

## **GOVERNANCE THROUGH COOPERATION: A NEW VISION OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION (EXAMPLE OF EUROCITY CHAVES-VERIN)**

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### **Abstract**

Within the European regions, the cross-border cooperation between Northern Portugal and Galicia is different, the established cultural position is strategic and particular. The mutual understanding between the two regions refers to past cooperation (tribes in Romanization, smuggling routes), which makes the mental border “thinner” and cooperation emerges as the main driver of local and regional development. Given the European vision, cross-border cooperation is seen as a tool to reduce differences between regions, promote convergence and integration.

**Keywords:** cross-border cooperation, management, Eurocity.

### **Introduction**

In the modern development of Europe, the various political, social, institutional and economic connections that can be established between two border cities acquire a concrete form of cooperation.

We propose a theoretical framework that we believe is appropriate in the study of projects that bring together in cooperation two border territories: common territory for action, institutional framework, activities and initiatives, symbolism and communication. The methodology used is based on quantitative and qualitative indicators. Official information was reviewed, published interviews of direct participants in the implementation of the Eurocity Chavesh-Verin project were analyzed.

The subject of the study is the cross-border cooperation between the municipality of Shavesh and the municipality of Verin, and the subject of the study is the policies that unite and create a model of sustainable cooperation.

### **Exhibition**

We cannot talk about the Euroregion without knowing the management policy of cooperation. The content characteristics, the composition, structure and functions of the governing bodies, the goals and methods of governing influences and feedback, the management techniques at each level have their own characteristics. However, they should be considered in their substantive inseparability (Bouzova, 2021)

As José Antonio Palmeira writes in “Governance in the Galicia-North Portugal Euroregion”, the relationship between Galicia and North Portugal does not depend on Madrid and Lisbon. The author understands that civil society is the basis of good relations between regions, as the dynamics are fueled by cultural affinities and by actions at the economic level, and it is in this sense that the concept of governance appears. This concept is considered new and comes directly from the process of globalization and the subsequent reformulation of the concept of the nation state. It should be noted that governance is a term that refers to 'self-governance' in a global dimension. According to this author, governance is the “governance of a society” (Palmeira, 2008) and also the “positive acceptance of diversity by the state”. In this context, one can see the growing interdependence of states in the face of globalization and the fundamental role played by regional alliances.

According to Palmeira, “if the capacity to govern is no longer necessarily as linked to certain niches of the national territory as it was in the past, the territorial state is still a significant factor and needs to be taken care of”. Governance is linked to the process of integration and, therefore, to consolidated European citizenship through the economic and political interdependence of the European Union (EU). It is possible to identify three levels in this process: the EU at the top, the states in the middle and the regional units at the bottom serving as support. In this way, the growing importance of regions in the European context is confirmed; the globalization movement itself ultimately becomes relevant in the sense that through this same movement it is possible to give meaning to the local/regional. Through globalization, we manage to preserve the different identities present in the EU and to visualize a process of European construction that contains within itself a huge multitude of identities. It should be understood that this whole process, which aims to cover the regions in a global panorama, has in itself possible corrections of the inequalities present in the European territories (Palmeira 2008).

There is a distinction between politics and governance (Fernando 2005): politics refers to a course of activities within a polis; politicians rule, judge and deliberate. The human being is analyzed as a “social animal” who is unable to live in isolation and therefore needs to connect with others. In this sense, their social relationships will determine their way of life. Politics is the act of managing these dichotomies through goals and coordinating social situations. Order and social balance prevail for the purposes of the common good (Gonçalo 2004).

Over the decades, some problems and questions arise regarding the concept of governance, which is associated with the crisis of democracy and, accordingly, the difficulties that various forms of governance go through. All of these concepts are challenged due to a decline in civic participation and an overly technical view of society. The action of governance also includes the participation of civil society (institutions, associations, companies, etc.) in certain decisions that were previously a priority of political power (Fernandes 2004).

