



Mission
Opérationnelle
Transfrontalière

EUROMOT

EUROPEAN NETWORK
OF CROSS-BORDER
LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Contribution of EUROMOT to the Committee of the Regions' White Paper on multilevel governance

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A. POSITIONNING

A sustainable integration of the European Union has to be based on a multilevel partnership which associates the European, national, local and cross-border level on the basis of subsidiarity and according to competences of each one in order to increase the legitimacy of Community action and to win the adhesion of the European citizens.

All active forces in Europe, from institutional stakeholders (Member States, regional, local, cross-border authorities) to socio-economic stakeholders and stakeholders from civil society, should be able to participate, in regard to their respective know-how and competencies, in improving the effectiveness of Community action. Thus the political and institutional leaders on all levels should adapt their action to the expectation of the citizens by creating a true dialogue between and with stakeholders likely to pass on feedback of local needs.

In this context, the specificity of cross-border territories is of particular importance for the European integration. Indeed:

- nearly a third of European population (27 member states) lives in cross-border areas,
- cross-border areas constitute real "laboratories of European integration", places of experimentation of European policies and legislations,
- cross-border territories are the places par excellence of European integration¹, visible for the citizens, who lack today confidence towards the European Union,
- cross-border territories are confronted with obstacles inherent in the existence of a national border (administrative and institutional, historical and cultural, linguistic, etc. disparities on both sides of the border), requiring a good articulation of stakeholders and policies, and however create assets,
- the pre-accession and enlargement process is lived at the external borders of the European Union.

For all these reasons and in order to respect the social contract established with the European citizens, Community action has to answer to their needs and take into account the specificities of cross-border territories and set up required governance tools.

By opening the debate on multilevel governance, as follow-up of the White Paper on governance by the European Commission (2001) and the Berlin Declaration of 2007, the Committee of the Regions wishes to advance practical propositions in order to support the participation of all actors concerned (local and regional authorities, stakeholders of civil society, etc.) in the European process and to reinforce the effectiveness of Community action.

The EUROMOT expressly thanks the Committee of Regions to have launched this consultation on the White Paper on the multilevel governance. Due to this initiative, the concerned stakeholders can express their specific needs and their proposals to improve the framework of European integration.

EUROMOT wishes to contribute to this consultation on the basis of its concrete experience in local cross-border co-operation and its know-how, and giving echo to the needs expressed by its European network.

¹ "Committee of the Regions' White Paper on multilevel governance", Committee of the Regions, 89/2009, p.4: "[...]continuing the process of European integration that abolishes borders, unifies markets and brings people closer together whilst respecting national sovereignties and preserving identities. [...]"

B. PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS

The proposed modifications are underlined:

B.1 GENERAL COMMENTS

3. Encouraging participation in the European process

- **Stimulating participatory democracy**

Page 16, end of the first paragraph outside box

"[...]In taking forward its work, and in promotion of the objectives and measures set out in the White Paper, the Committee of the Regions will strive to work in partnership with the European associations of local and regional government, in order to take into account the local needs and to show the importance of multilevel governance for the good conduct of territorial projects."

Explanation: EU institutions need to base their activity on a good knowledge of the needs on the ground in order to work out policies and legislations answering the requirements of European citizens.

Page 16, end of the second paragraph outside box

"Multilevel governance also looks as though it could be extremely useful for promoting active citizenship and could provide a decentralised communication policy that is more in line with the public's real and immediate expectations, by gradually helping to bridge the gap separating people from the Community institutions and their political leaders. A decentralized communication on Europe should not only contribute to a sensitizing and information on the European questions, but should also relate to the realization of concrete projects."

Explanation: EU programs impose to their project leaders the obligation of publicity and communication throughout the project and of the project results. Therefore, the EU institutions should inspire themselves by success stories obtained due to the support of these programs in order to communicate on Europe and reach European citizens by valorizing and promoting concrete projects.

Page 17, box, second dash

The Committee of the Regions:

"Undertakes to:

[...]

