



**LOCAL ACTION PLAN**  
**To improve the cross-border urban  
governance of the Eurocidade  
Chaves-Verim**



Connecting cities  
Building successes



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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. Trinationaler 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.

## **1. The Local Support group and its involvement in the elaboration of the Local Action Plan**

The Local Support Group (LSG) is composed of **representatives from national, regional and local administrations, University, economic and social Agents and Eurocidade Chaves-Verín Support Cabinet Members**. It is expected that the LSG constitutes a mechanism for taking decisions which turn into agreements. Moreover, it will **solve political and project management obstacles** and will be working on the implementation of project objectives. The LSG will attempt to focus on singular matters, to propose ideas and to formulate strategies to improve governance in the Eurocidade, taking advantage of different resources from institutions represented in the LSG.

With the integration of Chaves in the EGCT – Urbact Project a consultative body was created; it has turned into the LSG for the conurbation, adding some members from relevant social and economic groups for the Project in order to reach a partnership between them. There is no involvement of Spanish national civil servants yet, nor formal involvement of the civil society.

### **▪ Composition of the Local Support Group**

The composition of the LSG is as follows:

- General Secretariat of External Relations from Galician Government (Xunta de Galicia)
- Vice-Presidents from both Municipalities - Chaves and Verin
- CCDR-N (technician from the European projects department)
- Eixo Atlántico (responsible for Porto-Office)
- Diputación Provincial de Ourense (County Council) (technician from the European Projects department)
- Support Cabinet for Eurocity (one technician)
- Technicians from both Municipalities (urban planning, finance, equality, social dynamization)

The LSG will be divided, for operative reasons, into two smaller groups. This division comes from the governance structure established for the conurbation. Therefore:

- There will be a group composed of **politicians** from both Municipalities, as well as representatives from the Spanish Regional and County Governments, Commission for the Coordination and Development of Northern Portugal and Eixo Atlántico (Association of Portuguese and Spanish Municipalities). This group corresponds to the same constitution of the Steering Committee of the Eurocity. This group will be in charge of validating the LAP. The political group will have to validate the LAP and to deal with some aspects of the **leadership issues**.
- On the other side, there will be a working group composed mainly of civil servants and representatives from the civil society and socio-economic agents in order to deal with **community issues**. The group will be collaborating directly with the elaboration of the LAP by the Technician from the Eurocity through meetings organized every 6 months.

It has been chosen to involve Local Administrations in the LSG because the cross-border conurbation needs the assistance of local public servants in order to implement the objectives set by the Eurocidade governing board. Local public servants know the realities of their town, challenges and expectations for future actions by Councils, thus it is necessary to **count on local public servants to develop a successful local action plan** for cross-border conurbations. Moreover, civil servants from both municipalities have to plan and act in connection with the Eurocidade since there is a need for sensibilization and commitment.

National and Regional Administrations have been involved in order to provide the LSG with expertise on cross-border cooperation issues. At the same time, considering that the project has **many legal and administrative barriers**, authorities that may need to take legislative or regulatory actions in order to overcome the mentioned barriers need to be part of the conurbation's governance structure.

Participation of Universities comes from the **need for future research on cross-border cooperation issues**. These studies might provide the Eurocidade with feedback on how to improve structures and management to be more effective. Analyses have been already done by some Universities that have visited the Eurocidade-Chaves Verín.

Finally, it is vital for a better governance to count on social and economic Agents. Considering that **the constitution of a common social area is one of the main challenges** for the Eurocidade, social and economic

interests have to be considered in the decisions taken by all management-consultancy groups.

▪ **Involvement in the elaboration of the Local Action Plan**

- The LSG will meet every six months with the Technician from the Eurocity in charge of the elaboration of the LAP. These meetings will intend to permanently **provide constant feedback regarding the activities organized for the citizens**. At the same time, they will bring together the solutions for the problems faced in their day-to-day life in those activities carried out at cross-border level.
- The Technician in charge of the elaboration of the Plan will provide the political group with a draft for their validation. Validation at this stage will ensure the implementation of the LAP as well as coherence with public policies at regional and cross-border levels.
- The working group composed of politicians will validate the LAP.

## 2. Expectations and achieved results

Starting situation: expectations regarding the «EGTC» URBACT project

### Starting situation

Eurocidade Chaves – Verín has a **previous Strategic Agenda** which would help to develop and implement the LAP, since the objectives for the conurbation have been set for the short, medium and long run. Some of the current members of the LSG have already participated in the previous conversations and elaboration of the aforementioned Agenda.

### Expectations regarding the EGCT URBACT Project

1. To **assess the best governance organization**, such as an EGTC, in order to implement their common strategy.
2. To **exchange with cross-border conurbations** already in advance in the process of establishing a structure of governance. Exchanges on specific good practices as well as on those problems common to all cross-border conurbations.
3. **Mobilization of local actors** in the Eurocity area in favour of a new dynamic. The establishment of a permanent committee (LSG) composed of members of Councils and representatives of the civil society will provide the Eurocity with interesting feedback in order to improve the

way the EU acts. They will also be keen on acting together in those areas in which it is possible.