Management, as mentioned above, has more than one meaning. The fact that it is a concept with real elasticity makes it possible to apply it to different realities and according to different goals. Governance is not a term used only in matters of political power; it is also used in business or institutional environments, local administrations, international and supranational institutions, implying a new form of public management. It basically has two meanings: traditional and modern (Fernandes 2004).

The traditional perspective is based on the authority and rule of the state as something irreplaceable and a fundamental act of government. The modern concept of governance pays particular attention to existing resources at the core of societies capable of self-governance without state intervention (or at least with little state intervention). It is in this context that it is possible to make more effective and fair decisions. On the other hand, there is the belief that society can regulate itself without the action of the state, placing citizens in a more relevant position to the detriment of the administration. What is important to know about the concept of governance is that it is primarily a social phenomenon that involves various actors within societies, with the aim of governing and reducing the separation of relations between subjects and civil society.

Governance is directly related to the changes brought about by globalization, but administrative differences between regions must still be taken into account. It is due to the efforts of the Working Community that the difficulties regarding cross-border cooperation have been overcome (Buursink 2001), making it a process closer to the concept of governance and, therefore, to the process of formation of the Euroregion. It was through the Working Community (administrative structure that is the basis of the Eurocity Chaves-Verin project) that the management and use of historical and geographical similarities, as well as the organization of political and social elements in a network for the benefit of the two regions, was created.

However, it becomes plausible to see that the Euroregion concept is linked to globalization and governance. According to Dominguez Castro, the Euroregion is characterized by having "a permanent character, its own identity separate from its members, having its own administrative, technical and financial resources with internal decision-making capacity" (Dominguez Castro 2006). This is generally not the case in Northern Portugal/Galicia; this Euroregion has a permanent character but no identity of its own despite the similarities. It is true that this Euroregion also does not have its own autonomous financial

resources. In this case, the accession of Northern Portugal and Galicia essentially involves the planning of cohesion strategies. For all these issues, mutual assistance becomes imperative based on the shared past and the peripheral situation they both share, being peripheral at the European level and in their countries.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, cross-border cooperation projects have been growing in Europe thanks to financial resources provided by the EU. Projects that are implemented within the internal borders of Europe and cover two cities are called: Eurocities, Eurodistricts, cross-border agglomerations, cross-border metropolises, etc. The prefix “euro” is used in the case of cross-border (euro) regions located in Europe and oriented towards European integration. Projects aimed at cross-border cooperation gain importance as “laboratories of European integration”. Through the implementation of cross-border projects, daily contact with residents is maintained, which is a guarantee for the integration of a united Europe (Sohn & Lara-Valencia 2013). Cross-border cooperation within the EU started with the initiative of the Interreg community in 1991, and in the period 2007-2013 it began to form the specific goal of the European regional policy - strengthening territorial cooperation.

Some of the main documents that have been developed in the direction of territorial cooperation in the EU are the European Territorial Strategy of 1999, the Territorial Program of the EU, etc., adopted in 2007 and reformed in 2011 to adapt directly to the strategy “Europe 2020”. The aim is to promote territorial cohesion in cross-border, transnational or inter-regional territories.

The examples of cross-border cooperation in the Iberian Peninsula are numerous, but we will look at a specific model of cooperation - Eurocity Chaves - Verin. This model of cooperation started in 2007, gradually expanding by joining the Atlantic axis (Eixo Atlántico), becoming part of the Euroregion Galicia - Northern Portugal, as well as the European territorial cooperation. Eurocity Chaves - Verin is studied from an institutional point of view, how it is formed administratively, how an administration functions with experts from two different countries that have a different form of government Spain (monarchy) and Portugal (republic). The Atlantic Axis is a cross-border association of non-profit municipalities that ultimately corresponds to the territory of the Euroregion (<http://www.eixoatlantico.com/> 2023).

