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Subnational 'co-operative' mobilization
through territorial co-operation: the case of EGTCs

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Since 2006 a new type of subnational mobilization has emerged across the EU. Regulation 1082/2006 of the European Parliament and the Council has facilitated the creation of a brand-new supranational institution at the territorial level, the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). The establishment of the new legal entity has intended to promote territorial cross-border co-operation among local, regional and –since 2013– national actors either by implementing co-funded by the EU projects or by serving as a formal platform for exchanging best practices and diffusing knowledge among its members.

Respectively, subnational authorities have gained a policy instrument which serves as a formal channel for fostering their collaboration at the supranational (cross-border) level. Drawing on the literature of multi-level governance (Hooghe and Marks, 2001), the aim of the paper is to investigate and present evidence of: a) the nature of EGTC as a typical horizontal dimension of Europeanization; b) basic functional traits of the existed EGTCs such as the broader categories of their members (local, regional, national authorities) in conjunction with the architecture of governance of the EU member state of origin (unitary, decentralized or federal). Empirical data are drawn from the Committee of the Regions EGTC Monitoring Report (2016). It is argued that the EGTC fall into a third type of subnational 'co-operative' mobilization – though not exclusively– next to the other two generic types (financial and regulative) that have already been suggested (Callanan & Tatham, 2014).

Keywords: EGTC, Europeanization, multi-level governance, subnational mobilization.

1. Introduction

Dealing with European territorial problems and providing effective solutions has been at the core of the efforts made by institutions placed at the supranational (European Union

- EU), national (governments) and subnational (i.e. regions, municipalities) level of governance. The EU, under the principles of subsidiarity and partnership, has launched public policies (i.e. cohesion, environment) and created financial instruments (i.e. the structural funds, the LIFE programme) in order to provide assistance to (sub-)state authorities, particularly during the implementation stage. At the same time, subnational authorities (SNAs) have proved –with variations– keen to mobilize in the European arena in order to directly take advantage of the opportunities offered by the EU.

The combination of top-down initiatives –led mostly by the European Commission– and bottom-up efforts made by subnational institutions to take advantage of the European opportunities, aim at effectively addressing economic, social, and territorial issues. In addition to these vertical dimensions of Europeanization, a newly formed initiative of the Commission characterized by its 'horizontal' Europeanization perspective has been set out in order to compliment the already existing efforts for economic, social and territorial cohesion and development. In that respect, the Commission launched in 2006 an institutional tool called "European Grouping of Territorial Co-operation" (EGTC – Regulation 1082/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council) through which institutional actors from different member-states could overcome problems created by the different legal systems of their countries and participate in a joint supranational platform of co-operation, with own legal personality and legal capacity for developing its own course of action (see also: Committee of the Regions (2007)). A core trait of the new institutional tool was its multi-level governance perspective, as it promoted the participation of public actors from different levels of governance (national, and sub-national) and at the very same time from different states (members of the EU or not according to the new Regulation 1302/2013), with the aim to promote co-operation and development at a cross-border, inter-regional and transnational level as well.

The aim of the paper is to present basic characteristics of the EGTC such as its legal architecture along with core geographic and functional aspects. Following the argumentation about the potential of the new EU institutional tool for economic, social, and territorial cohesion, the Europeanization effect of the EGTC is discussed from a multi-level governance point of view, focusing on the sub-state mobilization that has respectively been developed. It is argued that the EGTC falls within the "co-operative" type of actors' mobilization according to which policy diffusion and exchange of

knowledge may serve as principal incentives for action. In addition, aspects of financial mobilization also characterize the operation of the EGTC. The paper is organized as follows: the next section presents some theoretical considerations. In section three is described the legal architecture of the EGTC. The forth part presents some basic empirical features, and the discussion follows. Finally, the conclusions are summarized in the last section.

