

LOCAL ACTION PLAN



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Ister-Granum European Grouping for
Territorial Cooperation

FIRST DRAFT

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INTRODUCTION

The “EGTC” URBACT project (Expertising Governance for Transfrontier Conurbations) is a European working group co-financed by the URBACT II programme (2007-2013). This programme aims to encourage the sharing of experiences between European cities and to disseminate knowledge on sustainable urban development throughout Europe.

The project is led by Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT); it involves six cross-border conurbations in Europe: Lille Métropole for the Eurometropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai (F/BE), Basel for the Trinational Eurodistrict Basel (F/DE/CH), Esztergom for the Ister-Granum EGTC (HU/SK), Chaves for the conurbation Chaves-Verin (ES/PT), Slubice for the Frankfurt (Oder)-Slubice conurbation (DE/PL), and Strasbourg for the Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau (F/DE).



1. Paris - MOT • 2. Eurometropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai • 3. Eurocidade Chaves-Verin
4. Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau • 5. Frankfurt (Oder)/Slubice conurbation
6. Trinational Eurodistrict Basel • 7. Ister-Granum EGTC

The partners aimed to:

- **improve their governance models** by exchanging experiences, with the support of the Lead Expert,
- **capitalize best practices**, spread models of governance throughout Europe and,
- **promote cross-border agglomerations** at national and European levels.

The new opportunities provided by the **European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation**, the European instrument (EC Regulation 1082/2006), whose use is still under experimentation, constituted an interesting case study. The first two European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation in Europe were involved in the “EGTC” URBACT project and an EGTC was established during the project.

By “**cross-border governance**”, the project partners have agreed to deal with the following two major themes:

- How can public leaders and cross-border organizations frame and implement efficient policies (“**Leadership**” issues)?

The way a cross-border conurbation is managed on a technical, political, legal, as well as financial point of view. The main question resulting from this issue is the one of designing and implementing cross-border urban strategies and concrete projects by involving all relevant public stakeholders on both sides of border.

- How can the involvement of the civil society guarantee the legitimacy of cross-border agglomeration policies (“**Community**” issues)?

The way a cross-border conurbation earns its legitimacy to intervene above national borders, through the development of mobilizing projects aimed at citizens, through the development of services dedicated to the citizens, through the emergence of cross-border Medias which enable a dialogue with the inhabitants, and through the creation of participative democracy mechanisms. The main question related to this issue is the one of building efficient and legitimate partnerships able to address cross-border territorial cohesion issues.

In order to make sure that the URBACT projects lead to concrete and realistic outcomes, the URBACT II programme requires specific results from the URBACT project partners:

- Each partner realizes a **Local Action Plan**, which identifies the measures and actions which will be implemented in order to improve the running policies. It aims to provide pragmatic, precise solutions based on the results of the transnational exchanges. It is jointly produced with the Local Support Group (link) on the local level and with all the project partners on a transnational level.

- All URBACT project partners commit to establishing and leading an **URBACT Local Support Group** to make sure that exchanges have an impact on local practices and policies. This group assembles the main interested parties and local actors concerned by the project topic and the issues the partner is looking to resolve; the groups include local elected officials, representatives of various local administrative departments, representatives of residents/users, etc.

URBACT Local Support Groups contribute to implementing transnational activities (production/approval of case studies, for example) and producing the Local Action Plan that each partner has to produce as the result of participation in the URBACT II programme.

For more information: <http://urbact.eu>

1 "LEADERSHIP" ISSUES

The following section of the Local Action Plan (LAP) for the Ister-Granum EGTC gives a view on management issues of cross-border conurbation. The "Starting situation" chapter deals with the managerial background of the EGTC in the time of launching "EGTC" project, thus some facts have changed since then.

1.1 Starting situation

The Ister-Granum Euroregion has decided to **intensify cross-border governance to secure an efficient integration of the conurbation in 2007**. The local politicians signed the convention officialising the entry of their municipalities into a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) in May 2008. It was the first initiative taken in Eastern Europe concerning the new governance tool proposed by the European Institutions. The EGTC was registered by the Slovak government and the Hungarian authorities will normally recognize the official existence of the structure in the near future.

The statutes of Ister-Granum EGTC show that the executive power is exclusively shared by the local municipalities of the EGTC. Subregional authorities and national governments are not members of it. The decision-making process in the EGTC is under the responsibility of 3 instruments:

- The **General Assembly** is responsible for the statutes of the EGTC, the budget of the structure, the integration and exclusion of members, the choice of the EGTC director, the choice of an auditor and the election of the Senate's members. The assembly meets at least twice a year.
- The **Senate** is the managing body of the General Assembly and consequently it represents the Assembly between meetings. The head of the Senate is the chairman of the General Assembly. The Senate has 8 members chosen among the members of the assembly, an equal number coming from both sides of the border. The Senate prepares the decision of the assembly and it implements them. It is also an instrument making proposals and delivering opinions concerning cross-border projects, especially the ones prepared by the Committees.
- The **permanent professional committees** are expertise networks helping the EGTC in the definition/implementation of its working programme. They are connected with external organizations and they can organise conferences/workshops on specific issues. 6 different committees have been established:
 - External relations
 - Human Resources Policy

- Economic and Assets Management
- Environmental protection
- Industry and Transport
- Culture and Tourism.

