

Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'Euroregions'

(2007/C 256/23)

On 17 January 2006, the European Economic and Social Committee, acting under Rule 29(2) of its Rules of Procedure, decided to draw up an opinion on *Euroregions*.

The Section for Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 21 June 2007. The rapporteur was Mr Zufiaur.

At its 437th plenary session, held on 11 and 12 July 2007 (meeting of 11 July), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 108 votes, with one abstention.

1. Background

1.1 Definition

1.1.1 Euroregions are permanent structures intended to promote cross-border cooperation between directly neighbouring local or regional authorities located along shared State borders.

1.1.1.1 Specific features ⁽¹⁾ of these structures include the following:

- Euroregions and similar structures are neither a new form of administration nor a new level of government; they are a platform for exchange and for 'horizontal' cross-border cooperation between local and regional government; they also promote closer 'vertical' cooperation between regional or local authorities, State governments and the European institutions.
- They are associations of local and regional authorities from both sides of a national border, sometimes with a parliamentary assembly.
- They are cross-border associations with a permanent secretariat, technical and administrative team and own resources.
- In some cases, they are private-law bodies, based on not-for-profit associations or foundations from either side of a border, in accordance with their respective national laws. In others, they are public-law bodies, based on inter-State agreements, intended, inter alia, to secure the involvement and cooperation of local and regional authorities.
- Euroregions are often not defined solely by their geographical or political/administrative boundaries but also share common economic, social or cultural characteristics.

1.1.2 Various terms are used to designate different 'Euroregions', including Euroregio, Euroregion, European Region, Greater ... Region, Regio, etc.

1.2 Aims

1.2.1 The main aim of Euroregions and other similar structures ⁽²⁾ is to ensure cross-border cooperation, the priorities of

which are selected on different bases according to regional and geographical characteristics. In the early stages, or in the case of working communities with very specific aims, the first priority is to promote mutual understanding, develop cultural relations and strengthen economic cooperation. Euroregions that have more integrated structures and their own financial resources set more ambitious aims for themselves. They address all types of issues relating to cross-border cooperation, from promoting common interests in all areas to implementing and managing cross-border programmes and practical projects.

1.2.2 Cross-border activities encompass not only socio-economic development and cultural cooperation, but also other areas of general interest to border communities, in particular social affairs, health, education and training, research and development, waste management, environmental protection and landscape management, tourism and leisure, natural disasters, transport and communication infrastructure.

1.2.3 Euroregions are considered to be an appropriate framework for implementing European projects to improve labour mobility and economic, social and territorial cohesion because they implement cooperation procedures in cross-border areas, and thus avoid conflicts of responsibility.

1.2.4 Euroregions help to boost EU construction and integration, from the ground up and in people's daily lives.

1.2.5 Cooperation across borders in turn helps to set in motion cross-border forms of organisation and action on common problems, such as inter-regional trade union committees, cooperation between business associations and chambers of commerce and the creation of Euro-regional economic and social committees, etc.

1.2.6 The study group responsible for drawing up this opinion had the opportunity to observe the truth of this assertion at first hand, when it was invited by the Economic and Social Committee of the Saar-Lor-Lux region ⁽³⁾ to a hearing in Luxembourg on 13 February 2007.

⁽¹⁾ Features based on the AEBR, 'Practical Guide to Cross-border Cooperation', 2000.

⁽²⁾ The term 'Euroregions' can be assumed also to refer to other, similar structures.

⁽³⁾ Saarland, Lorraine, Luxembourg, Rheinland-Pfalz, Wallonia, the French-speaking Community of Belgium, the German-speaking Community of Belgium.

1.3 Background

1.3.1 The Council of Europe, based in Strasbourg, is the European organisation that has for decades addressed the issue of Euroregions and that of cross-border cooperation in general.

1.3.2 The first experiments in cross-border regional cooperation took place in the late 1940s. The Benelux Agreement, signed in 1948, was an early attempt to cut across the dividing lines formed by State borders. The Euregio was created in 1958 around the Dutch area of Enschede and the German area of Gronau. Shortly afterwards, but at the time outside the European Community, various experiments were promoted in Scandinavia, in Oresund, North Calotte and Kvarken, which straddle the borders of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

1.3.3 Between 1975 and 1985 a number of working communities (WCs) were set up between regions in different States, such as the Jura WC and the Pyrenean WC, with limited scope to act.

