

## THE STRATEGIC DESIGN OF EUROCITY CHAVES-VERIN AS A TOURIST DESTINATION

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### **Abstract**

The creation and expansion of the European Union allows the development of tourism to benefit from cross-border cooperation between individual cities. In the given case, the cities of Chávez and Verín belong to different countries, Portugal and Spain respectively, but they have common historical ties, exchange and cooperation and experience in social relations. They are part of the Atlantic and are the first Eurocities in the Northwest of the Iberian Peninsula. Tourism can play an important role in building this new territorial development model.

**Keywords:** Eurocities, cross-border cooperation, tourism, tourism development.

### **Introduction**

Cross-border cooperation is a powerful force that spatially affects the socio-economic structures of neighboring regions (Dimitrova, 2022). Within the framework of the European Union (EU), cross-border cooperation has entered the second generation, or more precisely, it is moving from the phase of dominance of infrastructures to the phase of predominance of citizens' lives, largely artificially divided. This is the community's commitment to local collaboration. In this context, Eurocities are very important elements, understood as authentic laboratories for building citizenship and experimenting with shared experiences among equals.

Eurocity is a relatively new cross-border governance tool that was officially established in 2007. The system is based on the governance political cooperation between the mayors of Chávez (Portugal) and Verín (Spain). Eurocity Chaves-Verin unites both cities and Spanish and Portuguese organizations from the two municipalities located on both sides of the Tamega River valley (Dimitrova 2021).

Chaves and Verin are two cities with solid historical ties of exchange and cooperation, and the idea of creating institutional structures to strengthen relations between them has a long history of relations between the two local institutions from a certain time. However, the opportunity opened by the impact of two new factors allowed the implementation of the current Eurocity construction process: the inclusion of the two cities in the Atlantic Axis - an association

of municipalities from the Euroregion that promotes cross-border local cooperation and community development 2007-2013 , with a special emphasis on territorial cooperation elevated to the main objective, along with cohesion and commitment to growth and employment.

The aim of Eurocity Chaves - Verin is to create a unique model of a cross-border, innovative and cooperative region that provides residents through joint territorial planning with common management of urban services and joint overcoming of obstacles that hinder mobility. The Eurocity project aims to promote common services and policies in the fields of culture, tourism, trade, education, scientific research and social policy. The promotion of territorial cooperation also strengthens social cohesion between the two communities, improving the quality of life of people in general (Dimitrova 2021).

Although it is a completely local initiative, born with a strong social impulse, after its integration in 2005 in the Atlantic Axis, the project received strong support, as it fully coincided with the strategic directions outlined for the period 2007-2013 in the Axis Strategic Program , whose main pillar is precisely the promotion of governance and cooperation structures, the main objectives of the Eurocity concept. Thus, in December 2007, the two mayors officially presented the Eurocity project in Chaves, sponsored by the Secretary of State for Regional Development of Portugal, by the Minister of Economy of the Xunta de Galicia, by the Vice President of the Commission for Coordination and Development of the Northern Region (CCDR-N) and by the President of the Province of Ourense, among other authorities. One of the first decisions was to entrust a group of professors and researchers from the universities of Vigo and Trás-os-Montes to prepare a diagnosis and proposals for action, which were presented at the end of 2009. These became a solid basis for collaboration during the following programming periods as well periods (2014-2020, 2021-2027).

The chosen methodological option is based on a reality that recognizes the Eurocity as a process already underway, with a relatively high social acceptance, which implies a specific analysis scale with variable geometric indicators, so the search for information cannot be limited to writing. only documents (relatively scarce), but they extend to the social actors themselves involved in the process.

The research object of this article is the joint tourism management policies in the Chaves-Verin Eurocity. The object of research is the particularities, advantages and disadvantages of the tourism management policy on both sides of the Spanish-Portuguese border.

The objective of scientific development is to analyze the important role of tourism in the construction of this new model of territorial development. The achievement of good economic development indicators, as well as improvements in the field of tourism, is the result of successfully implemented projects that cover the population on both sides of the border.

