

Strategies and Results of Business Cross-Border Cooperation in the Eurorregion Galicia — Norte de Portugal

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Abstract

Since the integration of Spain and Portugal in the European Community, the institutional and economic relations between their border regions have increased very much. This increase has not been just the result of the integration of the market of both countries, but has been promoted by European policies and the activities of regional and local governments, and by business associations and other private organizations. In this paper, We analyze how the different organizations have promoted relations between companies across the border in the Eurorregion Galicia—Norte de Portugal.

Key Words: Cross-border cooperation, Eurorregion, regions, Spain, Portugal

Introduction

Until the incorporation into the European Community in 1986, there was little institutional and economic relationship between the border regions of Spain and Portugal. Since then, economic and political relations between both countries and between the border regions of both countries have increased very much. The regions of both countries that are in the border area have both a handicap and an advantage in this relationship. On the one hand, they are regions that lag-behind in their economic development, have little industry, and have different languages. On the other hand, they are close to regions of the neighbor country and share a similar natural environment, which are factors that can facilitate cooperation relationships between border regions of both countries.

The region of Galicia, in the Northwest of Spain, and the region of Norte de Portugal, in the North of Portugal, are the regions in the Spain-Portugal border that show most cultural proximity between both sides of the border, including the language of Galicia, Galician, that is very similar to Portuguese. In addition, there is an important industrial

and population centre in the Province of Pontevedra, in the South of Galicia, which provides with chances for economic exchanges and cooperation between the two regions.

However, the grade and form that the economic relations between these two border regions have taken, and how these are influenced by public policies and the activity of business organizations is not clear. The aim of this paper is to analyze the activities undertaken by regional and local governments and by business organizations in order to promote business relations between Galicia and Norte de Portugal, and the effect they have. For this, two dimensions are analyzed. One dimension is the kind of activities to promote the mobilization of companies in order to establish economic relationships, and engage in cooperation activities, with companies of the other side of the border. The second dimension is how much cross-border is the participation in the planning and execution of these activities.

First I analyze the evolution of economic and political relations between both regions. Then, I analyze the organizational structures and activities that regional and local governments and business organizations have developed to promote economic relations between both regions, and the effect of these institutional factors on the business relationship between both regions.

I. Eurorregion Galicia — Norte de Portugal

The Eurorregion Galicia-Norte de Portugal is formed by the regions (NUTS II) of Galicia in Spain and Norte de Portugal in Portugal, with their regional capitals in Santiago de Compostela and in Porto. It has an area of 50,700 km² and a population of more than 6 million people. The region of Galicia is formed by the sub-regions (NUTS 3) of A Coruña and Lugo, in the north, and Pontevedra and Ourense in the border area. The region of Norte is composed by the sub-regions (NUTS 3) of Grande Porto, Ave, Tamega, Douro and Entre Douro e Vouga, in the South, and Minho-Lima, Cavado and Alto Tras-os-Montes in the border area (see Map 1 and Table 1). The regions near the border (Pontevedra, Ourense, Minho-Lima, Cavado and Alto Tras-os-Montes) are targeted by the European policy Interreg. The aim of this policy is to promote cooperation between public and private organizations of both sides of the border, in order to developed strategies and projects for economic development and regional integration (see below).

Although the per capita GDP has largely increased between 1988 and 1999 (Table 2), this Eurorregion lags-behind other areas of the EU in its economic development. In 1999,

for a per capita GDP average of 100 in the EU, Norte had 60.8 and Galicia 65.4. Both regions have a per capita GDP lower than the average of their respective countries. Unemployment rate, in 1989, was 2.9% in Norte, lower than the Portuguese rate (4.8%). In the same year, Galicia had a very high rate (12.5%), although lower than Spain (17.4%). In 2002 the situation improved a little in Galicia (although it improved much more in Spain), with an unemployment rate of 12.2%, and worsened a little in Norte, with an unemployment rate of 4.9% (Table 2).

**MAP 1: Euroregion Galicia
– Norte de Portugal**



Source: Working Community, 2005

TABLE 1: Regions in the Euroregion

Country	NUTS 2	NUTS 3
Spain	Galicia	4 Pontevedra 5 Ourense 11 A Coruña 12 Lugo
Portugal	Norte de Portugal	1 Minho-Lima 2 Cavado 3 Alto Tras-os-Montes 6 Grande Porto 7 Ave 8 Tamega 9 Douro 10 Entre Douro e Vouga

Note: Sub-regions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are targeted by Interreg.

Norte's labor has low productivity, same as the rest of Portugal. The average of added value per employee in the year 2000 was 32,839 Euros in Galicia and 22,706 Euros in Norte. In all the main industries productivity is higher in Galicia, except in the plastics industry and the food industry. In the former, Norte's productivity is 47,438 Euros and Galicia's productivity is 34,576 Euros, and in the latter Norte's productivity is 34,594 Euros and Galicia's productivity is 31,265 Euros per worker (CEP, 2004a). Also, Norte has little investment and employment in R&D (0.54% of the regional GDP and 0.51% of the employed population). In Galicia population employed in R&D (1.01 of employed population) is higher than in Norte but investment is at the same level (0.54% of the region's GDP) (Azevedo, 2004). In addition, Norte's population shows a low education level while Galicia, although used to have a low education level, has recently reached the EU's average (Azevedo, 2004).

The level of salaries in Norte and in Galicia is very different. In the year 2000 in Norte the average annual salary is 13,943 Euros, and in Galicia it is 20,128 Euros. In all the main sectors the salaries are higher in Galicia than in Norte: 15,867 Euros and 9,959 Euros in the textile and clothes industry, 18,451 Euros and 14,160 Euros in the food industry, 18,962 Euros and 14,659 Euros in construction, and 29,642 Euros and 13,943 Euros in the automobile industry. The only sector in which Norte's salaries are higher is the plastics industry, with 20,993 Euros in Norte and 18,559 Euros in Galicia (CEP, 2004a).