1.3.4 Cross-border regional cooperation and the creation of Euroregions have expanded since 1990 ⁽⁴⁾. The factors that have contributed to this growth include:

- advances in European integration, especially with the creation of the single market, the introduction of the euro and the enlargement of the EU;
- the increasing decentralisation and regionalisation of European countries;
- the increase in cross-border employment;
- the recognition, albeit limited, of the role played by the regions in the governance of the European institutions;
- the implementation of Community cross-border cooperation initiatives such as Interreg.

1.3.5 The two latest rounds of enlargement, which increased the number of EU Member States from 15 to 27, have significantly increased the number of border regions and of characteristics associated with them. To be specific, there are now 38 border regions as defined by NUTS II and the EU's borders have grown from 7 137 kilometres in length to 14 300.

1.3.6 In its resolution ⁽⁵⁾ of December 2005, the European Parliament considered that cross-border cooperation was of vital importance to European integration and cohesion and called on Member States and the Commission to promote and support the use of Euroregions. Cross-border cooperation was also included in the draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (Art. III-220).

⁽⁴⁾ There are currently more than 168 Euroregions and similar structures. Approximately half of the regions in the European Union's Member States participate in Euroregions.

⁽⁵⁾ European Parliament Resolution of 1 December 2005 on the role of 'Euroregions' in the development of regional policy.

1.4 Forms of cooperation

1.4.1 Through the Interreg III Community initiative for cooperation between regions, the Commission has identified three areas of cooperation:

— A — Cross-border cooperation

The aim of cross-border cooperation is to ensure economic and social integration by implementing common development strategies and structured exchanges between communities on either side of a border.

— B — Trans-national cooperation

The aim of trans-national cooperation between national, regional and local authorities is to promote greater territorial integration by forming large European groups of regions or macro-regions.

— C — Inter-regional cooperation

The aim of inter-regional cooperation is to step up exchanges of information and experience, not necessarily just in border regions.

Euroregions fall in particular under strand A and, increasingly, also under strand B.

2. Community context

2.1 Various recent Community proposals have improved the general framework in which the Euroregions operate. In the first half of 2006, a number of important decisions with implications for cross-border cooperation were adopted by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers.

2.2 The financial perspective

2.2.1 The Commission presented its initial proposal on the revision of the financial perspective (2007-2013) ⁽⁶⁾ in 2004. In this proposal for a Union of 27 Member States, the Commission calculated the required level of expenditure to be around 1,14 % of GNI for the period 2007-2013. In its opinion ⁽⁷⁾, the EESC stated its support for increasing own resources to a maximum of 1,30 % of GNI (an increase on the previous ceiling of 1,24 %), in light of the major challenges facing the European Union. The European Council of December 2005 set total expenditure for the period 2007-2013 at 1,045 % of GNI. Lastly, in April 2006, following negotiations between the Council and the European Parliament, the definitive proposal was set at EUR 864 316 million, or 1,048 % of GNI.

2.2.2 This substantial reduction has affected funding for economic and social cohesion, which has fallen from 0,41 % of GNI in the EU-15 to 0,37 % in the EU-27. This has happened at a time when the entry of the new Member States and other challenges facing the EU such as globalisation call for more, not fewer resources.

⁽⁶⁾ COM(2004) 101 final.

⁽⁷⁾ Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament — Building our common future: Policy challenges and budgetary means of the enlarged Union 2007-2013, OJ C 74 of 23.3.2005, p. 32.

2.2.3 With regard to territorial cooperation in Europe, the new Objective 3 provides for EUR 8 720 million (2,44 % of the 0,37 % of GNI provided for cohesion), compared to the EUR 13 000 million requested by the Commission in its original proposal. Less money will clearly have to be stretched further.

2.2.4 The EU's financial support for cross-border cooperation has increased in relation to the previous period (2000-2006), but the reduction in relation to the European Commission's original proposals requires closer cooperation by regional and local bodies and better use to be made of public-private partnerships. The resources planned now cover more border areas, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, following the accession of the 12 new Member States.

2.3 New regulations

2.3.1 The Commission's proposals, presented in July 2004, on the Structural Funds for the period 2007-2013 set out the aim of 'convergence' to replace the previous objective 1 and the aim of 'competitiveness and employment' to replace the old objective 2, and establish a new objective 3 — 'European territorial cooperation' — which attaches greater importance to actions in the regional cross-border sphere.