The Region of Ister-Granum has created a tool enabling to officialise connections between its executive instruments and external organizations; that is to say the **Regional Advisory Council**, which is a consultative body. That instrument is also used to connect with the civil society. Its members are the following ones: the chairmen of the 6 professional committees, 3 representatives of the Ister-Granum Regional Civil Parliament, the representatives of the chambers of commerce and industry (3 persons representing the counties Komárom-Esztergom, Pest and Nitra) and 3 representatives of the largest employers of the Region, that is to say a total of 15 people. The group supports the work of the professional committees and expresses external organizations' interests (employers – employees – professional organizations).

The technical management of the EGTC is put under the responsibility of a Director employed by the structure. As the Hungarian authorities have not approved yet the statutes of the EGTC, the actual director is not yet employed by the EGTC (this statement was true until the end of 2009). Finally, the 2 (sub)regional **development agencies** covering both sides of the EGTC also support actively the action plan of the conurbation.

It is also important to say that the Hungarian language is used locally as the lingua franca of the cross-border co-operation at the political and technical levels because of the importance of the native Hungarian-speaking communities on both sides of the border. Non-Hungarian speakers are few on the Slovak side of the Region and the Slovak-speaking minority living in the Hungarian region of Esztergom is bilingual. The use of Slovak is mainly necessary to connect with external Slovak organizations located at the regional and national scales. An equal use of both languages is above all limited to written communication, especially when official documents are produced.

1.2 Good practices experimented by the IsterGranum EGTC

Ister-Granum EGTC has urged the set up of a forum which is able to involve the civil society e.g. NGOs in the governance of the EGTC. Therefore the so called **“Civil Parliament” established from 20 civil organisations**. At that moment about 900 NGOs are registered in the EGTC. The form of the “Parliament” is a public association. The role of Civil Parliament is:

- Strengthen the relation between Hungarian and Slovakian civil organisations.
- Articulate common interest either at local or regional level.
- Launching common programmes, events and projects.
- Operation of a network which facilitates non-profit organizations at local level.

- Participation in the work of the Expert Board of Ister-Granum EGTC.

1.3 Problems to be solved

The problems can be grouped into:

- mobilization, and external connections;
- formalization** of the cross-border cooperation;
- financing** of the cooperation;

1.3.1 Mobilization of the stakeholders and external connections

Before the establishment of the Ister-Granum EGTC, its predecessor, the Euroregion had eight professional committees; six of them functioned well, actively. After creating the EGTC, these committees terminated their operation. However, at the beginning the committees were marked out to prepare important decisions, now it seems their missions have to be changed because of the lack of interest of the mayors.

Mostly because of the occlusion for a long time - and also as a consequence of their involvement in national politics and administration -, the public administrators living on both sides of the border have only superficial knowledge of the political, social or legal system of the other country. Sometimes **it is a real obstacle of plausible and effective cooperation in cross-border issues.**

The Ister-Granum EGTC has no well-funded contact network neither among higher level technical experts nor higher level members of the public administration, neither in Hungary nor in Slovakia. That is why the specific purposes of the EGTC cannot appear in national and regional strategies.

1.3.2 Formalization of the cross-border cooperation

In spite of the fact that a clear definition of the EGTC was given on several occasions, **most of the mayors do not understand what this new euro-territorial institution provides in practice.** They have unclear ideas about the real purposes, the opportunities and the responsibilities of this instrument. Although they are enthusiastic about the cooperation, they do not see what the benefit and the potential of this cooperation is in the daily life.

While within the General Assembly all the municipalities have equal vote, the executive agencies of the EGTC belong to individual municipalities. The Hungarian regional development agency is owned by two Hungarian municipalities only and the EGTC has no vote in the Slovakian regional development agency, either. Theoretically, owner municipalities may have a decisive influence on the development agency. However, during the operation and activity of the Agency such direct influence was not experienced.

1.3.3 Financing of the cooperation

Financing of common projects:

In the Ister-Granum EGTC, **the members cover the contributions of the projects according to the number of inhabitants**. The bigger settlements finance more than smaller villages. Two problems of this system may be discovered.

1. Some mayors are to increase the membership fees providing stable financial fund and secure pre-financing of common projects (either own or ETCP (European Territorial Cooperation Programmes) developments or improvements).
2. Other ones prefer the pay extra only in case of successful tendering. This model seems to neither provide enough sources for implementation of development projects, nor sustainable operation of EGTC's institutions and employees (still the director).

In the interest of financial stability, the General Assembly took the decision to set up a regional development fund. The fund is to finance projects at the starting phase, before first payment. The development fund means an independent bank account for the EGTC, where the existing 20,000 Euro on the account of the Euroregion organization, which terminated when the EGTC was founded, was transferred. The extra amount required for individual projects is divided between the inhabitants of the EGTC. **It is clear that the projects will be playing a definitive role in financing institutions created by the EGTC.** Therefore is so important to have such a fund.