TABLE 2: Economic characteristics of the Eurorregion

	EU15	Spain	Galicia	Portugal	Norte
Km2		506,030.0	29,434.0	91,906.0	21,278.3
Population, 2000	376,584,000	41,116,842	2,732,926	10,256,658	3,643,795
Population/Km2,2000	116.4	81.5	92.8	111.6	171.2
Per capita GDP (EU15=100) 1988	100.0	74.0	57.9	58.9	51.4
Per capita GDP (EU15=100) 1999	100.0	82.2	65.4	73.7	60.8
Per capita GDP (Euros) 1999	21,258	17,480	13,897	15,663	12,932
GDP (million Euros) 1999	8,016,482	565,483	30,940	108,214	31,807
Unemployment (%) 1989	–	17.4	12.5	4.8	2.9
Unemployment (%) 2002	7.6 (2001)	11.4	12.2	5.1	4.9
Population employed in agriculture (%) 2001	4.1	6.5	15.4	13.0	12.7
Population employed in industry (%) 2001	28.5	31.6	31.4	34.0	43.9
Population employed in services (%) 2001	67.4	61.9	53.2	53.0	43.4
Agriculture GDP (%) 1998	–	4.1	7.5	3.9	3.3
Industry GDP (%) 1998	–	29.5	31.0	29.3	38.9
Services GDP (%) 1998	–	66.4	61.6	66.8	57.8

Source: Elaborated from Quasar Consultores, 2003; EC, 2001b; EC 2005

These regions are highly dependent on agriculture. In 2001 12.7% of the population in Norte was employed in agriculture and 15.4% in Galicia. However, compared to their

countries the two regions have differences. Norte has the same level of dependence on agriculture than Portugal, but is more industrial than the rest of Portugal, with 43.9% of industrial employment in front of the 34% of the Portuguese industrial employment. Galicia is more dependent on agriculture than Spain (with 6.5% of employed in agriculture), but has the same level of employment in industry with 31.4%. Thus, Galicia is more dependent on agriculture and services than Norte, and Norte has more industry, although with lower productivity, than Galicia. Both regions have less employment in services than their respective countries. Compared to Europe, both regions show a higher level of population employed in agriculture and in industry, and a lower level of population employed in services (Table 2). In addition, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and specially small companies, are predominant in the Eurorregion (Quasar Consultores, 2003).

The border region, targeted by Interreg, shows a huge difference between the littoral area and the internal area. In the littoral area there are big cities, industry and the most fertile lands. In the internal area land is less fertile, population is more dispersed in small towns and villages, there are problems of underdevelopment and agriculture and livestock are important economic activities (Quasar Consultores, 2003). The regions targeted by Interreg have lower per capita GDP than either Norte or Galicia. In Norte they have a per capita GDP between 46% and 54% of the European average, while in Galicia they have 65% in Pontevedra and 58% in Ourense (Quasar Consultores, 2003).

The recent evolution of the population in the two regions shows different tendencies. In Norte, the population increased 3.2% between 1991 and 1999. But, in the same period the population in Galicia decreased 3.1%, due to a decrease of population in its internal regions. In addition, Galicia is one of the European regions with higher proportion of elder population. Norte and Galicia have a higher population density than their respective countries. In 2000, in Portugal the density was 111.6 people per km², and in Norte it was 171.2. In Spain the density was 81.5, while in Galicia it was 92.8 (Table 2). However, the distribution of population is very unbalanced. Most of the population is concentrated in the coastal area, especially in A Coruña and the area from Pontevedra to the border, in Galicia, and in the area that includes Braga, Aveiro and the metropolitan area of Porto, in Norte. These are also the most industrialized areas, while the other areas are basically dependent on agriculture.

This is the area in the Spain-Portugal border that shows most cultural proximity

between both sides of the border. There are 4 main common elements in both regions (Domínguez, 2004: 18-21). The clearest element is that both regions have very similar languages. In Galicia, in addition to Spanish, Galician is spoken and is the official language of the regional government. Galician is a language very close to Portuguese, being possible for people speaking one of them to have a fluid communication. The second element is a common ecosystem, with shared national parks and similar geography and forests. The third element is the existence of common cultural habits. In both regions the catholic religion is lived in a similar way, the small familiar agriculture activity has been until recently the main economic activity, social activities focused around the local level, and important migration to Latin America, Germany and Switzerland took place during the 20th Century. And fourth, both regions have a common historical past. They were part of the same administrative region during the Roman period, and later they were part of the same region for the Christian church. Although in the 12th Century both regions were separated by a political frontier, this was not definitely established until 1864 (Domínguez, 2004: 18-21).

II. Evolution of cross-border relations

1. Evolution of political relations

The relationship between Galicia and Norte can be divided in three periods (Venade, 2004): the period previous to the European Community membership of both countries, the period between the incorporation into the European Community and the foundation of the Working Community Galicia — Norte de Portugal, and the period after this foundation.

During the first period, both countries developed democratic systems, and signed the Friendship Treaty (Tratado de Amistad) in 1977. Both states agreed to promote the common use of natural resources, to promote the economic development of the border regions, to improve the communication infrastructures between both countries, and to establish a system for mutual help in case of accidents in the border region. The establishment of the Council for the Spanish-Portuguese Cooperation in 1977 established periodic meetings between both governments (Ponte et al, 2004). In the first half of the 1980s several Conventions between both countries enlarged cooperation in customs, health, cooperation in hazards and their prevention. During this period the Spanish system of autonomous regions (Autonomous Communities) was developed.

With the incorporation into the European Community, both countries cooperated in

the elaboration of European policy due to their socio-economic similarities (Ponte et al, 2004; Venade, 2004). In addition, the establishment of a specific European program for the promotion of cross-border cooperation (the Interreg program) since 1990, has promoted the relation between Galicia and Norte.

In the 1980s the Presidents of both regional governments (Xunta de Galicia and Comissão de Coordenação da Região do Norte) began contacts in order to developed cooperation. The first cooperation activities were the coordination to defend common positions in the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR),¹⁾ and a study on infrastructures in the Minho Valley. The next step was the elaboration of a study on economic and social aspects of the Eurorregion (“Memoria Conjunta”). The aim of this study was to become the base for the execution of EU’s programs in the region. In 1988 and 1990 the two regions hold the 1st and 2nd Technical Days. Their aim was to deepen the cooperation, and as a result of the second one it was decided to establish the Working Community Galicia — Norte de Portugal. This project also had the support of business associations, universities and the tourism industry, which took part in the Technical Days (Ponte et al, 2004; Dominguez, 2004).

