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THE EVOLUTION PROTOCOLS OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION IN THE EUROPEAN AREA: RESULTS IN THE SPANISH-PORTUGUESE REGIONS OF EXTREMADURA, ALENTEJO AND CENTRO

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ABSTRACT

The European territory that we know today as a community space without barriers for persons and goods is the result of different mechanisms and cooperation initiatives initially issued in the mid-twenty century by a number of European countries, with the aim of launching a common area of work and collaboration between neighboring countries prior to the European Economic Community (EEC) and European Union (EU). In regard of the Council of Europe, founded in 1949, it was the starting point of this phenomenon of transnational cooperation within the European framework, giving a rise to an important network amongst national, regional and local authorities, committed to the development and implementation of mechanisms for cross-border cooperation underway later. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the different cross-border cooperation agencies that interact in the Spanish and Portuguese regions, Extremadura (Spain), Alentejo and Centro (Portugal), as well as projects and financial instruments put in place from the different protocols and treaties of cross-border cooperation defined at European, Spanish and Portuguese and regional levels which have facilitated the development of this type of processes (INTERREG, POCTEP, and etc.).

Keywords: *evolution protocol, cooperation treaties, cross-border cooperation, Spanish and Portuguese border, POCTEP.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Borders are a phenomenon of extraordinary importance and effect on the territory which translates into a specificity of flows, economic activities and relationships between societies, product of human convenience, i.e. of the historical division exercised by the political bodies, primarily in the states - so that you would agree that "as long as states have borders" -, but also the other administrations of lower rank are responsible in one way or another to keep those limits. Therefore, it can tell whatever intercepts communications and

normal relations of the population that is forced to itineraries conditioned to the location of steps and border posts (Lopez Trigal, 2005). In the same way, on many occasions, we find that borders lead to differentiate territories that originally present a same or similar geographic, climatic and cultural condition. For instance, affinity is explained largely by the physical proximity, sometimes accentuated by the membership, in the past to the same state, and which facilitates the understanding between people which, to a greater or lesser extent, and unless they have geographical or political impediments, tend to maintain relations of all kinds activities (social, labor, business, and etc.) with its social attendant impact (frontier workers, location of facilities and services, and etc.) and even human (relationships, family, and etc). However, these relations are facing to a series of problems arising from the existence of the border, so it requires mechanisms that remove or soften the possible extent of these disadvantages and this is the main objective of cross-border cooperation agreements (Sobrido, 2004).

On the basis of this background, the purpose of this paper is to deepen in the evolution of the different processes of cross-border cooperation, taking as an example from the agencies that interact in the regard of the Spanish and Portuguese border regions of Extremadura, Alentejo and Centro, as well as financial instruments (INTERREG, POCTEP, and etc.), derived from the different protocols and treaties on cooperation initiated at European, Spanish and Portuguese and regional level aimed at mitigating this type of obstacles that limit the daily activity of the border municipalities in the context of a community space without barriers.

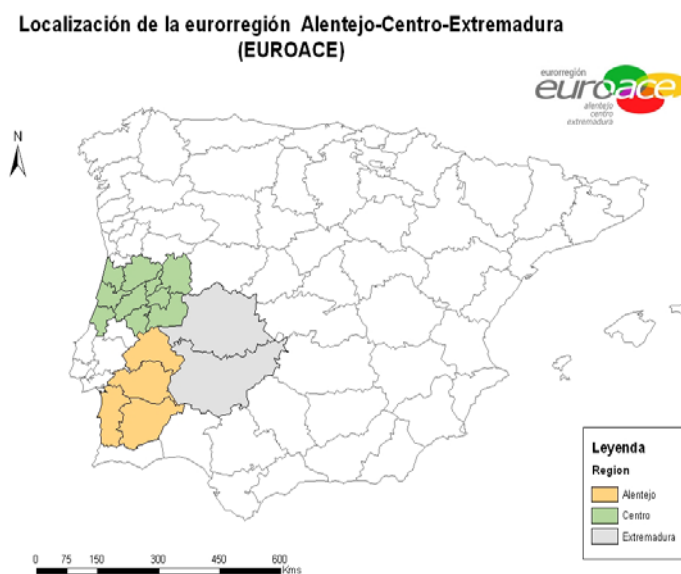


Figure 1 – Area of Study.

2. THE BORDER SPACES: FROM CONFRONTATION TO COOPERATION

After centuries of coexistence, "costas voltadas" result of the existing mistrust between the various states, the twentieth century will mean a point with regard to the consideration of border spaces, hitherto understood as zones of separation, to move to areas of nexus and union between territories based on a new concept emanated from the heart of European in order to undermine the disadvantages existing in these areas as a result of the policy of confrontation defended until then: we are referring to the "cross-border cooperation". However, in spite of this situation, we still find barriers of perception and real differences

between systems and economic, social, political and cultural values of neighboring countries (Schmitt-Egner, 1998). Here, if we classify borders based on relationships that occur between neighboring states, we find ourselves, on the one hand, with "border-edge" characterized by hinder relations and generate conflict and, on the other, "border-cooperation" that works as a bridge to the interrelation and relations common to both sides of the border (Lopez Trigal, 2007). Both situations give a rise to divergent effects on the territory: the first displays a "barrier effect" that prevents workflows and deters any possibility of development and, on the other hand, in the case of the later, it is observed a "contact effect" that enables the cooperation and development of the contiguous spaces (Marrou, 2000).

