

EUROPEAN UNION



**Committee of the Regions**

# **EGTC Monitoring Report 2015 Implementing the new territorial cooperation programmes**

## **Executive summary**

**This Executive Summary was written by the CoR Secretariat-General Unit C1, and is based on the study "EGTC Monitoring Report 2015 - Implementing the new territorial cooperation programmes" written by Metis GmbH (Jürgen Pucher and Nicole Hauder).**

More information on the European Union and the Committee of the Regions is available online at <http://www.europa.eu> and <http://www.cor.europa.eu> respectively.

The full study "EGTC Monitoring Report 2015 - Implementing the new territorial cooperation programmes" is available in English at: <http://cor.europa.eu/en/documentation/studies/Pages/studies.aspx>

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# Executive Summary

The European Committee of the Regions regularly publishes a monitoring report on the development of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). This report analyses the latest developments from late 2014 to the end of 2015. By the end of 2015, 60 EGTCs were established in total, including more than 800 national, local and regional authorities from 20 Member States and Ukraine. Another 14 Groupings were in the pipeline in December 2015, one including non-EU countries: the EGTC EUCOR - The European Campus, which included Switzerland, was registered in early 2016.

## National implementation

The national implementation of the amended EGTC Regulation in the EU Member States is still in progress. To date, the CoR has identified the Spanish Royal Decree 23/2015 of 23 January, published in the Official Journal of the State No 27 of 31 January. Furthermore the amended Hungarian and Slovak provisions entered into force on 20 December 2014 and 1 March 2015. In the federal state of Austria, the Burgenland, Kärnten, Salzburg and Tirol “Länder” changed their legislation in line with the revised EGTC Regulation between October 2014 and February 2015. Luxembourg checked to see if the current legislation had to be changed and officials did not identify any need to do so. All the other EU Member States did not amend their legislation until the end of March 2015, and some of them, like Luxembourg, have identified no need to amend the current legislation.

## Overview of the activity of the EGTC during 2015

### EGTCs set up since 20 November 2014

Between the end of 2014 and the end of 2015, 10 EGTCs were set up. Compared to the EGTCs set up during the previous two years (8 new EGTCs in 2014 and 9 in 2013), the pace would seem to be holding steady in the current observation period.

The Tisza EGTC was a milestone in the history of the EGTCs, the first to involve a non-EU Member State. The grouping was established in October 2015 between the Hungarian county of Szabolcs–Szatmár–Bereg, the municipality of Kisvarda and the Ukrainian region (oblast) of Zakarpattya.

Table 1. *Key information on the EGTCs set up in late 2014 and 2015<sup>1</sup>*

#	Name	Countries	Date set up
1	European Border Cities European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation Limited Liability (European Border Cities EGTC)	HU, RO	28/10/2014
2	ESPON EGTC - European Node for Territorial Evidence	BE, LU	19/01/2015
3	GECT Pays d'Art et d'Histoire Transfrontalier Les Vallées Catalanes du Tech et du Ter (GECT PAHT Les Vallées Catalanes)	FR, ES	28/01/2015
4	EGTC Rhine Alpine Corridor	DE, IT, NL	27/05/2015
5	MASH European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (MASH EGTC)	HU, SI	16/06/2015
6	NOVUM	CZ, PL	16/12/2015
7	Mura Region EGTC	HU, HR	28/05/2015
8	Tisza EGTC Tisza ETT €OTC TICA	HU, UA	26/10/2015
9	GECT-Autorité de gestion programme INTERREG V A Grande Région	LU, FR	19/10/2015
10	AECT León-Bragança	ES, PT	29/12/2015

<sup>1</sup> EUCOR – The European Campus, between France, Germany and Switzerland, set up in 2016, is not included.

## Developments in the EGTC: ETC programmes and projects

Regarding **geographic trends**, the dynamic development around HU continues. After three new groupings were set up in 2014, during the period covered by this report two groupings were established around HU, one of them aiming to incorporate non-EU countries (Ukraine).

