

Implementing the new legislation on EGTC – Dialogue with the national authorities

On the 26th of June 2014, the Committee of the Regions and the Greek Presidency of the EU Council of Ministers co-organised a workshop to promote a dialogue on a harmonized implementation of the revised EGTC Regulation, gathering representatives of the competent National Authorities, the EGTCs, the European Commission, the CoR Members and the stakeholders.



The first keynote speaker, Mr. Antonios Karvounis, EGTC National Authority Contact Point, Ministry of Interior of the Hellenic Republic. Presidency of the Council of the EU, noted that “for many regions and cities around Europe, this period is crucial to overcome the economic crisis and to settle the basis for a real recovery. Within this framework, under the legal architecture of the new cohesion policy, EGTCs, as a legal as well as a political instrument of multilevel governance with the potential of horizontal, vertical and even crossing cooperation of competent actors beyond borders, are called upon to play a more active role in the new programming period: implementing programmes and new instruments like Joint Action Plans and Integrated Territorial Investments, acting in different fields of policy, providing their knowledge and orientation to combine cross-border cooperation, local action and macro-regions, during the development of macro-regional strategies, and consolidating cooperation with non-EU countries”.



Mr. Karvounis pointed out that “what is at stake right now with the new legislation at hand, apart from any technical interpretations, is the ability of the already established EGTCs to convince their members and partners at national and European levels about the necessity to assume the role and tasks provided by the aforementioned Regulations”. In his concluding remarks Mr. Karvounis stressed that “so far, the potentials provided by the previous legal framework on EGTCs have been strongly underestimated and derecognised whereas the political attractiveness of this legal instrument has been also very low. Indeed, it appears that there is a lack of awareness of the added value (legally binding effect, new problem solving capacity, pooling of competences and resources etc.) at the political level whereas it seems to be fully recognised at the technical level”.



Mr. Joachim Zeller, Member of the European Parliament, rapporteur on the revision of the EGTC Regulation, argued that many politicians invoke EU but when it comes to national issues then reactions follow. In this respect, Mr. Zeller said that the revision of the EGTC was not an easy task because national representatives have not realised that EGTCs have not been in competition with their authorities in respect of the

programming, the partnerships and the networkings. He concluded saying that the surplus of suspicion and the lack of information should be dealt and that the European Parliament would be an ally to this mission.



On his part, Mr. Vassilis Xenos, director of the EGTC 'Amphyctiony', wondered whether the provisions of the revised EGTC Regulation would be put into practice now that Europe expects from EGTCs to function as an instrument for development at cross-border level. Mr. Xenos mentioned that much remained to be done concerning the aware-raising campaign for local and regional authorities, the EGTC personnel, proposing, at the end, that the dialogue with national authorities should take place in all the countries which host EGTCs seats under the aegis of the EGTC Platform.

In this context, Mr Dirk Peters, European Commission, DG Regional and Urban Policy, team leader - legal officer, opened the two roundtables which were devoted to the technicalities of the revised EGTC Regulation. Mr. Peters set out the member states obligations and the new provisions concerning membership, approval procedure, the applicable law as well as the new EGTC operations provided by other Regulations of the new EU cohesion policy.





Representatives of other EGTCs such as Mr. N. Krimniantis (EGTC Efxini Poli) raised the issues of the bureaucratic procedures for hiring EGTC personnel in Greece, the partnership question in EU programmes, and the lack of information concerning consultations over a series of territorial cooperation issues (eg. Macro-regions, EU territorial programmes). Mr. E. Stavropoulos, Permanent Representation of Greece to the EU, suggested that all these issues can be tackled through the exchange of practices between regions and member states and a tactical communication with the competent national authorities.

In the closing of the meeting, Alfonso Alcolea Martinez, representative of the CoR EGTC Platform, commented that the dialogue would continue in view of the new Interreg Europe programme in order to highlight the main priorities of the interregional cooperation.