The main objectives of the Atlantic Axis are:

- Economic, social, cultural, technological and scientific development of the cities and regions that make it up;
- Promotion of economic, social and cultural cohesion by structuring a common territory.

The main cities that are part of the Atlantic axis: La Coruña, Lugo, Ferrol, Ourense, Santiago de Compostela, Pontevedra, Vigo, Villagarcía de Arusa, Monforte de Lemos, Porto, Braganza, Braga, Chávez, Viana do Castelo, Villa Real, Guimarães, Peso da Regua and Vila Nova de Gaia.

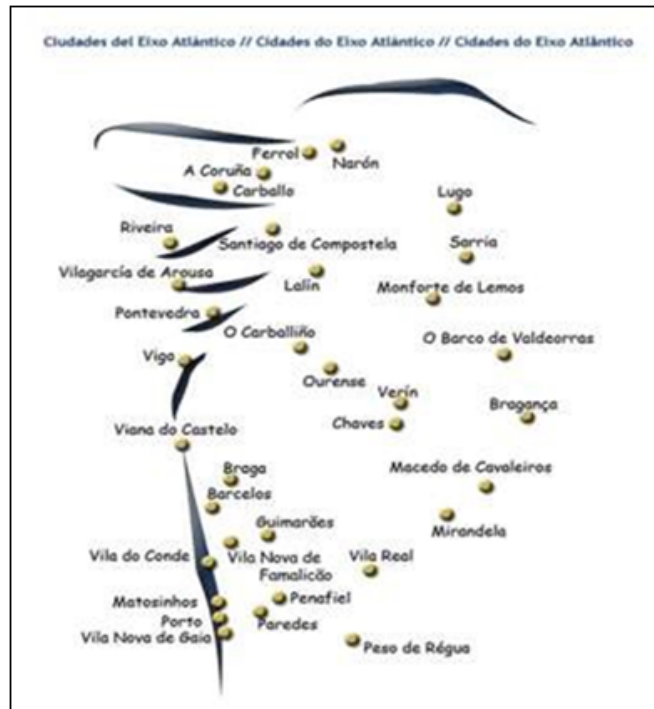


Figure 1: Cities of the Atlantic axis

Source: (<http://www.eixoatlantico.com>)

We apply two methodological approaches that address complementary aspects. On the one hand, we analyze the documentation generated around the Eurocity project, including reports, academic articles, press releases and published data on the web page and social networks related to initiatives that are implemented on the territory of Eurocity. On the other hand, we also analyze published interviews of experts and citizens who directly participated in the construction of the project. Through the published interviews, the values and beliefs of the local residents, who are direct participants in the implementation of the initiative, are understood.

We also look at terms that are used in the academic literature and refer to the name of the border towns that maintain connections with each other and we will try to present the specifics of cross-border cooperation between two municipalities located in Spain and Portugal. Projects that unite two cities that are bordering but outside the EU use other terms, for example twinning or bi-national cities in English. These terms are officially used in the specialized literature in which similar problems are studied.

The term “binational city” is used for projects that unite two cities located on both sides of a state border. The idea behind such terminology is to maintain a balance between competition and cooperation between border cities located in two countries. Such projects are usually imposed by the political class (from the top down). In this case, it is important to specify that the population is integrated among themselves and no conflicts are foreseen. An example

of such cooperation is Eurode ("Eu-Rode" is a made-up word created from the name Europa and the "Land of s'Hertogenrode" originating from early history. Already since the 12th century Herzogenrath and Kerkrade formed one unit on the administrative maps). This is the name of a project that includes the city of Kerkrade (Germany) and Herzogenrath (Netherlands). Such cooperation can be seen as the unification of two cities that are anchored in their own identity, but have never ceased contact with each other (Sohn & Lara-Valencia 2013).