2.3.2 In particular, this new objective 3⁽⁸⁾, which is based on the experience of the Interreg Community initiative, will focus on promoting balanced integration between the Union's regions, by means of cross-border, trans-national and inter-regional cooperation.

2.3.3 The Committee drew up its opinions on the reform of the Structural and Cohesion Funds in 2005⁽⁹⁾. The Council and the European Parliament adopted the proposed new regulations in 2006⁽¹⁰⁾.

2.4 Cohesion policy: strategic guidelines

2.4.1 The Commission communication⁽¹¹⁾ on the strategic guidelines for cohesion policy was approved following the adoption of the various regulations on the Structural Funds. This communication confirms the importance of the new objective 3 — 'European territorial cooperation' — in all of its three strands: cross-border, trans-national and inter-regional cooperation.

2.4.2 The aim of the new cooperation objective is to promote greater territorial integration within the Union and to reduce the 'barrier effect' by means of cross-border cooperation and the exchange of good practice.

⁽⁸⁾ COM(2004) 495 final, Article 6: *European territorial cooperation*.

⁽⁹⁾ EESC opinions on the general provisions on the Funds: the Cohesion Fund and the European Regional Development Fund and on the European grouping of cross-border cooperation (EGCC), OJ C 255 of 14.10.2005, pp. 76, 79, 88 and 91.

⁽¹⁰⁾ OJ L 210 of 31.7.2006.

⁽¹¹⁾ COM(2005) 299 final and COM(2006) 386 final, adopted by the Council of Ministers on 5 October 2006.

2.4.3 The strategic guidelines for European cohesion policy aim to

- a) make the regions more attractive to investors;
- b) promote innovation and entrepreneurship; and
- c) create jobs; and more specifically to take account of the regional dimension of cohesion policies.

2.4.4 As is well known, national borders often present an obstacle to the development of Europe's territory as a whole, and can restrict its competitive potential. One of the main objectives of Community cross-border cooperation is, therefore, to eliminate the barrier effect between national borders and to establish synergies to address problems requiring common solutions.

2.4.5 Cohesion policy should focus on measures that bring added value to cross-border activities, such as increasing cross-border competitiveness through innovation and research and development; linking up intangible networks (services) or physical networks (transport) to strengthen cross-border integration as a feature of European citizenship; promoting mobility and transparency in the cross-border labour market; water management and flood control; developing tourism; encouraging the participation of economic and social actors; promoting cultural heritage and improving land-use planning, etc.

2.5 A new legal base for territorial cooperation

2.5.1 Historically, the lack of a homogenous European legal base for cross-border cooperation has acted as a brake on the implementation of useful measures in this field.

2.5.2 In 2004, the Commission proposed that a European grouping of cross-border cooperation (EGCC) be created. In its later proposal, the Commission amended the name, replacing the term 'cross-border' with 'territorial'.

2.5.3 The regulation⁽¹²⁾ adopted on 31 July 2006 acknowledges that:

— Measures are necessary to reduce the significant difficulties encountered by Member States and, in particular, by regional and local authorities in implementing and managing actions of territorial cooperation within the framework of differing national laws and procedures.

— In order to overcome the obstacles hindering territorial cooperation, it is necessary to institute a cooperation instrument at Community level for the creation of cooperative groupings in Community territory, invested with legal personality, called 'European groupings of territorial cooperation' (EGTC).

⁽¹²⁾ OJ L 210 of 31.7.2006, page 19.

— The conditions for territorial cooperation should be created in accordance with the subsidiarity principle enshrined in Article 5 of the Treaty. In accordance with the principle of proportionality, as set out in that Article, this Regulation does not go beyond what is necessary in order to achieve its objectives, recourse to an EGTC being optional, in accordance with the constitutional system of each Member State.

3. Economic integration and social and territorial cohesion

3.1 *Integration and specialisation*

3.1.1 In the larger, older States, most economic activity has tended to be concentrated in the central part of the country and often in the capital and largest cities. Within each State, a degree of regional economic specialisation has developed.

3.1.2 European integration encourages the creation of new areas of cooperation such as the Euroregions. European integration has meant that regional specialisation no longer takes place within each State but, increasingly, at European level. Borders between States no longer constitute an insurmountable barrier to trade. This encourages new relations between regions — with sometimes differing levels of development — from different Member States but which have common aims, against the backdrop of increasing specialisation at the European level.