2. Theoretical considerations

The concept of Europeanization emerged within the literature of European studies during the 1980s. It does not constitute a distinct theoretical field of study, let alone a new theoretical contribution (Olsen, 2002, p. 944); (Radaelli, 2004, p. 15). Thus, it has been suggested that it should be combined as a research tool with existing theoretical frameworks (Featherstone & Radaelli, 2003, p. 333). Though many alternative definitions have been given (Ladrech, 1994, p. 69); (Bulmer & Burch, 1998, p. 602); (Börzel, 1999, p. 574); (Radaelli, 2003, p. 30)) in general, the concept has been associated with the impact caused by the (EU) into domestic structures, public policies and policy processes of the EU Member States (Börzel & Risse, 2006, p. 485), candidates states and other countries as well (Balkir, Bolukbasi, & Ertugal, 2013, p. 125).

Respectively, two approaches in Europeanization's literature are usually employed in analyses: the first one originates from the EU level headed to the states ("top-down"). It has been characterized as the prevailing one (McCauley, 2011, p. 1021). According to its rationale EU pressures are transferred into the domestic level pushing for adaptation in line with the EU preferences. In contrast, the "bottom-up" approach stems from the domestic level as actors try to 'upload' their preferences in the EU level, consequently minimizing their costs when adopting them. In that respect, Europeanization is considered to be a two-way process (Börzel, 2002, p. 193).

In addition to the aforementioned approaches, there has been proposed a third horizontal perspective of Europeanization (Howell, 2004). This approach is directly associated with a soft Europeanization mechanism (for mechanisms see: (Knill & Lehmkuhl, 2002); (Radaelli, 2003)) which takes the form of policy transfer (Dolowitz & Marsh (1996), (2000); Bulmer & Padgett (2004)) and diffusion of knowledge with regard

to formal and informal practices, policy implementation methods, ideas and institutional and administrative arrangements between politico-administrative bodies across space and/or time.

The conceptual framework of policy transfer can be applied to the way the EGTC has been legally structured and works. Employing the analysis of Dolowitz & Marsh (1996, 2000) for the case of the EGTC the following comments can be made. In the first place, among the categories of political actors that have been indicated as responsible for policy transfer are political leaders and bureaucrats/public servants of subnational institutions (local and regional governments) and national bodies that participate and co-operate within an EGTC platform. Secondly, there is a voluntary process that allows for policy transfer based on the willingness of political actors to respond either to a problem with (mostly) territorial characteristics (rational response) or simply to promote co-operation on a cross-border or transnational scale aiming at improving social and territorial aspects of life and facilitating economic development. Thirdly, in terms of what is transferred within an EGTC, that may be ideas, attitudes and concepts; administrative techniques, knowledge and expertise; policy goals, structure and content of an already existing policy that is implemented or has implemented in the past by an EGTC member. Regarding the degree of transfer, it may vary between copying, emulation or synthesis (Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996). Furthermore, there is a variety of choices from which members of an EGTC may draw lessons. Thus, they may formulate their preferences based on members' past experience or from members that belong to similar or different political systems (federal, decentralized or unitary states). Finally, policy transfer is characterized by constraints and limits. In the case of an EGTC the financial constrain either of the members or of the EGTC to implement a policy or a project appears as the most important one. Additionally, the structural simplicity of a given territorial problem or of a transferred programme, the side-effects that may cause the implementation of a project and the available information about the preconditions for its proper implementation may also be factors that determine the effectiveness of policy transfer.

Moreover, the mode of governance (hierarchical, market or network; (Meuleman, 2008)) is an essential factor in policy transfer literature as it defines the nature and the role of transfer between different political environments (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2012, p. 342).

With regard to the EGTC, its organizational mode is characterized by its typical network architecture of governance which facilitates policy diffusion between members. In addition, it portrays an intrinsic multi-level governance (Hooghe & Marks, 2001) structure that allows for participation of actors from different government levels. Local and regional institutions (as well as national authorities) are able to mobilize beyond their national borders as soon as they will manage to establish an EGTC, because of the opportunities they will have for institutional co-operation and extensive networking and interweaving within the EGTC by pursuing common aims, sharing motives, exchanging good practices and implementing projects in various policy fields.

In other words, the interconnection of political arenas which stands for a core dimension of the multi-level governance perspective (Hooghe & Marks, 2001, p. 4) is highly realized within the day-to-day function of an EGTC. With regard to the type of multi-level governance (Hooghe & Marks, 2003) it has been claimed that the EGTC fall with type II (Nadalutti, 2013, p. 767) as it is most similar to structures that account for task-specific jurisdictions where numerous territorial levels and overlapping memberships co-exist.