In addition to this fund, it is also planned to **create a public foundation in the EGTC**. The annual budget of the foundation would be provided by larger companies operating in the region. This would not represent a significant amount for the companies individually, however together it could contribute very efficiently to the development of the region. The independent board could manage approximately 100,000 Euro annually. The Public Fund can provide a financial help to the regional development fund as well, in order to prepare new project ideas.

In Hungary the local governments collect local business tax from the enterprises that operate there, the sum of which was 16 million EUR for Esztergom in 2007 and it will be about 10 million EUR in 2009. Since the employees of these companies are primarily not from Esztergom, the local government of the City took the decision to return 1 % of this tax to the member settlements of the EGTC for them to be able to realize their smaller developments. To this end, a **Solidarity Fund** was established and municipalities were invited to submit project proposals in an open system of calls.

In 2008, in the year of foundation, an experimental invitation to tender was published for 0.5% of the business tax of Esztergom. 29 applications arrived, and from these 14 were supported by the city based on the recommendations of the assessors.

The assessment was made in two parts. First the needs to support the given settlement were assessed. Here, factors such as the number of inhabitants of the settlement, annual budget per capita, tax income per capita and the number of enterprises per 1,000 inhabitants were taken into account. The aid contract was concluded based on these. The settlement that had the poorest

data was placed first. Then the planned developments were also assessed. Here, it was also taken into account how much the local government collaborated with the local civil organizations and neighbouring settlements in the implementation of the project, as well as how much the project supported the objectives of the regional developmental plan. These factors determined what amount a given project received.

As a result of the above procedure, **14 contracts** of smaller value (between 430 and 10,200 Euros) were shared; for example for the renovation of a community centre, the construction of the roof of a primary school, the organization of a harvest festival, the creation of a gymnasium for a school, the purchasing of a school bus and the building of an open air stage. The projects will be completed by the end of the year 2009.

Due to the economic crisis in 2009, there will be no new call for tenders published as the revenues of Esztergom have decreased by a third this year. However, according to the plans, the fund will be published again in 2010. A big change will be that **the decision on the applications will be made by the Senate of the Ister-Granum EGTC**, and not by the representative body of the city.

Although it seems to be clear that the EGTC needs to have bigger independent administrative capacities to be more effective, no immediate solution has been found until now. Even if municipal leaders were extremely committed to finance forward-looking initiatives as cross-border cooperation, the weak financial status of the municipalities on both sides of the border would represent pretty close limits to the funding of the operations.

As a short-term solution, some operational costs can be covered by management costs of successful EU-funded projects. However, these costs are to be linked directly to the activities of the projects.

1.4 Solutions to be developed

In the past the Euroregion has decided to build up a global policy for the Ister-Granum area. A **cross-border strategic development plan** was approved by the local authorities in 2005 for the 2007-2013 period, that is to say for the following European programming period and prepare ERFA and CF sources.

Eight cross-border committees bringing together a total of 150 experts have also been associated to the definition of the strategy. The objective of the strategy is to **intensify the cross-border territorial cohesion** in all possible ways.

All spatial topics are considered as potential themes of co-operation. **The creation of the EGTC, three years after the approval of the development plan can be understood as a required evolution of governance in the area.** The previous parliament of the mayors and its presidency shared by 14 people have played a significant role in the setting up of the Euroregion consciousness but the implementation of a development plan needed a more integrated structure of co-operation. Still, the first EGTC of Eastern Europe is a newly born cross-border public arena.

Governance methods within the EGTC must be experienced to achieve concrete results in the coming years

1.4.1 Best practices coming from “EGTC” projects

During the two-year cooperation within the framework of the URBACT II “EGTC” project, several new ideas and methods on cross-border conurbation issues came from the partners. Although the historical, economic and cultural backgrounds are different some best practice and benchmark may be worth being studied deeper and adopting some elements.

Of course, the mentioned differences and practices cannot and must not be accepted without modification, but the experiences give useful information. In the following chapters some best practices (institutions, practices, activities etc) will be highlighted replying to the “problems to be solved”.

1.4.2 Updated development strategy, agenda

At least two cross-border conurbations (Chaves-Verín and Frankfurt-Slubice) mentioned the **Common Strategy/Agenda** as a good practice. Although the Ister-Granum EGTC has an approved operative programme for 2007-13 it should be updated considering the followings:

- New development directions considering global economic processes.
- Definition of local (municipal) cooperation as smaller scale development axes.
- Participatory approach in updating the recent OP. Direct involvement of NGOs and business partners (stakeholders) in the strategic planning process. (Agenda-like document, rather than a technical material).

1.4.3 Awareness rising of regional and national authorities

As the representatives of Chaves-Verín suggested, **the regional and national decision (makers) levels have to be more involved in the establishment, development and operation of EGTCs.** It is important to emphasize that the efforts at cross-border levels have (or should have) regional and national relevancies as well (e.g. economic and social projects).

