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SPANISH PRESIDENCY
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ESPON Seminar

Small and medium-sized cities in Europe

15-16 November 2023 in Cuenca, Spain

*Policy reflections from the
EU Presidency Trio 2014-1015 (Luxembourg)
Dr. Gérard Thomas
Ministry of Housing and Spatial Planning*

General context

- **The presence of a border is no longer seen as an obstacle but is instead perceived as an asset to further the interests of all parties.**
- Progressive opening of borders in the European Union
- Developments in the governance of cross-border regions (Eurodistrict, Euroregion, EGTC, etc.)
- Role of Interreg in strengthening cross-border cooperation

Contribution of the Luxembourg Presidency to the Trio theme

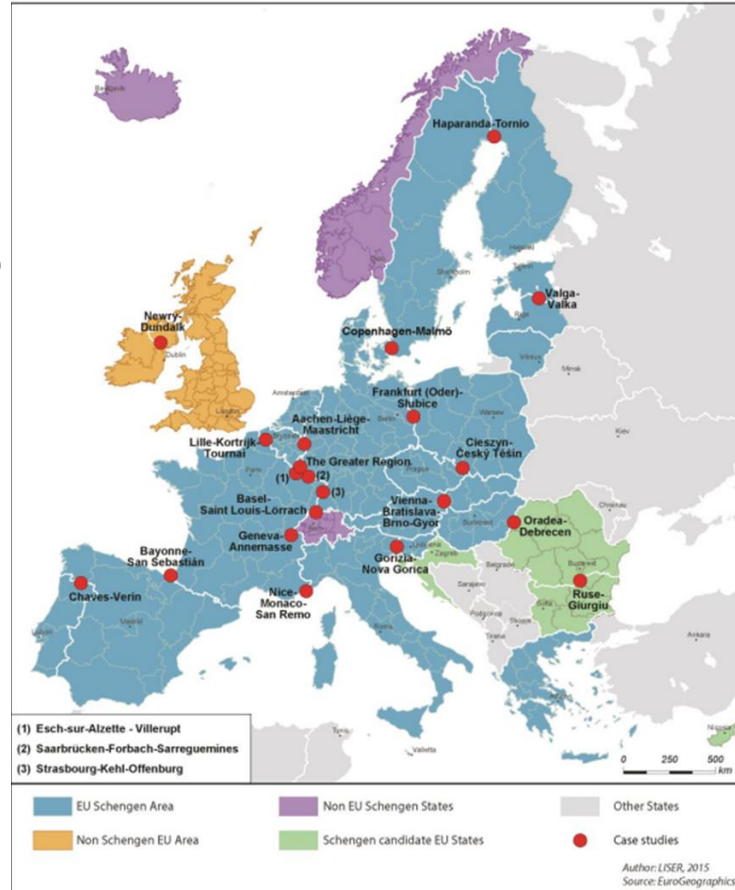
- **Highlight the potential of small and medium-sized cities cooperating across the border**
ESPON targeted analysis “Metroborder” (2010-2011): Concept of cross-border polycentric regions (CBPRs)
- Study by the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research on:
 “Opportunities of cross-border cooperation between small and medium cities in Europe”
 Case studies of SMCs cooperating across the border: Comparison of 21 case studies across Europe
- Luxembourg Presidency Conclusions

Small and medium-sized cities cooperating across the border

- **How to gain critical mass by cooperating across the border?**
 - **Cooperation within cross-border polycentric regions** allows small and medium-sized cities to reach **the critical mass for unlocking their development potential**
 - **This depends on cross-border integration and common territorial strategies**
- **Factors** that can influence the form/level of cross-border integration:
 - Geographical context,
 - Cross-border governance structure
 - Shared interests or identity in a cross-border area
- **Potential difficulties** in developing cross-border territorial strategies:
 - Lack of a formal framework for cross-border spatial planning
 - Institutional mismatch between the different stakeholders,
 - Divergences in strategic priorities,
 - Differences in planning cultures.

Case studies of SMCs cooperating across the border

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Identification of 21 existing instances of cross-border cooperation

Great diversity among existing instances of cross-border cooperation based on:

- the size of the cities,
- the geographical context,
- the history of cooperation and/or the surface, areas of the different cooperation structures

All cross-border cooperation initiatives share similar aims:

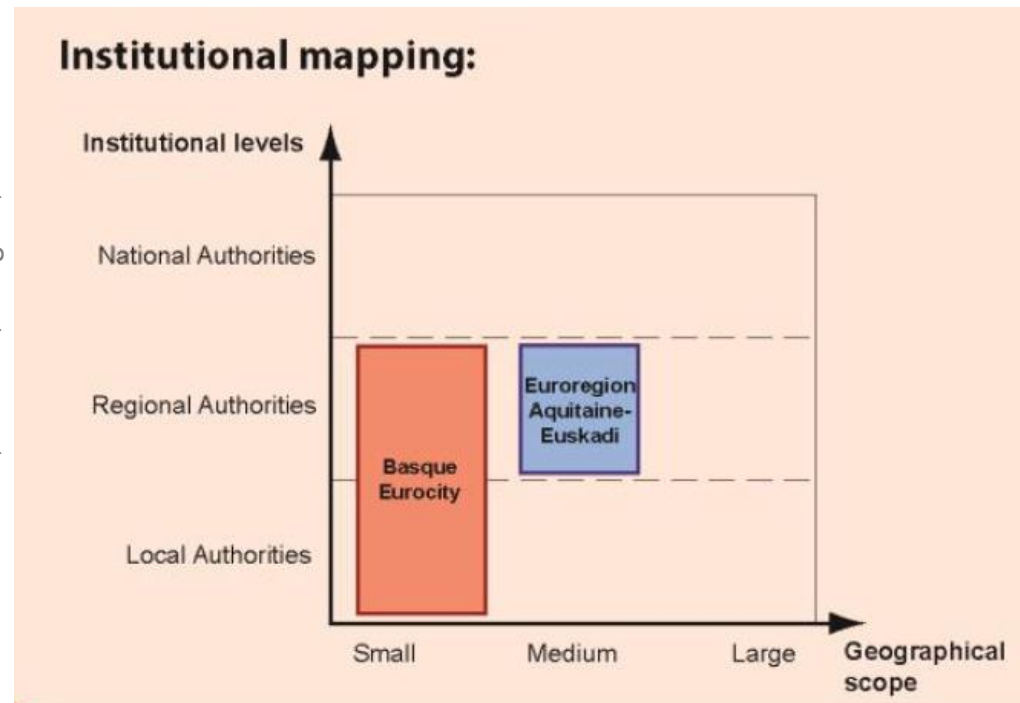
- improve the relationships with the neighbours,
- construct a common future

Case study: Bayonne (FR) - San Sebastián (ES)

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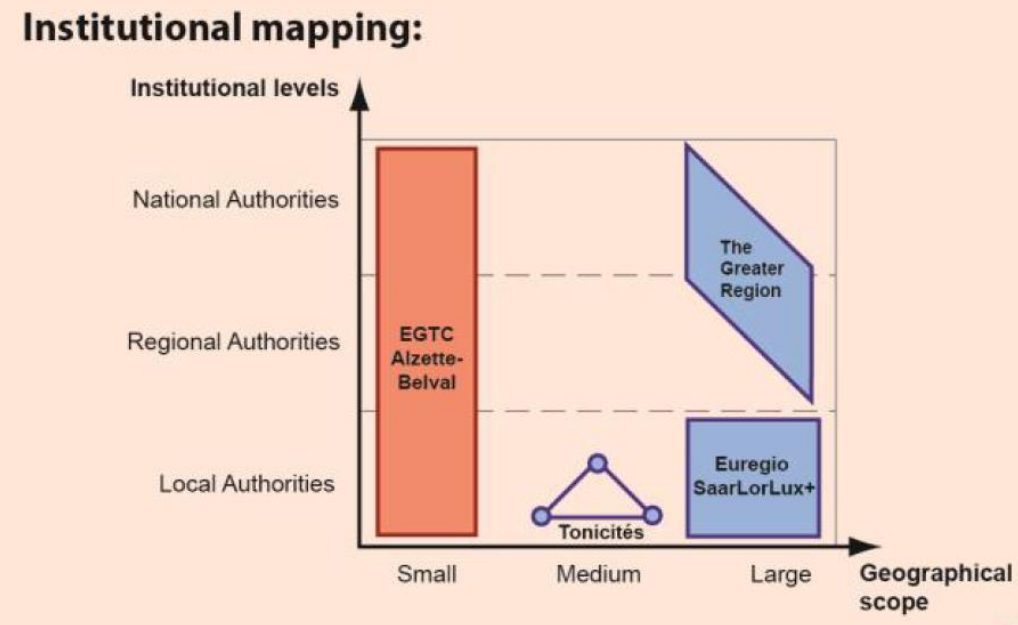


Case study: Alzette Belval (LU-FR)

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Luxembourg Presidency Conclusions

➤ Three clauses dedicated to SMCs cooperating across borders:

- Encourage national authorities to integrate cross-border development strategies at the local/regional level into national, transnational, macro-regional and European development strategies
- Call for a platform for cross-border polycentric regions to further exchange experiences and good practices
- Ask ESPON, the Commission and Interact to further strengthen the knowledge base and evidence on cross-border regions, as well as to support the development of observatories for the collection/production of cross-border data

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Thank you!

For questions please contact:
Gerard.Thomas@mat.etat.lu

Please visit us at www.espon.eu

References:

Small and Medium-sized Cities in Cross-Border Polycentric Regions

Input paper for the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Urban Policy under the Luxembourg Presidency

https://amenagement-territoire.public.lu/dam-assets/fr/eu-presidency/Events/26-27-November-2015_-Luxembourg-City/Material/IMM-Urban- LU-Presidency ---Input-Paper-Action-5.pdf

Opportunities of cross-border cooperation between small and medium cities in Europe

https://amenagement-territoire.public.lu/dam-assets/fr/eu-presidency/Events/26-27-November-2015_-Luxembourg-City/Background-Reports-_-Studies/Opportunities-of-cross-border-cooperation-between-small-and-medium-cities-in-Europe-_LISER_.pdf

METROBORDER

Cross-border Polycentric Metropolitan Regions

https://www.espon.eu/sites/default/files/attachments/METROBORDER_-_Final_Report_-_29_DEC_2010.pdf

The Trio Presidency theme of small and medium-sized cities:

synthesis of the results

https://amenagement-territoire.public.lu/dam-assets/fr/eu-presidency/Events/26-27-November-2015_-Luxembourg-City/Background-Reports-_-Studies/The-Trio-Presidency-Theme-of-Small-and-Medium-sized-Cities---Synthesis-of-the-Results-_EUKN_.pdf