### **Expectations regarding the Eurocity Governance:**

1. **Involvement of Spanish and Portuguese politicians** in the project through their participation in the events held during the project. In addition, the main expectation has to do with the participation of members of Spanish regional and county governments, Portuguese government, as well as representatives from one of the main cross-border associations from Galicia-North-Portugal (Eixo Atlántico). This composition will guarantee that the initiatives and actions proposed in the LAP are going to be coherent with those coming from the national, regional and cross-border levels. Finally, the LAP will be achieved since it will receive political support.
2. **Formalization** of the Eurocidade Chaves-Verín, by acquiring legal personality of a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation. The fact of having the experiences of Ister-Granum and Eurometropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai will contribute considerably to the elaboration of the Eurocity's strategy.
3. Sensibilization: internal and external communication for the promotion of the citizenship and the involvement of the citizens, and for the renown of the Eurocity territorial image.
4. Using the Accompaniment Commission for the **elimination of legal, administrative and fiscal barriers**.
5. **Promoting thematic groups** for cooperation within the Eurocity conurbation.
6. Anchor project: **creation of a common social area** and development of the "Water Eurocity" trademark: a new place emerging in the Euroregion Galicia-Norte de Portugal. Universal access to services for eurocitizens and for outsiders: The Eurocity means to be exported as a geographical area; it is a vision of a Galician-North Portugal revitalized territory for the opportunities and aspirations of the 21st century; it is a practical vehicle for cultural legacy, thermal; it is a rebranding of an area so often associated with its low income and economic growth and low population densities. It will connect people, businesses and places.
7. **Enlarge participation of socio-economic agents** in the consultative level, not only in thematic working groups.
8. Deeper know-how and development of cooperation structures. To adapt partners to each other, to acknowledge and respect different ways of working, creation of synergies **between local institutional capacity-building**.
9. Good practices benchmarking.



## 3. CONTENT OF THE LOCAL ACTION PLAN

### 3.1. “Leadership” issues

#### 1. Starting situation

The Eurocity was officially created as a new cross-border governance tool in 2007. It is not yet a registered organisation. The decision was taken by the two mayors, with the support of Eixo Atlántico, to start with a **bilateral linkage with the goal to extend the co-operation to the surrounding communes** in the years to come. It was considered strategically better to search for a local cross-border spatial cohesion at the border point before enlarging the perimeter of actions and decision-making at the local level. The mayors meet each other on a regular basis (once a month). The co-operation is based on a **strong political will** and a **good personal relationship**.

The Eurocity is linked to the other policy-makers’ networks in the cross-border area (Euroregion: Galicia-Northern Portugal) that is to say Eixo Atlantico and the Working Community of Galicia and Northern Portugal. A **working group** has been formed in September 2007, with the launch of the project and was composed of representatives from both municipalities, as well as CCDR-N, Xunta de Galicia, Diputación provincial de Ourense, Eixo Altántico and Working community Galicia-Northern Portugal. Also a **joint technical secretariat** has been set up, composed of one person per city council at the cabinet level, one of them being also Vice-Mayor (City of Verín). In November 2007 the Cabinet support was created with one technician in order to support the work of the Technical Secretariat.

The governance structure of the Eurocity has been created in order to **improve the coordination and impel the creation of the Eurocity**, by ensuring an adequate and close monitoring of the strategies to follow in order to meet the Eurocity’s targets.

The current legal basis is the Interreg IVA financial convention. The approval of the Interreg IVA project supporting the Eurocity Chaves-Verín has assured the technical support for the Eurocity, funding 3 years of activity. **Besides the EU funding, the Eurocity counts on the support of upper local authorities at financial and political levels.** The regional government of Galicia has funded studies about the viability of sustainable development transport within the Eurocity, contributed to

the elaboration of the Strategic Agenda and, together with the Youth Portuguese Institute, is contributing to develop a youth strategy. At this stage, they have created a Cross-border Youth Office.

At present, **the Eurocity depends on the local administrative and legal structures** of the Chaves and Verín Councils. These councils have not enough capacity – in terms of human and economic resources as well as administrative competencies- to manage both conurbations. In addition, there are **two different legal systems** that it is necessary to take into consideration when implementing the Eurocity's projects. This situation creates **obstacles** and prevents the management from being efficient in the conurbation.

However, the coordination of the Eurocity has been ensured from the beginning through the **creation of a Steering Committee**–at political level-, and the **Joint Technical Secretariat** –at Technical level. These are the structures that have impelled the creation of the Eurocity Chaves-Verín by ensuring an adequate supervision and monitoring of the strategies to achieve the project's objectives. There is a **will to create an EGTC** within the coming months. First steps have been already done. With the acquisition of a legal structure, an efficient governance structure will be guaranteed for the Eurocity.