The representation of cross-border initiatives, especially EGTCs, in national administration has to be ensured.

1.4.4 Improvement of staff

The managing of an EGTC and other cross-border conurbation institutions is a new and responsible task. Therefore the improvement of staff is essential. Such tasks cover knowledge improvements on:

- European CB cooperation and programmes;
- Project management;
- Cultural studies;
- Learning languages (cross-border partner's);
- Communication.

All the staff working for the EGTC has to have a future vision and carrier option, as these people will be the next generation of experts for other institutionalized cross-border initiatives.

1.5 Recommendations at national and European level

1.5.1 For the national level

- Provide a clear framework regarding the mission and administrative linkages of the institutions of the EGTC** in the national administrative system (including institutionalized links between EGTC and line ministries and NUTS II, regional development councils and Agencies).
- Promote, initiate and support the partnership-based strategic planning process** for the stakeholders of the EGTC with an objective of channelling results to Structural Funds programs beyond 2013.

1.5.2 For the EU level

- Promote the idea of developing EGTCs** as possible Managing Authorities for Cross-border OPs in the next period - set clear policies and administrative conditions to allow preparation of EGTCs in due time.
- Include cross-border outlook to the justification of mainstream programmes whenever it is relevant
- Provide EU Structural Funds to assist joint planning and programming in cross-border areas including effective programming for the regions as well as networking

2 | "COMMUNITY" ISSUES

2.1 Starting situation

2.1.1 Cross-border civil society involvement

Even if the Ister-Granum EGTC (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation) is a young formulation, **since the very beginning the involvement of civil society in the actions of the EGTC was a concrete aim**. Therefore, the newly formulated institutional structure of the EGTC is providing linking points to decision support and participatory levels for the civil bodies so they are able to express the – in Hungary not so strong – civil based expectations and suggestions.

The daily migration of Slovak workers to the Hungarian factories is the most evident proof of that integration. The introduction of the Euro in Slovakia at the beginning of 2009 could incite Slovak workers to move back to their country to be paid with a stronger currency. That individual strategy which would also interest some Hungarian workers could destabilize some businesses located on the Hungarian side of the EGTC, another proof that the destiny of both sides of the Danube is interlinked.

The most recent objectives of the EGTC are ambitious. In terms of mobility and energy, a **cross-border sustainable transportation policy** is wanted to secure the exportation of goods and to contemplate new logistics activities along the Danube. A **new approach of hospital services** is also required. The EGTC would like to be considered as a single catchment area to allow people living on the Slovak side of the territory to go to the hospital in Esztergom instead of going to the nearest Slovak hospital situated 50 km away from the border. The **building-up of a common tourist image** is also considered to be a central issue to merge the assets of both sides of the border (thermal activities, heritage, eco-tourism...). Finally, an **integrated media strategy** helping to connect together the inhabitants living in the Euroregion is another expected theme of territorial cohesion.

The implementation of these expected policies requires innovative systems of cooperation that include financial, social and communication capacity improvement and other developments.

Some major ideas (and instruments) of that strategy have been set up: the building-up of cross-border services such as an Ister-Granum Tourist Destination Management Agency and a news agency creating bilingual programmes; and stronger active and operative connection between the EGTC and governmental bodies to secure the funding of the EGTC's projects with national instruments existing in the various ministries; a network of cross-border territories all along the Slovak-Hungarian frontier to express common recommendations influencing more efficiently decision-makers at the national level.

The change of national legislations due to the local economic, political, social and environmental needs in the border areas is a long and uncertain process. However a cross-border area having an

EGTC could be seen as a spatial laboratory of legislative experimentation. The new governance system expected in the Ister-Granum EGTC should lead to a certain level of legislative flexibility and social sensitivity to test formulas benefiting to both sides of the border.

2.1.2 Multi-level networks

Since the establishment of the first EGTC (Ister-Granum), the national authorities are paying attention to support somehow, with limited tools, the freshly established EGTCs. From the nine EGTCs officially registered (February 2010), three organizations are registered in Hungary or having Hungarian members.

Therefore, and because of the preparation for Hungarian EU Presidency, the Ministry of Local Governments established a working group on EGTCs to promote and facilitate the setting up and management of EGTCs. Ister-Granum EGTC is an active member of this body.

Since the early phase of establishment of the EGTC it has seemed that **much more assistance is needed from the national level**. By now the burden of the establishment is eliminated but still several other legal questions are left open.

2.1.3 Cross-border communication

The EGTC has not yet developed a global communication strategy. Communication in the former Euroregion was more project-related through cross-border events and actions mentioned in the local press and radio stations. The use of the Hungarian language in the spoken communication is more frequent because of the cultural characteristics of the area. Slovak is used such as Hungarian for the written communication. English translations are available for documents considered important in a wider European framework.