Multi-level governance also serves as a catalyst for subnational mobilization. Within the multi-level institutional environment (see also: Committee of the Regions (2009)) regional and local institutions as well as their associations (Callanan, 2012) have the opportunity to look for opportunities offered and take advantage of them, such as finding financial resources or trying to pose influence on supranational institutions, like the EU bodies (Hooghe, 1995). The EGTC platform allows for multi-level interaction and co-operation between authorities that come from not only different administrative levels but also serve different constitutional settings. In addition, the participation in an EGTC results in the more effective tackling of resource constraints' problems, like adequate funding or skilled human capital, a situation that the weaker subnational authorities face more often when mobilize alone.

It has been suggested that the subnational authorities and their associations mobilize in the EU arena in general either for searching for funds (financial mobilization) which the EU provides (top-down dimension) reacting to problems and local needs, or for – proactively– exercising influence on EU institutions (regulative mobilization/bottom-up perspective of mobilization) (Callanan & Tatham, 2014). Along these two generic types

of mobilization is proposed a third one: the 'co-operative' mobilization. This form of mobilization has a horizontal dimension in the sense that allows for promoting co-operation and building partnerships between subnational actors across EU borders, regions and/or states. The main motive is the territorial co-operation between public authorities in various policy fields, as well as the exchange of knowledge, good practices and expertise through policy transfer processes. However, another motive can also be the search for financial resources for funding common activities and projects. In that respect, the co-operative type of mobilization overlaps with the financial type.

Networks and other organizations that do not aim at lobbying as such is the case in regulative mobilization but on promoting policy transfer are among the main actors involved in co-operative mobilization. The ECTC falls within the co-operative type of subnational mobilization as it provides the institutional background for developing co-operation among its members, though it can also target at searching for necessary funding in order to implement projects for territorial, social and economic cohesion. Table 1 summarizes the three types of mobilization along with their core traits.

Table 1: Types and basic characteristics of subnational mobilization.

Characteristics	Types		
	Financial	**Regulative**	**Co-operative**
Dimension	Top-down	Bottom-up	Horizontal
Actors	Individual regional and local authorities	Individual regional authorities and associations of regional and local authorities	Individual local and regional institutions; national authorities and public bodies (i.e. universities)
Motives	European funding opportunities	"Projecting" own preferences to the EU policy-making process	Inter-institutional co-operation; Policy transfer; exchange of knowledge/expertise
Institutional actors	Commission; Brussels offices; pan-European associations	EU institutions; Brussels offices; pan-European associations;	CoR; pan-European associations and networks; EGTCs
Nature of Response	Reactive	Proactive	Reactive

Source: Adapted from Callanan and Tatham (2014, p. 193).

3. The organizational architecture of the EGTC

The regulating framework of EGTCs is based on two Regulations of the European Parliament and of the Council (Regulations 1082/2006, OJ L 210 and 1302/2013, OJ L

347). In short, according to their provisions, the EGTC has its own legal personality. Its main objective is the facilitation of cross-border, interregional and/or transnational co-operation between its members, aiming at promoting economic, social and territorial cohesion within the EU. The EGTC is governed by a convention which defines the tasks of the platform in agreement by its members (from the EU and outside as well) and in accordance with the Regulations and the national laws of the members' countries. Additionally, it is of utmost importance that the EGTC should act within the confines of the tasks given to it. Similarly, the objective(s) of the EGTC, the duration and the conditions governing its dissolution must be described in the convention.

Furthermore, every EGTC has a statute which contains the operating provision of the EGTC's organs and their competencies, the decision-making process, the working language(s), and other arrangements regarding functional aspects of the platform such as personnel management and recruitment policy, members' financial contributions or members' liability. The basic organs of the EGTC are the assembly (representatives of its members) and the director; however, there may be established additional organs according to the organizational needs of the EGTC. The budget is based on an annual period and is adopted by the assembly. The aims, the tasks and the respective policy fields of the EGTC are decided by the assembly and are specified in the convention of the platform.