Bodies already established for the Eurocity governance will be only adapted to the legal structure created for the Eurocity management. Those bodies are:

**a. The Steering Committee** (working group) is composed of members from:

- Commission for Coordination and Development of the North of Portugal Region (CCDR-N) – PT (managing authority)
- Regional Government of Galicia (Xunta de Galicia) – ES (managing authority)
- Working Community of the Euroregion Galicia-Northern Portugal – ES/PT

This entity is the **governance tool** of the Euroregion“Galicia-Northern Portugal”. Its main objective consists of **stimulating a cross-border development framework** through a multi-scale/multi-thematic platform.

- Diputación de Ourense – ES (County level)

- Eixo Atlantico Association – PT/ES (cross-border level)

Chaves and Verín have been associated in the work of this cross- border governance system as local authorities involved in the same cross-border valley of Tamega (one of the 4 territorial commissions of the interregional Working Community) and as urban centres members of Eixo Atlantico. Consequently, the working habits developed between both city councils in the 2 spatial ensembles and the geographical proximity between the 2 urban settlements contributed to the recent creation of the Eurocity, a project that has been really driven and encouraged by that Institution.

- Municipality of Chaves – Portugal
- Municipality of Verín - Spain

The Steering Committee was constituted in September 2007 with the launch of the Eurocity in order to **give political impulse and technical assistance**. It is the main instrument to ensure and reinforce cross-border coherence at all governance levels. The Steering Committee facilitates strongly the interchange at upper-local levels (Regional and State levels) in order to **implement efficient territorial policies** which will be coherent with those established at superior levels.

Competencies:

- The governance structure was established under a decision making and implementation process defined and agreed upon by the Steering Committee, integrated by all project partners and representatives from the Portuguese Government. They created the Joint Technical Secretariat and the Support Cabinet. An Accompanied Commission was also established in order to deal with legal and administrative barriers.
- Conflict management: to **identify strategies to solve eventual conflicting positions** between opposed groups of stakeholders or any other conflict that may appear alongside the project.
- Approval of process and financial reports
- Setting-up the strategies to follow by the other bodies

The Steering Committee meets every six months in order to approve the activities that have already been done and to propose the strategy for the following months.

## **b. The Accompanied Committee**

It is composed of members from the same institutions as the Steering Committee. While the Steering Committee is composed mainly of politicians, the Accompanied Committee is **composed principally of**

**technicians.** The Accompanied Committee was created to **deal with the legal and administrative barriers** coming from different administrative and legal systems. The Accompanying Committee will identify those obstacles as well as the solutions to those barriers and will present them to the Steering committee. The Steering Committee will transfer the proposals to the level at which they can be solved and will give political impulse to those initiatives coming from the local level.

Meetings are held once a year, normally before the Spanish-Portuguese annual Summit, that is held at the beginning of each year.

There have already been meetings with the main transport and communication companies from both countries to confirm how keen they are on setting up strategies which will contribute to overcome some of the current barriers of the Eurocidade.

### **c. Technical Secretariat:**

The Joint Technical Secretariat is composed of the Vice-Presidents from the Councils of Chaves and Verin. They are now integrated in the Steering Committee as General Secretariat and Administrator. The Technical Secretariat has been run by a Coordinator, which is in charge of **coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Eurocity's project activities.**

The Joint Technical Secretariat has been a key body for the communication process between the conurbation and the national and regional arenas of the partners, as well as the main driver for the communication between both Municipalities. Since the very beginning, it has been maintaining informal meetings with local agents, coordinating the activities carried out by the Eurocity.

### **d. Cabinet Support:**

It is composed of two technicians and one administrative assistant. They organize the activities under the coordination of the Technical secretariat in collaboration with both Municipalities. They have to **elaborate new project proposals** that will be validated by the Steering Committee afterwards. Its main goals are to **provide information** through the cross-border information centre about the benefits of the Eurocity to locals and the activities organized, as well as to collect new initiatives and proposals coming from citizens.

Recruiting new technicians will be necessary as the strategies for the Eurocidade turn into new actions. It has been decided to have a common conurbation staff. Also technicians from local and regional authorities will be involved in the project through the thematic working groups that will be created for consultation regarding the main axis of the Eurocidade.

A symbolic building has been chosen as a one stop shop for the Eurocidade. It is the former Spanish Customs. The building is situated just in the middle way between Chaves and Verín. Portuguese and Galician governments have already created a cross-border Youth Office and will set a Rehearsal Room in order to promote a better interaction among the youth and to encourage creative activities for youngsters. Meanwhile, information services are being provided in both Municipalities.

Finally, the efficiency of the Eurocity governance has been reinforced by a partnership agreement signed by all project partners of the INTERREG IV A project, setting their financial obligations and responsibilities. This agreement constitutes a complement to the previous Cooperation Protocols signed by Chaves and Verín.