2.1.4 Common projects

Since 2003, a series of projects has been carried out by different organizations located in the Euroregion. The most significant actions consisted in:

- Connecting civil society located on both sides of the Danube River.
- Defining thematic strategies enabling a future cross-border territorial cohesion.
- Implementing some specific short/medium term projects

These actions have been related mainly to the following themes: economics/tourism, environment, logistics/transportation and the third sector/civil society (NGOs).

Economics/tourism: a web portal has been developed for the 20.000 businesses located in the Euroregion with a view to give them useful information for their daily life (e.g.: information concerning the registration requirements). Tourism is highlighted on the portal. In parallel to that

project, thematic bicycle routes have been created and common tourist maps on the cross-border territory have been published.

Environment: A fish ladder on the River Ipoly has been built in order to enable fish migration and to reduce the environmental damage caused by the regulation of the River Ipoly dating from the mid-1980's.

Logistics/transportation: a feasibility study has been carried out concerning the development of a cross-border business-related logistics belt leading to 10 different potential projects. Some plans have also been drawn concerning two future bridges crossing the Ipoly River and a renewed road network around that infrastructure.

Third sector/civil society: the strengthening of the regional civil sphere was considered as a major theme of co-operation; a guide on the NGOs working in the Euroregion was published in Slovak, Hungarian and English. A bilingual newsletter is also published.

Furthermore, a web portal for the NGOs located in the area was created to initiate interactions between these organizations. Finally, a cross-border study was carried out to know about the networks created by the NGOs in the Euroregion, then in the EGTC.

2.2 Good practices experimented by the IsterGranum EGTC

The Ister-Granum Development Agency operates a portal-like web page for the Ister-Granum EGTC. This is a trilingual platform in Hungarian, Slovak and English.

2.2.1 Economic Portal of Ister-Granum EGTC

This portal was developed by the national development fund in Hungarian, Slovak and English languages. The main aim of the portal is to **present the economic environment of the EGTC and the cross-border region and promote investments**. The Hungarian part of the EGTC has stable investors e.g. Suzuki Hungary while the Slovakian part mainly provides employees.

The web page also presents:

- Industrial Parks
- Training for employees
- Job market
- Tourist attraction and services

Through the page, the visitors can subscribe to newsletters and register their enterprise in the regional company register, database. This database is accessible to registered visitors and offers various search option.

2.2.2 Civil Portal

The portal collects the NGOs of the EGTC. It provides various services for the visitors and registered NGOs, as follows:

- partner search for NSRF and EU calls and projects,
- events,
- organizations,
- introduction of regional civil organizations,
- link to civiljutube.hu (civil video-share portal)

2.2.3 Ethnical Portal

The web page was developed in the framework of “KOMP” (also having meaning: ferry) Interreg III/A project. The portal presents the minorities of Ister-Granum EGTC. As the page is developed by the Research Institute of Ethnic and National Minorities of Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the scientific approach is rather strong. The portal collects surveys and studies on minorities sometimes at settlement level. The content is valuable for researchers and for everyone interested in the topic.

2.2.4 Civil Parliament

The Parliament was registered as public association in 2006. The core idea of its establishment was to **promote the social acceptance of regionalism**. After the birth of the EGCT, the aims slightly changed:

- strengthen the relation between Hungarian and Slovakian civil organizations,
- articulate common interests,
- launch common programs, events and projects,
- operate the Service Network for Non-profit Organizations of Ister-Granum EGTC,
- participate in the work of the Expert Board of the Ister-Granum EGTC:

Through the Parliament, the civil organizations will be able to express their needs and opinions in the Expert Board. The role of the Expert Board is to function like a Regional Development Council. Its members are:

- Executive Board of the Civil Parliament.
- Representatives of the three top employers from the Region.
- Representatives of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (from two counties).

- Six majors leading the Thematic Committees of the EGTC.

2.2.5 Solidarity Fund

The Solidarity Fund was established 12th June 2008 by the Municipality of Esztergom. The background of the Solidarity Fund was that the enterprises registered in Esztergom employ not only local inhabitants but commuters from neighbouring settlements. Consequently the tax from business activity remains in Esztergom instead of going to the workers' municipalities and even the commuters are not able (or limited) to participate in the cultural life of their residence.

Therefore Esztergom decided to establish a Fund from the 1% of the business tax and in a tender structure to redistribute it between the municipalities which lack own financial sources for development. The applicable sources can be applied for:

- local investments,
- own contribution in development projects (e.g. within OPs),
- local physical and development plans and development strategies,
- regional events.

The administrative task of the Fund management is contracted with the Ister-Granum Euroregion Development Agency. The formal check of the proposals is completed by the Agency while the concept (content) is evaluated by two independent experts.

The territorial scope of the Solidarity Fund is the municipalities of Ister-Granum EGTC, Slovakian and Hungarian communities.

The evaluation process pays specific attention to the principle of solidarity. Therefore following the formal check, the next indices give the final rank:

- Number of inhabitants
- Local expenditure per inhabitant
- Tax income per inhabitant
- Number of active enterprises per 1,000 inhabitants

According to the evaluation process and the decision of Esztergom, 14 projects won altogether 19.5 million HUF (app. 71.000 EUR).

