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UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA

# EGPA2026 CONFERENCE

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CALL FOR PANELS



Public Governance for the  
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## EGPA Ad Hoc Group 1 on Horizontal integration and transborder participatory governance in the European Administrative Space

**Dr. Peter Ulrich;** University of Potsdam, Germany;  
[peter.ulrich@uni-potsdam.de](mailto:peter.ulrich@uni-potsdam.de)

**Prof. Dr. Joachim Beck;** University of Applied Sciences Kehl, Germany;  
[beckj@hs-kehl.de](mailto:beckj@hs-kehl.de)

**Ass. Prof. Hynek Böhm;** University of Opole, Poland; & Technical University of Liberec Czech Republic;  
[hynek.bohm@uni.opole.pl](mailto:hynek.bohm@uni.opole.pl)

**Dr. Alice Engl;** Institute for Minority Rights, EURAC Research, Bolzano, Italy;  
[alice.engl@eurac.edu](mailto:alice.engl@eurac.edu)

**Ass. Prof. Lukáš Novotný;** Jan Evangelista Purkyně University, Ústí nad Labem, & University of Chemistry and Technology Prague, Czech Republic;  
[lukas.novotny@ujep.cz](mailto:lukas.novotny@ujep.cz)

**Ass. Prof. Sara Svensson;** Halmstad University, Sweden;  
[sara.svensson@hh.se](mailto:sara.svensson@hh.se)

Cooperation of regional and local public entities – such as political actors and public administrations – across national borders has evolved dynamically in Europe in the last decades especially after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Border regions accommodate a significant share of population and territory in Europe which makes it a “Europe of cross-border regions”. Several Euroregions and so-called European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs) have been created in national peripheries to facilitate euroregional political and administrative cooperation in cross-border regions for example in managing cross-border public services or EU projects and funds.

Yet, deeper political and administrative integration and cooperation partially experiences boundaries. Besides general re-bordering processes through re-nationalization, the discursive and political dismantling of values, ideas and political processes of Europeanization and Transnationalism and the re-enforced border controls in the EU



Schengen Area also practical barriers in the daily cross-border collaboration practice of public entities reveal that cross-border integration reaches its limits.

The newly established Ad Hoc Group (AHGs) aims at discussing this ambivalence under the notion of “Horizontal Integration” in the European Administrative System (EAS) and also asks the question how could cross-border governance structures be more inclusive and participatory by including distinct actors across civil society, academia or private actors beside public administration and political actors in these governance arrangements.

The Ad Hoc Group is a novel experimental forum that brings together outstanding European expert researchers from political and administrative sciences that work on cross-border cooperation in Europe. Jointly, the group will discuss theoretical approaches of “horizontal integration”, cross-border “participatory governance” and “multilevel governance” in the debate revolving around the EAS, current developments and will compare the administrative horizontal integration in different border regions in Europe. The Ad Hoc Group aims at bringing different European cross-border administrative experiences under a holistic analytical lens to test new ideas and approaches.

The Ad Hoc Group brings two thematic threads into discussion: horizontal integration in cross-border territories and participatory governance in cross-border regions:

### *Horizontal integration in cross-border territories*

Although cross-border cooperation in Europe has already a long history, it varies concerning the duration of cooperation and the depth of integration. While there are territorial authorities that have cooperated with each other for several decades, countries from Central and Eastern Europe have experienced cooperation in a EU integration context less time. Moreover, European cross-border regions differ in their depth of integration in terms of administrative capacities and leeway, autonomy, resources, institutionalization and broadness of policy fields involved in cross-border cooperation.

### *Approaches and instruments to horizontal integration and cross-border cooperation*

To foster cross-border cooperation of administrative and political transborder structures, there have been introduced political, legal and financial approaches mostly by the European Union (EU). Through the financial instrument Interreg cross-border projects and networking has been promoted fiscally. The transnational network Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) and the official EU body Committee of the Regions are representing politically the interests of border regions. Legal instruments such as the



EGTC or the currently debated BRIDGEforEU regulation aim at deepening cooperation of administrations and to resolve legal boundaries that exist so far in the EAS.