In October 1991 the Presidents of the regional governments of Galicia and Norte signed a cooperation agreement that established the Working Community Galicia — Norte de Portugal. Its aims are the establishment of regular meetings to discuss on common interests, to coordinate initiatives, to promote the relations between universities and economic organizations from both sides, and to represent common interests in front of other administrations. This agreement is voluntary and does not establish any contract between members. This agreement, since is previous to the signature of the Treaty of Valencia, needed the authorization of the Spanish and the Portuguese governments. In 2004 the Treaty of Valencia was enforced, and since then regional authorities can reach cooperation agreements and sign contracts between them without requiring the authorization of the national governments.

1) The aim of Galicia and Norte is the defense of their interests in fishing, communication networks, and agriculture.

2. Evolution of economic relations

(1) Cross-border trade and investment

Trade between Galicia and Norte de Portugal has been increasing since the incorporation of Spain and Portugal in the European Community. Exports from Galicia to Norte were less than 300 million Euros in 1994, but steadily increased reaching 700 million Euros in 2000. Exports from Norte to Galicia were less than 200 million Euros in 1994, but increased to reach more than 500 million Euros in 2000. Norte is the third main destination of Galicia's exports, after France and Latin America, and Galicia is the fifth destination of Norte's exports, after Germany, France, UK and Italy. Trade between the two regions is quite complementary (CEP, 2004a). The main exports from Galicia to Norte are products of the primary sector (30.4%), textile (13.7%), and metals and metal manufacturing (10.7%). The main exports from Norte to Galicia are textile (39.4%), primary sector (14.5%), and metal and metal manufacturing (10.7%) (CEP, 2004a).

There is no data on cross-border investment between Norte and Galicia. But there are data on foreign direct investment (FDI) to Norte and to Galicia. According to a study of the Employers Confederation of Pontevedra (CEP, 2004a), during the 1990s Norte attracted foreign investment, including investment from Galicia and Spain, because of its cheap labor. Thus, 34 foreign companies established in the area between Porto and Valença. However, between 2000 and 2003, FDI looking for cheap labor went to other countries, and investment looking for qualified labor, industrial clusters and research centers, established in Galicia. Thus, between 2000 and 2003, pharmaceutical, aeronautic, automobile and textile multinational companies invested 253 million Euros in the industrial area of the city of Vigo. The foreign investment to Galicia has come in its most part from UK (62.5%) and France (22.4%) and investment from Portugal is very low (2.4%).

(2) Cross-border cooperation between companies

The business associations of Pontevedra and Minho-Lima undertook a survey on the cross-border relations between small and medium enterprises (SMEs) of the main sectors ²⁾ in the border area of the Eurorregion (CEP, 2004b). According to the results of this survey (see Table 3) companies have little knowledge on the companies of the neighbor region.

2) Wood and furniture, construction, non-metal mining, metal and machinery, textile and clothes, and commerce.

This lack of knowledge is worse in Galicia than in Norte. Also, only one third of companies have a strategy for cross-border cooperation. Companies in the metal and machinery sector and in the non-metal mining are the ones that cooperate most, with 55% and 51% of companies having a cooperation strategy. The main areas of cooperation are subcontracting for trade and technical activities, and technological innovation. In addition, most of the companies that cooperate are not satisfied with the results of cross-border cooperation (54.38%). This is attributed to the companies' focus on economic gains in the short term, expecting a great revenue, with little knowledge about the different cooperation possibilities they have and the characteristics of the companies of the neighbor region, lack of long-term planning of the cooperation, and lack of cooperation culture in the Eurorregion (CEP, 2004b: 19-22).

In addition, only one third of the companies think of the neighbor region's market as a target. The interest for the neighbor market is higher for Norte's companies (35%) than for Galicia's companies (22%). However, 85% of the companies think the public administration should promote cross-border cooperation between companies. The areas in which public support is most expected are the elaboration of data bases on public subsidies for companies, instruments to help companies to get subsidies, information on labor and the diffusion of the products and services offered by companies in the Eurorregion, inventory of new technologies, elaboration of data bases on activities in the Eurorregion, and activities for the promotion of the external image of the Eurorregion (CEP, 2004b).

TABLE 3: Cross-border relations between companies

	TOTAL		GALICIA		NORTE	
Opinion on companies of the neighbor- region	NOT KNOW	44.00%	—		—	
	BAD	22.00%				
	GOOD	33.00%				
Have a strategy for cooperation	YES	34.61%	YES	36.00%	YES	33.00%
	NO	62.50%	NO	64.00%	NO	67.00%
Evaluation of cooperation	GOOD	38.13%	—		—	
	BAD	54.38%				
Neighbor-region market as a target	—		YES	22.00%	YES	35.00%
			NO	78.00%	NO	65.00%

Source: Elaborated from CEP, 2004b

The huge difference between, on the one hand, the real grade of cross-border cooperation, the interest in the market of the neighbor region and the grade of knowledge on its companies, and on the other hand, the wish of public support for cooperation, shows a

passive attitude of the companies in this Euroregion and their dependence on public initiative and finance for strategy construction, organizational changes and involvement in new activities that require cross-border cooperation. Although this general situation, one third of the companies are cooperating, and in certain sectors (metal and machinery, and mining) more than half of companies are cooperating, which means that some sectors and some companies are undertaking cooperation activities and are satisfied with them.

III. Public organizations for cross-border cooperation

1. Working Community Galicia-Norte de Portugal

(1) Organization of the Working Community

The Working Community (WC) was established in October of 1991 by the regional governments of Galicia and Norte de Portugal (the Xunta de Galicia and the Comissão de Coordenação da Região Norte de Portugal). The legal basis was the European Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation of 1980, and had the support of both national governments. Its aims are to promote periodical meetings between both regions in order to exchange information, discuss on topics of common interest, coordinate initiatives and search for solutions to common problems, and the elaboration of common statements to other authorities (national and European).

