTERREGIONAL CITY NETWORKS - CECICN

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Language of your contribution: English

Type of organisation:

Non-registered organisation/company

Main area(s) covered by your contribution:

- Economic and financial affairs
- Competitiveness
- Industry
- Single market
- Employment
- Research, development and innovation
- Digital economy
- Climate, energy and resource efficiency
- Education
- Poverty/social exclusion
- Other, please specify:

Register ID number (if you/your organisation is registered in the Transparency register):

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A) Background



The Conference of European Cross-border and Interregional City Networks (CECICN) was born in 2010. Its objective is to boost territorial cooperation among border cities in Europe and to reinforce the message concerning the importance of territorial cooperation.

CECICN involves nine cooperation networks that represent more than 600 cities in border and macro regions and 37% of European population:

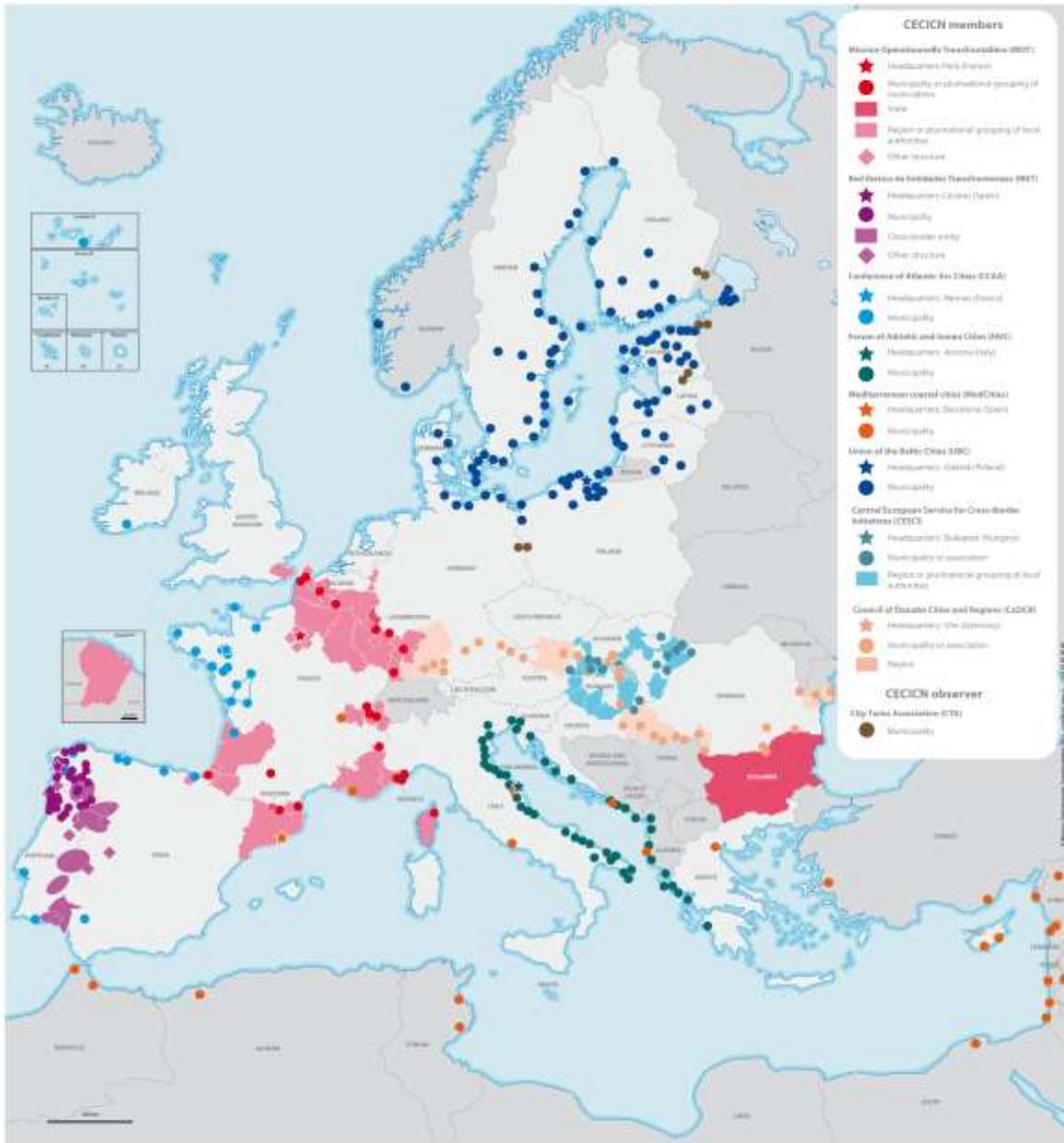
- ≡ Union of Baltic Cities (UBC) www.ubc.net
- ≡ Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities (FAIC) www.faic.eu
- ≡ Mediterranean Cities (MedCities) www.medcities.org
- ≡ Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities (CAAC) www.atlanticcities.eu
- ≡ Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT) www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org
- ≡ Iberian Network of Crossborder Bodies (RIET) www.rietiberica.eu
- ≡ Council of Danube Cities and Regions (CoDCR) www.codcr.com
- ≡ Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives (CESCI) www.cesci-net.eu
- ≡ Cross-border City Twins Association (CBCTA) www.citytwins.org