### Challenges and prospects to horizontal integration and cross-border cooperation in different policy fields

Cross-border cooperation and horizontal integration contain prospects and opportunities for nationally peripheral territorial authorities to join forces and to bundle synergies functionally or territorially. Potentials exist in different policy fields like health provision, public transport, education, security and police cooperation, catastrophic management, tourism, urban and regional planning and development, economic development, energy supply, environmental and climate protection. The creation of jointly administered hospitals in cross-border regions such as the French-Spanish EGTC Cerdanya, energy security cooperation, cross-border district heating supply or wastewater treatment in the German-Polish border or hydrogen infrastructure cooperation in the industrial French-German borderlands, show the opportunities and synergies that exist in transborder cooperation. On the flipside, there are also legal, administrative, socioeconomic, sociocultural, historical or political boundaries that hinder efficient and effective administrative and political cooperation across borders. The AEBR together with EU institutions introduced the programme *b solutions* to tackle concrete obstacles in border regions which is a central EU wide initiative.

The proposed papers shall make a contribution to answering one or more of these questions:

- How are political initiatives and strategies, administrative and legal structures coordinated across national borders? How are administrations and legal structures horizontally integrated?
- How are EU instruments and approaches utilized in border regions?
- To what extent are different policy fields (health, transport, education, security and defense, catastrophic management, tourism, urban and regional planning and development, economic development, energy, environmental and climate protection) integrated across borders?
- Which opportunities and obstacles exist in cross-border cooperation practice? What are the prospects for good administrative practice across borders?
- What roles could the approaches of horizontal cross-border cooperation play within the broader institutional multi-level context of the EAS (e.g. as specific fields of application for the ComPAct Initiative of the European Commission)?



- How well can major theories from the field of public administration be applied in border regions?

### *Participatory governance in cross-border regions*

Besides cross-border cooperation structures, also the composition of actor relations is of interest. Thus, we are discussing different dynamics and ways of cooperation among different kinds of actors in border regions with a special emphasis on the inclusion of the population and civil society groups. We are interested in cross-actor relations and in cross-border public services that are provided for and with the society.

### *Cross-actor relations and cooperation in multilevel cross-border governance*

Cross-border cooperation has been mostly being the domain of public actors – political and administrative bodies. In the last decades academic, consultancy, private and economic partners have also been involved for example as cooperation partners in Interreg projects on economic development or public service delivery. In recent years, citizens and civil society were actively engaged in cross-border co-creation. By introducing different approaches like citizen polls, surveys or consultations, petitions, citizen councils or citizen budgeting the civic dimension was actively integrated in cross-border governance. Also approaches like (cross-border) smart cities or cross-border open government show current trends in local (cross-border) contexts to get the citizens back in in times of the perceived democratic deficit and erosion of democratic values and institutions. On the other hand, civil society is integrated into different kind of participation format of cross-border governance by being part of working groups on future priorities and action plans.

### *Cross-border public services for and with society*

Public services are mostly organized in a national context. Growing demands of public service delivery across borders, for example in metropolitan regions have triggered regional planners and administrations to think about how to conceptualize service delivery f.e. in the transport, education, energy and heating supply, education, and infrastructure sector across borders. Since the corona pandemic also the health sector came to the fore as solidarity and equipment and patients exchange was observable in different border regions. With the creation of so-called *InfoBest* or *border contact points* citizens can also be actively informed about border-related concerns that affect their daily lives. Also approaches to public service delivery, which is co-organized and co-created by citizens and civil society groups, are of interest.



The proposed papers shall make a contribution to answering one or more of these questions:

- How do different actors (public, private, academic or societal) cooperate in cross-border settings such as in Euroregions, EGTC's, smart (double/twin) cities or metropolitan regions?
- How are citizens or civil society interacting with primary administrative and political actors in cross-border governance? Which formats of participatory governance (citizen polls or consultations, citizen councils or citizen budgeting) exist and how do they work? To what extent is there a cross-border open government? Who is typically missing in cross-border governance structures?
- Which cross-border public services exist for and with the society in border regions?

We would welcome contributions that deal theoretically and/or empirically with either one of both thematic threads *horizontal integration in cross-border territories* and *participatory governance in cross-border regions*.



## Practicalities

If you wish to present a paper in one of the Permanent Study Group's, Ad Hoc Group's, or Specialized Panel's sessions at the conference, please upload an abstract outlining your proposed conference paper. This may be done through the conference website.

## Important dates

- Deadline for submission of abstracts: April 6, 2026
- Deadline for submission of EGPA Booster Grant applications: April 15, 2026
- Acceptance notification and opening of registrations: April 20, 2026
- Deadline for submission of EGPA Travel Grant applications: April 26, 2026
- Full paper submission deadline and registration deadline: July 19, 2026

## Website

- <https://www.iias-iisa.org/egpa-2026-conference/>

## Submission

- <https://www.conftool.org/egpa2026/>
- Unless specified otherwise, 500-words limit for abstracts

## Contact

- [egpa-conference@iias-iisa.org](mailto:egpa-conference@iias-iisa.org)