The President of each regional government every two years undertakes the presidency of the WC. The President chairs the Council, and is assisted by the Analysis and Strategic Reflection Group. The same number of members from every region compose the Council, and they include the coordinators of the sectoral commissions, representatives of local administrations and of associations of local administrations. Also, according to the WC's rules, the participation of the socio-economic agents, universities and research centers can be arranged. The Council decides the action program, the functioning rules, and so on, and meets twice a year. Under the Council, the Coordination Commission is in charge of coordinating the other commissions, checking the Secretariat and the development of the action program. A General Coordinator and a Technical Coordinator in each region form the Coordination Commission. The Secretariat is in charge of the general management of the WC and assists the Coordination Committee. The Secretary is proposed by the General Coordinators and designed by the President.

There are 15 Commissions: 10 sectoral commissions (composed by the representatives of the governments of both regions in every area of cooperation); four Territorial

Cooperation Communities that join local administrations of the border regions (Cámaras Municipales in Portugal, and Ayuntamientos and Diputaciones Provinciales in Galicia); and a Commission established by the Atlantic Axis (Eje Atlántico del Noroeste Peninsular), which promotes cooperation in the area of urban policy between the cities that are member of the Atlantic Axis. The commissions' structure is double, with the same structure in Galicia and in Norte. Commissions do not have a regular calendar of meetings, and each commission has its own life. There are also ad hoc commissions. The decisions of the Council, when are ratified by the Presidency, are transmitted to the competend authorities as recommendations, which are free to take them into account or not (Ponte et al, 2004).

(2) Activities of the Working Community

The WC has been undertaking three kinds of activities. These are the elaboration of a development strategy for the Eurorregion, the construction of the institutional structure for cross-border cooperation between administrations, and the elaboration and execution of cooperation projects financed by Interreg II and Interreg III.

In the period 1998-2000 the WC elaborated the Common Action Program, in order to establish a common development plan for the whole Eurorregion. The Common Action Program has three aims: to increase the exchanges internal to the region and the external economic exchanges, to promote the cross-border area with the coordination of public actions in the management of territory and in the supply of collective services, and to promote the idea of common space Galicia-Norte internally and externally (Report of the Presidency 1998-2000). This Program was also the basis for the elaboration of the subprogram for Galicia and Norte of the Interreg III A program, which was basically elaborated by the WC. The WC's Commissions undertook a total of 30 meetings for the elaboration of the subprogram. In addition, the WC had 5 meetings with external organizations. However, only one meeting included private economic actors (the main business associations of Galicia and Portugal). These two plans form the strategy for the development of the Eurorregion.

The WC also has promoted the establishment of organizations for cross-border cooperation. Thus, the WC promoted the establishment of 4 Territorial Cooperation Communities, reached and agreement with the Atlantic Axis to integrate into the WC's structure, signed a cooperation agreement with the Inter-Territorial Union Council, participated in the creation of the Cross-Border Office of the European Employment

Service (EURES), established a capital-risk fund for the establishment of cross-border companies, and tried to promote business cross-border cooperation with the organization of cross-border business meetings.

The WC does not execute cooperation projects; they are undertaken by the offices of the regional governments.³⁾ However, projects are programmed in the cross-border commissions of the WC, which are assisted by the Coordination Commission of the WC.⁴⁾ Between the years 1996 and 1998 the offices of the regional government of Galicia were leader of 32 cooperation projects (including projects with budget until the end of 1999), with a total budget of 11,355.5 million Pta. The offices of the regional administration in Norte were leader of 53 projects, with a budget of 14,989.6 million Escudos (Activities Report 1996-1998). The main cooperation projects with finance from Interreg II undertaken by the regional governments were: 1) Construction of transport infrastructures, especially cross-border roads and bridges. 2) Protection of the natural environment, with the establishment of the cross-border Peneda-Sunes national park (with a budget of 24.4 million Euros), and improvement of the water supply. 3) Creation of a risk-capital fund for cross-border companies. 4) Support to cross-border cooperation of SMEs. 5) Cooperation with EURES. 6) Establishment of the Regional Studies Center, in which 3 universities from each side of the border take part. 7) Social projects, like rehabilitation programs for marginal population and exchanges of students. 8) Rehabilitation of historical monuments. 9) Making of a tourist map of the Eurorregion. 9) Promotion of R&D, with the establishment of a network of research centers in the Eurorregion. 10) Creation of a statistical information system of the Eurorregion.⁵⁾

Among the activities of the WC two activities have directly targeted companies, trying to promote their cross-border cooperation. One is the already mentioned Risk-Capital Fund Galicia — Norte de Portugal. This was established in 1996, with a compromised investment of around 10 million Euros,⁶⁾ 50% financed by Interreg, 25% by the regional

3) They presented 103 applications for finance from Interreg II between 1994 and 1999.)

4) In addition to the diffusion of the Interreg calls for projects, an important function of the Coordination Commission is to provide with help in order to overcome conflicts that make difficult the consensus in the programming of cross-border cooperation projects (interview with the Coordinator for Galicia of the WC).

5) Its products have been the next publications: *Yearbook of Galicia-Norte de Portugal*, *Atlas of Companies*, *Trade Relations Between the Two Regions*, and *Intra Community Trade*.

6) 825 million Pesetas from Galicia's side and 1,000 million Escudos from Norte's side, including the financial help from Interreg II (WC, 1998).

government of Galicia and 25% by the regional government of Norte. Interreg III A has continued financing the fund with 3.42 million Euros, reaching the total amount of around 10 million Euros. Its aim is to promote the economic relationship between the two regions, by taking part for a limited period of time in productive investments (new companies) in the Eurorregion. Financing can be provided to companies from Norte that invest in Galicia, companies from Galicia that invest in Norte, and companies with mixed capital (from Galicia and Norte) that invest in the Eurorregion or in other regions (if this investment is considered to have a positive effect on the economy of the Eurorregion). This fund is managed by two capital-risk managing societies, PME Capital in Norte and XesGalicia in Galicia.⁷⁾ The decisions about investments are taken by unanimity by both societies, and every side gives the same amount of finance for each selected project, which together can not be over 45% of the capital of the company that are financing. This fund has financed 4 projects, two in 1999, one in 2000 and one in 2005. The fund has the goal of promoting between 10 and 12 projects in total. The 4 projects financed until the now are: 1) A company of automobile parts, from Galicia to establish in Norte. 2) A company of construction material, from Galicia to establish in Norte. 3) A company of tires, from Norte to establish in Galicia. 4) A company for the production and sales of paper sacks, which is a mixed company (Galicia-Portugal), in Norte.