3.1.3 Cooperation of this nature is particularly needed for small-scale activities that suffer most acutely as a result of the border effect. SMEs are a case in point.

3.1.4 The EESC is of the view that the Euroregions should make a substantial contribution to the aims of EU economic, social and territorial cohesion policy. To this end, the main aims of the EU's new territorial policy proposal are: convergence and increased competitiveness and employment, especially in the less prosperous regions and in those facing new specialisation-related challenges.

3.2 *Competitiveness*

3.2.1 Euroregions are conducive to economies of scale. In short, they offer increased market size (agglomeration economies), complementarity of production factors and greater incentives for investment. It is estimated that some investments in innovation and development can have a direct impact at a distance of 250-500 kilometres. Although some Euroregions are larger, the average Euroregion stretches from 50 to 100 kilometres.

3.2.2 Euroregions are crucial to achieving critical mass in certain fields, making possible a range of investment in key services that would not be possible without cross-border cooperation.

3.2.3 To increase competitiveness, cross-border cooperation between regional and local authorities can provide distinct public benefits, such as:

- information, communication, energy and transport networks and other cross-border infrastructure;
- public services, such as schools, hospitals and emergency services;
- institutions and services that promote private economic activity, including trade development, entrepreneurship and partnerships between cross-border undertakings, creating new job opportunities and worker mobility.

3.3 *Cohesion: problems affecting cross-border employment*

3.3.1 Most Euroregions contain regions with a similar level of development. However, some Euroregions also include regions with different levels of development. One of the purposes of the Euroregions is to promote economic and other types of activity that reduce inter-regional disparities. Greater involvement on the part of the States concerned and the EU is crucial to achieving this.

3.3.2 Investment in basic social services in border areas is typically lower than investment in more central areas in each country, often as a consequence of the weaker influence of border areas in the decision-making centres. In many cases, this results in the inadequate funding of high-quality, diverse and profitable services, in particular those serving the most vulnerable members of society, including children, immigrants, families on a low income, the disabled, the chronically ill, etc.

3.3.3 Euroregions can play a key role in developing this type of service and in ensuring that these social sectors are consequently given greater protection as the result of a cross-border approach. Furthermore, Euroregions can also to a large extent help to surmount the legal, administrative and financial barriers and disparities that hamper the progress of these communities. They also help to eradicate long-standing prejudices, prepare joint studies and improve mutual understanding of the differences between them.

3.3.4 The legal shortcomings relating to the free movement of frontier workers and the inadequate harmonisation in this field have only been partially remedied by the Community *acquis* and the Court of Justice. Due to the growing number of frontier workers, this situation has become a matter of importance at European level, in particular as regards taxation, social security and social assistance, where definitions and approaches still differ on concepts such as residence, family circumstances, reimbursement of health costs and dual taxation — along with other types of administrative constraint ⁽¹³⁾.

⁽¹³⁾ The EESC's future Employment Observatory could follow-up the issue of border and cross-border work in Europe.

4. Cross-border cooperation — added value for European integration

4.1 Surmounting borders

4.1.1 The need to overcome obstacles to integration is a daily reality for people living in border areas. The aim is not to change borders or to infringe State sovereignty but to facilitate effective cooperation on all aspects of cross-border life, improving living conditions and making a citizens' Europe a reality.

4.1.2 The EU's borders have largely moved beyond their traditional role of forming a barrier, but economic, socio-cultural, administrative and legal differences still remain and this is particularly striking at the EU's external borders. The aim of cooperation in cross-border areas is, therefore, to develop cooperation-based structures, procedures and instruments that help to remove administrative and legal obstacles, eliminate factors that have, historically, been divisive and make 'neighbourhood' a factor for mobility, economic development and social progress. The aim, in short, is to make cross-border regions 'areas of shared prosperity'.

4.2 Added value

4.2.1 Cross-border cooperation and its steady implementation by Euroregions not only helps to prevent conflict, deal with disasters or overcome psychological barriers; it also clearly improves development on both sides of a border. This added value can be seen at the political, institutional, economic, social and cultural levels and also in terms of European integration. Cross-border cooperation makes a very useful contribution to promoting peaceful co-existence and European security and integration. It is a highly effective means of implementing the Community principles of subsidiarity, partnership and economic, social and territorial cohesion, and of bolstering the full integration of the new Member States into the EU.