### **Economic cooperation in the Chaves-Verin Eurocity**

The starting point of development in any territorial community is the set of resources (economic, human, institutional and cultural) that make up its endogenous potential. It is small and medium-sized companies, with their flexibility and their entrepreneurial and organizational capacity, that are called to play a leading role in endogenous development processes (Vázquez 2005). Applying this concept to the case of Eurocity Chaves-Verin, it can be observed that the impetus to initiate structural changes in their production system came after the crisis of the 1980s (Commission Européenne, 1999).

The gradual institutional creation of favorable conditions for trade and economic activity led to a reduction in transaction costs between companies and other economic agents in both regions. In this context, the role of infrastructure clearly defines a model of cooperation that, in addition to reconfiguring the territory in the short term, can redirect it to European and world markets, even despite its peripheral position in geographical and economic terms (Pardellas 2009). Therefore, the state must make systematic efforts to build a fair infrastructure of the market economy, based on rules, regulations and control (Bouzova 2021).

Discussing territorial competitiveness, it is clear that a project like the construction of Eurocity must be part of this line in order to face the challenges in the short term. Perhaps the balance to compensate for the asymmetry of administrative powers between the two banks of the Minho River (the traditional border as a continuation, natural and administrative between Galicia and Portugal until its integration into the EU) can be guaranteed initially in the short term, taking into account the aforementioned support from the Junta de Galicia and the Commission for Coordination and Development of the Northern Region CCDR-N, which would influence macro decisions.

The additional approach is oriented to the analysis and configuration of the geographical space of the two municipalities of Eurocity Chave-Verin as a tourist destination, starting from the economic activity, despite the presence of a number of resources on its territory, both in the unique natural and cultural-historical heritage, and in its specific thermal resources.

The construction of Eurocity allows the analysis of tourism as an essential factor in its development, both for the two municipalities and for the entire border territory between the two countries.

Chaves is a municipality with about 38,000 inhabitants (of which about 18,000 in the urban center), adjacent to the territory of Alto Tamega (comprising 6 municipalities with about 84,000 inhabitants) and is part of the Northern Portugal region (INE 2022). Verin, for its part, is a municipality with about 13,500 inhabitants, the center of an extensive functional area (which includes the Monterrey-Verin region with about 28,000 inhabitants (INE 2022), as well

as some municipalities in neighboring regions) and is part of the autonomous region Galicia in Spain.

The two cities are located about 30 km from each other along the old highway (a new highway has already been built) and although they are on the periphery of the peninsula, they seem well framed in the Iberian space, forming part of the Greek "Y" that leads the plateau to the two main coastal cities of the Euroregion: via the Portuguese A7 motorway connecting the metropolitan area of Porto and the Spanish A52 access to the Vigo area. Other factors of functional centrality reinforce this situation, the Chaves activity park and the cross-border logistics platform Chaves-Verin (integrated into the Portuguese logistics program), are already a concrete reality of a future multi-center and multifunctional logistics platform envisaged in the Orense Strategic Plan 2010-2015. (Department of the Presidency. Xunta de Galicia, 2010).

Analyzing the collaboration between Chávez and Verín, we can agree that it has diverse convergent dynamics (Domínguez, 2008):

- Geographical conditioning, common historical and cultural identity, political-institutional proximity, which was supported through various initiatives for cross-border cooperation, construction of joint infrastructure and new opportunities related to residence, rest, employment;

- The presence of common complementary factors, such as territorial resources (Tamega river valley, hot thermal springs), economic (the aforementioned business logistics), cultural (language, music) and equally common urban and territorial management problems;

- Joint community projects, such as under Interreg III, IV, V, two museum interpretation centers, promoting a cultural network or a border smuggling route (turned into a popular tourist route);

- An opportunity to exchange existing experience in the field of education and health care, implying on the one hand a stay and joint teaching for high school students, and on the other hand, offering a variety of health care in the hospitals of Chaves and Verin satisfying the existing needs.