As for projects that include twin cities, we can find them in the texts of a classic author such as Hartshorne, who explores the cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, separated by the Mississippi River, although both belong to the state of Minnesota (USA). This cooperation is an example of strong strategic coordination on both sides of the border, that is, which corresponds to an urban structure in order to function in an integrated way. We will comment without going into details that the relationship between Mexican cities and Americans is based more on economic exploitation by the US (Sohn & Lara-Valencia 2013).

The types of cooperation that affect two border towns separated by an international border can be summarized in the following sequence:

a) twin/duplicated and split cities: these are those that present a high degree of continuity in the urbanized area; In fact, the line itself passes unnoticed and gives the impression that it is in a city. We will encounter the case of twin cities, when one of them is a product of the existence of the other, earlier in time (as happens with Mexican border cities in relation to the USA). On the other hand, there are cities that were divided as a result of wars. An example of this is the cities of Central Europe after the Second World War or just as happened in the Cypriot capital of Nicosia;

b) connected cities: these are cities that are not physically adjacent and that are connected by infrastructure (bridges, tunnels, roads). An example of such cooperation is Malmö (Sweden) and Copenhagen (Denmark);

c) neighboring or integrated cities that, through their cooperation, create the best tool to overcome economic problems.

Projects involving so-called "binational cities" or "binational agglomerations" despite cooperation and common project activities do not achieve community consolidation; they still have two different societies and mentalities on both sides of the border, which is why it is not possible to speak of one city (similar to Eurocity). The same author accepts that it is more correct to use the name "border towns" in this case. According to the author, projects that reflect cooperation between two cities that fail to overcome differences in values, mentality, etc. it is best to call them "border projects", in fact they have contacts across the border but fail to overcome the "barriers between them". Residents in these areas regularly cross the border for shopping, entertainment or employment (Sohn & Lara-Valencia 2013).

The focus of the study is not one city located on both sides of the border, but two cities that actually cooperate but are part of two different countries. According to Buursink (2001), the conditions necessary for such cooperation are three: the existence of a shared territory; institutional framework and contacts between the population on both sides of the border.

According to the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière 2006 (MOT) it is the main platform for exchange and reflection on cross-border cooperation, representing all political trends at national and European level.) cooperation requires: political and democratic clarity (inclusion of different territorial levels); operational efficiency at the technical level (joint commissions, studies); and active participation of civil society, the so-called "living forces" of the territory (companies, unions, associations, etc.) (<https://www-espaces--transfrontaliers-org.translate.google/> 2023).

Ultimately, the goal is to create a sense of belonging to the cross-border territory. According to (MOT 2010), it is necessary for one of the local politicians to ensure adequate management of resources; to activate civil society, which must participate in the project, through dialogue measures, participation mechanisms, use of specific services, etc. In analyzing projects that include "cities that cross the border", we will follow a sequence of the following four elements that are necessary:

a) Territory of common action, which will be shaped by the municipal conditions of the cities that participate in the cooperation;

b) An institutional framework in which experts (local individuals) participate, who carry out the cooperation, build the commissions, plans or studies in order to make the project effective;

c) Implementation of activities and initiatives aimed at the effectiveness of social services. It is necessary for citizens to actively participate in the implementation of the initiatives;

d) It is necessary to establish symbols and communication in order to build a vision of the project itself.

In our opinion, these elements can serve as reference points in the study of projects related to cross-border cooperation.

Some of the possible areas of cooperation could be in the direction of: territory management, planning, transport and mobility; economic development; employment, training; social and health issues; environment, tourism, culture, etc. Undoubtedly, administrative problems due to incompatible management policies make negotiations difficult.

Foresight and sound policy solutions are needed to overcome the disparities faced by "cities that cross the border". An advantage of the EU is that, through cross-border financing projects, political alternatives are offered that actually legitimize cooperation - the Council of

Europe, a similar structure is not found in North America (Velde 2000; Sohn and Lara-Valencia 2013).