Currently, there is no doubt that in the European Union (EU) we have the model of "borders-cooperation" and that, therefore, the opening of internal European border spaces on the transit of persons and goods, on the basis of implementation of these cross-border cooperation processes, has been a bet by these territories from once having forgotten to locate in the periphery of the main centers of national power. From the academic point of view, various opinions on this subject arise and, on the one hand, there are all those authors who defend the existence of a number of emerging negative effects as a result of the disappearance of the physical border that causes on the historical organization of border space and their economic relations (agricultural properties, traditional economy of border, clandestine trade movements) and social (relations of kinship, friendship, and etc.) that they gravitated over the border, and they have been modified by the permeability of the infrastructure, the new areas of influence of the department stores and the reorientation of the flows and exchanges (Covas, 1996 and Campesino, 2000). Somewhere between those who indicate harmful or beneficial connotations arising from processes of elimination of different barriers border following the development of the processes of cooperation, we locate those responsible for the disappearance of the Portuguese-Spanish border, not resulted in harmful effects, but that they believe that the border still clearly a dominant area of trade and contact between the two countries for political, fiscal, monetary and cultural systems. These may not disappear in a few years, as in the case of Spain and Portugal, that the great stability and closure between Spanish and Portuguese states persistent centuries make difficult the rapid disappearance of the border in the mind and in the customs of the people (Laborde, 2000). Moreover, they raise the perseverance of a series of obstacles such as the differences in the organizational models of the two states; the absence of a joint cooperation project structured and articulated; the facility to obtain community funds for multiple actions, which in many cases prevents the development of common projects system integrators and structures; the implementation of fragmented structures of cooperation, is said, confinement including hindering resolution everyday problems; the atomization of power and of the development plans in Portuguese territory, where the municipalities hold authority over the territory, limiting cooperation actions in the absence of any entity of higher rank that combine resources and ideas; and the population abandonment of these spaces result of the crisis of rural household livelihood model identifies also as limiting obstacle to cross-border development in last place (Caballero Arencibia, 2009).

At the other part, we find those authors who believe that the removal of the border has been a chance for the implementation underway of different actions of cross-border

cooperation to reinforce and strengthen the relations of all type activities (commercial, industrial, institutional, corporate, and etc.), between the municipalities located in the influence area of the border and, therefore, it allows to enhance the well-being of the residents in these borders nuclei (Merchán Puentes, 2003). As benefits are arising from processes of cross-border cooperation between neighboring municipalities, it is also mentioned the reduction of transaction costs; the implementation of networks which facilitates the information exchange on the areas of common interest (formation of alliances); the limitation of the interregional competition effects; exploitation joint resources - whether natural sources (water, forests, and etc.), or infrastructures and equipments of public ownership (roads, health centers, teams of emergencies, civil protection, education facilities, and etc.) -, that as a result of the underlying sparse population density would be unworkable, without function sharing them (Cappelin, 1993). In tune with this argument, there is a large group of researchers for which cross-border cooperation mechanisms are an option and a crucial process to oppose discrimination, regional no-movements, arrears and fatalist understanding of history, and also it brings advantages, among which we can highlight the "external" promotion of those territories; the identification of needs, bottlenecks and potentials (resources) in common; the establishment on the basis of this diagnosis, a common strategy for action; and the exchange of knowledge and experiences (Ribeiro and Gomes, 2000). There are even some authors who go beyond and they point out that "the cross-border fact has ceased to be something negative, a brake on our development, to become, especially in recent years, in a very positive element, an added richness that joins our regional identity" (Corrales Romero, 2002).

3. EVOLUTION OF THE MAIN PROTOCOLS OF COOPERATION

Considering the importance attached by the EU as a body, the maximum political and economic representation in the community area, the different protocols of cooperation as key elements to reduce socio-economic and territorial imbalances are discernible between the different European regions, in particular of those who have a less favorable situation, as it is the case of the spaces closest to the area of influence of the border. According to the bibliography consulted in relation to this thematic, the significant number of authors already aware of who mentioned the benefits derived from the implementation of such initiatives, particularly in border areas. This work raises an analysis that allows us to evaluate the main protocols addressed in this area so far, through their identifications from the more general scope (European level) to agencies that act directly on a specific border territory, in this case the Spanish and Portugues regions of Extremadura, Alentejo and Centro.