## **2. Good practices experimented by the cross-border conurbation**

- A successful partnership between the Eurocidade Chaves-Verin and the regional and national authorities from both sides of the border.
- The governance structure of the Eurocity has been created in order to improve the coordination and impel the creation of the Eurocity since the beginning of the project.
- Establishing a Strategic Agenda, fixing the aims of the conurbation for the short, medium and long term.
- The EGTCs set-up by the different project partners Lille, Strasbourg and IsterGranum are examples that inspire the Eurocidade. Indeed, Chaves-Verin has realized there is a strong need for a legal structure and an EGTC will be created in a near future.

The Eurocity Chaves-Verín has a strong collaboration with the Spanish and Portuguese national, regional, county levels of governance, as well as the Spanish-Portuguese cross-border association of municipalities, Eixo Atlantico. Indeed, the cooperation with these entities is represented in the governance structure of the Eurocity Chaves-Verín: in the Steering Committee, the Accompanied Committee and the Local Support Group. These structures will ensure the coherence between cross-border strategies established at local, regional, national, cross-border and European levels.

### 3. Problems to be solved

- 1) **Institutional Leadership has to be reinforced** with consultative bodies (a political one –including neighbour municipalities- and a community one –with representation of socio-economic agents)
- 2) There is no **permanent staff** dedicated exclusively to the conurbation.
- 3) There is no **legal personality** of the Eurocity.
- 4) There is still a **need for sensibilization/commitment**. Civil servants from both municipalities have to plan and act as key roles in the Eurocity.
- 5) There is no further possibility to give advantages in daily life to eurocitizens without a **transfer of competence** to the municipalities.

At the moment, the Municipality of Verín does not have the necessary competencies to achieve the objectives of the project, because it depends on district and regional administrations. Despite the lack of competencies, Verin counts on those administrations to implement the Local Action Plan. Some members of both administrations compose different governing structures that govern the Eurocity: Working Group, Accompanying Commission and Local Support Group. Also, they receive reports on the activities carried out by the Eurocity.

The Municipality of Chaves has a broader range of competencies, since the state administrative structure has two levels. Therefore, Portuguese national authorities have taken part in the composition of the Local Support Group through the CCDR-N

- 6) **Legal and administrative barriers** in the field of transport, health and education. Role of the Accompanied Commission regarding this part of the LAP.
- 7) Budget: there is **not enough budget** to implement the aims of the conurbation.

### 4. Solutions to be developed

- 1) Regarding decision-makers and technicians from both Municipalities:
  - **Participation of civil servants in seminars** regarding cross-border cooperation, language courses. It is important that civil servants take part in seminars concerning cross-border cooperation to be aware of the importance of the creation of cross-border cooperation structures for the improvement of living conditions in a cross-border region.

- **Cultural communication courses** are needed in order to improve communication between Municipalities. Fieldtrips and thematic workshops for civil servants from both Municipalities will be organized by the Eurocity in order to benchmark and to exchange experiences. Those events will be held in both Municipalities and will definitely improve dialogue between civil servants, on the one hand, and between civil servants and the Eurocity staff on the other hand.
- Involvement of civil servants in all activities implemented by the Eurocity has made that other civil servants become more interested and come up with new ideas and projects.

Development of new projects by civil servants: e.g. fields of education and security: a project has been started and is to be developed.

## 2) INSTITUTIONS

### To **create a cross-border legal institution:**

A legal structure for the Eurocity has already been settled: European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). **The EGTC will mean more possibilities to get European funds**, making the best of European funding opportunities.

Legal, organizational and management aspects of cooperation will be much easier, since the Eurocity will not depend on the Councils.

The EGTC will be governed by a convention concluded unanimously by its members.

The **convention** will specify:

(a) the name of the EGTC and its registered office, which will be located in Portugal or Spain

(b) the extent of the territory in which the EGTC may execute its tasks, which will be the area of influence of the Councils of Chaves and Verín

(c) the specific objective of the EGTC, which will be translated into a more efficient and sustainable cooperation between both Municipalities. The Eurocidade Chaves-Verín has been constituted to improve the quality of life of the eurocitizens from both Municipalities, on a first phase and to contribute to an economic well-being, development and social cohesion within the area of influence of Chaves and Verín. Therefore, the conurbation will provide better integration possibilities for the Eurocidade with regions from other Member States.

(d) the list of the EGTC's members.

(e) the law applicable to the interpretation and enforcement of the convention, which shall be the law of the Member State where the EGTC has its registered office;

(f) the appropriate arrangements for mutual recognition, including for the purposes of financial control; and

(g) the procedures for amending the convention

**Statutes of the EGTC will contain:**

(a) the operating provisions of the EGTC's organs and their competencies, as well as the number of representatives of the members in the relevant organs;

(b) the decision-making procedures of the EGTC;

(c) the working languages; the arrangements for its functioning, notably concerning personnel management, recruitment procedures and the nature of personnel contracts;

(e) the arrangements for the members' financial contributions and the applicable accounting and budgetary rules, including on financial issues, of each of the members of the EGTC with respect to it;

(f) the arrangements for members' liability in accordance to article 12(2);

(g) the authorities responsible for the designation of independent external auditors; and

(h) the procedures for amending the statutes, which shall comply with the obligations set out in articles 4 and 5.