### **The case of Eurocity Chaves - Verin**

The cooperation project between the municipalities of Chaves and Verín officially launched at the end of 2007. The municipality of Verín has 20,000 inhabitants and is the second most populous municipality in the province of Ourense (Galicia). The municipality consists of 15 parishes. More than 70% or about 10,653 inhabitants are concentrated in the urban agglomeration of Verin. The fact is that it is a municipality with an urban appearance. The municipality of Shavesh has 40,903 inhabitants, covers 39 parishes and about 45% of the population. There are 18,118 inhabitants in the urban agglomeration of Chaves.

The city center of Chaves is 8 km from the border and Verin 14, so the distance between them is 22 km. Chaves and Verin have been suffering from depopulation and an aging population for many decades. The two towns are connected by a road, and since 2010 they are also connected to the A-75 (Verín-Feces de Baixo) and the A-24 from Portugal (from the border it goes to Vila Real).

As a result of the cooperation, foreign investment is increased, the labor market is significantly improved mainly due to improved infrastructure and improved communication channels. According to official statistics, there are 1,820 citizens who are Portuguese and live in Verín, while in Chaves only 85 Spanish citizens live within the municipality.

Labor mobility covers citizens who travel daily to work across the border, but there are also those who do not travel daily and aim for permanent settlement for long-term employment. Information on labor mobility is provided based on data from the municipal administration. Workers who live and work in the province of Oriense and are Portuguese citizens number 1,488, are socially insured according to Spanish legislation. In the municipality of Chaves, there are officially 80 Spanish workers who find employment in Vila Real. On the Spanish side, there are 69 cross-border workers with officially declared employment contracts from Portuguese employers. The number of Portuguese companies operating in Galicia is only 9. These are primarily intermediary companies that take advantage of the transport infrastructure and manage more easily to mediate commercial transactions.

In Eurocity Chaves-Verin, data on the number of all foreign workers can be obtained from the Observatorio Transfronterizo España-Portugal (OTEP) (This document is the result of the joint work of the Ministério das Portuguese Infrastructure and Habitação and the Spanish Ministry of Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda. Its intention is to have variables that allow the characterization of cross-border transport flows, of passengers and goods, with a detailed analysis for the different modes of transport).



In the Spanish-Portuguese border, specifically Galicia - Northern Portugal, approximately 50% of the border points are concentrated, which are by road, which is largely explained by the dispersion of settlements characteristic of the area. The average daily traffic is 5,463 vehicles, which represents about 17% of the total number of border crossings between Galicia and Northern Portugal. This is about 60% of the total amount of this section of the border. A decrease in daily traffic has been observed in recent years, leading to a constant evolution over time since 2008, which can be interpreted as a consequence of the economic crisis in both countries, which weakens the capacity of relocations. In terms of HGVs, the average daily traffic is 830 vehicles.

### **Institutional framework and project objectives**

The beginning of the Eurocity project is directly related to the inclusion of Verín (July 2007) in the association of municipalities Atlantic Axis, to which Chaves has belonged since 1992. However, his application for admission explicitly included the desire to form a specific union between the two cities in within the Atlantic axis (Campos & Pardo 2008). Soon after, a Working Group was also created, which aims to plan the Eurocity project, in the presence of the local regional authorities (Xunta, through its Consellería de presidency and the Northern Regional Commission for Coordination and Development – CCDR-N); provincialists, in this case Gallego (Deputación de Ourense); local (municipalities of Verín and Chaves); and the Atlantic axis itself. In November of the same year, an office was established, a person was appointed who initially performed technical functions for the Eurocity project, a plan for the activities planned for the project was published, an administrative act was drawn up and included representatives from the various mentioned territorial levels. The reasons documented for the constitution of the Eurocity project by the people responsible for their management are as follows:

- Proximity, affinity and historical connections;
- Opportunities for growth and economic development;
- Avoidance of duplicated administrative services and costs;
- Practical application of the principle of European integration.

In order to satisfy these intentions, the project managers are also developing a Strategic Program for Eurocity. This task is carried out by an outsourced consultant, specifically the Portuguese company Quaternaire and Servicio de Estudios del Eixo Atlántico (Domínguez, 2008).