From this point of view, the creation of Eurocity makes a serious request, and against the background of the recent past, it offers two new possibilities, becoming an incredible European experience of a new type. The first condition is the political will of the administrations (local, provincial, autonomous and national) to develop the project. And the second is, its location as a gateway to the interior of the Galicia-North Portugal Euroregion, a territory in need of urgent measures regarding the deteriorating demographic situation and weak economic dynamics, which with actions of this type will increase its competitiveness and the possibility of catching up of the riparian zone (Blas and Fabeiro 2013).

### **The tourist market in Eurocity Chavez-Verin**

The tourism offering of both cities until 2009 can be seen as a clearly marginal factor in their economy and despite the presence of remarkable and unique resources, much of it remains unused or underutilized. Among all of them, obviously, the wealth of thermal and mineral-healing waters stands out, thanks to the same geological fault north-south, from Verín to Peço da Régua, on the coast of the Douro (Domínguez 2008).

The other and no less important water resource is the Tamega River itself, which, rising from San Mamede Mountain, makes its way through the Monterrey Valley, crosses Verin and passes through the Chaves region until it joins the Douro River in Portuguese territory (Fig. 1).

The military architecture is consistent with the history of both countries, accompanied by frequent military conflicts, of which the medieval fortresses of Monterrey (a short distance from Verin) and that of Chaves, in the city center, part of which has now been converted into a four-star hotel. More recent in time are the castles of Aguiar and Montalegre on the Galician side and Saint Stephen, Montforte and Mao Visinho in the Chaves region.

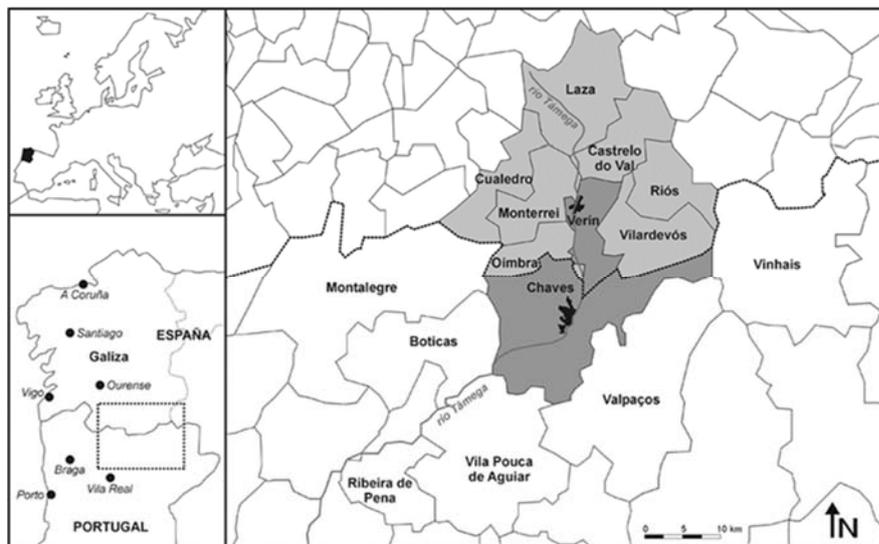


Figure 1 Location of Chaves and Verín

Source: [www.euroidadechavesverin.eu](http://www.euroidadechavesverin.eu)

The touristic use of the resources complements the nature, history and ethnography that already exist, albeit with much greater potential for development and promotion than the current presentation, the Golden Road and the Magic Views, that of the Reservoirs (Dams), that of the Rock Art and that of smuggling, as well as the branch of the Camino de Santiago, which starts in the Algarve, runs parallel to the border with Castile, and was widely used by converted Mozarabs in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Festivals and gastronomy are equally unique resources of this territory, highlighting two of Galicia's most ancient carnivals in Laza and Verín, and of course the presence of quality wines protected by the Monterrey designation of origin, in the case of Galicia, and the VQPRD

geographical indication (Quality wines produced in a specific region), specifically Vinho Verde in Ribeira de Pena, Vinho de Valpaços and Vinho Maduro de Chaves, on the Portuguese side (CCDRN 2007).