4. Facts and figures

The establishment of EGTCs was increasing after the first year (2008) of the launching of the new EU institutional tool. However, during the last years -particularly after 2013- the trend in the creation of new EGTCs is rather mixed. All in all, there have been established 65 EGTCs according to the latest data available (Committee of the Regions/METIS, 2017). Eleven new EGTCs were launched during the years 2011 and 2013 respectively, signifying the highest numbers of newly established EGTCs per year. During 2016 5 new EGTCs were established. Figure 1 shows the evolution of the number of new EGTCs per year. It should be mentioned that not all EGTCs that have been established are in function. In fact, the first platform will be formally closed in 2017 (Committee of the Regions/METIS, 2017, p. 8).

Figure 1: Evolution of the EGTCs.
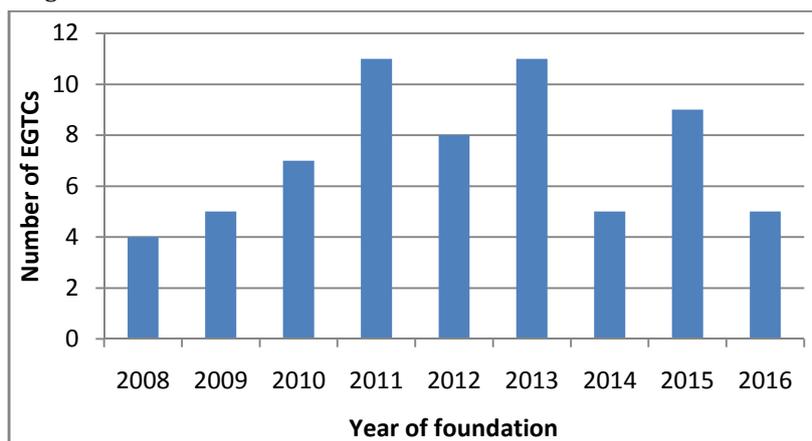
Table 2 summarizes the formal seat of the EGTC. Hungary is in the first place as 19 out of the 65 (29,2%) EGTCs in total have their seat there. France and Spain follow in terms of hosting the central offices of EGTCs with 12 and 10 EGTCs respectively. In Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands and Portugal there is only one EGTC that has been created in each country respectively.

Table 2: Seat of the EGTC

Seat	Total	%
Hungary (HU)	19	29,2
France (FR)	12	18,5
Spain (ES)	10	15,4
Italy (IT)	4	6,2
Slovakia (SK)	4	6,2
Poland (PO)	4	6,2
Germany (GE)	3	4,6
Luxemburg (LU)	3	4,6
Greece (GR)	2	3,1
Austria (AU)	1	1,5
Belgium (BE)	1	1,5
Netherlands (NE)	1	1,5
Portugal (PT)	1	1,5
Total	65	100

Figure 2 depicts the members of the 65 established EGTCs. As it is shown, the vast majority of the members is represented by a local authority (LAs, 48%) whereas only1 EGTC has solely national authorities for members (EUKN – European Urban Knowledge Network). Regional authorities (RAs) participate in the EGTCs with 22% of the total existing members. Subnational authorities as well as national authorities (SNAs+NAs)

represent 15% of the members. Finally, 9% are subnational authorities (SNAs) and 5% are members which come from other public bodies (universities, national parks).

Figure 2: Members of the EGTCs
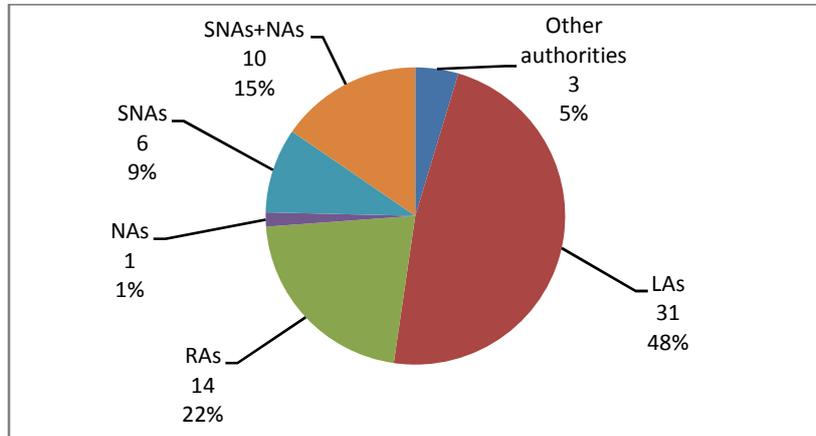
Source: Committee of the Regions/METIS (2017); own elaboration; (N=65).

