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Cross-border territorial impact assessment

Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 amending Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation

Disclaimer

This report was produced by the European Committee of the Regions secretariat to assess the effects of the EGTC Regulation – Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 amending Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 on EU regions in which EGTCs are very active.

This report is meant to be used to inform decision making only and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the members of the ESPON 2020 Monitoring Committee. Furthermore, it is not binding on the European Committee of the Regions and will not affect the subject matter of related opinions.

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This territorial impact assessment (TIA) report is the result of an expert workshop organised by the European Committee of the Regions and ESPON EGTC on 13 March 2018 in Brussels.

The ESPON TIA Tool is designed to support the quantitative assessment of potential territorial impacts according to the Better Regulation guidelines. It is an interactive web application that can be used to help policy makers and practitioners to identify, ex-ante, the potential territorial impact of new EU Legislations, Policies and Directives (LPDs).

This report is for information purposes only.

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Acronyms

CoR	European Committee of the Regions
CESCI	Central European service for cross-border initiatives
EP	European Parliament
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
ESPON	European Territorial Observatory Network
LRA	Local and Regional Authority
MS	Member State(s)
MOT	Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière
NUTS	Nomenclature des unités territoriales statistiques/ Common Classification of Territorial Units for Statistical Purposes
ÖIR	Austrian Institute for Spatial Planning
TIA	Territorial Impact Assessment

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1 Introduction

In accordance with Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 (EGTC Regulation), a report on the application of this Regulation is to be drafted by 1 August 2018. Based on a number of indicators, this report will evaluate the Regulation's effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, European added value and scope for simplification.

As the CoR is the home of the EGTC Platform and the official Register of the European Union's EGTCs, it will assist the European Commission's DG REGIO in the preparation of the report planned for August 2018.

The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) commissioned a study¹ to monitor the national implementation of Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013². This study looks at the evolution of national legislation (changes and new countries implementing the EGTC Regulation) and provides an analysis of how the authorities in charge of authorising new EGTCs are planning the implementation of the revised EGTC Regulation.

As some of the information requested in the study is hard to obtain, particularly information related to the added value of the EGTC Regulation, the CoR and ESPON organised a Cross-border Territorial Impact Assessment (TIA) on 13 March 2018 in the CoR using the updated ESPON Quick Scan tool as the basis for its methodology together with its newly developed module. The results of the TIA will feed into the European Commission's evaluation of the EGTC regulation that is scheduled to be published on 1 August 2018.

The overall objective of this exercise was to give an overview of the impact that the European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs) were having on border regions, as well as their added value, and to evaluate the implementation of Regulation No 1302/2013.

¹ <https://portal.cor.europa.eu/egtc/about/Documents/EGTC-MR-2017.pdf>

² Full title: Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 amending Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) as regards the clarification, simplification and improvement of the establishment and functioning of such groupings.

2 Methodology: ESPON Quick Check

The aim of a territorial impact assessment (TIA) is to show the regional differentiation of the impact of EU policies. The ESPON TIA Tool³ is an interactive web application that can be used to help policy makers and practitioners to identify, ex-ante, the potential territorial impacts of new EU Legislations, Policies and Directives (LPDs). The 'ESPON TIA Quick Check' approach combines a workshop setting, in which systemic relations between a policy and its territorial consequences are identified, with a set of indicators describing the sensitivity of European regions.

This approach helps to facilitate an expert discussion about the potential territorial effects of an EU policy proposal by examining all relevant indicators in a workshop setting. The guided expert discussion results in a number of judgements about the potential territorial impact of an EU policy on different thematic fields (the economy, society, the environment and governance) across a range of indicators. These results are then fed into the ESPON TIA Quick Check web tool.

The web tool converts the expert judgments on exposure, combined with the different sensitivity of regions, into maps that show the potential territorial impact of EU policy at NUTS 3 level. These maps serve as a starting point for further discussion about the different impacts of a concrete EU policy on different regions. In this way, the experts participating in the workshop provide important input for the quick check on potential territorial effects of an EU policy proposal.

The workshop on Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 was held on 13 March 2018 in Brussels and brought together a number of experts representing different organisations and LRAs. Two moderators from the ÖIR, provided by ESPON, prepared and guided the workshop, and handled the ESPON TIA tool.

Figure 1 - Workshop Discussion



Source: Territorial impact assessment expert workshop, Brussels, 13 March 2018, ÖIR

³ https://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_ToolsandMaps/TIA/

environment, society and governance. The lack of availability of data for all NUTS 3 regions imposes certain limitations as to which indicators can be used. From the available indicators offered by the ESPON TIA Quick Check web tool, the experts chose the following to describe the identified effects.