2.3 Problems to be solved

Challenges of "Community" issues can be grouped as:

- Lack of civil participation** in the strategy making (participatory democracy);

- Lack of communication** and marketing strategy.

2.3.1 Lack of civil participation in strategy making (participatory democracy)

Although the body of Civil Parliament exists and defined element of the EGTC's operative structure, it is not a real parliament. The membership is voluntary, only the Executive Board is elected. The association should work and be operated independently and continuously like an open forum of civil issues. Due to the voluntary membership, a strong campaign should be launched to foster NGOs and civil organizations to become members. This is a time consuming task, as in Hungary this kind of participatory approach is weak and there are only a few (good) examples. However, **the successful work of the Civil Parliament is a real good practice.**

Furthermore, the Civil Parliament has to participate in the decision-making process of the EGTC. The opportunity is given, but the civil organizations have to find the relevant topics they are working for.

2.3.2 Lack of communication and marketing strategy

Probably the most important fact to make the events successful is the good **communication** and **marketing**. This complex activity is not only time consuming, but needs **higher budget** year after year, which is a serious burden for the civil organization.

Therefore, Esztergom allocates some of its own sources (e.g. through the Solidarity Fund) for the following activities:

- free advertisement surface on its own web pages;
- news on the running and planned events;
- printed leaflets and flyers.

2.4 Solution to be developed

The "EGTC" project partners presented good practices from their cross-border conurbation during project meetings. Some of them are well applicable for Ister-Granum EGTC.

2.4.1 Cross border information centre

The Portuguese-Spanish cross-border region (Eurocidade Chaves-Verin) developed the following project to improve the communication between the citizens. Within the framework of the INTERREG IVA financed project an information centre is setup, which:

- Provides information on services that citizens can use on the other side of the border (“programa termalismo senior”)
- Provides information about the activities organized by the Eurocidade,
- Receives and collects applications to take part in the activities of the conurbation

At the moment the office is situated in the Council of Verín. For citizens from Chaves, the information is provided through the Cultural Centre in Chaves.

2.4.2 Cross-border Office for Youth

Another good example to promote the cross-border region (Chaves-Verín) and facilitate regional identity is the Youth Office. A **youth strategy** has been set up in partnership between both municipalities with the support of Portuguese and Galician governments (Youth Departments) in order to:

- Create a Platform to support mobility, interaction and collaboration between youth. The mentioned action will finally contribute to a better social and cultural cohesion.
- Assess on work offers, culture, leisure, and study possibilities within the Euroregion.
- Organize and present any type of cultural activities (theatre, dance, photography) coming from young artists.
- Promote youth tourism within the Euroregion.

2.4.3 Upper Rhine Museum Pass

For integration of cultural heritage and having common regional cultural identity the **museum pass** from the Trinational Eurodistrict Basel is a best practice.

The Upper Rhine Museum Pass is an annual ticket for over 180 museums in Germany, France and Switzerland. This ticket is currently bought each year by approx. 35,000 people within the Upper Rhine region. In addition to the citizen dimension, the project also entails close cooperation between the member museums.

This concept is well adaptable for the Regional Tourist Destination Management structure is being developed in the Ister-Granum EGTC with the support of HU-SK Cross-Border Programme.

2.5 Recommendations at national and European level

3 | THE ACTIVITIES PROGRAMMES

The following tables refer to future actions planned to implement in the Ister-Granum EGTC.