The second activity that directly targeted business was the promotion of cross-border cooperation structures between business organizations through the organization of cross-border meetings and fairs. Between 1996 and 1998 the most important activities were a cooperation program for handicraft industries, centers for showing SMEs' products, a meeting of companies of ornamental rocks, and the 1st Business Meeting Galicia—Norte de Portugal. This meeting was organized by the Associação Empresarial Portuguesa (AEP) and the Confederación de Empresarios de Galicia (CEG) in 1998. It was a meeting of businessmen with the aim to promote the mutual economic and business knowledge. In addition to debates on the general economic situation of the Eurorregion, sectoral meetings took place on the textile, metal and machinery, wood and furniture, civil constructions, and

7) PME is a Portuguese private risk-capital society. XesGalicia is a society formed by a partnership between private financial societies and the Galician Institute for Economic Promotion (IGAPE) of the regional government. In addition to co-manage the Risk-Capital Fund Galicia-Norte de Portugal, XesGalicia manages two more risk-capital funds for companies in Galicia and one risk-capital society (PME, 2005; XesGalicia, 2004).

construction materials sectors. Although these activities are not evaluated as successful for the creation of cooperation structures, they contributed to the establishment of contacts between the Industry Association of Minho (AIMinho) in Norte and the Confederation of Employers of Pontevedra (CEP) in Galicia, which signed a cooperation agreement in march of 1998 (Domínguez, 2004). This would lead later to the creation of the most important business cross-border cooperation project, the Business Centre of Trans Bordering Cooperation (CECOTRAN) (see below).

2. Territorial Cooperation Communities and local administrations

There are 4 Territorial Cooperation Communities (TCCs). They are structures for cross-border cooperation in which the municipalities of the border area of Norte and their associations, and the municipalities and Diputaciones (supra-municipal administration) of the border area of Galicia take part. Their aim is the promotion of a harmonious and sustainable development of the border areas, through concertation in order to manage matters under their jurisdiction, exchange of information, coordination of activities, solution to common problems, elaboration of cooperation projects and recommendations and proposals to other authorities.

The first TCC, the TCC of Vale do Lima, was established in 1999, and has 26 members. The TCC of vale do Minho and the TCC of Vale do Tamega were established in 2000, and they have 41 and 19 members. Finally, the TCC of Vale do Cavado was established in 2002, with 13 members. The protocols that establish each TCC are the same, and very similar to the protocol establishing the WC. The Presidency, the Council, the Coordination Committee and the Sectoral Commissions compose the organization of the TCCs. One representative of each member forms the Council. The functions and composition of the institutions are the same as in the WC. However, some of them have little activity, and most of it is for support, information, and political negotiation for the preparation of cooperation projects in Interreg, and participation in the WC.

3. Atlantic Axis (Eje Atlántico del Noroeste Peninsular)

(1) Organization of the Atlantic Axis

It is a cross-border association of cities established in 1992 as an initiative of the Mayor of Vigo. It has 9 members from Norte and 9 members from Galicia. They are the main cities in the region. It has three aims: promotion of cohesion, promotion of cross-border cooperation

and cooperation for local development, and promotion of participation of cities in European integration (construction of the “Europe of cities”).

All the members take part in the General Assembly, which approves the accounts and the annual objectives. The Executive Commission is formed by the mayors of Vigo and Porto and 6 more mayors (3 from Galicia and 3 from Norte). They take the decisions by consensus. The President and Vice-President are elected among the members of the Executive Commission, one from each side of the border. Also there are Delegated Commissions, which are composed by members of the city governments, and meet once or twice a month. Also the Technical Commissions are composed by the technical officials of the city councils and they meet once or twice a week. In addition, the Atlantic Axis has 3 permanent offices, in Vigo, Porto and Brussels. The staff of the Atlantic Axis is formed by 2 coordinators (one in Vigo and one in Porto), one representative in Brussels with the mission of collecting information (especially on the subsidies to which the members of the Axis can apply), one director of European projects, one administrative director, one administrative assistant, and the General Secretary (who is also in charge of selecting the staff). Also, in each city council there is one official in charge of the contacts with the Axis. The activities of the Atlantic Axis are financed with the fees paid by the members, sponsorship of specific activities by companies, and finance from the European Community for specific projects.

The Atlantic Axis was integrated into the WC in 2000, due to the coincidence of aims between both organizations. Its integration is as a specific Commission, which is in charge of the urban matters of the 18 member cities. In addition, this Commission discusses and makes proposals for the urban system of the Eurorregion, takes part in all the activities of the WC, and the WC defends in front of the Spanish and Portuguese governments and in front of the EU the projects of the Atlantic Axis that can be financed by EU's programs.

(2) Activities of the Atlantic Axis

The Atlantic Axis undertakes 3 types of activities: elaboration and execution of cooperation projects (original projects and EU's projects, like Interreg A, B, C and others), think tank and strategy formation, and lobby in front of the regional and national governments and in front of the EU.

In the first times of the Atlantic Axis its main aim was to act as a lobby in order to get

finance from the European structural funds⁸⁾. The increase of the structural funds and the establishment of funds for cross-border regional policy with Interreg I, the implementation of the European unified market, and the fear of competition from the regions integrated in the “Blue Banana” were the facts that pushed for the development of the Atlantic Axis in its beginning. At present, the Atlantic Axis is exercising an important lobby activity for the construction of infrastructures, especially for the construction of the line of the high-speed train between Lisbon and A Coruña.

However, along the time, other activities have become more relevant. One is the elaboration of a common development strategy. This has been developed with the making of a map of infrastructures, a plan for promotion of the historical and cultural heritage as an economic resource (Atlante Plan), and the First Strategic Plan (1993) and the Second Strategic Plan (2003).