Depicting potential territorial impacts in the light of economic indicators

- Potential accessibility by rail
- Potential accessibility by road
- Total overnight stays per thousand inhabitants

Depicting potential territorial impacts in the light of societal indicators

- Cross- Border difference: Hospital beds: weak advantageous effect

Depicting potential territorial impacts in the light of environmental indicators

- Cross –Border product: Protected areas (NATURA 2000)

2.3. Judging the intensity of the potential effects

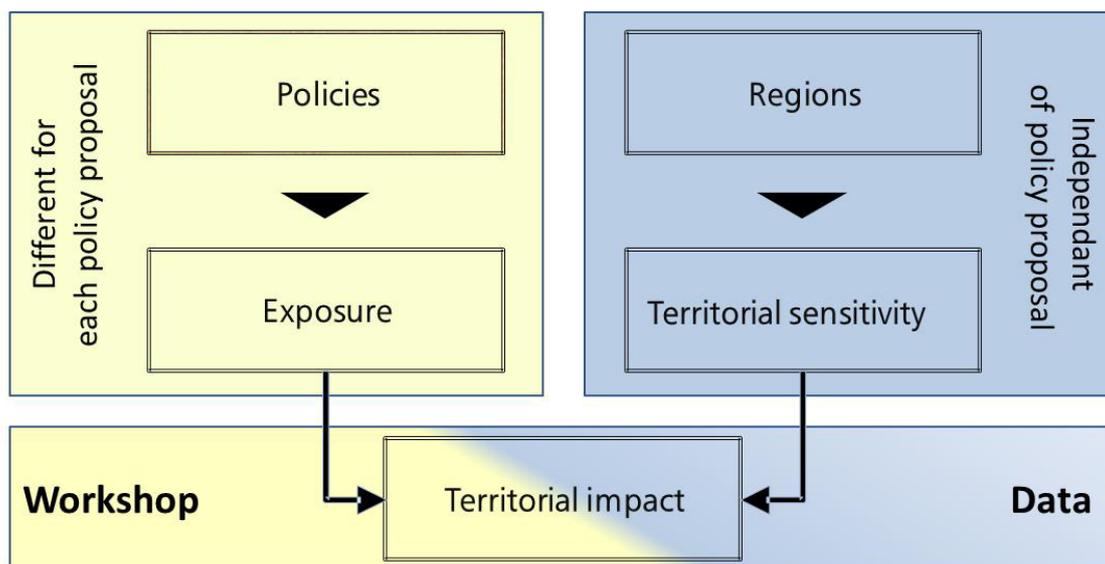
The participants of the workshop were asked to estimate the potential effects of the implementation of the EGTC Regulation on EGTC regions in cross-border areas. They judged the potential effect on territorial welfare according to the following scale:

- ++ strong advantageous effect on territorial welfare (strong increase)
- + weak advantageous effect on territorial welfare (increase)
- o no effect/unknown effect/effect cannot be specified
- - weak disadvantageous effect on territorial welfare (decrease)
- -- strong disadvantageous effect on territorial welfare (strong decrease)

2.4. Calculating the potential ‘regional impact’ – Combining the expert judgements with regional sensitivity

The ESPON TIA Quick Check combines expert judgements on the potential effects of the implementation of the EGTC Regulation (**exposure**) with indicators for the sensitivity of regions and converts this information into maps that show territorially differentiated impact. This approach is based on the **vulnerability concept** developed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). In this case, the effects of a particular policy measure (**exposure**) are combined with the characteristics of a region (**territorial sensitivity**) to produce potential territorial impacts (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 - Exposure x Territorial Sensitivity = Territorial Impact



Source: ÖIR, 2015

- 'Territorial Sensitivity' describes the baseline situation of a region according to its ability to cope with external effects. It is a characteristic of a region that can be described by different indicators independently of the topic analysed.
- 'Exposure' describes the intensity of the potential effects caused by the potential effects of the implementation of the EGTC Regulation on a specific indicator. Exposure illustrates the experts' judgement, i.e. the main findings of the expert discussion at the TIA workshop.

2.5. Mapping the potential territorial impact

The result of the territorial impact assessment is presented in the form of maps. The maps displayed below show potential territorial impacts based on a combination of the expert judgements concerning exposure and the territorial sensitivity of a region, described by an indicator at NUTS 3 level. Whereas expert judgements are qualitative (i.e strong advantageous effect on territorial welfare/weak advantageous effect/no effect/weak disadvantageous effect/strong disadvantageous effect), sensitivity is a quantitative indicator.

3. Expected effects on governance

3.1. EGTCs in the context of the Procurement Directive

In undertaking this workshop on the EGTC Regulation, governance was raised as a significant subject for discussion; during the opening exchange of the day participants indicated their preferred aspect of EGTCs. In this initial dialogue it emerged that one major strength of EGTCs was the Procurement Directive which had been adopted after the EGTC Regulation and had opened up the possibility for EGTCs to choose which national procurement procedure should be applied to their EGTC, meanwhile taking into account the specificity of EGTCs and the fact that they work across borders. This procedure also allows for singular investments to be made in two Member States. One of the experts cited this change in the Procurement Directive as being more important than the EGTC Regulation itself, even though these types of programmes could not have taken place had the EGTC Regulation not already been in force.