geographic location, players involved, topics covered and type of tasks has increased considerably over recent years
(Committee of the Regions/METIS, 2017, p. 9)

Figure 3 depicts both the country of origin of the members as well as the type of partnership that characterizes the EGTCs. As it is evident, the presence of local authorities is the prevailing feature. In addition, over 15 local authorities out of the 31 are from Hungary, a unitary state. On the contrary, less than five local authorities represent Spain and Italy which are fairly decentralized stated, less than five France and none Germany, Belgium and Austria which are countries with a federal system of governance and hence provide higher degrees of institutional autonomy for subnational mobilization. Finally, the most regional members come from Spain (3) and Poland (3).

Figure 3: Geography and type of partnership.
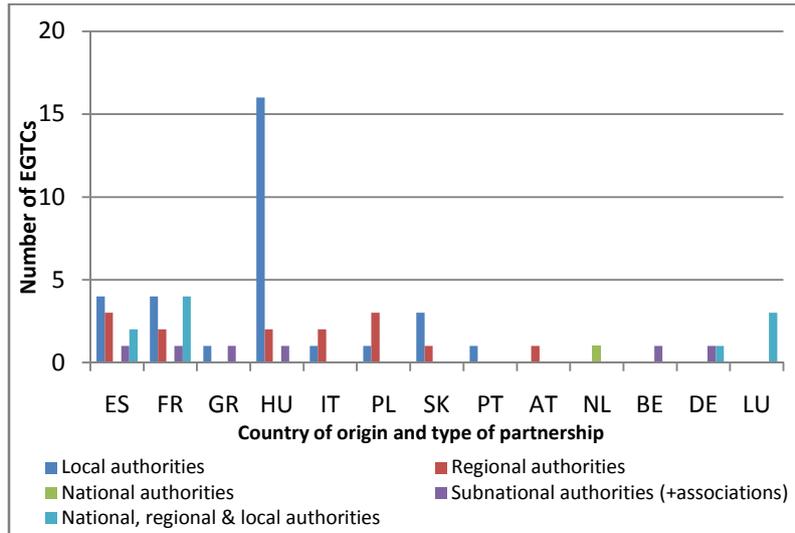
Source: Committee of the Regions/METIS (2017); own elaboration; (N=65).

In figure 4 is shown the architecture of governance in tandem with the country of origin (where the seat is) of the EGTCs. Germany, Belgium and Austria have been taken into account as federal states with only 5 EGTCs. In sharp contrast, the majority of the EGTCs have their seat in unitary states, suggesting that there is aspirations for subnational mobilization of the respective authorities and the EGTC facilitates this purpose as an institutional tool that enhance cross-border, interregional and transnational co-operation.