In general, the accommodation supply shows a highly asymmetric structure in the two municipalities, as shown in Table 1, where we observe that hotel beds in Chaves are almost three times more than those in Verín, which can be explained by the greater weight of the traditional spa tourism related to thermal activity in the Portuguese municipality. In any case, it is evident that most of the places correspond to very low category establishments in Verín and medium and low category establishments in Chaves, which represents an important barrier to developing a quality tourist offer within the Eurocity Project.

Table 1 Tourist base in Eurocity Chaves-Verín

Accommodation	Chaves	Verín	Chaves	Verín
	№		Mecra	
Hotel 4*/3*	4	2	596	128
Hotel 2*	1	1	78	60
Hotel 1*	-	2	-	98
Hostal 1*	-	5	-	146
Albergaria 4*	1	-	107	-
Boarding house	9	4	309	96
A motel	1	-	60	-
Rural tourism	14	0	309	96
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1345</b>	<b>528</b>

Source: [www.turgalicia.es](http://www.turgalicia.es), [www.verin.net](http://www.verin.net)

Regarding demand, the tourist activity in the cities of Eixo Atlántico, reveals some particularities regarding the characteristics and motivations of the tourists who come to these two cities (Pardellas, 2009). The data comes from a survey conducted at local tourist information points among 200 visitors (table 2).

Table 2 Characteristics of tourism demand in Eurocity Chaves-Verín

Chaves	Verín	Chaves	Verín	Chaves	Verín	Chaves	Verín	Chaves	Verín	Chaves	Verín
Age											
< 30		30-60		> 61							
24%	8%	63%	76%	14%	16%						
Emissions markets											

Galicia		Portugal		España		Europa		América			
1%	6%	97%	0%	0%	87%	2%	5%	0%	2%		
Information channels											
Brochures		Mutual friends		Agencies		Past visitors		Internet		Other	
15%	7%	32%	72%	3%	2%	17%	3%	25%	8%	8%	8%
Motivation to travel											
Heritage		Nature		Crafts and folklore		Gastronomy		Tranquility		Cultural events	
39%	48%	22%	32%	1%	2%	14%	15%	20%	2%	1%	0%

Source: Blas, X., & Fabeiro, C., 2013.

From the given data it is clear that Chaves is visited by significantly more young people than Verin (24% compared to 8% under the age of 30) and that the main issue market in both cases is national, but relatively better expressed in Shavesh. Differences regarding sources of information are significant. Visitors to Chaves mainly rely on internet technology to undertake their journey (25%) and demonstrate empathy (17% have come before), those visiting Verin rely heavily on recommendations from relatives and friends (72 %), and only 8% had previously used the Internet.

On the other hand, although the answers show logical variations, the motivation for the trip maintains in the two municipalities a noticeable correspondence with the resources and offers of the two, focusing mainly on the historical heritage and nature, which in turn is in line with the advertising carried out by the two local administrations of their web portals where this offer is most prominent.

### **Obstacles and facilitators to tourism development**

Both cities previously had strategic development plans (Cámara de Comercio de Verín. Informe 2006; Cámara Municipal de Chaves. Plano de Ação 2015) which looked at the situation and above all presented data and analysis relating to their basic resources and economic activities. With these documents and the information extracted from the interviews and working groups with local agents, the research focuses on discovering the main factors that facilitate or hinder the process of building the Eurocity from the perspective of the hypothesis that tourism can be an essential element in cooperation and in the process as a whole.

In general, three types of positive factors and two negative factors stand out. The most favorable can be found in geography (the Tamega River runs perpendicular to the border and therefore forms territorial alliances), in the presence of an active civil society and the local administration (cultural associations have already been carrying out joint activities since a few

years ago and the Atlantic axis - the association of the municipalities of the Euroregion – showed full support for the project from the beginning), and thirdly, in directing state investments in road infrastructure, which position the two municipalities as an important railway junction from the south of Portugal and the center of the peninsula.

As a negative side, we must mention the administrative and jurisdictional asymmetries (the government of Xunta de Galicia has normative and legislative capacity in many of the aspects that affect this project, which do not exist in the Northern region) and of course, the small business association experience with serious problems for innovation and competition.

All this is presented in terms of facilities and difficulties.