3.2. EGTC as a long-term strategy

Developing the theme of governance within EGTCs, the assembled experts then took a step back and discussed what the basic added value of an EGTC was to EU regions in which cross-border contact and cooperation had already been taking place for many years prior to the entry into force of the EGTC Regulation. One participant agreed that EGTCs did not invent the notion of collaborating across borders, but that they allowed for this co-operation to be organised better.

It was further claimed by another expert that EGTCs are simply a step forward in the cross-border evolution process. Indeed, whereas two bordering towns might, for example, have held joint festivals traditionally, it was argued that an EGTC allows for long-term strategic planning in a variety of fields. It was therefore agreed by the experts that the strength of the EGTC regulation lies in its ability to facilitate better overall governance via strategic plans which go beyond the short term. EGTCs also allow for a long-term strategic vision of the cross-border region, as opposed to the current tendency to look at cross-border cooperation as two separate projects under one budget.

3.3. EGTC and the Nation State

The experts questioned how this supplementary governance structure fitted into dominate national governance structures. It was argued that EGTCs challenge the notion of the traditional nation state. Indeed, it was suggested that this evolution in governance of cross-border regions would not be possible without an EGTC organisation and that they therefore emerge as an entity existing outside the nation state model and even the INTERREG paradigm, both of which were claimed to represent 'national' mindsets.

The experts agreed that governance in EGTCs goes beyond solely national objectives to provide a completely different mindset for those involved and affected, which, when applied, can give rise to common LRA decision-making bodies outside the traditional strictures of a bordered nation state.

3.4. The membership and the legal status of EGTC

The experts discussed what place private and third sectors have in EGTCs and debated both the benefits of enlarging the scope for membership as well as the obstacles and drawbacks.

In particular, one expert suggested that perhaps third sector participants might be allowed to take part in the programme. However, another expert questioned whether this would affect the wholly public character of EGTCs, a status which a number of member states require.

3.5. Possible improvements to governance

The experts also discussed areas in which EGTC governance regulations could be improved. One expert commented that it could sometimes take two to four years to establish an EGTC which, it was claimed, could dampen the initial enthusiasm of regions to establish one. This expert then suggested that a time limit of six months for approval of new EGTCs, as defined in the Revised EGTC Regulation, should be respected by national and regional authorising authorities. A separate comment on improvements to EGTC governance regulations related to the proposed need to widen the field of potential participants in an EGTC.

A discussion then took place regarding how some pieces of EU legislation stand in the way of EGTCs, for example in the area of transport, as urban cross-border bus lines are still classed as "international" travel under EU rules and must therefore abide by certain regulations, such as the number of stops. However, one expert stated that in practice these regulations concerning urban cross-border bus lines were often ignored. The suggestion therefore was that certain EU legislation sometimes stands in the way of EGTCs and that the functional governance of EGTCs can be distorted by these regulations.

In concluding the discussion on **governance** and the EGTC regulation, the workshop established that the strength of EGTC governance lay in the benefits of being a single legal entity which allows them access to certain governance tools, like spatial planning, from which other structures, such as Euroregions, do not benefit. Furthermore, the experts pointed out that EGTCs challenge established governance structures and described them as positively disruptive tools whose provocative role outside the national paradigm lead them to become agenda-setting instruments. However, it was also agreed that EGTCs were only one of a number of tools which could be found in cross-border governance.

4. Expected social effects

4.1. The forging of stable bonds across borders

Another prominent part of the discussion about the influence of the EGTC regulation had to do with its effects on society. The first point discussed involved both the social and governance-related fields of the EGTC regulation, namely the long-term planning perspective which EGTCs offer. It was claimed that the long-term operation of EGTCs allowed for the development of social bonds across borders while avoiding the short termism found in three- to five-year political cycles, which can burden or even put an end to cross-border cooperation.

An organisation is therefore created, instead of a project, thereby allowing for both deepened governance and social bonds. The invited experts also identified a positive intersection between the governance and social components of EGTCs, as evidenced by the fact that these organisations help cross-border regions to solve problems together.

The experts went on to discuss the resulting solidarity, with one participant adding that a shared 'borderscape' could also be developed and explaining this notion as a shared border home region that could emerge from better and deeper understanding between different peoples. In a more concrete sense, one expert developed this point by stating that EGTCs stimulate a sense of European citizenship, and he cited the example of his local EGTC which had developed a euro-citizens card which local inhabitants could use at a number of cross-border public facilities such as public swimming pools at a discounted price. Such practices could be reproduced by other EGTCs thereby contributing to the development of a European identity.