Finally, the agenda was published in 2008 by the editors of the Association, under the coordination of Luis Domínguez in collaboration with other researchers.

The strategy is built around three main points:

- Striving for civil participation in local government in order to strengthen a sense of belonging to the common territory;
- Sustainable development in order to preserve the natural heritage, as well as to carry out a new arrangement of the territory, improvement of the transport infrastructure;
- Economic dynamics, creation of a competitive, entrepreneurial and value-generating economic structure.

These actions are included in an action plan and subdivided into different measures and actions that must be implemented within specific deadlines.

Economic support from European funds is extremely important for the realization of the project. The initial funds coming from the cross-border programs of the EU are worth a million euros, and the second tranche is worth 600,000 euros. The realization of these funds is aimed at sports activities and youth events.

Eurocity's management is located in a building that was the old customs border of Feces de Baixo (municipality of Verín) since April 2012. The organizational-management structure followed, which consists of 4 technical associates who work daily in the building, employed by the municipal administration of Verin and one of the hired persons, performs the functions of a POCTEP line coordinator. Various mixed sectoral commissions (tourism, sports, culture and education and healthcare) are formed to work in the specific areas. In July 2013, the statute was approved for the creation of the Group for European Territorial Cooperation (AECT) for Eurocity (AECT-ECV), whose seat is in the headquarters of Eurocity - Feces de Baixo (municipality of Verín).

The establishment of the Group for European Territorial Cooperation (AECT), in fact, institutionalized cooperation activities, organizing legal-political subjectivity. It is accepted that the organizational-management structure has a director, deputy director, secretary and general assembly. The main responsibilities of the AEST are, for example, direct recruitment of staff in order to participate in future calls for territorial cooperation funds. As for the specific objectives of the cooperation, the statute contains the following:

- Promote cross-border ties between its members based on complementarity, endogenous resources and a history of secular coexistence, by promoting a model of European citizenship;
- Promotion of institutional, economic, social, cultural and ecological convergence between cities, using the border effect as an opportunity for territorial development and socio-economic benefits;
- Creation of mechanisms for managing and reassessing the territory, opportunities to create and attract population, to create and consolidate employment dynamics and guarantee the creation of productive investments;

- Combining efforts and resources through planning and joint management of existing equipment, services and infrastructure in the territory;  
Encourages its use as a tool to stimulate population coexistence;
- Cooperation with territorial units that have a regional scope and are known among the local community.

### **Activities and initiatives: a serious vision**

One of the first initiatives associated with the Eurocity project is the publication of the Cultural Program, which since 2008 unites the cultural initiatives of the two municipalities - Verín and Chaves. Residents of the two municipalities organize themselves for joint initiatives in the field of culture, sports, training courses and education, these are the areas in which promoters are most actively involved in Eurocity. The aim of all these initiatives is to raise awareness and involve residents in the project so that they actively participate.

Some of the activities are the following - preparation of a monthly cultural program; Theater festivals; Traditional Folk Music Festival; Children's Song Festival; Youth Music Workshop; Children's Magic Festival; Exhibition of the artist; Creative Writing Course; Choir Festival; Photography competition; Mascot creation competition; Gastronomic festivals, etc.

Some of the sporting events are the following - indoor football tournaments; Football Marathon; beach games; Games without borders and more.

Projects with a training focus are the following: Education and road safety project; Tourism Resource Course; Travel Innovation in Tourism; Interactive workshops - tourist; Workshop on participation of young people in groups crossing borders; Meeting with young realized businessmen and entrepreneurs; Days to raise awareness on cross-border cooperation in emergencies; "Initiate and create" conferences; Live with tongues; Spanish and Portuguese language courses; School Library Meeting; Job fairs are organized with the participation of local businesses and young job seekers.