4.2.2 These permanent structures for cross-border cooperation help to ensure the active and sustained involvement of the general public and administrations and of trans-national political and social groups. They ensure mutual understanding and help to build a vertical and horizontal partnership on the basis of different national structures and powers. This also facilitates the management of cross-border programmes and projects or the joint management of funding from different sources (such as Community or national funds, their own resources or funds from third parties). The EESC considers that the joint implementation of this type of initiative can be more successful and effective if organised civil society plays a leading role in it.

4.2.3 From the socio-economic point of view, cross-border cooperation structures facilitate the following: a) harnessing the endogenous potential of all actors (chambers of commerce, associations, businesses, trade unions, social and cultural institutions, environmental organisations or tourism bodies, amongst many others); b) opening up labour markets and harmonising professional qualifications and c) enhancing economic development and job creation by means of measures in other sectors such as infrastructure, transport, tourism, the environment, education, research and cooperation between SMEs.

4.2.4 In the socio-cultural field, the added value of cross-border cooperation lies in the ongoing dissemination of general knowledge. This dissemination of knowledge should be seen as a kind of 'cross-border continuum' which can be accessed in different publications and formats. Similarly, it helps to guarantee a network of bodies that act as multipliers. This applies to centres of education, environmental protection organisations, cultural associations, libraries, museums, etc. Cross-border cooperation also promotes equal opportunities and a broad knowledge of the language of the neighbouring country, or even of local dialects, which are key components of cross-border regional development and a prerequisite for communication.

4.2.5 Viewed in this light, cross-border cooperation bolstered by permanent structures such as the Euroregions adds value to national measures through the additionality of cross-border programmes and projects, the synergies that are created, joint research and innovation, the creation of dynamic and stable networks, the exchange of knowledge and good practice, the indirect effects of surmounting borders and the cross-border and efficient management of available resources.

4.3 Obstacles

Nevertheless, different factors hampering cross-border cooperation remain ⁽¹⁴⁾, most notably:

- Legal limitations imposed by national legislation on the cross-border activity of regional and local administrations.
- Differences in the structure and responsibilities of the different levels of administration on the two sides of a border.
- The lack of political will, especially at national level, to eliminate restrictions, for example by means of national regulations or bilateral treaties.
- The absence of common frameworks for taxation and social security or the recognition of academic and professional qualifications.
- Structural economic differences on the two sides of a border.
- Linguistic, cultural and psychological barriers, including prejudice and historical grudges between communities.

4.4 General principles of cross-border cooperation

4.4.1 A number of examples throughout Europe help to identify a set of general principles for the success of cross-border cooperation:

- Proximity to the general public. The inhabitants of border areas want cooperation, as a means of overcoming the problems they face or of improving their living conditions.

⁽¹⁴⁾ EESC opinion on The management of industrial change in cross-border regions following EU enlargement, of 21 April 2006 — OJ C 185, 8.8.2006.

- The involvement of political representatives (local, regional, national and European) is crucial to successful cross-border cooperation.
- Subsidiarity. The local and regional level has proved to be the most effective for developing cross-border cooperation, although an alliance is needed with national governments.
- Partnership. The involvement of all actors from both sides of the border is essential to achieving common goals.
- Joint structures with common resources (technical, administrative, financial and decision-making instruments) are a guarantee of lasting and constantly evolving activity. They are also a guarantee of being able to exercise certain powers, manage programmes, including European programmes, achieve cross-border consensus and to prevent national self-interest from taking over.

5. Towards cooperation-based governance

5.1 *A new form of governance needed for new regions*

5.1.1 Euroregions are territorial units that put into practice new models of cooperation within the public sector, within the private sector and between these two sectors, with the aim of framing new joined-up policies, and with the greater involvement of all of the genuine stakeholders.

5.1.2 The concept of governance denotes a more participatory and horizontal form of governing than traditional, more hierarchical and vertical forms. The issue of governance in the Euroregions is particularly complex and interesting and hinges on finding common solutions to common problems.

5.1.3 Furthermore, Euroregions increasingly play a minor but nonetheless crucial role in the European governance of economic, social and territorial cohesion policy.

5.1.4 The EESC, therefore, considers that the Euroregions and similar structures should make a key contribution to deepening the process of European integration and unification.

5.1.5 In turn, creating Euroregions requires cooperation between institutional and social actors, who often have very different traditions and mindsets. Simply living in close proximity to one's neighbours does not always mean more cooperation with them. Hence the important role of the institutions and civil society organisations in horizontal governance.