4.2. Cross-border cooperation and healthcare

The workshop also deliberated on the obstacles faced when EGTCs seek to collaborate across borders in the social sphere. Several experts stated that by linking social services, their EGTCs had found that the EGTC regulation had not had the desired effect. One example given related to shared health services which had proven difficult to achieve given that health care was a national competency throughout the European Union. Several experts gave different examples of the obstacles they had encountered, for instance language barriers mean that a Slovenian doctor will not accept a diagnosis written in Italian. Another expert offered the following example: while it is theoretically possible for an EGTC to facilitate the sharing of blood-testing facilities, administratively the price of carrying out a blood test might vary on either side of a border, being, for instance, 100 euros in Slovenia and 150 euros in Italy.

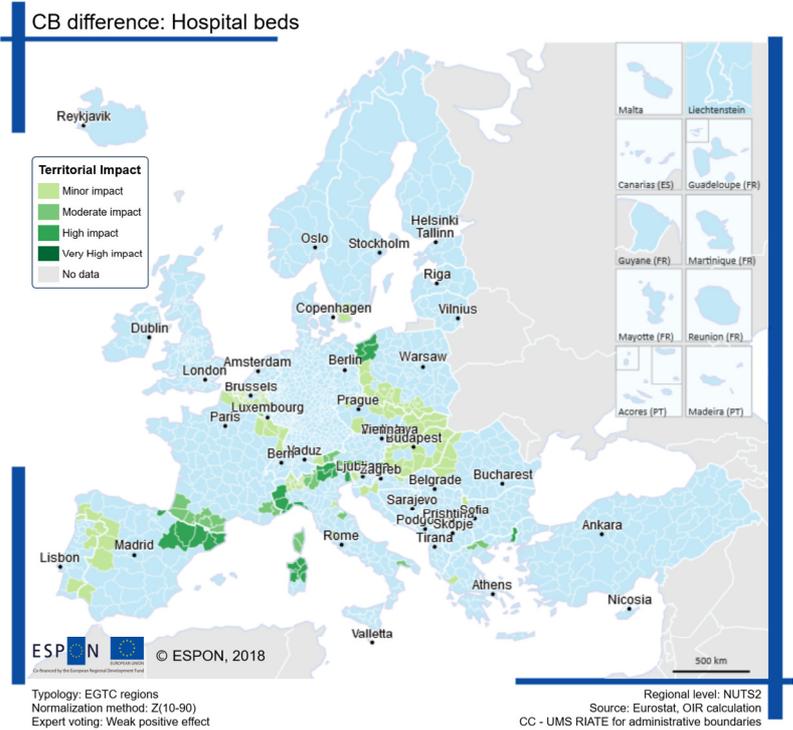
The experts assumed that the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 would affect the quality of health services. One expert opted for strong positive impact and three for weak positive

impact while one chose weak negative impact. Six experts did not see any relevant effect. This shows that the experts consider EGTC activities to have few potential effects on the levelling differences in the quality of health services within an EGTC region.

The spatial weighted indicator shows the quality of health facilities in comparison to the weighted average within the neighbouring cross-border regions. The relative difference between two regions is calculated. The hypothesis on which such indicators are based is that any difference counts proportionally and thus increases sensitivity. This may be the case, for example, where some form of trade benefits both sides. Higher differences between region and neighbours result in higher sensitivity.

The basic indicator for sensitivity of a region according to the quality of its health services is measured by the number of hospital beds per hundred thousand inhabitants. Regions which lack health facilities are assumed to benefit more from policy measures aimed at increasing the number of such facilities and more negatively influenced by those which decrease it.

The following map shows the potential territorial impact caused by the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013, based on the spatial weighted quality of health facilities. It combines the expert judgement of a weak advantageous effect with the given sensitivity of regions. 15 % of the EGTC regions would accordingly experience a highly positive impact. These regions are located in Spain, Italy, Slovenia, Poland and Greece. The majority (66 %) of the region would only experience a minor positive impact. However, it should be mentioned that only a minority of the experts thought the impacts would be positive, with the rest expecting them to be neutral.



Map 1 - Hospital beds affected by the implementation of the EGTC Regulation

Result of the expert judgement: weak advantageous effect.

Source: Territorial Impact Assessment Expert Workshop, Brussels, 13 March 2018

4.3. A people-to-people approach

We therefore find situations in which EGTC regulations are unable to achieve the desired effect due to social and linguistic barriers. Reviewing the added social value of EGTCs, one expert argued that cultural exchanges had already been taking place before the implementation of EGTCs. It was suggested that EGTCs were therefore not the only means by which people-to-people exchanges could take place; however, the experts agreed that in some regions they were the best means of achieving improved people-to-people relations.