The objectives of CECICN are:

- ≡ To represent the interest of its members, especially in terms of cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation involving cities.
- ≡ To place ETC at the hearth of European politics in the new programming period 2014-2020 and the Europe 2020 strategy.
- ≡ To exchange best practices among the different members of the network.

In order to do this, CECICN has raised the following **five key ideas** to put ETC at the core of the European debate:

1. **Financing Territorial Cooperation in Cohesion Policy:** The ETC needs a larger budget, but also a more integrated and strategic approach; it must be part of the strategic documents.
2. **Improving the strategic dimension of cooperation:** ETC should be a flagship instrument of territorial cohesion. It should be included in all strategic documents. Member States should be encouraged to coordinate strategies and funding across borders.
3. **Reinforcing governance:** Cooperation requires multilevel governance: a more territorialized approach and a strengthened partnership with cities and regions representing the level of proximity of daily life, also in the context of cross-border and macro-regions.
4. **Developing the tools:** Territorial Cooperation will not succeed without common, intense, agile and representative cooperation structures at different scales, such as cross-border agglomerations or regions, euro-regions, city networks, macro-regions, or the European level itself.
5. **Contributing to the Single Market:** The current crisis requires a strategic approach for the new programming period aimed to overcome the economic situation and to contribute to the creation of growth and jobs, along with the other Cohesion Policy goals.



B) Questions:

1) Taking stock: the Europe 2020 strategy over 2010-2014

Content and implementation

For you, what does the Europe 2020 strategy mean? What are the main elements that you associate with the strategy?

The Europe 2020 strategy establishes an accurate general framework to guide the priorities for action of Regional and Local Authorities to achieve a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, as well as to design the pillars for the post-crisis Europe.

The most important elements linked to this strategy are the promotion of the Urban Agenda, a Digital Agenda for Europe and issues related to sustainable development and the efficient use of natural resources.

- Overall, do you think that the Europe 2020 strategy has made a difference? Please explain.

The Europe 2020 strategy tries to give a framework which could have an impact on local and regional authorities to adapt their priority setting concerning sustainable and inclusive growth-oriented policies and so, help to implement the strategy all over the EU. The introduction of indicators or targets gives the possibility to measure the results of the strategy.

Nevertheless, this strategy has still not reached its objective of reaching stakeholders and local authorities. Although almost all of them know the strategy, they do not feel it as a tool to guide its daily work. In this sense, it is important to reinforce this area of the strategy, working closely with stakeholders, especially those more attached to municipalities and the territory, like CECICN.

- Has the knowledge of what other EU countries are doing in Europe 2020 areas impacted on the approach followed in your country? Please give examples.