**Structure of the EGTC for the Eurocidade Chaves-Verín will** have at least the following organs:

(a) an assembly, made up of representatives of its members;

(b) a Managing Director, who stands for the EGTC and acts on its behalf.

The statutes may provide additional organs with clearly defined powers.

The EGTC will establish an **annual budget**, adopted by the assembly.

### 3) BUDGET

I. At EU level, it is expected that within the horizon 2013, specific funds have to be put at disposal for conurbations.

II. There are no contributions from national governments yet to promote cross-border cooperation. The Portuguese government has supported and



still encourages this initiative through the CCDR-N by means of technical support.

III. At regional level, the Galician government has a very strong commitment toward this conurbation. They are also thinking of contributing financially. At the moment, some initiatives are on the table.

Contributions from the regional government of Galicia:

-Study for the viability of a sustainable development transport between Chaves and Verín.

- Contribution to the elaboration of the strategic agenda.

IV. Contributions from Youth Departments from Portuguese and Galician governments:

-Cross-border youth office

-Strategy to promote employment for youth in cross-border areas. There have been many actions around this strategy.

V. There is a strategy between **Galicia** and the North of **Portugal**, which involves the main sectors and integrates the existing cooperative structures in order to perform a structured **cooperative** knowledge network. The following actions are part of their commitment to the Eurocity:

-Technical assistance on the elaboration of the statutes and convention of the European grouping of territorial cooperation.

-Presence on the steering committee and the accompanying committee, main political bodies of the Eurocity.

## **3.2. "Community" issues**

Sub-theme 1: Cross-border civil society involvement

### **1. Starting situation**

Chaves and Verín are cities with **solid ties of communication and cooperation between their populations**. There have been permanent contacts between the inhabitants on both sides of the border. They used to travel to the other side of the border principally for tourism and purchasing reasons. Besides, both cities have a common cultural heritage

based on the grounds of their **historical ties**, routes, landscape and common natural resources.

Cooperation with the civil society has started with its **involvement in the main reference document for the Eurocity : the Strategic Agenda**. This document establishes the main objectives for the Eurocity in the short, medium and long run.

Informal collaboration with the civil society has been reached through different ways:

- Participation of representatives from the civil society in the elaboration of the Strategic Agenda of the Eurocity.
- Identification of main actors within the civil society
- Participation of the same actors in the LSG.
- Possibility for citizens and socio-economic actors to bring their initiatives and projects to the cross-border information center and cross-border youth office.

The Strategic Agenda, which was presented in July 2007, was based on a **consultative and participatory democracy system**. Seventy people including representatives of the local population, groups of interests, experts, and policy-makers at different levels have been associated to the drafting of the aforementioned strategy. The strategy was finally validated by a group of politicians (from local, county, regional and national levels), experts and policy-makers. It implied not only a major involvement of the civil society with respect to the participatory democracy system in both Municipalities, but also the **participation of key cross-border governance networks** (Eixo Atlantico – Interregional Working Community) in favour of a strategic cross-border agenda.

The Eurocidade Chaves-Verin has proceeded in the identification of the main actors within the civil society as the actions and processes of developing new strategies were implemented, for instance:

- The participation of citizens in the elaboration of the strategic agenda (consultation process) and in the organization of cross-border activities.
- The participation of representatives of the civil society in the LSG.
- Citizens have also demonstrated their interest in staff members of the Eurocity or politicians responsible for the projects related to Eurocity`s objectives and brought up new ideas and projects.

- There are members of the staff who are natives from both Municipalities, which facilitates good relationships with the inhabitants, especially when living in small cities.

Some of the actions resulting from the aforementioned partnership are:

- Organization of trips along the route of Saint Jacques from Chaves to Verín. There is a member of BTT (Sport association) who is taking a leading role in the Eurocity organizing this event to promote the interaction between locals from Chaves and Verín.
- Organization of intercultural exchanges between theatre groups from Spain and Portugal. The Eurocity has received a proposal from a theatre group from Verín to organize such an event.
- Organization of the Road safety week upon a proposal of the coordinator on road safety at county level and the civil protection department from Verín.
- Organization of a popular music concert, proposed by the responsible of the Chaves Conservatory.
- Implementation of the **citizenship card** project together with the commerce associations from Chaves and Verín.
- Some teachers from secondary schools are involved in the organization of informal groups created to develop strategies for training the citizens.
- The Eurocidade has implemented a health strategy for its territory. In this framework, some good practices set-up by other project partners represent models that can inspire Chaves-Verin. Examples are the “walking day” in the Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict, and the “slow-up” project in the Trinational Eurodistrict Basel.
- The Eurocidade has implemented a youth strategy for its territory. In this framework, some good practices set-up by other project partners represent models that can inspire Chaves-Verin. An example is the solidarity run from the Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict that involves pupils from the local schools.