5. Expected economic effects

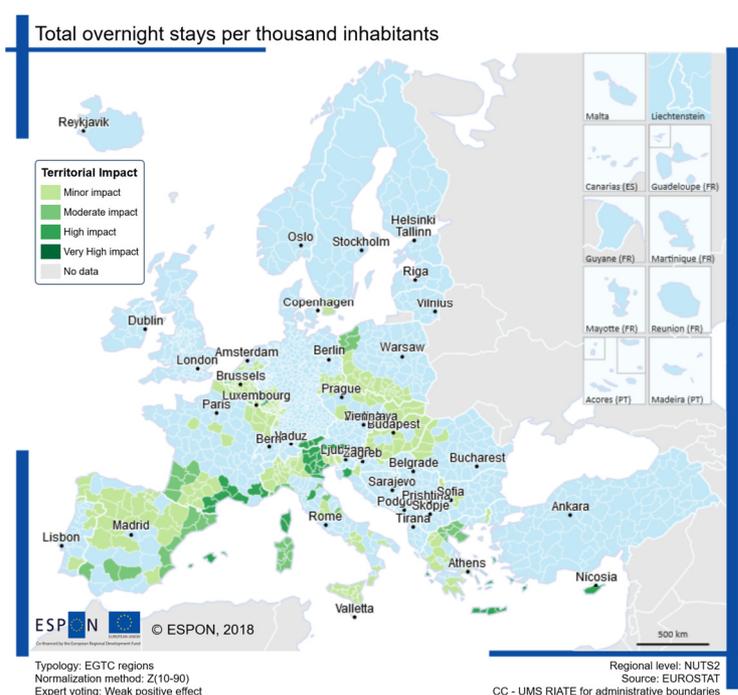
5.1. Enabling economies of scale

The workshop on the effects of the EGTC regulation then focused on economic impact. The central point on which the experts agreed was that EGTCs allowed their participating territories to take advantage of economies of scale, thereby creating the critical mass needed to bring about increased economic activity, and one expert stated that this had led to better decision-making concerning the overall direction of an economy. Another expert suggested that the benefit of EGTCs was that they facilitated the bundling of key sectors of a cross-border economy via a sharing strategy and that with these larger territorial units came greater economic potential.

5.2. The example of tourism

It was the contention of the experts that the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 would affect tourism. Three experts opted for a strong advantageous effect and three for a weak positive effect. Three experts did not see any relevant effect.

The following map shows the potential territorial impact caused by the implementation of the EGTC Regulation (EU), based on landslide susceptibility. It combines the expert judgement of a weak advantageous effect with the given sensitivity of regions. Only 13 % of the regions would experience a high positive impact. These regions are located in Italy, Austria, Germany, Greece, Cyprus, France and Spain. Based on currently very intensive levels of tourism, EGTC initiatives could help to increase the potential for tourism.



Map 2 - Total overnight stays per thousand inhabitants, as affected by the implementation of the EGTC Regulation

Result of the expert judgement: weak advantageous effect.

Source: Territorial Impact Assessment Expert Workshop, Brussels, 13 March 2018

The indicator above depicts the number of total nights spent at tourist accommodation facilities per thousand inhabitants. These facilities comprise hotels, holiday and other short-stay accommodation, camping grounds, recreational vehicle parks and trailer parks. Regions with higher levels of tourism are likely to be influenced more strongly by the implementation of the EGTC Regulation. Sensitivity is thus directly proportional to the total number of nights per relevant share of population.

One expert cited an example of the positive benefits of an EGTC by explaining how his local EGTC had facilitated the creation of a singular cross-border region for tourism which brought significant economic benefits to the cross-border economy. In this example an EGTC situated at the Spanish-Portuguese border had been instrumental in the creation of a cross-border tourism brand carrying the tag line "Live 25 hours a Day". This EGTC, therefore, helped to create a common tourism platform, with private sector involvement, as well as to create a brand for a region not previously known as a tourist area.

5.3. EGTC in the context of transport

The benefits of singular projects which relate to two or more spheres of national regulation were stressed by one expert who described the experience of creating a cross-border public transport information system with the ambition to create a singular cross-border public transport system. The workshop then discussed how the experts' experiences demonstrate the way in which EGTCs had enabled shared diagnostics and shared solutions to be implemented across borders. The opinion was put forward that the sharing of information, such as in transport projects, created an environment in which resources could also be pooled, thereby creating a governance realm of shared cross-border services.