5.1.6 The participation of economic and social actors in the governance of Euroregions requires institutional frameworks that enable this system to work. Civil society organisations must be involved in drawing up and implementing the policies established by the different levels of cross-border cooperation

between two or more States. The involvement of the social partners in the EURES network in cross-border areas is an important practical expression of this principle.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 The adoption of the Regulation on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) and its inclusion of a new objective for territorial cooperation have given Euroregions new scope for action. Firstly, because it establishes a Community legal instrument for cross-border cooperation and also makes it possible for Member States, at their different levels, to become involved in cross-border territorial cooperation. Secondly, the move from 'cross-border cooperation' to 'territorial cooperation' means that the Euroregions can extend their sphere of activity beyond the issues typically covered by cooperation at the local level or with neighbouring local authorities, and fully develop larger territories that share common synergies and potential.

6.2 The EESC therefore considers that the territorial cooperation promoted by the Euroregions is a key factor in promoting European integration, reducing the economic, social and cultural fragmentation created by national borders and in developing economic, social and territorial cohesion. For this reason, the EESC calls for particular attention to be given to cross-border territorial cohesion in the forthcoming debate on the definitive adoption of the European constitutional treaty.

6.3 To ensure that European territorial cooperation is able to meet the expectations created by the reforms referred to above, the EESC considers that national States and their intermediate structures will need to be more closely involved in developing the Euroregions. National strategies for territorial cooperation in the Community framework would be required to achieve this. In particular, States would have to help to solve the most pressing problems facing their cross-border communities, which generally concern the labour market, healthcare, social services, education and transport.

6.4 In the EESC's view, in order to make territorial cooperation activities more effective and in line with the principle of subsidiarity, there should be greater direct management by the EGTCs of cross-border and, in certain cases, trans-national projects financed by Community or national funds.

6.5 Turning Euroregions into 'areas of shared prosperity' would require greater involvement by the private business sector (including the social economy) in cross-border development initiatives, given the importance of small and medium-sized businesses in maintaining the production fabric and in job creation.

6.6 The EESC believes that, like the EGTCs created in accordance with Regulation No 1082/2006, the Euroregions are the ideal physical expression of the principles of European governance that the Commission set out in its 2001 White Paper. The EESC therefore considers that the effectiveness of cross-border activities and policies and of territorial cooperation in general depend on achieving a genuine 'partnership' between all of the territorial and socio-economic stakeholders concerned. Accordingly, the EESC calls for methods of participation to be established for organisations representing organised civil society in territorial cooperation projects.

6.7 In particular, the EESC is of the view that the EURES network should be made a European instrument that really plays a key role in mediating between labour supply and demand. The cross-border sphere is in this sense a testbed. The EESC therefore regrets the trend seen in recent years towards the re-nationalisation of EURES's management, which it thinks should be genuinely cross-border in nature. It should be added that EURES not only acts as a mediator in the labour market but also plays a major role in promoting social dialogue in neighbouring trans-national areas.

6.8 It is generally accepted that socio-economic organisations play an important role in European integration. The EESC therefore welcomes the experiments in trans-nationalisation conducted by inter-regional union councils, the different forms of trans-national cooperation and association implemented by business organisations, chambers of commerce, research insti-

tutes and universities and the creation of Euro-regional economic and social committees, amongst others. The Committee encourages their consolidation and development and offers the possibility of assistance.

6.9 In the EESC's view, Euroregions play a major role in regions sharing a border with third countries and can play an even greater one, both from the point of view of economic development and of public security and social integration. The EESC therefore calls for this type of body and the activities that it can carry out to be included in the EU's Neighbourhood and Pre-Accession policies.

6.10 Given the great wealth of experiments carried out on cross-border activity (some examples of which are provided in the appendix to this opinion) and the considerable ignorance about these schemes, even amongst the Euroregions themselves, the EESC considers that it would be extremely useful if the Commission were to draw up a 'good practice guide' in the field, including examples of successful public-private partnerships.

6.11 Since an issue as multifaceted as this one can clearly not be examined exhaustively in a single opinion, the EESC considers that it would be useful to study the issue — cross-border territorial cooperation and its support structures — in greater detail in other opinions on cross-border issues of common interest, such as the labour market, tourism, development hubs, etc.

Brussels, 11 July 2007.

The President
of the European Economic and Social Committee
Dimitris DIMITRIADIS