Facilities:

- Territory with geological uniformity and lack of physical boundary. The stream of the Tamega River, perpendicular to the border, forming a unique natural and ecological corridor;
- Availability of natural spaces throughout the region and urban green areas with the potential to create an image of the quality of the environment;
- Rural centers in the surroundings with important heritage, historical and cultural value that constitute a common identity;
- Cooperation structures at regional level (Atlantic Axis, Working Community Galicia - Northern Portugal, Community for Territorial Cooperation Tamega), as well as experience in cooperation between the two cities through Interreg IIIA, IV, V (Interpretation Center, Museum, Cultural Network);
- Cultural associations with certain dynamics of programming joint activities, especially in plastic and musical arts (reference for organizing other events in the future);
- Significant economic activity around the thermal springs (Shavesh) and bottled water (Verin), with significant investments in recent years and medium-term diversification projects;
- Communication infrastructures between urban areas that favor their connectivity;
- Geographical location within high capacity roads facilitating access from the peninsula to the joint area;
- Hotel offer with potential for design and development of the destination;
- Combining commerce and restaurants as factors of interconnection, with recent experience of public-private cooperation and innovation initiatives to create a common commercial space.

Barriers:

- Asymmetries in the treatment of the Tamega River corridor, which makes it difficult to protect, classify and even manage it (nature network in Verin and still a request for a protected landscape in Chaves);
- Lack of integrated treatment of the Tamega River as a tourist resource for recreation and nature;

- Unharmonized plans for sewage and water treatment and waste treatment. Verin's delay in joining Agenda 21;

- Differentiated legal, fiscal, tariff, administrative and bureaucratic frameworks on each side of the border, which hinder fluid relations in the Eurocity, both in the exercise of citizenship rights and in economic and business relations;

- Asymmetries in the territorial, urban, economic, commercial and equipment dimension between Chaves and Verin, which do not favor the perception of a fair distribution of costs and benefits arising from the construction process of Eurocity;

- Different legislation and legal provisions for territorial planning applicable in the two municipalities, which also have differences in jurisdictions (larger than the Portuguese side), making it difficult to organize Eurocity as a single territory and to protect the landscape;

- Lack of a Eurocity computer platform that would allow interactive access from the emission markets to integrated information related to the area (consultations, reservations, purchases);

- Insufficient level of professionalism, especially in lower category establishments and in general, lack of training to consolidate a quality offer;

- Limited presence of cross-border investments and stable structures for cooperation between business associations in the area, with a low culture of entrepreneurship and innovation, which reduces the opportunities to implement larger projects.

### **Strategic framework of the destination**

The need for solutions to direct the development of cooperation in Eurocity to a model of micro-competitiveness (horizontal relationship between companies seeking complementarity in production and increased efficiency, based on synergies for the use of common resources) added to macro comes to the fore. an action that generates positive externalities (coordination of regulations and institutional support will be the most important challenges in the medium term for the success of the project).

For the development of tourism, it is believed that the central core of the attraction will be the complex formed by the Tamega River and the available thermal springs, which will allow to create a brand image with the name "Eurocity of Water", supported respectively by municipal councils in Chaves and Verin. As the Tamega River runs perpendicular to the border (in the north-south direction), it allows a circular tour with two main nodes in the two cities themselves and several nodes and secondary attraction complexes in the neighboring cities, where numerous historical, architectural, ethnographic and cultural resources exist, landscapes as well as thermal springs.

The strategic design of Eurocity Chaves-Verin as a tourist destination was marked by two main axes acting also as links for activities and reconfiguration of the entire territory: the

“Ecological Corridor Tamega” and the “City of Health”, should be united in the “Thermal Destination of excellence” (Blas and Fabeiro 2013).

The ecological corridor concept delves into aspects of particular interest to this project, such as ecological connectivity and contact zones, given the transboundary nature of the actions. In this sense, for the definition of the Tamega ecological corridor, it must be taken into account that in the territory of the Chaves-Verin Eurocity we find, as already mentioned, a unique geographical fact compared to the rest of the border between Galicia and the north of Portugal, whereas instead of a natural feature that marks the border, as is the case with the Minho River in the so-called “wet line” or mountain ranges in the “dry line”, here the river is perpendicular to the border and has historically never served as complementing the administrative barrier, but rather to promote ties between the two cities.