- help to implement a genuine decentralised communication policy, the scope of which was recognised in the joint declaration of the European Parliament, European Commission and Council on "Communicating Europe in partnership" which depends on the political involvement of institutional actors to constantly drive the European debate in European cities and regions and report the decisions taken at Community level. European projects to valorize good practices need also to be taken into account in this communication strategy to participate in the process of capitalization of experiences and best practices."

4. Reinforcing the effectiveness of Community action

- **Designing and implementing common policies in partnership**

Page 20, box, first dash

The Committee of the Regions:

“undertakes to:

- plan and launch initiatives aimed at disseminating good practices in the area of partnership, linked to the definition of local, regional, national and supranational political priorities in the Member States, and support all the initiatives launched by the Member States, the European Parliament and the European Commission, as in particular the European grouping of territorial cooperation, in order to apply the principle of partnership with local and regional authorities, not only during the policy implementation phase but also, and above all, during the preparation of these policies;”

Page 20, box, at the end of third dash

The Committee of the Regions:

“Recommends:

- reinforcing the partnership practice [...].

“In the context of investment projects, the horizontal partnership policy of local authorities with civil society could, if necessary to achieve the aims of the project, include economic stakeholders, e.g. for the setting-up or the management of infrastructures.”

Page 20, box

The Committee of the Regions:

“Calls on the European Commission to:

- study on a case-by-case basis the possible changes to Community policies including between the responsible services in terms of a reinforced partnership;”

- **Developing the potential of territorial cooperation**

Page 30, first box, second paragraph

“[...] The areas of application of the EGTC, according to emerging experience, are varied: from institutional cooperation to the carrying out of common programmes and projects, from health to civil defence, from economic development to the protection and promotion of natural resources, from training to employment, from research and innovation policy to public transport, etc.”

Page 31, box, second paragraph

The Committee of the Regions:

“Undertakes to:

[...] - cooperate with the European Commission, Member States and other institutions involved on a major action involving communication and operational support for the implementation of new EGTCs, lighthouse tool of multilevel governance, and for the exchange of good practices in the context of those EGTCs already established;”

B.2 TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE CROSS-BORDER DIMENSION

Introduction box

First dash

"The Committee of the Regions considers multilevel governance to mean coordinated action by the European Union, the Member States and local, regional and cross-border authorities [...]"

Explanation: The setting up of cross-border entities such as the GECT, European tool for multilevel governance par excellence, requires taking them into account within the governance tools.

Sixth dash

"The Committee of the Regions:

[...] - recommends that the territorial impact and cross-border impact analysis should become standard practice through the involvement, upstream of the policy decision, of the various actors concerned in order to understand the economic, social and environmental repercussions on the regions of Community legislative and non-legislative proposals;"

Seventh dash

"The Committee of the Regions:

[...] - undertakes to submit proposals to support the use of experimentation at local, regional and cross-border level [...]"

Explanation: Cross-border territories constitute places which particularly require the recourse to experimentation of Community policies and where this experimentation can truly contribute to the integration of the European Union at its borders.

2. Building Europe in partnership

Page 6, first paragraph after box

"The Committee of the Regions considers multilevel governance to mean coordinated action by the European Union, the Member States and local, regional and cross-border authorities, based on partnership and aimed at drawing up and implementing EU policies. [...]"

3. Encouraging participation in the European process

Page 9, additional text at the end of the first paragraph after box

"As melting pot of European citizenship, cross-border territories should receive a particular attention."

- **Strengthening institutional representation**

Page 10, box, sixth dash

The Committee of the Regions:

"Invites the Member States to:

- put in place, where there is no possibility of formal representation within the Council or its preparatory commissions, internal processes of consultation and coordination with local, regional and cross-border authorities [...]"

Explanation: The setting up of cross-border entities such as the GECT, European tool for multilevel governance par excellence, requires taking them into account within the governance tools.