Generally admitted targets and indicators open the field for a benchmarking between Member States or regions in the EU and their way to implement EU policies. Furthermore, Europe 2020 strategy fosters the exchange of best practices among Europe and helps national and regional authorities to learn from each other and to improve their policies in view of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

With regard to cross-border territories, their development is at the very heart of the process of European integration. The border is the interface of two neighbour states where a national strategies' implementation is confronted directly to another Member State; and where differences in EU legislation transposition by state become evident. That's why cross-border territories are the laboratories of European integration.

- Has there been sufficient involvement of stakeholders in the Europe 2020 strategy? Are you involved in the Europe 2020 strategy? Would you like to be more involved? If yes, how?

In the name of the cities and regions represented by the CECICN network, the European policies need to take more into account their realities. Integrating territorial dimension in European policies is important for developing integrated approaches. Thus, the territorial dimension should be considered as a cross-cutting issue, which has its place in the Europe 2020 strategy.

It is important take into account the opinion of relevant and representative stakeholders, not only through public consultations but also giving them a seat in the structured governance process. For instance, it would be a good idea to set up periodical working meetings between some stakeholders, representative at different levels (national, regional and local) and the EC services, so they can work together on initiatives, as well as on the follow up of their impact at territorial level. An option may be to launch within the European Commission an Inter Service Group dedicated to Cross-border and Macro Regions where stakeholders such as CECICN would be regularly invited.

Tools

- Do the current targets for 2020 respond to the strategy's objectives of fostering growth and jobs? [Targets: *to have at least 75% of people aged 20-64 in employment; to invest 3% of GDP in research and development; to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20%, increase the share of renewables to 20% and improve energy efficiency by 20%; to reduce school drop-out rates to below 10% and increase the share of young people with a third-level degree or diploma to at least 40%; to ensure at least 20 million fewer people are at risk of poverty or social exclusion*].

Yes, the objectives respond to the strategy objectives. But what is really important is the proper definition and implementation of the measures to achieve the objectives.

- Among current targets, do you consider that some are more important than others? Please explain.

Targets related to employment, education and energy efficiency are more important due to their potential impact on the other objectives.

- Do you find it useful that EU-level targets are broken down into national targets? If so, what is, in your view, the best way to set national targets? So far, have the national targets been set appropriately/too ambitiously/not ambitiously enough?

In terms of cross-border cooperation, coordination of national state levels seems to be indispensable to reach common objectives. The challenge consists in testing an integrated policy approach in border areas. Legal, political, administrative and fiscal frameworks at national or European level do not always adjust to the cross-border, transnational or interregional reality,

because of its lack of interoperability. It is therefore essential to coordinate strategies, legislation, financing and institutions in different Member States across borders with the support of EU.

- What has been the added value of the seven action programmes for growth? Do you have concrete examples of the impact of such programmes? [*"Flagship initiatives": "Digital agenda for Europe", "Innovation Union", "Youth on the move", "Resource efficient Europe", "An industrial policy for the globalisation era", "Agenda for new skills and jobs", "European platform against poverty"*].

CECICN and its members want to achieve the Europe 2020 strategies goals, and cooperation is the way we choose in order to meet this goals. To underline this statement, ABER and CECICN have identified in 2012 a sample of cooperation projects that have been contributing simultaneously to one axis of the Single Market and to one of the strategy Europe 2020. Please find these examples by consulting the common report of CECICN and ABER "Strategic Document on Smart Cooperation", published in May 2012: http://cecicn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/CECICN_AEBR_report_12_03_12.pdf

2) Adapting the Europe 2020 strategy: the growth strategy for a post-crisis Europe

Content and implementation

- Does the EU need a comprehensive and overarching medium-term strategy for growth and jobs for the coming years?

Yes, but not a new strategy but an Action Plan. The EU 2020 strategy is ok but it should be guaranteed that all actions linked to it are implemented according to territorial reality and together with local stakeholders.

What are the most important and relevant areas to be addressed in order to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth?