Figure 4: EGTCs and the architecture of governance of the country of origin.
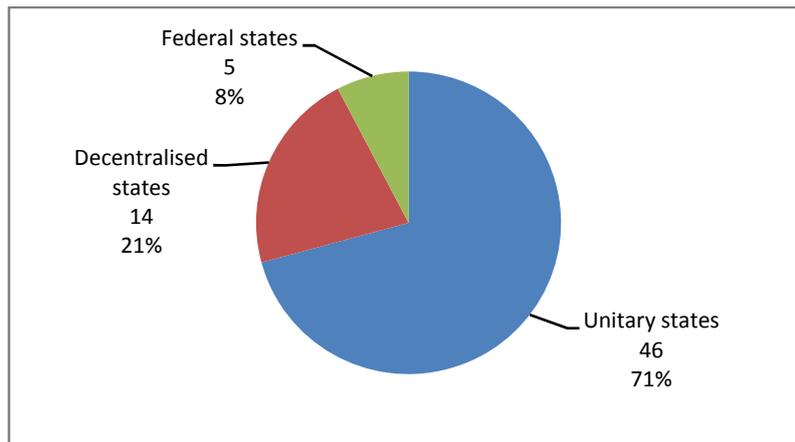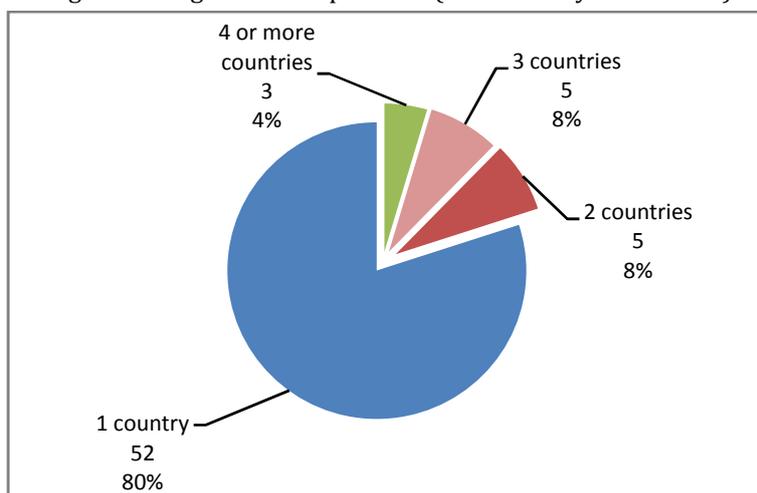

Source: Committee of the Regions/METIS (2017); own calculations; (N=65).

Figure 5 shows the origin of the EGTCs partner(s) (excluding the country of the seat) with the aim to depict the number of countries that are involved in the creation and

functioning of the EGTCs. Interestingly, 80% (52 out of 65) of the total number of EGTCs have members from one country, a feature that corroborates the fact that the cross-border dimension lies at the very heart of the EGTC as an institutional form of territorial co-operation. In addition, 8% of the 65 EGTCs have partners from two and three countries respectively, and only three EGTCs (4%) have been currently working with partners from 4 or more countries. As members come from more than one country, the aims of the EGTC seem to broaden rather that confining to strictly territorial co-operation (for instance the 'EUKN' EGTC: urban policies such as housing, transport, mobility, economic development, security etc.; and the Amphictyony EGTC: social services, local democracy building, cultural policy and local government).

Figure 5: Origin of EGTC partners (seat-country is excluded)

Source: Committee of the Regions /METIS (2017); own calculations; (N=65).

Finally, in terms of the policy areas that the EGTCs are active, there is a large diversity of activities, ranging from culture and sports, transport, forestry, nature and biodiversity, to human rights, civil protection and youth employment (Committee of the Regions/METIS, 2017, p. 120). Tourism represents the most famous policy area in EGTCs' fields of interest in 2016 while culture and sports activities are the second most popular EGTC activities (ibid.).

5. Discussion

The presentation of the facts about the EGTCs allow for some further reflections with regard to the type and the characteristics of them. In geographical terms, there are three broad categories in which the EGTCs can be divided: cross-border/interregional, transnational and thematic. In each category, the tasks and the reason for becoming a member are different (table 3). For instance, sharing knowledge is a task that is attributed to EGTCs that characterized by a network form of governance (i.e. EUKN) without connected territories.

In contrast, cross-border/interregional EGTCs are based on members that are neighborhoods aiming at dealing with cross-border issues. The transnational type of EGTC is based on interstate problems with actors of common objectives rather than proximity or common knowledge. The means remain the same for all three categories and are related with the financing of the territorial initiatives upheld by the EGTCs.

Table 3: Types and traits of EGTCs

Characteristics	Type of EGTC		
	Cross-border / interregional	Transnational	Thematic (one or more policy fields)
Tasks	Tackling with cross-border issues	Dealing with inter-state problems	Sharing/advancing knowledge
Means	EU funds and own resources		
Membership (Mostly based on)	Proximity	Common objectives	Common knowledge & expertise

Source: Adapted from the Committee of the Regions/METIS (2017).