The Eurocity needs to involve civil society in order to:

- Reach an effective participation by the intended beneficiaries of the Eurocity

- **Overcome the skepticism** about the benefits that this project will bring to the daily lives of locals, especially from Verín.
- Ownership of the projects: maintaining the outputs reached by each of the projects (such as INTERREG projects) implemented along the Eurocity lifecycle for the success of the Eurocity's objectives.
- Encourage policies that will increase the participation of the civil society in the decision-making processes in the Eurocity and also in the City Councils.
- Become interested not only in the issues at local level, but also, at the upper governance levels, especially in the Euroregion and European levels.
- And finally, **embracing a new identity** built on common ideas, beliefs and ways of behaving within the Eurocity's territory, with which most locals feel comfortable in order to enhance the sense of belonging to a same territory.

The conurbation was born to meet all the aforementioned challenges. Despite having a strong political support, the creation of a conurbation is a project that has not counted on the support of the civil society who has received it with great skepticism, especially locals from Verín. This is one of the main challenges for the Local Action Plan: to involve actively the population from Chaves and Verín. The **creation of a common social area** will highly contribute to meet this challenge.

## 2. Problems to be solved

- Embracing a **Euro-citizen identity**
- The Eurocidade has been provided with a "strategic plan" which has to be a cornerstone strategy to exceed all expectations regarding the involvement of civil society.
- Ownership of the processes by target groups will be crucial for the development of the conurbation. Practices will need to fit well with local development priorities to achieve this target.
- A specific legal framework for cooperation in the needed areas must be provided.

### 3. Solutions to be developed

1. To organize an Assembly composed of citizens from Chaves and Verín, to bring initiatives to the governance of the conurbation. It implies the establishment of a continuous dialogue between the municipalities and their cross-border groups, programme managing authorities, regional, national and Community authorities.

2. **Creation of a common social area**: universal access to social public services for the eurocitizens from the Eurocidade, improving their quality of life. It allows unprecedented cooperation between state and regional or local authorities on common competences, such as health.

The increase of a European citizenship at a cross-border level is expected especially through the creation of a social free zone implying an access to both public services by the Spanish and Portuguese local population. Because of the peripheral situation of both cities and the current policy of scale economies organized in national frameworks, a **cross-border access to public services** existing locally would be a way to maintain some services; to develop some other ones and consequently to prevent the local population from travelling long distances nationally to get access to the needed services. It is especially the case for health services. Education is also a sector requiring a common agenda at the Eurocity size, especially artistic and university facilities.

3. Creation of a healthy city

4. Setting up a Creative city

5. To promote a **common cultural heritage**. Exposure to culture on the other side of the border through films and music, as well as taking part in the most representative cultural events for the cities, such as Carnival for Verín, or "Feira dos Santos" for Chaves.

6. Plan on visibility and all media tools for increasing the participation of the civil society and for arousing the interest in the project

#### – A COMMON SOCIAL AREA

A common social area will be translated into the **universal access to social public services** by eurocitizens from the conurbation, improving their quality of life. The Eurocidade will also promote a **common cultural heritage**. Therefore, the capacity of citizens from Chaves and Verín to become familiar with a common culture will be increased, appreciating their

own culture and those of the other EU Member States. As a result, cultural and social cohesion will be achieved on the medium-term of the LAP.

The conurbation counts on valuable factors. Chaves and Verín have a common history, culture and tradition as well as close languages. Those circumstances have facilitated the organization of activities that are interesting for locals, such as to go sight-seeing through traditional routes for smuggling, taking part in language courses. A **common cultural agenda** has substituted the agendas from both municipalities. The citizens' expectations for cultural activities on the other side of the border have increased.

Both municipalities have put in place resources in order to organize actions having popular meaning since the beginning of conversations to set up the conurbation. Those actions have improved communication between locals from both municipalities and, in the medium term, they will have enhanced the **sense of belonging** to the Eurocidade and Europe.

Devices will be implemented to achieve the aforementioned goals, overcoming the main actual barriers of the Eurocidade.

Activities to remember the common cultural and historic links between both cities will be carried out for locals to embrace a Euro-citizen identity. Other actions will complement it, such as the **citizen card**. It will be the key to e-government services and services for businesses.

Language barriers will be tackled with **language courses** for citizens, conurbation staff and civil servants. Courses for local shopkeepers and traders are already in place.

Cultural and mentality differences will be tackled by organizing thematic meetings between civil servants, participation of professionals from both municipalities in the implementation of the activities organized by the conurbation.

The Youth Strategy developed in partnership between both Municipalities with the support of IPJ and Xunta-Juventud will definitely contribute to those actions organized in the field of youth. The organization of sportive competitions, leisure events, and coexistence activities between youth will contribute to a better knowledge of both cultures, languages and understanding.