In the field of tourism, an initiative related to the preparation of the Eurocity Tourist Map is being implemented; Geoportal for tourist resources; Social programs – open trade border; A handbook of good practices for small businesses and more.

Initiatives in the field of tourism and trade, which aim to promote the economic activity of the population, are also being restored.

In the field of commerce, it is envisaged that the Chamber of Commerce of Ourense will develop a voluntary database that gathers all companies from Verín and Chaves. The goal is to facilitate faster communication with job seekers. Eurocity Chaves-Verin also has a website, which is structured in several sectors - culture, tourism, trade and other activities. The cross-border cooperation program POCTEP, which is the main source of funding for Eurocity Shaves - Verin, also enables the partnership of the two municipalities in the field of mineral

waters. The aim is to promote tourism by developing new tourist routes. Finally, and perhaps as the biggest practical application, there are project activities aimed at developing an up-to-date map that includes all the Spanish-Portuguese landmarks on both sides of the border.

In 2009, the Spanish Ministry, personally in the presence of the then Prime Minister, handed over to the municipality of Verin the installations that until then performed a control and defense function on the territory. The idea is to use these facilities in a completely different purpose.

The headquarters is open every day and welcomes residents of both municipalities as well as external visitors who visit Eurocity for tourism purposes. The building houses a counseling service for young people, which aims to support realization and more recent employment. A Eurocity Tourist Information Office has also been established. The old customs house is also the place where the Eurocitizen card is issued. This card is free for residents of both municipalities and offers a number of benefits to holders. They can be divided into two groups:

a) access to facilities in both municipalities under equal conditions (libraries, swimming pools, museums;

b) discounts for cultural, sports and entertainment activities organized by Eurocidade, with access to the mineral springs of Chaves, as well as shopping in stores and places associated with the brand. Therefore, the aim of this initiative is, in addition to increasing joint service provision and cost savings, to achieve a sense of belonging to a common space.

### **Symbol of Eurocity**



Figure 2 Graphic identity of Chaves - Verín Eurocity

Source: <http://www.eurocidadechavesverin.eu/eurocidade/identidade-grafica>

The logo presented above describes features such as the union of the two countries through the colors of their national flags, the ideal of a united Europe and the continuous

progress of the project through a circle. The choice of the headquarters of the Euros has its symbolic meaning symbolic dimension - it was erected at a place where the two cities intersect. The card that Eurocity citizens receive seeks to raise awareness among the population of the value of cooperation and the enjoyment of services and initiatives. On the other hand, the various cultural, social, formative sports teams, which are financially secure, seek to expand the image of Eurocity. We can summarize the activities that are financed through the Eurocity Chavez - Verin project:

- Issuance of a monthly cultural calendar for Eurocity;
- Publication of a quarterly newsletter;
- Joint publications (Strategic program, tourist guides, brochures, etc.);
- General tourist strategy, around the Eurograd brand of the train;
- Dissemination of news through local and regional media.
- New technologies: Eurocity website, Facebook and Twitter. First, in addition to

the information listed in Eurocity, you can access the company directory and the geoportal of tourist resources;

- Participation in fairs (Termatalia, Fitur), in open days and in networks, etc.

In management theory, however, the informal relationships between actors are considered as important as the formal relationships established within a system. In practice, this means that a joint body, even if based on legal or administrative agreements, does not function without a cooperative relationship per se.

In terms of day-to-day cooperation, the interviewees indicated that a shared project cannot be successful if the local authorities are not able to accept that certain policies must be coordinated with the population. In any case, the greatest difficulties in the implementation of the project according to the summarized data from the interviews would be in the implementation of the joint initiatives. On the one hand, the different Spanish and Portuguese politico-administrative systems, which oblige people to resort to different territorial levels on one side or the other due to the different performance of administrative services, Gallego over local level (Diputación de Ourense), state level (Instituto Português da Xuventude) passing through the region (Xunta de Galicia, CCDR-N). The other shared problem is state politics - the central government, which has a different attitude towards its borders. The local administration is finding it difficult to organize border control according to the requirements of the Central Governments.