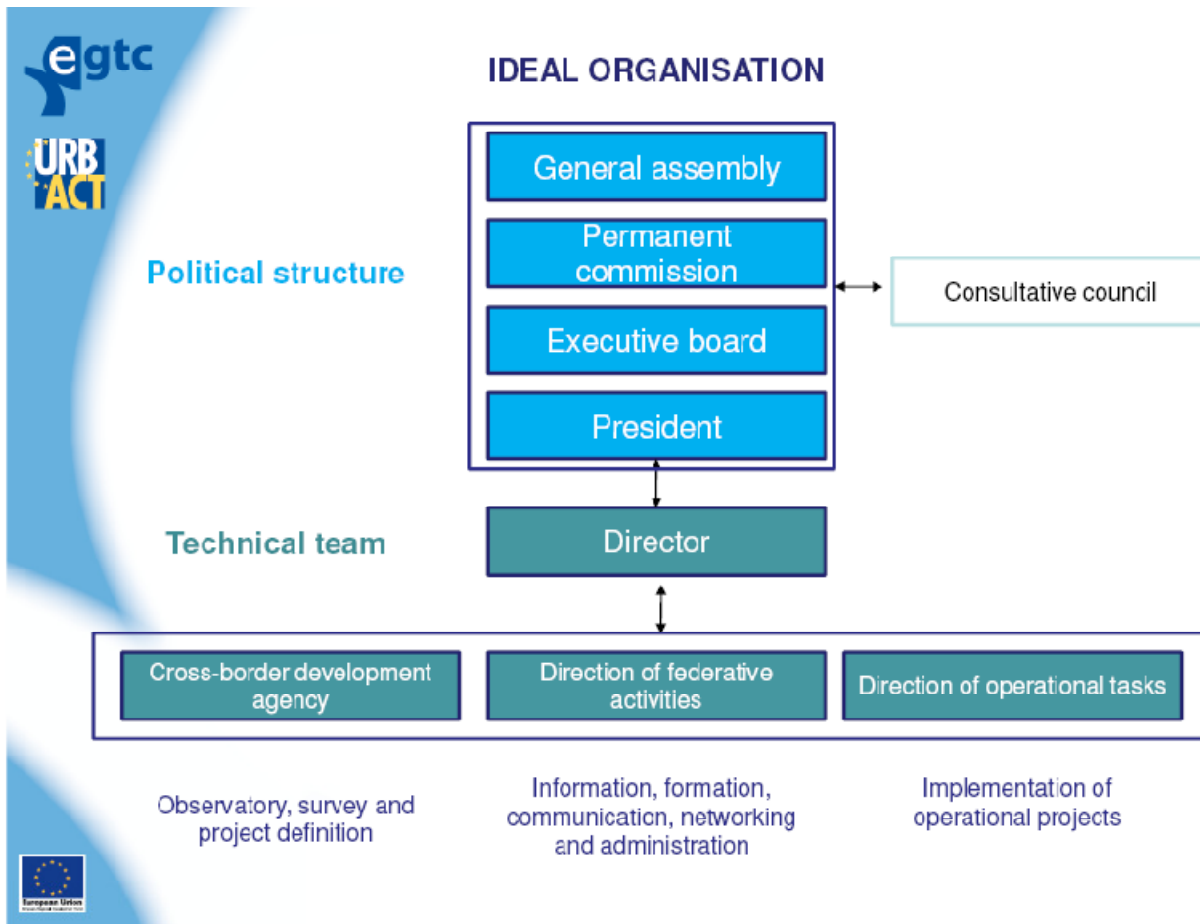
Challenge 1: Common Renewable Energy Strategy						
Type of action	Partnership	Description of the action	Intended outputs	Timescale	Financial sources	Recommendations at regional, national and EU level
Common Energy Mapping	EGTC	Mapping of the RE capacity of EGTC	map	small scale	HU-SK ETC	TA for mapping
Energy Centres	EGTC	set up two demonstration centres	RE energy strategy, demonstration site	medium	HU-SK ETC, IEE	harmonisation of national RE energy concept

Challenge 2: Project based TDM committee						
Type of action	Partnership	Description of the action	Intended outputs	Timescale	Financial sources	Recommendations at regional, national and EU level
Permanent meeting and platform	Mayors of EGTC	Continuous meeting of mayors and experts within the frame of RTDM	TDM strategy, EGTC marketing, permanent communication platform	medium	HU-SK ETC, Regional OPs	harmonisation of ROPs for the next programming period

4 | THE CROSS-BORDER GOVERNANCE ORGANIZATION SCHEME

4.1 The starting situation

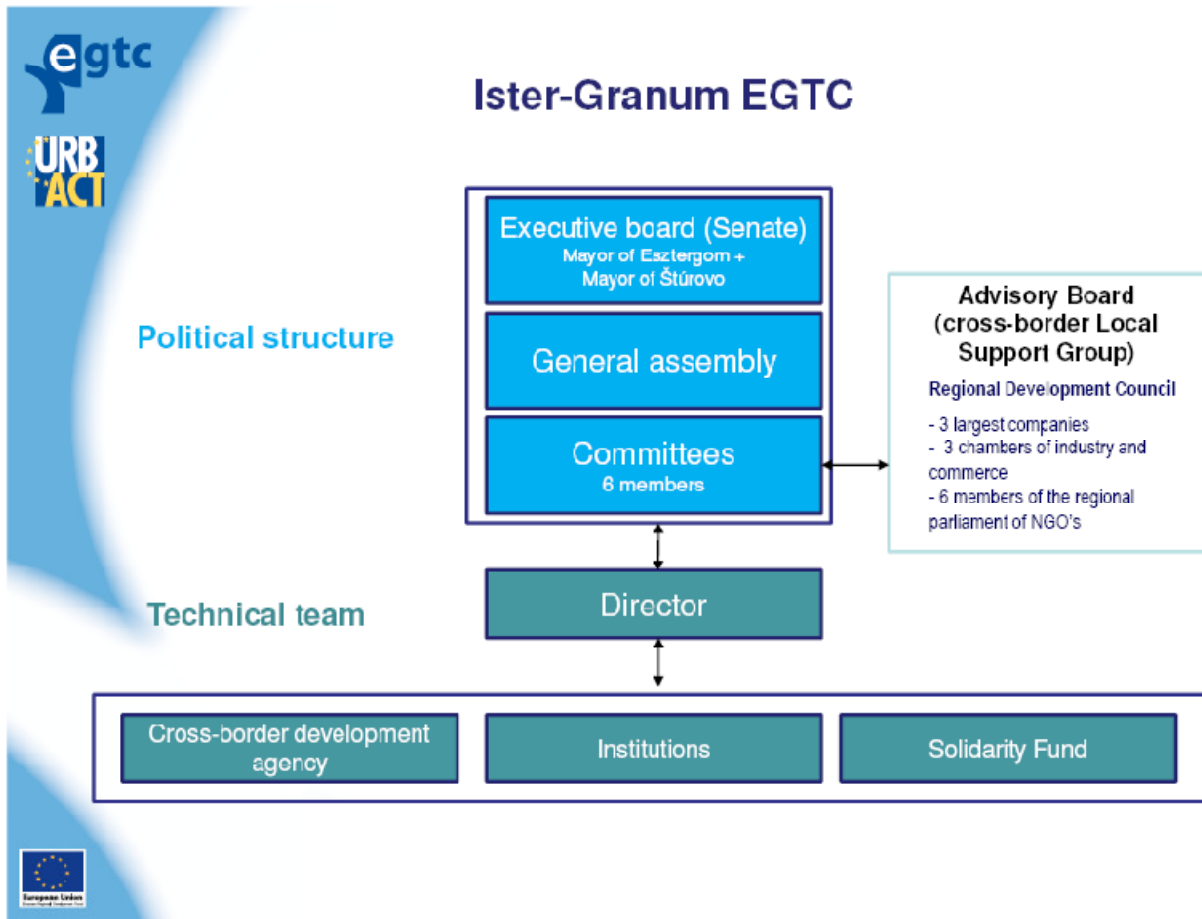
On 12 March 2009 in Chaves a governance scheme for cross-border conurbation was developed and presented by MOT.



