



Vigo Declaration:

The Iberian European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation, united to strengthen a Europe closer to its citizens

The European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs) represent a unique legal instrument within the institutional framework of the European Union (EU). They are capable of operating as laboratories of European governance, translating EU policies into local contexts, and acting as catalysts for solutions tailored to the specific challenges of border regions. Their territorial legitimacy, operational flexibility, and transnational structure give them a unique capacity to deliver specific responses in areas such as mobility, shared public services, environmental sustainability, and crisis management.

Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006, as amended by Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013, which governs the European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs), already establishes that their objective is to facilitate and promote cross-border, transnational and/or interregional cooperation—hereinafter referred to as "territorial cooperation"—with the sole aim of strengthening economic and social cohesion.

This Declaration seeks to consolidate the role of EGTCs as key actors in European multilevel governance, promoting cohesion policies that drive the development of cross-border regions and foster community integration.

1. It is essential to promote the visibility and acknowledgement of the European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation at the European level. This requires a common framework that matches their significance—in other words, the creation of a coordinating structure that brings them together and represents them in a unified way at the European level is crucial. It is necessary to establish either **a European Platform for EGTCs**, managed by an independent body, or a coordination network operating under the auspices of the European Commission or the Committee of the Regions. This platform should serve as a centralized forum for sharing best practices, promoting joint projects, and engaging directly with EU institutions. Furthermore, it would enhance the international visibility of EGTCs, fostering recognition of their fundamental role in territorial cooperation and integrated regional development.
2. Recognition of EGTCs as key instruments for cooperation: European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation are essential actors in promoting cooperation between territories and advancing European cohesion. It is vital that European programmes—especially those focused on Territorial Cooperation—explicitly acknowledge EGTCs as preferred and structural partners, in light of their



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unique legal status, transnational nature, and ability to represent shared interests. This recognition should be reflected in calls for proposals, eligibility criteria, and project evaluation mechanisms.

3. Likewise, Member States should take EGTCs into account when drafting bilateral treaties or territorial cooperation strategies, ensuring their active participation in decision-making processes—especially regarding joint planning and the efficient management of shared resources.
4. Willingness to create a Network of Iberian EGTCs: We propose the establishment of a network that brings together the EGTCs of the Iberian Peninsula, facilitating the exchange of experiences, resources, and common strategies, to strengthen the impact of territorial cooperation.
5. Decentralization of European Funds and increase of the budget for European Territorial Cooperation. In line with the Interreg 35 Declaration on the future of Interreg, adopted at the "Art of Cooperation" Conference in Budapest on 14 November 2024, and building upon its principles, it is essential to maintain the decentralization of European funds, ensuring that the resources allocated to European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) remain substantial in the next Multiannual Financial Framework.
6. In future EU funding programming periods, it should be a priority to maintain the innovations introduced during the 2021–2027 period, such as Policy Objective 5 (PO5), functional areas, the Interreg objective, and small-scale projects.
7. BRIDGEforEU: EGTCs as Cross-Border Coordination Points (CBCPs).
Creation of a CBCP network: EGTCs should be identified as contact and coordination points within the framework of the BRIDGEforEU Regulation, acting as facilitators in the detection, analysis, and resolution of cross-border obstacles, in collaboration with the competent national authorities and with institutional support from the European Commission.
8. Statute for Cross-Border Workers: As a first step, recognizing a specific statute for EGTC workers is essential to ensure adequate labour rights and promote stability in territorial cooperation. This would serve as an experimental, pilot, safe, and controlled approach to gradually move—over the medium term—toward a more general statute for cross-border workers, a long-standing demand from both employers and employees.
9. European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation represent a unique tool within the European institutional landscape, with the ability to translate European integration into tangible results for people living in border regions—regions whose specific characteristics must be recognized. Their legal flexibility, pragmatic approach, and territorial legitimacy allow them to act as true laboratories



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of European integration. EGTCs promote innovative solutions tailored to the real challenges of their territories, ranging from sustainable mobility and shared public services to the joint management and research of natural resources, as well as cooperation in emergency situations.

10. At a time when the European Union seeks to strengthen its connection with citizens and address global challenges through local responses, EGTCs stand out as effective vehicles for a more cohesive, resilient, and supportive Europe. Moreover, by promoting cooperation between administrations, social and economic stakeholders from different countries, EGTCs foster more democratic and participatory governance, serving as a replicable model for other forms of regional cooperation around the world.

This Declaration has been developed by:

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- Eurorregión Nueva Aquitania Euskadi Navarra, EGTC
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