The project will set the necessary tools that will lead to a **full participation of the civil society into the governance of the conurbation**, not only taking part in the aforementioned activities, but also through consultative committees where their interest will be formally represented. It is foreseen that the civil society becomes involved in the Local Action Plan through the integration of representatives in the Local Support Group. Also the participation in consultative bodies that are going to be created alongside the project is foreseen.

The participation of the civil society will also be enhanced through the **organization of opinion polls, forums on the web site of the conurbation, consultation processes.**

Technological devices to collect data and measure the activities that have been already done:

Opinion polls have been carried out in order to reach statistical data about workers and tourists that visit the Eurocity, locals from both municipalities that already travel from one to another, reasons, impressions about the advantages that the Eurocity has, their perspectives....

Interviews of participants and representatives from civil society

– A HEALTHY CITY

There are previous cooperation projects between the health-care systems from both municipalities since the nineties. This cooperation was even formalized with the **creation of a working group** composed of professionals from the main health care institutions in both cities. There are still some **obstacles** to a solid cooperation in this area, some **administrative barriers** and a certain ignorance regarding the main challenges for health-care system on the other side of the border.

Strategies to be developed by the Eurocity:

1. To guarantee universal access to health-care systems by using efficiently health-care resources from both Municipalities
2. Make the Eurocidade become a European focal point for health and nature by developing a protocol for a joint presentation as healthy Eurocity, thermal and nature. Given that water is one of the most valuable resources for both cities, thermal baths have to become the main attraction of the Eurocity.

- A CREATIVE CITY

A creative city will be constituted in the long term by:

1. Training for creativity
2. Promoting creativity activities regarding all matters of concern for the conurbation
3. School of Arts
4. Exhibitions and demonstrations of work by locals, which will come into creative practice and support for creativity

## Sub-theme 2: Multi-level flexible networks

Enlarged participation of socio-economical agents in the consultative level, not only in thematic working groups

Committees representing the education or security fields have already been created in order to implement common projects that have come from the Councils. Civil servants' concern about the importance of the project has been growing parallel to the organization of activities with locals. They have become aware of the benefits that this project represent to them, as well as of getting a multi-governance system. So, they have come up with new projects and ideas which the operational group of the conurbation has helped to develop. As a result, **new partnerships and methods of coordination** have been developed. Some of them correspond to previous groups of coordination, the Eurocity has just impulsed them, giving another content to the cooperation (e.g. Security, an existing agreement at national level to make road security controls stronger).

In the field of education, the Eurocity has taken advantage of the collaboration offered by secondary schools from both municipalities that have been collaborating on the organization of activities. A group made up by people from every school has been established, and has held meetings with the Eurocity twice a year. Thus, it has acquired formal meaning.

Benchmarking. Education forum, or other activities carried out on the other side of the border have been incorporated and adapted to the other town.

The project has developed specific actions sensitive to the youth, since they were not actually involved in the project from the beginning. Youth is the main focus group for this project, since the Eurocity will be progressively constructed by them. Thus, various actions are only considering this public, such as the creation of a cross-border youth office.

Elderly have been taken into consideration as well, and activities to enhance their interest for a common identity have also been organized. However, since elderly have lived the common circumstances of history, they feel the proximity to the locals from the other municipality.

Bonds of union and communication will be reinforced by these activities. A **bigger budget** for these actions has been considered by partners. Tools enabling the implementation of these changes have been set by the Eurocidade. Opinion polls have been carried out after the implementation of the mentioned activities, which have been translated into a better organization of the activities that follow. In some cases, activities such as the World Childhood Day have been celebrated in the last two years; or also the World Flores try Day, the Education Forum between local primary and secondary schools.



Monitoring (follow-up of the activities) what type of instruments and parameters the Eurocidade is taking into account in order to improve: governance, involvement of eurocitizens, follow-up by the political working group.

### **Participation /involvement in the organization of activities:**

1. By representatives of the city on the other side of the border
2. Representatives from local stakeholders
3. Social and economic agents and civil society: **civil society involvement is one of the main challenges of the project** since they are not really aware of the importance and benefits that the project will bring to their daily life. The project will set the necessary tools that will lead to a full participation of the civil society into the governance of the conurbation, not only taking part in the aforementioned activities, but also through consultative committees where their interests will be formally represented. It is foreseen that civil society becomes involved in the Local Action Plan through the integration of representatives in the Local Support Group. Also, the participation in consultative bodies that are going to be created alongside the project is foreseen.

The participation of the civil society will also be enhanced through the **organization of opinion polls**, the **creation of a forum on the web site** of the conurbation, and consultation processes.

Some devices and tools to collect data and measure the activities have already been implemented:

Opinion polls have been carried out in order to reach statistical data about workers and tourists that visit the Eurocity, locals from both municipalities that already travel from one to another, reasons, impressions about the advantages that the Eurocity has, their perspectives....

Interviews of participants and representatives from the civil society.