Most of the literature about EGTCs focuses on the territorial dimension of the EGTCs and in particular the cross-border effects that the formulation of the platform entails, either in the creation of new territorial institutional arrangements, in dealing effectively with territorial problems (Engl, 2016; Evrand, 2016) or with aspects of subnational participation (Vara-Arribas, 2005). In addition, the launching of the new European tool for territorial co-operation has inspired analysis about issues of European integration (De Sousa, 2013; Spinaci & Vara-Arribas, 2009). The inherent dynamics of the EGTC allow for the provision of another core trait of the platform which serves as an 'comparative advantage': it is the ability of the EGTC to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, expertise and best practises between its members through intistutional co-operation.

The most important reason for establishing an EGTC is "working with geographical neighbours to build an institutional framework for co-operation on projects of common interest" (Committee of the Regions/METIS, 2013, p. 1). However, this is not the case for the EUKN EGTC where the motivation for the setting up of the institutional platform has been the exchange of practices in urban development (Committee of the Regions/METIS, 2013, p. 1). The same also pertains for other EGTCs where it can be found that among their various tasks in the policy fields they are focusing on is the exchange of knowledge, expertise, best practices as well as building capacity between members. Table 1 summarizes the EGTCs that have been found to deal with tasks which are directly linked with lesson drawing and policy transfer as discussed in the second section of the present paper. There are ten established EGTCs which show that apart from dealing with territorial development, policy transfer also accounts for a good reason for participating in an EGTC.

Table 4: EGTCs which promote policy transfer.

No	EGTC	Tasks implying voluntary lesson drawing and policy transfer	Policy field
1	Archi-Med	Development of exchange events between their respective communities	Territorial co-operation in various fields
2	Euregio Tirolo – Alto Adige – Trentino	Organization of conferences and meetings among the members' political leaders and administrative experts (economic and social affairs, labour, spatial planning, refugees, sport etc.) with the aim to exchange best practices among its members	Several fields: research, youth, education, culture, economic and social affairs, environment
3	EUKN European Urban Knowledge Network Limited	- Exchange of knowledge on between different European countries - Co-operation and networking events with other programmes and EGTCs	Economic, social and urban issues. Knowledge support to the Urban Agenda for the EU
4	Sajó - Rima / Slaná - Rimava	- Cultural cooperation and the strengthening of cooperation between local governments and schools, cooperation of schools – meeting of partner towns' schools and heritage guarding groups in schools - Harmonisation of capacities and exchanging of best practices between local governments - Good practices in the area of venture development, partnership building, artisanal and craftsmanship	Social cohesion, health-related, education, employment
5	Secrétariat du Sommet de la Grande Région	Exchange of best practices and (if possible) the definition of common strategies	Administrative support organ (secretary)
6	Huesca Pirineos – Hautes Pyrénées	Exchanges with the other EGTCs in the area and with the public administrations involved in the objectives	Economic development, agriculture, tourism.
7	Tisza	Conferences, meetings and exchanges with other members of the Hungarian Forum for EGTCs	Social cohesion, infrastructure, business, tourism
8	Efxini Poli	Serving as capacity building and exchange	Various fields (social

		platform for the staff of their members. Acting as the bridge for municipalities to increase knowledge capacity of their staff by having access to training and networking workshops organized by the EGTC	cohesion, environment, education)
9	Eurocity of Chaves-Verín	Collaboration with other European cross-border urban agglomerations and networks to share experience and transfer knowledge	Various fields (transport, tourism environment, business sector, agriculture, telecommunications)
10	EUCOR – The European Campus	Provision of common research infrastructures for the members. Future challenge: development of a joint knowledge and technology transfer office for promoting research applications	(Higher) education

Source: Committee of the Regions/METIS (2017).

6. Conclusions

The ECTC has been set out by the European Commission as a fully institutionalised tool for promoting cross-border, transnational co-operation between actors, aiming at dealing successfully with territorial issues and needs. In this form, the EGTC prove to be more than a mere tool of territorial co-operation and can become platform of exchange knowledge and expertise, as well as facilitating policy transfer and learning.

There is a great variety of types of EGTCs in terms of their place of seat, actors involved, policy fields covered and type of tasks. The number of the EGTCs has increased considerably since their launching (2006). All in all, inter-institutional, cross-border co-operation can become a catalyst for local development and can facilitate deeper European integration.

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