I would like to thank you on behalf of the EGTC – Hospital de Cerdanya and on my own behalf for the opportunity to address all of you to explain our reality, which is none other than the confirmation that cross-border collaboration can help offer public services to citizens of two states. In this case, services as essential as the right to health and hospital care.

This project began at the beginning of the 21st century due to the need for a small population and territory (32,000 inhabitants) in an isolated mountain area and far from large decision-making centers.

The need to be able to have a local hospital for the population that would help with the objective of providing accessible services avoiding trips to other centers that are more than 2 hours away by road. In addition, the existence of this hospital helps with two other objectives: to establish and attract population in the territory, avoiding desertification and promoting economic activities and mainly mountain tourism.

The basic concept was the creation of an entity that would ensure fully binational governance , management and financing . That could guarantee, as much as possible, similar care for citizens without depending on the differences in the health models of the two countries.

For this purpose, it was thought that the best existing instrument was the ECGT since it allows a state to work together with a region. The planning and financing powers in health are asymmetrical between France and Spain. In France, they are at the state level and in Spain they are at the level of the autonomous regions, as is the case of Catalonia.

The EGTC is formed by 60% by the Autonomous Community of Catalonia and 40% by the French Republic, allowing co-governance , co-financing and co-management.

Governance is guaranteed by a Board of Directors where the French Ministry of Health, the Regional Health Agency of Occitania and the Ministry of Health of the Generalitat of Catalonia are represented. The Board of Directors and by delegation, the Executive Committee, ensure the planning of health services for the territory and control over the management of the hospital. Its decisions are taken by consensus, in practically all cases for 10 years.

Financing is based on a shared global budget with contributions that also respect the 60/40 based on the budgets of its members.

Management is ensured by a general management formed by a Franco -Catalan team.

The results after 10 years of operation

Binational cooperation has allowed that after 15 years of its creation and 10 years of the hospital's operation, there is a hospital that works by bringing the most necessary services closer and accessible to the population, weaving a network that, in addition to the hospital, guarantees the continuity of health care. This continuity is based on a technical platform in the hospital and the use of resources from the entire territory through the collaboration of the different existing establishments and centers.

An offer in both outpatient activities (specialty visits) and diagnostics, treatment and control reinforced by alliances and agreements with the reference hospitals of the two health systems.

Although the results are very positive, there are still shortcomings due to the lack of supranational regulatory development. We had foreseen some of them from the beginning, but we chose to move forward with the project without waiting for everything to be resolved. If we had waited, we would not have started yet.

Some of them we have resolved through international treaties thanks to the involvement of the administrations that make up the EGTC, others we are still working on. But we are aware that new ones can arise every day.

In order to overcome them, we firmly believe that it is important that the EGTC has a very clear Mission and vision for the future that must integrate the needs of the population and must be agreed upon by all those involved: local, regional, national and European administrations.

Cross-border cooperation as a process.

All of us who work for cross-border cooperation must be clear that this is a long-term process. A marathon mixed with an obstacle course. And that we will have to overcome them gradually, focusing on short-term priorities but maintaining a final vision that we will have to adapt to the possibilities of our environment. And reaching consensus on it.

And to move this process forward we need instruments. And Europe has given us some:

The cohesion funds that we call Interreg have allowed and continue to allow these cooperation spaces to be financed. They must be maintained and strengthened. It is the visualization that Europe continues to have the coordination of its members as essential to move forward.

Initiatives like BridgeforEU that should allow for official bridges of agreement between States in cases of disagreement and force them to find solutions for cross-border areas. Too bad they are voluntary!

And the EGTCs, governance and shared management bodies. But in these we have remained at the organizational structure level and not enough progress has been made in the management instruments that allow them to develop cross-border operations.

I want to give you an example: Where there is no direct regulation, EGTCs must be based on the law of the State or region where they are based. This fact makes it more difficult for us to develop truly shared organizations. This leads to problems of ordinary management that make it difficult to reconcile the cultures or ways of acting of their members.

In an organization like ours, professionals with different salaries, taxes, social security contributions, vacation days or retirement ages can coexist. A complicated coexistence that makes the maxim of equity and the concept of “Equal responsibility, equal recognition” very difficult.

I end this example by stating a need: We must work so that Europe recognizes a statute specific to the EGTC worker. A statute that can recognize the work of our professionals as true cross-border workers from whom we do not only ask for their technical training for the job but that they are on equal terms and that recognizes the specificities that we ask of them.

In conclusion, I would like to highlight the advances that this co-governance , co-financing and co-management based on the development of EGTCs have promoted towards a Europe of citizens. Whether by facilitating cooperation and collaboration, or the preparation of common, agreed and shared projects.

But let's not forget that we have to keep moving forward. And that it is not and will not be easy. We need the involvement of all those who believe in it and especially our technical teams with a vision of the future following a highly complex but undoubtedly exciting and innovative process.