There will be at least three consultative bodies, corresponding to the main axis of Eurocidade, in which socio-economic actors will be represented, namely:

- Eurocitizenship
- Sustainable development
- Economic dynamization

This structure will enhance participation and transparency and will improve orientation towards objectives. Participatory approaches are a valuable instrument for appraisal and for communication. Besides, **these consultative bodies will become instruments for a multidisciplinary analysis of the future projects** in order to implement the strategic objectives of the Eurocidade.

There is a correlation between the objectives set in the strategic agenda and the existing plans and programs set by the municipalities and the regions for a social and economic development of the regions. European objectives established by the Gothenburg and Lisbon strategies have also been taken into account.

- Action Plan on visibility. Key to involve political actors and the civil society
- Creation of a common social area.

Management of the conurbation is guaranteed thanks to a strategic agenda for the conurbation, published at the very beginning as the key tool for the actions that will be implemented along the project. This agenda was built by an accurate identification and consultation of all potential stakeholders, target groups and project partners (bottom-up approach). In this phase, problems and advantages were identified for the elaboration of the conurbation's diagnosis. **The strategic agenda will be used as the main source of information in order to implement the project's objectives.**

## **4. NETWORK AND COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES**

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### **4.1. Description of activities and documents**

A joint action plan on visibility has been set as the communication strategy. This plan aims to drive the communication with eurocitizens, between project partners, with European, national and regional institutions.

Actions to implement this plan have already been taken. Some tools are already in place. These tools to improve communication are:

1. A common cultural agenda that has substituted for the agendas of both Municipalities.
2. Creation of an image for the Eurocity, including the creation of a trademark around the main resource for both Municipalities: water. There is a clear strategy around this. A tourism strategy has been elaborated, which will have to follow a certain process with determined steps and principles in order to achieve a well considered result: "Eurocidade da Auga", with numerous facilities for locals, on the one hand and pole of attraction for visitors on the other hand.
3. The Eurocity has taken part in forums, principally concerning economic and tourism matters. This has enabled interactions with cities and associations from the Euroregion, but also being known by people from other regions.
4. Publications: strategic agenda (distributed at local and regional level); newsletters
5. Bulletin: technical meaning
6. Newsletter:

News about activities and events in which the Eurocity takes part are monthly developed and broadcasted in local and regional newspapers, radio and press conferences by local politicians. The news are broadcasted in three languages: Portuguese, Galician and Spanish. At present, there have been some punctual interventions of locals in radio programmes, giving their opinion about the Eurocity's activities and expectations. At the same time, representatives from both municipalities have taken part in the same programmes to speak about the evolution /progress that have been made by the Eurocity- in terms of benefits for the eurocitizens.

However, communication within the Eurocity needs to be enhanced.

Potential tools:

- Setting-up a dedicated website to define the content of the future Eurocity cooperation with the different structures
- Eurocidade guide and directory which will provide useful information for locals and outsiders
- A civil society chat forum for creating a dynamic interaction between locals, exchange of ideas, consultation regarding the management of the Eurocidade and any other actions that could contribute to a better governance for the project, such as uploading any project idea.
- Section for downloading information about any project carried out by the Eurocidade

- A tool for outsiders to know all the resources from the Eurocity, historic and cultural principally
- Organization of thematic workshops
- Informal meeting with the Eurocity secretariat : various universities from both Spain and Portugal, even France, have shown interest in the functioning of the Eurocity, giving important feedbacks that have been taken into account, together with the data from the opinion polls

## 4.2. PERSPECTIVES

- For civil society:

1. Benefits coming from a common social area. A common social area will be translated into the universal access to social public services by the eurocitizens from the conurbation, improving their quality of life.
2. Participation in the governance of the Eurocity through formal committees and assembly.

- For the municipalities:

The **active involvement of a broad range of different stakeholders** in the governance of the conurbation: jointly learning or defining development needs. That means creating tools to deal with poor participation of the civil society. Better communication with potential visitors and investors into the Eurocidade resources and public institutions through a strong image of the Eurocity.

**A more efficient and sustainable cooperation between both municipalities.** The Eurocidade Chaves-Verín has been constituted to improve the quality of life of the eurocitizens from both municipalities on a first phase, and to contribute to an economic well-being, development and social cohesion within the area of influence of Chaves and Verín. Therefore, the conurbation will provide the best integration possibilities for the Eurocidade with regions from other member states.

Eixo Atlantico benefits from the multiplier effect of the project: the impact of the project will be transferable to other municipalities which integrate the Eixo Atlantico association.

Regional administrations:

The Eurocity will provide **new instruments for improving governance**, performance and investments regarding cross-border cooperation issues. Given the creation of the conurbation as a lab, national and regional cross-border cooperation policies and strategies for the Euroregion depend a lot on the success of projects. It is necessary to make national authorities

aware of the importance of cooperation between several countries. Sometimes they just focus on national and regional matters. The Eurocity could provide them with an interesting example on how to improve and develop new forms of governance.

## 5. Organization scheme of the Eurocidade Chaves-Verin

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