Also the elaboration and execution of cooperation projects, usually with finance from Interreg, has become a main activity. These projects are: 1) Cultural activities, like painting, literature, drama and cinema prizes and festivals. 2) Social policy (Original SIN program), with the aim of designing financial, legal and operative instruments in order to reduce social exclusion, in cooperation with other European cities. 3) Promotion of SMEs, with a project to promote the culture of cooperation and internationalization in companies, in cooperation with other European regions (Millennium program).⁹⁾ Promotion of innovation with the creation of an experimental virtual community.¹⁰⁾ 4) Protection of the environment with the implementation of the Agenda 21, doing an inventory of the resources of the cities and promoting environmental education. 5) Improvement of the urban quality, with the implementation of two projects (Urban Audit and URBE XXI) in order to measure the evolution of the quality of the cities. They complement the Agenda 21, and will be completed in 2006. 6) Organization of tournaments in which citizens take part. The most important are the Games of the Atlantic Axis and a boat race. 7) A research center of the region has been established in cooperation with universities. Its aim is to

8) According to an interviewee, if the cities are together in an association they have more possibilities to get funds from the EU than if they apply by their own (interview to the Secretariat of the Atlantic Axis).

9) It is financed by the European program RECITE II.

10) This is the program called Observatory of the Atlantic Axis. Its aim was to create a virtual urban community, with applications in economy, tourism, and culture. However, the results are considered as not satisfactory (Dominguez, 2004).

make research on economic, cultural, social and political issues of the region. 8) Training of local officials. 9) Publication of a magazine and management of a website.

IV. Business cross-border cooperation

1. Cooperation in the labor market

The Cross-Border Office of the European Employment Service (EURES) was established in 1997. Its main activities are surveys on the labor market in the Eurorregion; publication of studies and guides for cross-border workers and employers, and their diffusion through its website;¹¹⁾ information and advice on living conditions, labor, fiscal and other legislation, and job and training opportunities in the Eurorregion, for cross-border workers and employers; organization of courses and study meetings on cross-border labor; and promotion of the knowledge on cross-border labor topics of economic and public organizations. The members of EURES are business associations of the border regions, including CEP and AIMinho, the trade unions, universities, and the employment offices of Galicia and Norte (EURES, 2005).

2. Promotion of SMEs' cooperation

(1) Organization of CECOTRAN

The Employers Confederation of Pontevedra (CEP) and the Portuguese Industrial Association of Minho (AIMinho) signed a cooperation convention in 1998. The cooperation has three areas: exchange of information, advice to the companies of both associations, and cooperation projects. Three cooperation projects have been undertaken: the 1st Cross-Border Business Forum (1999) and other joint seminars and business meetings, the Study on the Effects of Euro in the Border Area, and the Business Centre of Trans Bordering Cooperation (CECOTRAN). Also both business associations take part in EURES.

CECOTRAN is a cross-border cooperation project with the aim to provide with common services (not in a specific place, but undertaken by all the members) to the companies of the border-area (Pontevedra, Ourense, Minho-Lima and Cavado). This project is one result of the cooperation agreement between AIMinho and CEP signed in 1998. Mainly these two

11) These studies are the *Study on Employment and Mobility in the Eurorregion Galicia-Norte de Portugal*, *Study on the Barriers to Cross-Border Workers Mobility*, *Employment Needs of the Cross-Border Space*, *Cross-Border Workers Census 2003*, and *Cross-Border Business State*. In addition EURES has a data base on more than 30,000 companies in the region.

TABLE 4: Members of CECOTRAN

GALICIA
Employers Confederation of Pontevedra (CEP)
Employers Confederation of Ourense (CEO)
University of Vigo
Association of Young Employers of Galicia (AJE-Vigo)
Association of Women Employers of the Province of Pontevedra (APE)
Metal Employers Association of Galicia (ASIME)
Professional Association of Environmental Companies (APROEMA)
NORTE DE PORTUGAL
Industrial Association of Minho (AIMINHO)
Business Innovation Centre of Minho (BIC-Minho)
Centre for Reminders Valorization (CVR)
Institute for the Technological Innovation and Development of Minho (IDITE-Minho)

Source: Elaborated from CECOTRAN, 2005

associations, but also the other members of the project, engaged in discussions and studies on the viability of the project in both sides of the border, in order to prepare the project. Many meetings were necessary in order to overcome the demands from each partner according to his own interests. The project was presented to Interreg III A in the measure 3.1 (promotion and development of the productive base), and was approved in 2002. The project began in January of 2003 and finished in February of 2005. CEP is the leader of the project. In total 11 organizations take part in the project, 7 are in Galicia and 4 in Norte de Portugal (Table 4).

The aims of CECOTRAN are to make stronger the strategic business sectors in both sides of the border, and to improve the environmental management of business through the creation of a Cross-Border Environmental Observatory. The sectors targeted by CECOTRAN are textile, metal-machinery, wood and furniture, construction, non-metal mining (granite and slate), and commerce. In order to promote these sectors, CECOTRAN has the next objectives: 1) Improve the professional level of the management, through advice and training. 2) Promote the image of a common cross-border space. 3) Assist SMEs in the acquisition of technology and know-how. 4) Promote the use of information and communication technologies. 5) Promote the relationship between SMEs in the

cross-border region. 6) Create common tools for training, spreading of information and advice.

(2) Activities of CECOTRAN

CECOTRAN received 1,169,335 Euros from the 1st call of Interreg III A. Considering that in this region ERDF can provide with a maximum of 75% of the cost of the project, the total budget of CECOTRAN should be around 1,559,113 Euros. The activities of CECOTRAN have been in 8 areas (CECOTRAN, 2005) (see Table 5):

- 1) Information and advice: These activities have been provided to SMEs of the border region and external potential investors. It has been provided by the different members of CECOTRAN, especially about the topics of information and communication technologies (ICTs), environment, and other topics of general interest for SMEs, like taxes, labor, subsidies, public regulations and so on. Companies can get advice in the offices of the organizations that take part in CECOTRAN or sending questions through the website. Questions can be attended in Spanish, Portuguese and English.
- 2) Training: The main topics have been ICTs, environment, innovation and technology transfer, business internationalization and investing in Portugal, and general topics of interest for SMEs, like management of human resources, management abilities, and introduction of systems for the management of quality, environmental impacts and risks prevention. Courses are open to companies of both sides of the border.
- 3) Cross-border relations between SMEs and external promotion of the Eurorregion: It has two aims. One is the promotion of the internationalization of the companies of the region, with the participation in events for external promotion, like fairs, with the organization of seminars for the exchange of experiences, and with the organizations of missions for external promotion. Also two guides on cross-border cooperation for companies have been published. The other aim is the attraction of foreign investment, with information and advice to potential foreign investors, and the promotion of direct contacts between companies.
- 4) Observatories: Three observatories have been created. a) Environmental observatory: This has evaluated the environmental management of the companies in the economic sectors target of CECOTRAN in the border region of Galicia. Also 5 guidelines for good environmental practices, one for each sector, have been elaborated. All these reports can be accessed freely through CECOTRAN's website. However, the evaluation and