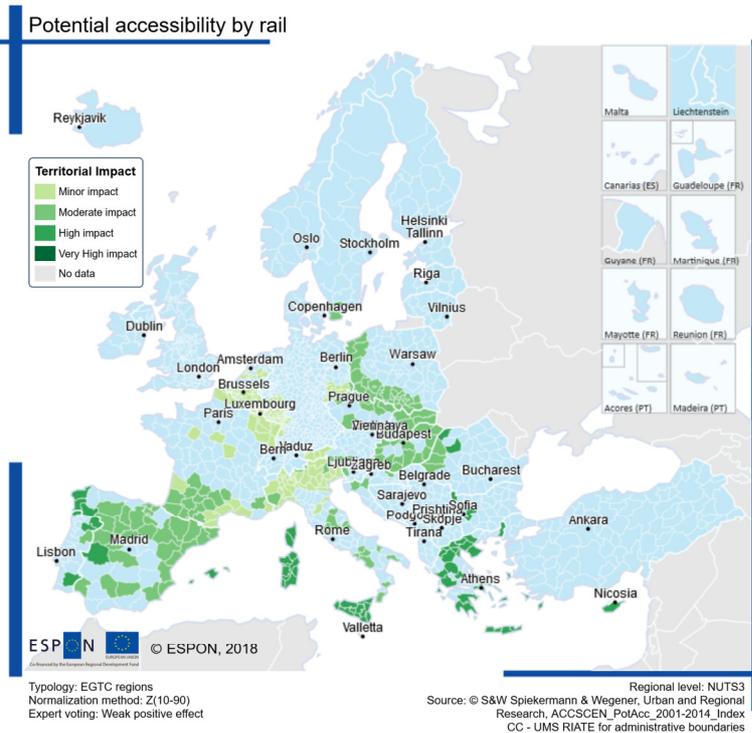
The experts considered the implementation of the EGTC Regulation to have a positive effect on accessibility by air. Five experts judged the effect to be strongly advantageous and five judged it to be weakly advantageous. One expert did not consider this indicator to be relevant.

The following map shows the potential territorial impact caused by the implementation of the EGTC Regulation (EU), based on accessibility by air. It combines the expert judgement of a weak advantageous effect with the given sensitivity of regions. Most of the regions would experience at least a high or very high advantageous impact. Regions with only a moderate advantageous impact can be found in the BENELUX states and in bordering regions in France and Germany.

In case of the expert judgement of a weak positive effect, the impact on the regions would be comparatively lower. Almost 20% of the regions would experience a high advantageous impact. These EGTC regions are located in the west part of the Iberian Peninsula, Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily, Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria and Romania. A considerable proportion of the regions, 46% to be exact, would

experience only a minor advantageous impact. These regions are in Northern Italy, Western Austria, France, the BENELUX states and Germany.

The map shows that the more peripheral regions of Europe are experiencing a potential catching-up effect, whereas EGTC activities in the more accessible core regions of Europe offer less leeway to improve accessibility.



Map 3 - Potential accessibility by rail, as affected by the implementation of the EGTC Regulation

Result of the expert judgement: weak advantageous effect

Source: Territorial Impact Assessment Expert Workshop, Brussels, 13 March 2018

This indicator shows potential accessibility by rail. For each NUTS 3 region the population in all destination regions is weighted by the travel time by rail needed to get there. The weighted population is summed up to the indicator value for the accessibility potential of the region of origin. All indicator values are expressed as an index, i.e. related to the ESPON average. Regions with lower potential accessibility will benefit more if it is increased but will be most disadvantaged by measures aimed at lowering it. Sensitivity is thus inversely proportional to potential accessibility by air.

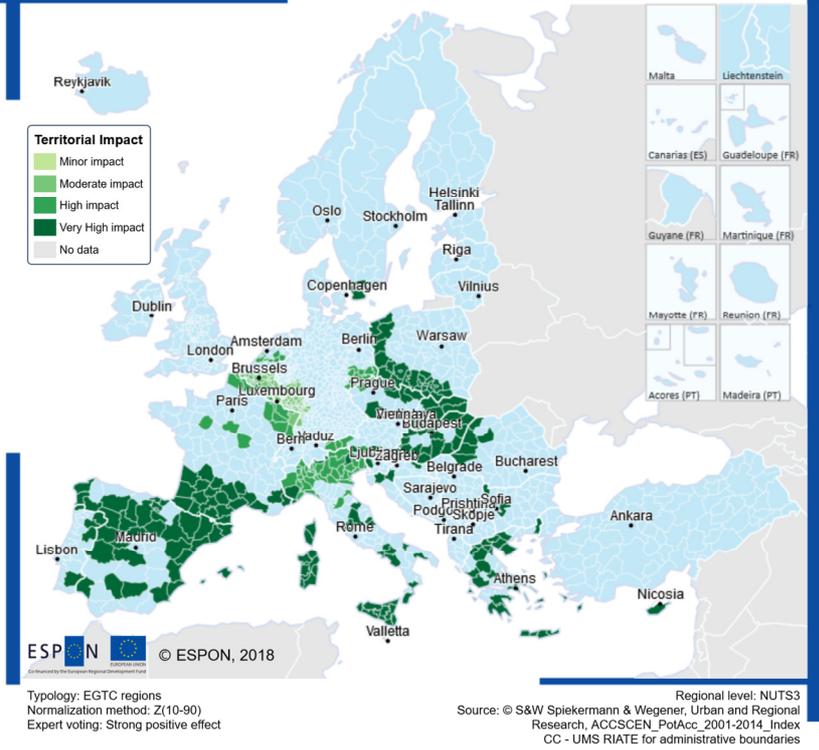
The experts also concluded that the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 would certainly have a positive effect on potential accessibility by road. Nine experts judged the effect to be weakly advantageous and one judged it as extremely positive. On the other hand, one expert considered this indicator to have a weak negative effect.