This feature represents a remarkably positive and appropriate distinguishing feature and the idea of the ecological corridor, in addition to emphasizing its main role of communication, that it will serve to guarantee the water quality not only of the Tamega River itself, but also of all the aquifers in the area, which represent an important social and tourist resource and will allow, in the short term, to take the necessary actions to declare it a transboundary biosphere reserve.

The different actions promoted in the so-called “Ecological Corridor Tamega” include different contents, considering the presence of different aspects affecting the concept related to the sustainable territory and therefore influencing the quality of the environment in this tourist destination (namely water, biotope care, the available energy sources, the existing landscape, etc.). That is, the proposed measures aim to bring together all these aspects, turning them into social and institutional commitments for modeling the tourist destination, with the main goal of people's quality of life:

1. Improving the quality of water and rivers as a key to development (this implies action on the various sources and springs of the two municipalities, carrying out an inventory and a global reuse program to ensure the sustainable use of this resource);

2. Creation of a quality green system (which will not be limited to the banks of the river, but to the totality of the surrounding natural spaces, including heritage, cultural and landscape resources, networked and continuous with the urban green spaces of the two cities. This system should be accompanied by walking, cycling and outdoor activity routes, as well as one or more nature classrooms for students);

3. Ecological transformation of Eurocities through the shared program 21 (an action already started by the Atlantic axis in 2006 and which would mean simply expanding and remodeling the actions to work from the point of view of a single urban complex in the programs and actions of environmental type, such as the generalization of the use of renewable energies in social facilities and administrative buildings with a medium-term energy saving program);

4. Restoration of the rural environment and the traditional urban environment (given that interventions in buildings and public spaces have already been carried out with other European programs since 2002, the new approach would suggest a coordinated action to carry out common actions and with similar criteria in the rural cores of the two municipalities, thus creating a time plan for the restoration and improvement of the ethnographic, cultural and architectural spaces to consolidate them as quality tourist attraction nodes).

In turn, in order to define a “City of Health” and considering the presence of important thermal resources in both municipalities, the concept must be extended beyond the traditional areas of prevention and health care, since both the concept itself and the proposals, focused by a configuration of a tourist destination, go beyond the traditional definition of health, which will thus be reoriented to create a new reference model with the integration of different resources that emphasize the concept of well-being. In any case and always from the general goal of a socially rational use of resources, it is obvious that those that exist in this territory represent an important source of opportunities to generate a general thermal and health offer with unique characteristics and remarkable quality (Eurocidade Chaves-Verín 2023).

Therefore, the lines of action for promotion in the “City of Health” cannot lose sight of the European guidelines for improving the quality of life of citizens, which in this case are clearly aimed at the achievement by the administrations of greater efficiency in the management of health resources . On the other hand, it should be noted that already in 2005, a Working Group was created in both municipalities to rationalize and deepen the cooperation between doctors and heads of medical institutions in the two cities, with the aim of improving the medical care of the population as a whole.

To these actions it should be added that modern thermalism seems to be much more oriented towards pleasure and relaxation than the nineteenth century idea of curing certain diseases and this change, integrated into the aforementioned broader concept of well-being, was included in a project of Eurocity to form an up-to-date and attractive definition of health, so that the proposed measures affect residents and visiting tourists alike:

1. Ensuring universal access to public health services (for which the above working group should be used establishing a formal protocol that allows the exchange of personnel and funds, given that there is evidence of complementarity between services and benefits from hospitals in each city and that there is a history of previous cooperation in health actions of special importance that would lead to geographic restructuring and clustering of services to increase coverage levels in primary family care);

2. Increasing the social and market value of thermal resources through business cooperation (the consequences of a modern thermal destination require changes in business goals, reorienting in this sense the market strategy, investments and the activity itself, from the consideration that new products and services will have as preferential recipients middle to high

income demand segments who come to these facilities to offset the stress of their work and who are also accustomed to a high level of service quality. A parallel and complementary establishment of a Thermal Product Innovation Center would tend to emphasize public-private cooperation, for example with academic staff from the university);