- **Organising political cooperation**

Page 11, box, second dash

The Committee of the Regions:

"Undertakes to:

[...] - support the pilot initiative of an "Erasmus programme for local and regional elected representatives" and cooperate to this end with the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission on its conceptual and operational development, and encourage the introduction of training programmes and experience and good practice exchange programmes intended for local and regional elected representatives. Such a program would represent an added value if it targets certain topics such as cross-border cooperation (Erasmus-T for local and regional elected representatives), as it meets the specific needs of the elected representatives concerned."

Page 15, box, adding a fifth dash (before "Calls on the European Commission")

The Committee of the Regions:

"undertakes to:

[...]

- develop separate scope of measures for local and regional authorities on the external borders of the EU (ex. Estonia-Russia, Finland-Russia) to reinforce the development of cooperation between cross-border cities."

Explanation: The border cities on the external borders of the EU are in the most complicated position to establish partnerships due to the sharp gap in the level of living, tempo of development and different policies. Therefore the special emphasis should be made to strengthen the role of the cities, situated on the external borders of the EU, in the multilevel governance.

- **Stimulating participatory democracy**

Page 16, footnote n° 22, addition of a fourth dash

"- The Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT) coordinates a project of cooperation on cross-border urban governance in Europe within the framework of the URBACT program."

Page 17, box first dash

The Committee of the Regions:

"Undertakes to:

- develop a sustained approach for collaboration with relevant networks at local and regional level, which foster interconnection and interaction in European society between the political, economic, associative and cultural spheres, and take account of the best participation practices at local, regional and cross-border level;"

4. Reinforcing the effectiveness of Community action

Page 18, first paragraph after box

"Multilevel governance aims to reinforce Community action in those areas which are at the heart of European citizens' concerns. In an area as cohesive as the European Union, any Community measure has a direct impact on the regions and their inhabitants, in particular visible in cross-border territories. [...]"

Explanation: Community action can show its added value on the borders of the European Union where citizens can better feel its impact than in any other territory.

- **Developing integrated policies**

Page 24, end of the second paragraph (before box)

"It is advisable to draw the attention to the cross-border urban, rural and even mountain and maritime cooperation areas which cumulate constraints. Cross-border territories require governance tools making it possible to pass over the obstacles inherent to existence of national borders, to associate all stakeholders concerned on both sides of the border and to follow common policies and concrete projects on the entire cross-border area. This should be based on an integrated approach of different sectorial cooperation fields concerning these territories: e.g. labor market, mobility, economic development and training have to interact and promote the sustainable and balanced development of these territories, due to a better identification and a more coherent use of its advantages."

- **Better lawmaking**

Page 26, paragraph 1

"[...] In that regard, the need to more closely involve local and regional authorities is motivated by the fact that the effects of a Community directive or regulation may vary significantly from one Member State to another due to its internal territorial organisation, the degree of autonomy of local and regional authorities and the extent of their responsibilities. This may cause avoidable distortions which can especially be felt in cross-border areas. [...]"

- **Evaluating the territorial impact of Community intervention**

Page 29, box, first dash

The Committee of the Regions:

"Recommends:

- that the territorial impact analysis should become standard practice, and in particular cross-border [...]"

Explanation: The cross-border areas are places of experimentation of the policies and Community legislations and the first concerned by those.

Page 29, box, fourth dash

The Committee of the Regions:

"Recommends:

[...] - that European and national statistics should reflect the diversity of the territorial situation, including cross-border, in order to more accurately understand the impact of policies on the regions."

Explanation: Today, no tool of European statistics takes into account cross-border territories.

- **Developing the potential of territorial cooperation**

Page 29, second box, first paragraph

"The EGTC is a new European legal instrument (Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006) designed to stabilise territorial cooperation (cross-border, transnational and interregional)[...] "

Page 31, box

The Committee of the Regions:

"Recommends:

- that additional resources should be allocated to the three aspects of territorial cooperation (cross-border, transnational and interregional) [...]."

- **Encouraging innovative and partnership-based methods of governance**

Page 32, box, first paragraph

The Committee of the Regions:

"Undertakes to:

- submit proposals to support the use of experimentation at local, regional and cross-border level [...]"