

## Thematic Paper XIII

Cities and Managing Authorities – A Pathway to Partnership



**FIN-URB-ACT Thematic Paper XIII**  
**Cities and Managing Authorities a Pathway to Partnership**

**FIN-URB-ACT work group meeting**  
**Gijon on 15/16 June 2010**

**Two Examples from Gijon and Aachen**

So far, many different models of relationships between cities and Managing Authorities were introduced. They ranged from a complete lack of cooperation, to informal cooperation as it is the case in Edinburgh, or in North-Rhine Westphalia where cities cooperate and speak with one voice, to the Managing Authorities, or they can be based on formal agreements as it can be the case between Rome and Lazio. Following, there is the description the approach in Gijon, where the relationship between the MA and the cities seems to be easier. Furthermore follows an example by the city of Aachen, where strategically cooperation was set through the fusion of two cross border projects, one regional level and one carried out on local level.

*Cities and Managing Authorities – Cooperation approach in Gijon*

The Managing Authority for Gijón in FIN-URB-ACT was the General Directorate of European Affairs from the Regional Ministry for Economy and European Affairs of the Principality of Asturias. During the implementation phase it changed to the Regional Ministry of Economy and Finance.

The Relationship with the Managing Authorities is quite particular and correlated to the size ratio of cities and communities region of Asturias. With one million inhabitants; Asturias is one of the smallest Regions in Spain. There three bigger cities, Gijón (app. 300.000 inhabitants), Oviedo (240.000 inhabitants) and Aviles (85.000 inhabitants) and various smaller cities. Together they build a joint metropolitan area of about 700.000 inhabitants with many commuting and exchange activities. Thus, the Managing Authority is faced with one metropolitan area that is one Eurocity and with one university.

Due to this structure, and the limited number of bigger cities in a densely populated but small area, it is easier to get in contact with the Managing Authority. As there have many informal relationships established. (e.g. the former mayor of Gijón is now president of the Region). Thus also the relationship with the Managing Authority is mostly based on informal agreements. There are nor regular meetings among the Managing Authorities and the Cities. Hence to get in contact is quite simple. In many case it's even just to give them a call. In case of FIN-URB-ACT the Managing Authority let the city act quite free.

The function of the Managing Authority comprises regular tasks like the support on the participation of local and European Projects, supervision of activities undertaken by the city and their compliance with the projects goals as well as the cooperation with local authorities in order to allow access to funding. Main interests of the City and the Managing Authority: opening discussions for projects undertaken by the city in order to support SMEs in order to provide:

1. A better service to SME (better access to funding/ support instruments)
2. Coordinate measures to take in the near future
3. Avoid duplicating financing schemes and structures (in particular the tasks is important for the different administrative bodies, as some schemes of the city and the region are pretty similar)

Questions:

Dr. Blatt: How is the situation now with Asturias, in order to receive funding from the ERDF?

Gijón: The situation was much better in the past, many projects have been implemented, still there is money available, and however it is less than in previous times.

### **TopTechnologyRegion (TTR) a crossborder cooperation approach between regions and cities**

*Background:*

On 10 April 2008 there was the official establishment of an international working group between Netherland, Belgium and Germany with the objective to develop a coherent international technological top-region (TTR) on regional level. The involved regions are Noord-Brabant (NL), Limburg (NL), Vlaams-Brabant (B), Liège (incl. DG, B) and the Western part of Northrhine-Westphalia (D). The development Agency AGIT (and also the Municipality of Aachen) was asked by the Northrhine Westphalian Ministries for Economics, & Innovation to represent the German part of the border area within the project and to take over the coordination of the main activities. Meanwhile also the regional districts (Regierungsbezirke) of Cologne and Dusseldorf attended the project and provide a strong interlinkage among different administrative levels.

The first step of the project was to carry out a benchmark study to identify strengths & weaknesses. Compared to 14 other technological top-regions in the EU & the USA, an analysis of comparative strengths and weaknesses in the sub-regions of TTR were found and cross border development potentials were defined. This was benchmarked on the fields of health/life sciences, high tech systems, advanced materials chemicals to receive and prospective starting point on technological and economical cross border cooperation.

In 2004 started the cross border project ELAt on cooperation between the cities of Eindhoven (NL), Leuven (B) and Aachen (D) to promote the technology triangle between these three cities. The project also started with mapping and benchmarking activities (16 clusters have been identified), the establishments of technology and business communities and the elaboration of a common strategy ("Engineering in the future").

