

**Submitted Abstract**

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## Abstract

European cross-border cooperation (CBC) has played a critical role in overcoming the barrier effect connected to the nation-state boundaries, and has opened new paths to institutionalize innovative territorial projects across borders. In this regard, the Council of Europe impelled CBC by virtue of a legal framework initiated with the Madrid Outline Convention on Trans-Frontier Cooperation (1980), while the European Union has developed a financial support programme since 1989 (Interreg). Moreover, the establishment of an EU legal instrument, the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) in 2006, has reinforced CBC structures.

Border areas, historically understood as marginal spaces as regards nation-state territories, have become the laboratories for European integration. CBC structures have flourished all along internal and external European borders, and mountains areas are not an exception. Cross-border governance has been the key instrument to managing common problems and challenges in areas belonging to different states, hence, under different legal regulations.

This paper aims to study two specific CBC structures in the Pyrenees: EGTC País d'Art i d'Història Transfronterer Les Valls Catalanes del Tec i del Ter, in the Catalan territorial context (Westernmost Pyrenean isthmus), and Territorio Xareta "Mugarik gabe", in the Basque territorial context (Easternmost Pyrenean isthmus). These are cases located in very specific areas where cultural and linguistic links to the south and north of the Spanish-French border exist, which may help to develop cross-border governance bodies and projects. The study, based on document analysis and fieldwork, mainly through semi-structured interviews, seeks to identify the challenges and opportunities of CBC in some particular areas of the Pyrenees. In this line of thought, it will be crucial to focus on the approaches and strategies developed by local stakeholders in order to overcome the barrier effect of the boundary and to promote an innovative and sustainable territorial development in the Pyrenees.