The third element of the theoretical framework, referring to the participation of people and civil society in the cooperation project, the developed activities and initiatives, through which it is aimed to form a "community of interests", a "free social zone", etc.

In the strategic plan for the development of the Eurocity project, the issuing of cards for the use of discounts and other privileges aimed at those living on the territory of Eurocity is

foreseen. From April 23, 2012 to December 2014, 7,100 cards were issued. Of these, 3,137 are for residents of Shavesh municipality, and 3,963 are for citizens of Verin. For the municipality of Shaves, citizens who have received a Eurocard to use privileges are about 7.6%, for the municipality of Verin this value is 26.95%. This significant difference can be explained by the fact that the headquarters of Eurocity is located in the municipality of Verin, so a certain marginal effect can be observed in this sense. Practically all issued cards belonged to residents of Verin, but card holders from Shaves municipality are also gradually increasing. This initiative is supported by 12.5% of the total number of residents of both municipalities.

The Eurocidade project marks the realization of 242 events and activities since 2008. The realized events are also attractive to the citizens themselves and this is evident from the increased number of participants, which reached 63,184. The statistics note a lower number of participants in 2014. The reason, which explains the low values in 2014, is in the funding of POCTEP (Eurocity I and II) for the indicated year the priority is funding only for sports, educational and entrepreneurial activities. During this period, entrepreneurial initiatives are financially supported, which are related to the launch of small projects that facilitate contact between residents on both sides of the border.

In the interviews, some of the citizens shared that civil society is limited in its participation in the business sector, but has the opportunity to protect its own interests. Others of the interviewees warn that the leaders of the Eurocity project still have a sense of power, which is one of the reasons for the outflow of citizens. Eurocity Chaves-Verin is a project created and developed in the community before the initiative was taken by the political class and this is the most valuable lesson in the project.

### **Inferences and conclusion**

According to the objectives of the Strategic Program, the best results were achieved in the direction of - confirmation of European citizenship, good results were found in the field of tourism, economy and sustainable development.

We can also highlight some of the weaknesses of the Eurocity Chaves-Verin project in our opinion:

- The lack of public transport connecting the two municipal centers with intermediate stops is a significant deficit because it limits citizens to the need for their own transport. Currently, there are bus lines that leave from the centers of Verin and Chaves, but go to the border;

- An international agreement is needed to attract established medical specialists to provide specialized services to the population on both sides of the border;

- It is necessary to build an emergency road to facilitate the passage of ambulances, firefighters or civil protection;

- In our opinion, it is also important to remove roaming from mobile phones;
- It is necessary that postal services be managed by the Eurocity administration, and not yet prioritized by state policy;

The project has a remarkable symbolic load represented by its logo, which is also presented in official media. The newsletter is distributed on Facebook (which has more than 5000 followers) or Twitter and other social networks. The official working languages are Spanish, Portuguese and Galician.

In conclusion, we can ask: are we facing a case of “cities that cross the border”? Even in a strictly geographical aspect (Zoido 2013), we cannot speak of the existence of a cross-border agglomeration, since the urban environment is limited to the centers of Verín and Chaves (the distance is 22 km) and there is no urban extension that reaches the border. The theoretical framework used allows us, in conclusion, to reflect that a political initiative promoted by the local authorities, which seeks to get closer to the inhabitants, both of the urban districts of the municipal centers and to the inhabitants of the villages directly involved in the project, has been successful. The Eurocity project is forward-looking, it seeks to consolidate the community by implementing new policies in the fields of transport, healthcare or telecommunications. In search of a sense of belonging to a common territory, however, we cannot ignore the fact that Chaves is a city in Portugal and Verín is a city in Spain, the differences in state-administrative activities are an indisputable fact and this is one of the reasons why some researchers use the concept of “cities that cross the border”.

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