- guidelines are based only on the companies in Galicia. b) Business Observatory and Sociological Observatory: For the analysis of the situation of SMEs in the Eurorregion and their cross-border relationships and the analysis of consumers in the Eurorregion, they interviewed 750 SMEs and 250 consumers in the border regions. The results are 6 reports for the diagnosis of each economic sector in the border region, one report on the perception of the Eurorregion by SMEs and their cross-border relationships, and one report on the market of the Eurorregion.
- 5) Construction of a website: This is not just to present the results of CECOTRAN's activities and make public its reports, but also to provide by free with the following services. a) Information on technological sources: There are documents to inform on technological issues, some of them elaborated by CECOTRAN and others collected from other sources, and also there is a system to send questions that will be answered by experts of the organizations members of CECOTRAN. b) Information to the foreign investor: There are documents, some of them elaborated by CECOTRAN and others collected from other sources, and also there is a system to send questions that will be answered by experts of the organizations member of CECOTRAN. c) Construction of an engine for the preparation of the documents necessary for cross-border transportation of dangerous and industrial remainders. This engine began to work by the end of the period of implementation of CECOTRAN, and is now managed by the regional government of Galicia. Also there is an engine for evaluating the environmental management of companies by themselves. These engines are only in Spanish, not in Portuguese. d) Engine for search of information elaborated by CECOTRAN in its website. In total 500 questions have been answered and more than 100 documents have been publicized through the website, which has been entered 5,000 times.
- 6) Promotion of the use of new technologies by SMEs: Technological advisers have given advice to 200 companies on the introduction of ICTs, 50 reports on the same topic have been submitted to companies, and 10 websites for the relation between business and consumers have been constructed.
- 7) Publications: 18 documents have been published, including the environmental guidelines and the economic reports on each sector, surveys, statistic data, and information on the activities and aims of CECOTRAN.
- 8) Promotion of the cross-border region identity: Cross-border university games on simulation of companies, and a prize for the best cross-border business initiative.

The planning of CECOTRAN'S activities was made with the participation of organizations from both sides of the border. Also the products of CECOTRAN (information, website, etc.) are unique and shared by all members. Only the implementation of courses, conferences and so on is developed in each side of the border, but companies from both sides have taken part in them.

However, there is an imbalance between both sides of the border in the participation in activities and in the orientation of the final products. This imbalance is shown by the language of the documents elaborated as result of CECOTRAN's activities, the territorial area object of many activities, the place of realization of courses, seminars and other activities, and the origin of the companies taking part in different activities, as the next data show:

- 1) The documents of the Environmental Observatory are on topics of Galicia, Spain and Europe, but not of Norte de Portugal. For example, the guidelines on each sector are based on the analysis of the sectors in Galicia and are not translated to Portuguese, the lists of organizations for the management of industrial remainders refers only to Galicia and Spain, and the collection of legislation is about European, Spanish and Galician laws, but not Portuguese laws. In addition, the Government of Galicia manages the service in the website for transportation of industrial remainders.
- 2) In the engine of the web site for matching business offers with business demands there is data only about companies in Galicia, but there is no data on Portuguese companies. Thus, companies from Norte do not take part in this service.
- 3) The reports on ICTs are written only in Spanish, not in Portuguese. Also almost all the questions about ICTs (of 29 cases between 30/11/2004 and 14/1/2005 only two are in Portuguese) and the questions on business matters (all the 23 cases registered in 25/2/2005) have been made and answered in Spanish.

All this shows that CECOTRAN has been much a project of CEP than of AIMinho, in order to give services to its members and to promote their knowledge on business and the market in the border region and in Norte de Portugal, to promote the environmental management of companies in the south of Galicia, and to promote the competitiveness of companies in the south of Galicia. Although all this has implied cooperation with the business association of the Portuguese area of Minho, and companies from both sides of the border have got more knowledge about each other and have had more chances to get in touch directly, there is much less participation and interest from the companies and

TABLE 5: Activities of CECOTRAN

AREA	ACTIVITIES
Information and advice to SMEs	Web questions: 450 cases Direct consultation: 500 cases
Training	Long seminars: 60 cases, 500 hours, 1,000 people Short seminars: 50 cases, 250 hours, 500 people
Cross-border relations and external promotion	Fairs, etc: 10 cases Contacts with investors from China, UK, Belgium, etc. Seminars Guides: 2 cases
Observatories	Environmental observatory: 6 reports (one evaluation of the Eurorregion and guidelines for 5 industries) Sociological observatory: 2 reports Business-economic observatory: 6 reports (one per each industry)
Website	Technological information and advice for SMEs (150 cases, 30 documents) Information for foreign investors (50 cases, 10 documents) Information engine for the cross-border transport of industrial and dangerous remainders Search engine It has been entered 5,000 times
New technologies	Advice on the use of ICTs: 200 cases, 50 reports, 10 webs constructed
Publications	18 cases
Promotion of identity	Games and Prize

Elaborated from CECOTRAN, 2005b

business associations in Norte de Portugal. In addition, cooperation activities represent a small part of the activities of the associations from both sides of the border, especially in the Portuguese side.

V. European policy for cross-border cooperation: Interreg

The Interreg program was initiated in 1990 with the aim of preventing the national frontiers from being a difficulty for the balanced development and the integration of the European territory. There have been three generations of this program: Interreg I (1990-1993), Interreg II (1994-1999), and Interreg III (2000-2006). Interreg III A is the part of Interreg III dedicated to cross-border cooperation.¹²⁾ The aims of Interreg I for Spain and

12) Interreg III is divided in three strands: Interreg III A, Interreg III B, and Interreg III C. Interreg III A promotes “cross-border cooperation.” The aim is to promote the integrated regional development of neighbor regions of different countries, with the implementation of common development strategies. Interreg III B promotes “transnational cooperation.” Its objective is to promote a better integration through the formation of large groups of regions that have a territorial continuity among different countries. Interreg III C promotes “interregional cooperation.” The aim is to improve the efficiency of the regional development programs, through experience exchanges between any regions of the EU.