The following map shows the potential territorial impact caused by the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 based on potential accessibility by road. It combines the expert judgement of a strong positive effect with the given sensitivity of regions. Most of the regions would experience either

a highly or even a very highly advantageous impact. 21% of the regions, which are located in and around the BENELUX area, would only experience a moderately advantageous impact.

This indicates that the more peripheral regions of Europe are experiencing a potential catching-up effect, whereas EGTC activities in the more accessible core regions of Europe offer less leeway to improve accessibility.

Potential accessibility by road



Map 4 - Potential accessibility by road, as affected by the implementation of the EGTC Regulation

Result of the expert judgement: strong advantageous effect.

Source: Territorial Impact Assessment Expert Workshop, Brussels, 13 March 2018

This indicator shows potential accessibility by road. For each NUTS 3 region the population in all destination regions is weighted by the travel time by road needed to get there. The weighted population is summed up to the indicator value for the accessibility potential of the region of origin. All indicator values are expressed as an index, i.e. related to the ESPON average.

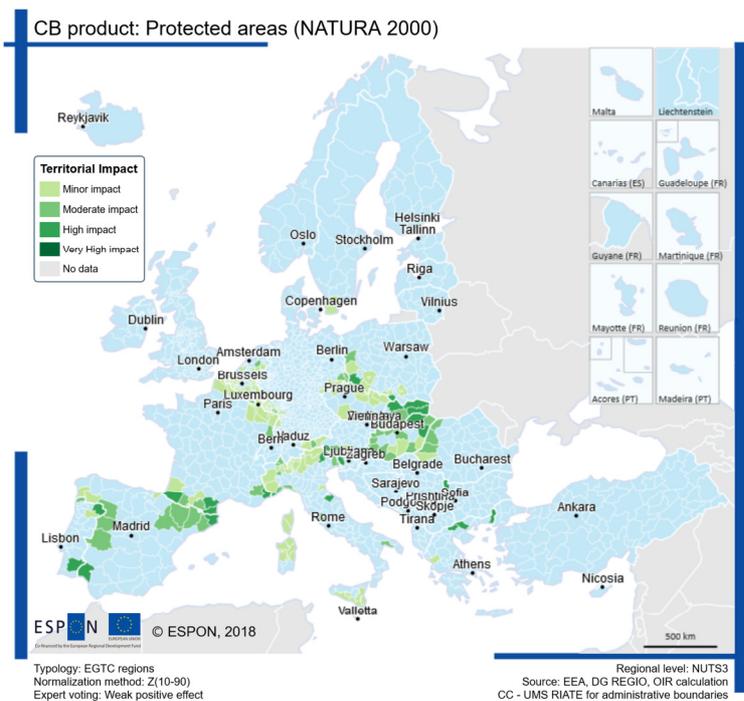
6. Expected environmental effects

6.1. Common management of the environment

The workshop also included a discussion about the influence of the EGTC regulation on the environment with the experts identifying several important benefits. Perhaps the most significant aspect of this discussion revolved around the benefits of common systems of environmental management. From common water management systems to common waste management systems, as well as joint governance over natural heritage areas, the experts agreed that the potential of EGTCs to improve management of the environment was great.

The experts assumed that the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 would affect protected areas. One expert considered the effect to be strong and five others regarded it as weak positive. One expert judged it to be strong negative. Four experts did not consider this indicator to be relevant.

The following map shows the potential territorial impact caused by the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 based on protected areas (NATURA 2000). It combines the expert judgement of a weak positive effect with the given sensitivity of regions. Most of the regions would experience a minor positive impact. 13% of the regions would experience a high positive impact and 21% a moderate positive impact. The impacts were rather scattered across the EU Member States.



Map 5 - Protected areas (NATURA 2000), as affected by the implementation of the EGTC Regulation

Result of the expert judgement: weak advantageous effect.

Source: Territorial Impact Assessment Expert Workshop, Brussels, 13 March 2018

The spatial weighted indicator shows the protected areas. Here the product of the regions is calculated. Thus the higher the indicator values on both sides the more sensitive the region is. Such an indicator is based on a hypothetical situation in which a shared high level is necessary, e.g. only when cooperation is reasonable and both regions are greatly affected. The basic indicator depicting the sensitivity of a region according to protected areas is measured by the share of Natura 2000 areas related to the total NUTS 3 area.

6.2. A virtuous circle in environmental governance

Importantly, the ensuing discussion focused on the interrelation of environmental and governance systems and many of the experts agreed that the EGTC regulation had enabled a closer and more streamlined interaction between these two spheres. One workshop participant stated that both spheres were interdependent, and cited as an example the fact that without a common decision-making body, such as an EGTC, it would be considerably more difficult to implement a cross-border water management system.