3. Turning Eurocity into a European benchmark for health, nature and water (in this order, the need to revise the requirements for the use of the European Health Card to be adapted to this project, paying special attention to vocational training and higher health personnel for this purpose and designing a protocol for coordination between general and thermal health. At the same time, the integration of the aforementioned ecological corridor of the Tamega River with the creation of a Center for the interpretation of thermalism will complete and direct to this destination offering clients and tourist visitors who are not specifically interested in using the thermal facilities, interesting information and dissemination of this topic, which in itself would become a reference tourism product).

From all that has been said so far, the main goal of the mentioned measures will be to transform the Eurocity (but with the name "Eurocity of Water") into a well-known thermal destination with excellent opportunities, focused simultaneously on nature, free time and, of course, health. Naturally, the consolidation of such a space with excellent achievements in thermal tourism in this area implies a new vision: modern and quality offer of equipment and specialized services (balneo and spa), professional service from hotels and restaurants, development offering additional services and activities, which stimulate and create synergies (a place for the interpretation of thermalism, cosmetic and hygiene products, business opportunities, cultural and attractive activities) and of course with a special emphasis on the tourist offers available in the vein, already mentioned (the golden road and magical views, the route of the dams, the rock art route, the smuggling route, as well as the Camino de Santiago route from southern Portugal). Of course this is accompanied by offering a truly friendly, healthy and environmentally sustainable environment (Blas and Fabeiro 2013).

Considering the information obtained from the meetings with social, economic and institutional agents involved in the Eurocity project, it can be concluded that the perception of local actors is very positive regarding the possibilities of its implementation, especially if we take into account the history of cooperation in some specific cases (health, education, culture) which should benefit in the short term, as well as the obvious full support of the supra-municipal institutions (Xunta de Galicia and Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento da Região North) (Council of Galicia and Commission for coordination and development of the Northern region, as already commented in the introduction of this document).

In any case, it is interesting to build a scheme for predicting the effects in the medium term, considering, first, that the proposals made are accepted and adopted by the main social and institutional actors of the territory, and second, that tourism works as a factor for urban

and territorial development, generating important changes in the system of settlements and in the provision of infrastructure and equipment that act as a favorable element for new entrepreneurial opportunities and job creation (Blas and Fabeiro 2013).

### **Conclusion**

From what has been said so far, the following conclusions and generalizations can be made:

✓ The shared territory of Eurocity Chaves-Verin has resources – some of them already transformed into current products and offers that allow it to develop a coordinated and attractive tourist offer for the emission markets of the Peninsula and Europe;

✓ The Tamega River is the central core of the destination named Eurocity of Water. This is due to its geographical location and its north-south course, perpendicular to the Spanish-Portuguese border, which makes it a leading factor in the remodeling of the territory. In addition, thermal resources are the second common element that serves to identify this unique destination;

✓ The towns of Chavet and Verin take the place of main cores in the configuration of the thermal destination, with huge potential, with secondary attraction nodes (based on the landscape and the unique culture), for the demand segments that are interested in this type of offer. In addition, each of them has resources that can complement the neighboring one, and it is permissible to imagine in the medium term an improved economic structure and a new production system that will be presented and promoted as leading in the existing European mineral springs;

✓ As the main objective of the proposed actions is to reach the greatest possible territorial convergence, and together with the indicated antecedents and practices of cooperation, it will favor the construction of a completely new cultural landscape, thanks to the existing common language and the good level of social acceptance of the innovative project;

✓ In addition, the significant institutional support for this project also allows us to imagine a scenario of reducing and even removing in some cases the existing barriers and obstacles arising from the differences in the administrative powers of the two regions;

✓ In fact, the main weakness lies in the apparent lack of a culture of business cooperation in tourism activities and especially in the sections related to thermalism, which is essential in the development of projects for the joint use of resources, without which it is very difficult to promote Eurocity Chaves-Verin as a thermal destination with excellent possibilities.

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