In order to provide efficiency of resources and more effective knowledge capitalisation the decision was taken to interlink both initiatives what was implemented within the past 1.5 years. In order to merge ELAt (city project) following the bottom up approach with TTR a project by the Managing Authorities following a more top down approach led to long discussions on the right process and on the combination of the right clusters. Thus, some adjustments on the right approach had to be made. Finally the presentation of the first joint TTR ELAt-action programme took place on 10 March 2010 by the representatives of the Municipalities and the Managing Authorities backed with political support.

*Common procedure: TTR ELAt*

Until now a joined action programme for the upcoming years until 2013 focusing the industries of chemical & advanced materials, health sciences and high tech systems. The joint action programme comprises different fields of action like the establishments of a strategic network to

interlink the businesses, the question of knowledge capitalisation, the institutional development as well as lobbying and marketing activities.

TTR ELAt is now set-up as a regional initiative carried out by regional partners (the networks and the regional development agencies). On the other hand the initiative is accompanied and supported by political representatives. The basic financing is being annually provided by each Managing Authorities (in total 150.000 € per year). In order to execute concrete projects that are based on the program, other independent funding sources (e.g. INTERREG IV, Objective 2 and FP7) have to be found.

The future cooperation approach will be based on three levels. On the top there is the initiative group serving as political backing, two working groups “Economy” and “Institutional framework conditions” and the community of all partners (“triple-helix” – university – industry - government). The tasks of the working groups (they are installed as a project office composed) is to act on the operational level, they need to work out the joint action programme, annual programmes and they should carry out at least one important activity/ project per year. They are foreseen as a kind of growth model for the future. It could be expanded to a joint TTR ELAt-bureau. The working group economic matters (composed by research and development agencies, universities, business networks campus companies) should supervise the program lines, the strategic networking and the business development support. On the other hand members of the government and mayors of the cities.

*First conclusions and benefits from the mutual project approach:*

- Desired West-orientation of North Rhine-Westphalia and East-orientation of the Benelux countries will be expanded in economic and technological respect
- Trinational interlinkage of insufficiently connected regions so far opens up new opportunities to close gaps in the regional value chains to create more critical masses and to strengthen the visibility on European scale.
- The focuses (only three promising fields) & at the same time strategic approach (combining contentwise & framework condition related activities) is new & probably opens up better chances for successful results
- The regional and project-orientated approach of the TTR ELAt-initiative could lead to very practical and demand-oriented cooperation but assumes also a stronger interlinkage between regional strategies and funding opportunities
- Cross-border business will be supported especially in the field of technology-orientated SMEs and by building up cooperate networks between companies (R&D university institutes)
- Border-related structural barriers and problems (e.g. in terms of funding instruments) will be tackled strategically. Their solution will strengthen the leading role of the regions in cross-border development within the EU

*Discussion:*

**Dr. Blatt:** Cooperation model of different stakeholder, coming together more easy way to receive funding, also for cities. With collective actions the possibility to have a contract with the Managing Authorities is easier. Thus a feasible way is to collect the cities, build local support groups and contact the Managing Authorities.

**Aveiro:** Posed question about the competition among the cities.

**Meyer:** Not really as there has been already a long tradition of cooperation among the involved partners which led to a joint understanding on the common aims, it is a win win situation for both parties .

**DV:** In order to benefit it needs to be created an environment of mutual reliance, if this precondition is given the competition effect among the partners should be reduced, additionally it is a strategic partnership on particular fields of action.

### **Conclusion:**

The Region of North-Rhine Westphalia shows a high capacity of cooperation, even beyond the borders: it proves that procedures can be adapted to the local needs and are not necessarily a blocking factor (an alibi) for isolation. This dimension could probably be an element for discussion in the seminar on Managing Authorities.

## URBACT II

**URBACT** is a European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development.

It enables cities to work together to develop solutions to major urban challenges, reaffirming the key role they play in facing increasingly complex societal challenges. It helps them to develop pragmatic solutions that are new and sustainable, and that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions. It enables cities to share good practices and lessons learned with all professionals involved in urban policy throughout Europe. URBACT is 181 cities, 29 countries, and 5,000 active participants

[www.urbact.eu/project](http://www.urbact.eu/project)



EUROPEAN  
PROGRAMME  
FOR  
SUSTAINABLE  
URBAN  
DEVELOPMENT