CECICN gathers nine cross-border and interregional city networks, representing more than 600 cities in Europe, situated both at internal and external borders of the European Union. These territories have the ability to play the role of European laboratories, to test new phases of integration and therefore to be themselves the driving forces of European integration - and this in the objective of a better economic, social and territorial cohesion.

- What new challenges should be taken into account in the future?

CECICN sees a great challenge in enhancing the Single Market (due to its necessary multi-national approach considered as one of the areas with a particularly large implication for Territorial Cooperation) which still suffers from a lack of integration. Involved to this, cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation could contribute to cohesion in general, fostered by a more integrated approach, and this supported by the national level and the EU institutions.

- How could the strategy best be linked to other EU policies?

A link between cohesion policy and the Europe 2020 strategy may nevertheless be sought at several levels: coherence between the strategic documents, but also concerted governance. The entire structure should be founded on a better grasp of the realities on the ground and the needs of local stakeholders, who, ultimately, are the project leaders.

- What would improve stakeholder involvement in a post-crisis growth strategy for Europe? What could be done to increase awareness, support and better implementation of this strategy in your country?

CECICN supports the statement of the Committee of the regions which says that the “principles of multilevel governance should be respected: full information and consultation; stakeholders' involvement; responsiveness ensuring that contributions coming from regions and cities are taken into account at all stages of the policy process”.

For this approach to be effective, it seems to be important that the cities and regions engaged in cross-border cooperation on both sides of the border give common answers linked to the obstacles and difficulties of cooperation. A combination of bottom-up and top-down planning and target setting is necessary to eliminate the obstacles to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

It is important to take into account the opinion of relevant and representative stakeholders, not only through public consultations but also giving them a seat in the structured governance process. For instance, it would be a good idea to set up periodical working meetings between some stakeholders, representative at different levels (national, regional and local) and the EC services, so they can work together on initiatives, as well as on the follow up of their impact at territorial level.

Tools

- What type of instruments do you think would be more appropriate to use to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth?

These territorial transversal approaches are in particular important to fully exploit the potential of macro-regions (please see CECICN document on [Cities in Macroregions](#) at www.cecicn.eu) and cross-border territories (euro-regions). As cross-border territories and macro-regions both are laboratories of European integration, tools fostering the integrated territorial approach are necessary. For the latter, CECICN encourages operations of Integrated Multiannual Strategies, Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) and Community Led Local Development (CLLD), and “Joint Action Plans” (JAP). Nevertheless, these tools aren’t frequently used yet, due to the difficulties encountered in practice. The role of the EC must be the coordination and the support of the different initiatives taken all over Europe.

- What would best be done at EU level to ensure that the strategy delivers results? What would best be done at Member State level?

The monitoring of the strategy Europe 2020 within the European Semester allows the strategies’ orientation and correction at EU and national level.

CECICN wants to attract the attention on the strategies’ results achieved in cross-border territories, on regional and local level. How can these areas be sure that their strategy is successfully implemented? The key is to improve results at this level.

CECICN is working together with other Member States on cross-border observation. Territorial cohesion of the European Union as well as the development of Single Market requires on one hand the opening of internal borders and elimination of legal and administrative barriers; as well as the correct survey and analysis of the integration process based on proper data bases, on the other. This is why CECICN supports cross-border observation and the harmonisation of methods used in data collection and processing. For this purpose the cooperation of national statistical institutes and planning institutions is needed, supported by the EU. In addition, a structured feedback work with representative stakeholders should be guaranteed at EU level.

- What are the most fruitful areas for joint EU-Member State action? What would be the added value?

For CECICN, cross-border territories and macro-regions are both seen as areas where coordination of strategies, legislation, financing and institutions in different MS across borders are the main topic of cooperation. The multi-level approach in these areas is evident to overcome the obstacles of cooperation; the national policies in this context have to be coordinated by the EU. This is already the case of the macro-regions where the MS and the EU level both work together (example of the Danube and Baltic Sea Strategies).