More than half of all groupings have reported successful **enlargements** in the past two years, firm plans or/and an interest in taking on new partners. The dominant **type of partnership** is composed of local authorities: half of all groupings are powered by the local level. The second largest group are EGTCs of regional authorities, with the number of partners ranging between two and six. The new EGTCs follow this trend, with three small local groupings and two regional ones. Only the Rhine-Alpine EGTC follows another model, specifically transnational cooperation from the North Sea to the Mediterranean Sea.

In 2015, the ESPON EGTC was set up with the **purpose** of implementing the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme. The main objective of the new Rhine Alpine Corridor EGTC is to facilitate and promote territorial cooperation among its members and to strengthen and coordinate the development of the multimodal Rhine-Alpine Corridor. The NOVUM EGTC was set up to step up, facilitate and promote Polish-Czech border cooperation in order to strengthen cohesion. The PAHT - Les Vallées Catalanes EGTC is a forum for testing out and discussing cultural and heritage policies. The other two new EGTCs set up in Hungary are intended to strengthen economic and social cohesion between its members and to structure cooperation on cross-border projects and programmes.

Most of the groupings operate on an annual **budget** made up of membership fees of up to EUR 50 000. The new EGTCs mainly follow this trend. The current aggregate annual budget of the EGTCs stemming from membership fees is estimated at around EUR 33 million<sup>2</sup>. Annual running costs for the Hospital of Cerdanya alone are about EUR 20 million.

**ETC projects** are a vital source of income for practically all EGTCs, particularly for those whose financial basis of membership fees is weak. In 2015, the majority of already established EGTCs (set up before November 2014) confirmed ongoing projects. Of the 38 groupings which responded to the

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<sup>2</sup>

12 million as reported in 2014 + 20 million from the hospital of Cerdanya + 1 million estimated for 2015.

questionnaire, 23 reported ongoing ETC projects, with a total of 140 projects. The Tirol-Alto Adige-Trentino EGTC has reported a significant number of direct projects run and financed by the EGTC. In total, 15 EGTCs reported obstacles in implementing the projects.

Only 8 out of 42 responses documented an interest in using **EU Funds** other than the ERDF for ETC. The funds have not always been specified but the followings funds have been mentioned: European Agriculture and Rural Development Fund (EAFRD), Cohesion Fund (CF), European Social Fund (ESF), Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) and LIFE+. Around a quarter of the groupings which responded to the questionnaire are considering rolling out **new instruments**, i.e. Community-Led-Local-Development (CLLD), Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) and Joint Action Plan (JAP). Five EGTCs said that they are already implementing smart specialisation strategies (S3).

The Luxembourg Presidency has proposed a new instrument to promote cross-border cooperation, consisting of a “European convention” allowing for legal exceptions and derogations, which would make the implementation of cross-border projects possible. Ten of the 42 groupings are implementing or interested in such projects.

## **EGTC in the pipeline**

According to the list drawn up by the Committee of the Regions and adding the Alpine Pearls EGTC, 14 EGTCs were in the pipeline by the end of 2015. The four groupings ESPON, Mash, Rhine-Alpine Corridor and Novum had been established since 2014 and started work. The EGTCs Eurocidade Valença do Minho – Tui (Portugal and Spain), and Medgidia – Silistra (between Romania and Bulgaria) are still awaiting approval. This status is unchanged compared to the reports for the last two years. The EGTC EUCOR - The European Campus, which includes Switzerland, will be the first cross-border campus and will include authorities from outside the EU<sup>3</sup>.

The EGTCs Cittaslow, and Alto Adriatico/Severni Jadran/Sjeverni Jadran are newcomers to the “EGTCs in preparation” section. The EGTC between Saint Martin and Sint Maarten, which would be the first between Outermost Countries and Territories (OCTs), was suggested in 2014.

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<sup>3</sup>

The EGTC EUCOR was registered in the first months of 2016, after this report had been written.