Portugal (1989-1993) were the promotion of economic and social development of the border regions, and to improve the economic integration of these regions with the rest of the Iberian Peninsula. The main aims of Interreg II were the construction of communication infrastructures (two international bridges, the Porrino-Tui road, infrastructures for a ferry between the two regions and so on), actions for the conservation of rivers and nature (cleaning of Minho and Chanza rivers, protection of the natural Park of Peneda-Geres), promotion of economic and business activities and other activities of the WC already mentioned.

The aim of Interreg III A is to promote cross-border cooperation projects elaborated and implemented by cross-border partnerships of regional and local governments and private organizations, mainly business organizations, foundations, and research and educational organizations. The Spain-Portugal border regions have a budget of 1,075 million Euros of public investment for the period 2000-2006. Of these, 291.01 million Euros (27.4% of the total) are for the Eurorregion Galicia — Norte de Portugal. The 57 projects approved (out of 136 projects presented) in the first call of Interreg III A received a total of 113 million Euros from the EU, which means 48.34 Euros per person in the border area of the Eurorregion (Quasar Consultores, 2003).

The areas in which there has been a higher mobilization of organizations executing projects, according to the number of projects, are 2.1 Environmental sustainability, 2.2 Cultural sustainability, historical heritage and local identity, 1.1 Transport and communications infrastructures, 3.1 Development of the productive base, 3.2 Technology and information society, 4.1 Social, labor and institutional cooperation and integration, and 4.3 Institutional structures for cooperation. However, 1.1 Transport and communications infrastructures, 2.1 Environmental sustainability, and 3.2 Technology and information society concentrated most of the funds. This shows that few projects that require the construction of expensive infrastructures concentrate much of the funds; but also projects that require little investment and mobilize a large number of actors, constructing “soft infrastructures” (study groups, business meetings, fairs, surveys, and so on) are also taking place.

Thus, Interreg has mobilized public and private organizations into cross-border cooperation, and in this process the organizations for cooperation have been established. But, in spite of this mobilization, there is little cooperation without the support of Interreg. Cross-border cooperation projects are only developed when they can get finance from the

EU. As an interviewee expressed: *Before Interreg there were just good neighbor relations. Without Interreg there would be just little cooperation. Without money there is no cooperation.*¹³⁾

TABLE 6: Projects approved in the 1st call for projects of Interreg III A

AXIS and MEASURES	N.	%	ERDF (Euros)	%
Axis 1: Infrastructures, management and development of the rural trans-border space	9	15.8	34,680,988	30.7
1.1 Transport and communications infrastructures	6	10.5	31,666,337	28.0
1.2 Urban and coastal management	0	0.0	0	0.0
1.3 Rural development.	3	5.3	3,014,651	2.7
Axis 2: Promotion and protection of the environment and the heritage and natural resources	19	33.3	43,868,547	38.8
2.1 Environmental sustainability	8	14.0	31,109,818	27.5
2.2 Cultural sustainability and historical heritage	7	12.3	9,348,711	8.3
2.3 Energy efficiency and alternative energies	2	3.5	1,166,663	1.0
2.4 Cross-border tourism.	2	3.5	2,243,355	2.0
Axis 3: Economic development and promotion of employment	16	28.1	25,119,750	22.2
3.1 Development of the productive base	6	10.5	6,569,981	5.8
3.2 Technology and information society	5	8.8	16,761,450	14.8
3.3 Local and rural socioeconomic activation	0	0.0	0	0.0
3.4 Education, training and employment	5	8.8	1,788,319	1.6
Axis 4: Promotion of the social and institutional integration and cooperation	13	22.8	9,384,642	8.3
4.1 Social, labor and institutional cooperation and integration	5	8.8	4,383,553	3.9
4.2 Development of local services and facilities	3	5.3	2,880,634	2.5
4.3 Institutional structures for cooperation	5	8.8	2,120,455	1.9
TOTAL	57	100	113,053,927	100

Source: Quasar Consultores, 2003

Conclusions

Since the beginning of the EU's Interreg program for cross-border cooperation in 1990 to the present, a high level of mobilization for cross-border cooperation of public and private actors has been reached. They have constructed a network of organizations to undertake cooperation. This promotes communication and negotiation between different organizations and coordination of the different cross-border cooperation activities. In addition, the different organizations are undertaking different kinds of activities. Thus, the regional governments, organized in the WC, have been undertaking much infrastructure construction and environmental projects, promotion of cooperation structures, and

13) Interview at the Coordination Office of the WC in Galicia.

promotion of business cooperation through the Risk-Capital Fund. However, they failed in the promotion of other business cooperation structures. The main cities, organized in the Atlantic Axis, focus on the management of the urban space and urban environment, promotion of socio-cultural cross-border relations, and lobby for infrastructures and subsidies. Finally, the business associations of the border area have organized in order to promote cooperation between companies. Their activity has mainly been studies on the characteristics of the companies, on their environmental management, the situation of the main industries in the region and the cross-border business relations, and promotion of SMEs capacities and relations. The results of cooperation have been the improvement of cross-border transport infrastructures, better knowledge on the economic situation and the companies of the region, better cross-border knowledge between companies, and increase of cross-border trade and contacts between companies.

However, cross-border cooperation has some weak points. One is the high dependence of cooperation on EU's subsidies. From 2007 the European funds for cross-border cooperation will probably be reduced. From that moment we will see if the different organizations consider cross-border cooperation worth enough to use more of their own resources to continue with it. Another problem is the difficulty of SMEs to engage in cooperation projects. For this, they need the help from an organization like CECOTRAN, which helps them to realize the benefits they can reach with cross-border cooperation and gives them chances to engage in cooperation. For this, CECOTRAN should continue and even be reinforced. Finally, the participation of companies in CECOTRAN's activities shows a lower degree of interest in the cooperation from the Portuguese side. The reinforcement of the participation from the Portuguese side should be promoted in order to increase the cooperation between companies of both sides of the border.

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