

WASSENBERG, Birte; REITEL, Bernard; PEYRONY, Jean and RUBIÓ, Jean (2015) *Territorial Cooperation in Europe - A Historical Perspective* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 172 p. ISBN 978-92-79-49499-4

In the context of the 25th anniversary of the launch of Interreg programmes, the European Commission has published a book entitled *Territorial cooperation in Europe, a historical perspective*. For the first time, a publication of the European Commission aims to represent most cross-border experiences and projects from the perspective of territories and not programmes of territorial cooperation.

This work, which is totally novel in its ambition and approach, is the fruit of collaboration between three partners: two researchers, Birte Wassenberg, professor of Contemporary History at the University of Strasbourg and Bernard Reitel, professor of Geography at the University of Artois, and the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT) through its director, Jean Peyrony, and its geographer-cartographer, Jean Rubió.

The book fulfils two principal objectives. Firstly, it seeks to provide a key to understanding the complexity, richness and diversity of all of the territorial cooperation initiatives in Europe; illustrating their role in the process of European integration since 1990. Secondly, this work is part of a broader project to produce a critical dictionary of cross-border cooperation in Europe which is now being drafted by the same authors and several other researchers in Europe. This work fills the gap of a generalised approach to the theme of cross-border cooperation at the European level.

In the general introduction, the authors begin with a historical presentation of the first forms of cross-border cooperation since the late 1950s in the context of the creation of the Common Market in 1957. The first cross-border cooperation is the Eure-

gio, created in 1958 around Gronau at the German-Dutch border. The second one is the Upper Rhine Conference (France-Germany-Switzerland) following the creation of the Regio Basiliensis in 1963 in Basel. Then the SaarLorLux Euroregion (Germany-France-Luxembourg) was launched in 1968 and became the Greater Region, including a Belgian part. The authors explain that these cross-border cooperation forums and working communities came into being independently of European integration and the evolution of bilateral relations. Indeed, cross-border cooperation is defined as a partnership between local and regional stakeholders separated by a national frontier, whose actions have repercussions at the local and the regional level on both sides of that frontier. Cross-border cooperation can therefore be seen as a way of recreating proximity, since borders usually appear to be elements that separate. The authors provide definitions of the terms 'border', 'cooperation' and 'cross-border' and specify that the term cross-border cooperation was officially recognised in 1980 by the Council of Europe Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation.

Furthermore, there are for them three dimensions of the frontier that are particularly important in understanding cross-border cooperation: its political dimension, its cultural dimension and its physical nature. The priority for cross-border cooperation is to weaken or eliminate the negative effects created by frontiers because cross-border cooperation is not a simple partnership between local authorities, it is a means not only of surmounting natural, political and cultural frontiers, but also of overcom-

ing psychological frontiers and reducing their capacity to separate. Thus, European integration and cross-border cooperation have the same objective: to safeguard peace in Europe and bring the peoples of Europe closer together.

The authors stress the differences between the process of European integration and that of cross-border cooperation, before demonstrating that a link has been established between them, notably by means of European regional policy. Firstly, the pioneers of cross-border cooperation did not, at least initially, have the same goal as the pioneers of European integration. Secondly, European integration and cross-border cooperation do not use the same tools. Thirdly, European integration and cross-border cooperation have evolved in fundamentally different ways. A link between European integration and cross-border cooperation began to be established in the mid-1980s, particularly with the project of creating a single market within the EEC. The link intensified with the geopolitical upheaval Europe experienced after 1989. Since the 1990s, research on cross-border cooperation has been regarded as complementary to studies on the role of stakeholders in the work of European integration.

Finally, the authors explain that this publication represents an additional step towards a better understanding of the evolution of European cross-border cooperation as a whole and its links with European integration. It approaches cross-border cooperation from two different angles: from the “centralised” point of view of the EU on one hand, and from the “decentralised” point of view of the cross-border regions in the EU Member States on the other.

In the first part, the authors describe the EU and its policies of cooperation across its internal (those between the Member States) and external borders (those between a Member State and a state that is not a member of the EU).

The aim of the authors is to explain the general approach of EU regional policy and how it meshes with the policies followed by other European organisations. They also describe the EU policies on cooperation and in particular the instruments which support cross-border cooperation in Europe. They try as well to understand how this corpus has built up over time and what spatial configurations have resulted from it. At least, they explain how territorial cooperation contributes to the emergence of a European territory.

In this part, the authors first describe regional groupings in Europe as areas of varying shape (EU, Council of Europe, Schengen Area, Eurozone, European Free Trade Association). Then a chapter concerns cross-border cooperation forums and working communities such as the Benelux, the Visegrad Group, the International Lake Constance Conference or the Pyrénées Working Community. A part is also dedicated to the history of the Interreg programmes (1990-2020) showing the different strands (cross-border, transnational, interregional) of this EU initiative. Other programmes involving non-EU member states are also mentioned. A section is dedicated to maritime and macro-regional strategies (Baltic Sea, Danube, Adriatic and Ionian, and Alpine regions); the next one to cooperation at the external borders of the EU (IPA CBC and ENI CBC programmes); another one to the cross-border and transnational cooperation in the outermost regions (Caribbean, Amazonia, Azores-Madeira-Canary Islands, Indian Ocean and Mayotte-Madagascar-Comoros); and a last section dealing with the European groupings of territorial cooperation (EGTC).

The second part is about territorial cooperation on the borders of European Union countries. It consists of the succinct presentation of the instances or structures of territorial cooperation in the

28 EU Member States. In this part the authors describe the cross-border territorialities that have taken shape, the various types of development of cross-border cooperation in each EU Member State and the goals of cross-border cooperation. Lastly, the authors explain which stakeholders are involved, what the different forms of cooperation are and what scales of cooperation have emerged.

In this part, the authors first make an analysis of the different stages of cross-border cooperation. Three stages can be identified in cross-border cooperation between Member States. Firstly, the pioneering initiatives that began in the 1960s on the French-German border and in the border regions of the Benelux involving the founding members of the European Community or their neighbours (Switzerland). The second stage, which began in 1990, mostly involved the border regions of the 12 Member States of the EEC that participated in Interreg from 1991 onwards (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and the United Kingdom), affecting for the first time regions of Central and Eastern Europe in transition (Phare and Tacis programmes). A third stage of territorial cooperation began after the enlargement of the EU to the east in 2004 and currently covers the new external borders of the EU – those to the east (with Russia and the countries situated between Russia and the EU) and those to the south (the Mediterranean countries) – in the form of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).

In summary, the aim of the authors in this part is to provide a country-by-country survey of existing cooperation initiatives, including multilateral cooperation and sectoral cooperation. The authors

used different and valuable sources in order to obtain the most updated information and to make a list of the cooperation bodies existing on all borders of the EU Members States. This list made it possible to produce maps for each country or groups of countries. The aim of the maps is to present all the recognised institutional cross-border cooperation frameworks for each state and each of the maps is accompanied by a commentary that goes beyond being a mere description. For the first time, the authors adopted a common structure to realise a harmonised cartography for all the countries. Three scales have been chosen (local, regional and supraregional) and four spatial aspects (urban, rural, metropolitan and non-metropolitan).

In conclusion of this publication, the authors state that the purpose of this work was to review the development of territorial cooperation in the EU since 1990. The authors consider that during 25 years territorial cooperation has expanded, intensified and become more complex. Interreg helped the EU to acquire a spatial vision in order to increase social and territorial cohesion in Europe. Finally, the bones of this review need to be fleshed out with systematic field studies of the genesis and evolution of cooperation initiatives based on a standard matrix in order to produce a detailed basis for comparison.

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