However, the conversation on the environment did not focus only on top-down governance systems; indeed, one expert interjected to say that EGTCs had also played a role in creating bottom-up, citizen led project focused on environmental preservation. This again touches on another aspect previously discussed, namely the intersection between people-to-people exchanges and the environment, demonstrating that EGTCs often involve a tangled web of societal, governmental, economic and environmental interactions and connections across European borders.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

In reflecting on their discussion and the cartographic representations of the effects of EGTC regulations, the experts took the opportunity to bring together their conclusions from the workshop. Much of the initial conversation revolved around the indicators used to measure the effect of EGTCs. One expert questioned the use of broad indicators, and wondered whether case-by-case studies would, in fact, be a better means of understanding the effects of EGTCs. Indeed, another expert added that notions such as shared borderscapes, as previously mentioned in the workshop discussion, were problematic given that the effects of borderscapes were decidedly difficult to depict.

The group then speculated on possible ways to measure and present how the opening up of a border, facilitated by an EGTC, both affects a region concretely, e.g. cross-border travel times, and changes the mental map of a citizen. It was suggested that perhaps more dedicated studies were needed and one expert proposed, as an example, a study that focused on the construction of a bicycle bridge over a river between two bordering regions. Studies such as this would focus on people's lives and how they had changed because of the bridge, comparing them to life before the bridge was constructed. In this concentrated study, a way could be found to try to identify notions of "close" and "far" through mapping, a process which could act as an alternative means of measuring the effect of the EGTC.

The workshop participants then shifted their discussion to the obstacles and potential weaknesses which EGTCs had faced according to the experience of the experts. One participant asserted that there was a need for more precise national provisions for EGTCs in the European Union's Member States. The experts then exchanged their experiences of directives from the EU being applied unevenly across Member States and causing obstructions to EGTCs.

On this point, one expert clarified that since EU directives were not regulations they actually allowed room for flexibility in how they were applied by Member States. Another participant then posed the question whether it would be difficult to force Member States to reach a common understanding of the EGTC Regulation. Yet, even on a local level, one participant suggested that there was an unclear understanding of the role of an EGTC and argued that local stakeholders needed a manual from the European Commission setting out exactly what an EGTC is. The workshop participants then concluded that directives are quite open to interpretation, and that an EGTC simply crystallises the differences in how these directives are interpreted. They concluded that the more you cooperate, whether it be in terms of governance, the environment, the economy, or society, the more you run into obstacles.

On the other hand, the experts then reflected upon the strengths and future potentials of the EGTC regulation. It was concluded that the effects of the EGTC regulation on governance are highly influential and extremely beneficial. In view of this, the experts began a concluding discussion on ways in which this aspect of governance could be enhanced further.

As discussed previously, when examining the governance aspect of EGTC organisations, the experts agreed that EGTCs permitted the creation of new governance areas for new territories and the creation of a new paradigm in which borders were de-constructed. One expert described EGTCs as both supra-national and sub-national organisations, adding that new laws were, however, needed to sustain this entity which was regarded as falling outside the bounds of the traditional nation state.

Continuing their discussion, the workshop participants then suggested potential ways in which this new entity could exercise influence and one expert asserted that cross-border physical planning was a very suitable role for EGTCs to take up. It was argued that an EGTC could act as a tool to bring two border cities together through the formation of a singular, trans-national, urban plan. The example was then given of the cities of Gorizia and Nova Gorica, on the Italian-Slovenian border, with one expert stating that there was a real need to think of them as a single city of 70,000 inhabitants rather than differentiating between the 40,000 on the Italian side and the 30,000 on the Slovenian side. This participant suggested that EGTCs should develop indicators to look at how this could be implemented through interpreting and comparing zoning or transport plans.

However, another workshop participant questioned whether, on closer analysis, a common European understanding of planning actually existed. Despite this, it was agreed that there was a potential role for EGTCs to play in cross-border urban planning, given their requirement for a strong governance-related role and taking into consideration environmental, economic and social factors. Participants concluded that EGTCs covered all these aspects, allowing them to be organisations which play a central part in building a Europe across borders.

In summing up the strengths of EGTCs, it was agreed by the workshop participants that the EGTC regulations facilitated the creation of on-the-ground, concrete entities which come to serve as laboratories for broader cross-border cooperation throughout the European Union. It was established that the main strength of EGTCs related to the fact that they were long-term, independent entities, at a remove from the changeable nature of national priorities, that provided long-term, strategic management, unlike organisations such as Euroregions. The workshop participants identified EGTC's power to set agendas and the positive disruptive challenge they posed to traditional paradigms as major strengths. It was also agreed that the most significant benefits of EGTC regulations relate to the effects they have on governance. The governance arrangements created by EGTCs were found to facilitate increased cooperation not only in governance but also in societal, environmental and economic linkages. However, possible improvements were also identified, the most fundamental of which was the need for better information and better co-ordination both between local authorities and EGTCs, and between Member States and EGTCs. In like manner, it was suggested that Member States should also be better engaged in forming and applying the EGTC regulation.