Some elements of the model are set by law for the EGTCs (e.g. general assembly, director) but some are quite innovative.

4.2 The targeted results

The governance model for the Ister-Granum EGTC is rather similar to the one suggested by MOT. Some parts of the recent scheme should not be modified, but some need revision. The recent structure is as follows:



Due to the great number of municipalities (and representatives) comprised in the EGTC, the work of the General Assembly is concentrated only on one occasion per a year into compulsory summit and it takes “only” strategic decisions.

The Senate has the lion’s share in operative decisions and delegates the tasks to the development agency as main operative body of the EGTC.

Probably the most flexible system is the working of the Committees. From our experience, the mayors participate with pleasure in bodies or committees preparing and implementing, real and tangible projects. Therefore, it seems to be logical to terminate – or suspend – the work of the professional committees and – instead of these – to use committees organized around projects or group of projects in which the mayors are involved. These committees can work together on the Internet and can also discuss “strategic” issues. After a while when – expectedly – project work results in an improved and more experienced partnership and – expectedly, again – the need of strategic planning becomes visible again (e.g by linking availability of national or European funding to strategies) committees will be operational again.

According to the above-mentioned experiences, the General Assembly of the EGTC on its meeting of May 2009 decided to quit the system of professional (technical) committees and prefers to

develop a system of ad-hoc committees each linked to a particular project. The Assembly asked the Agency to elaborate a detailed proposal and submit this to the next meeting.

One important consequence of this decision is that the heads of professional (technical) committees – as committees are abolished – cannot represent the municipalities in the Regional Advisory Council (“municipal side” of the Regional Advisory Council), therefore, the order of delegations of the Council is to be altered, too.

5 | NETWORK AND COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

5.1 Contacts with regional, national and European administrations

The Ister-Granum EGTC is the member of the national ministerial working group for EGTCs. It regularly presents the updated information on recent projects involved in the “EGTC” project.

The Development Agency, as the representative of the EGTC, and the director of the EGTC were invited for some European events on cross-border territorial cooperation and EGTC:

- Open Days (European Commission, Brussels)
- Workshop on cross-border cooperation (CoR, Mariehamn)
- URBACT City Lab (URBACT, Lille)
- Workshop on territorial cooperation and its institutions in 2014-20 (Interact, Brussels)

5.2 Contacts with other cross-border conurbations

Ister-Granum EGTC, as member of the national ministerial working group for EGTCs, is in contact with:

- Karszt-Bodva EGTC
- Ung-Tisza-Túr EGTC
- and other Hungarian EGTCs are under establishment or registration process.

6 | PERSPECTIVES

The year 2010 brings several opportunities for the Ister-Granum EGTC having some changes and modifications in its governing structure and methods.

According to the Statutes of the EGTC, in September the leading administrators (chairman and co-chairman) will be elected. The mandate of the Director will expire, thus this person has to be nominated and elected also.

The proposed modification which concerns the Statutes should be done in autumn at the latest as well, e.g.:

- Structure of the permanent committees;
- New thematic and/or ad-hoc committees or rearrange the recent ones;
- New function of the committees;
- Presentation and approval of the LAP;
- Framework of LAP implementation;
- Update the EGTC's Operative Program (Strategy, Agenda?)
- Introduction and approval of other thematic strategies (e.g. TDM, renewable energy etc.).