3.1 THE EUROPEAN TERRITORY: GENESIS OF A COMMUNITY SPACE

When we talk about the European territory as the genesis of a community space without barriers, we do them for being the original point where laying down the bases from which arise from the middle of the 20th century, the first initiatives of cooperation between countries, channeled through two institutions with a clear relevance and importance for the further development of the European space, such as the Council of Europe (promoting different legal structures for this purpose) and the European Economic Community (ECC) - EU since 1992 (reinforcing the previous structures through the provision of funds to implement cooperation initiatives). Later, these other entities joined and dedicated to promote the territories of border, such as the Association of European Border Regions

(AEBR), which develops an important work in the field of cooperation between local and regional bodies, and the Assembly of European Regions since 1985 comes dealing with issues directly linked to the progress of interregional cooperation.

3.1.1 THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Council of Europe, founded in 1949, was created with the objective of promoting the EU countries through cooperation among states, with the aim of achieving a common workspace across the Europe. With aware of the need for networks formed by authorities of regional and local cooperation for cross-border, it was created in 1952 as a representative body of European sub-state entities referred to as powers local commission, later known as European Conference of Local Powers (equipped agency statutes by the letter of the Permanent Conference of local powers, 1961). In 1975, the Council of Europe, due to the degree of involvement to the regions in the management of the territory, came to the reform of the Charter of 1961 by adding this new entity of vital importance and interest, and then became known as Permanent Conference of Local and Regional Powers of Europe. To promote the gradual development of the different mechanisms of cross-border cooperation at the European level, the Council established a European Framework Convention on Cross-border Cooperation between Communities or Territorial Authorities (Madrid Agreement, 1980). For what defines this type of collaboration like any concerted activity, it aimed to strengthen and develop the cooperative relations between communities and/or territorial authorities belonging to two or more contracting parties, as well as the conclusion of agreements and appropriate arrangements for this purpose (Article 1). Ultimately, it seeks to promote the commitment of states to set up cross-border cooperation agreements and, in addition, it carries out for the first time the institutionalization of this type of mechanism for cooperation, giving it is legal and pushing them. Initial framework has developed three additional protocols (years of 1995, 1998 and 2009), dealing inter alia with the Constitution of Euro Regional Cooperation Groups, aimed to launch cross-border and inter-territorial cooperation of its members, while respecting the competences and prerogatives in order to remedy the weaknesses identified in the convention.

3.1.2 THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU)

The EU, called earlier as EEC and instituted in 1957 following the signing of the Treaty of Rome, is one of the main pillars in dealing with the processes of cross-border cooperation at the European level following the footsteps of the Council of Europe. The later, it allowed to gain the commitment of states to promote and foster mechanisms for cross-border cooperation in the Europe and to do institutionalizing them, while for its part of the EU supports these processes through various financial instruments aimed at reducing territorial imbalances (European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF), and etc.). For this, it was established a joint regulation for the distribution of community funds, with particular emphasis on obstacles to starting available border spaces in achieving such a territorial balance, to introduce specific community initiatives for these spaces since 1988 (INTERREG, POCTEP, and etc.). In this regard through the implementation of such initiatives, we should prevent socio-economic inequalities and efficiently distribute goods and services (principles of equity and efficiency) in the territory of the community.

In the mid-1980s, it was added to this current approach of some member states of the EU on the possibility of eliminating border controls among member countries and allowed the

free movement of people among them. However, the rest of the countries rejected its approval and only Germany, Belgium, France, Luxembourg and the Netherlands decided to establish a territory without borders through the signing of the Schengen Agreement in 1985, initialed for its final implementation through an agreement of June, 1990 once established the conditions arising in the free movement of persons. From that moment, the rest of states were joining the initiative gradually during the 1990s, finally entering into force in 1995. From the European Treaty of Amsterdam of 1997, the Schengen Convention happened to be integrated into the legal framework and the institutional EU since 1999, forcing the new community members to comply with it and allowing the free movement of persons through the entirety of the internal borders of the EU. As a complement to this agreement, in 1992 through the Maastricht Treaty, the mechanisms for the implementation underway of the common market and monetary union of the European area were laid. Pursuant to this Treaty, a last decisive step, in relation to cross-border cooperation in the EU and the importance of local and regional authorities which already addressed the Council of Europe in this sense, became evident with the creation of the Committee of the Regions in 1994 (an advisory body consisting of representatives of local and regional authorities of the EU).

3.1.2.1 INTERREG (1990-2006)

The INTERREG initiative is a bet specifically centered on the border spaces belonging to the EU with the aim of promoting the integration of the territory of Europe as a whole, addressed as integrated action to support the economic and social development of both sides of the border, contributing to the people living in the rural setting and marking guidelines for growth ordered urban medium within the community market. It is divided into three periods of performance:

- **INTERREG I (1990-1993):** During this first period, it was provided an aid to different border regions (NUTS III located along the internal and external land borders of the EU and some areas adjacent to maritime boundaries), through measures aimed at the promotion of the exchange of information between both sides of the border; the creation of common institutional and administrative structures that will consolidate and promote cooperation; and the planning and joint implementation of cross-border programs.

- **INTERREG II (1994-1999):** In this case, in addition to continuing with the support for the objectives of the previous period with regard to cross-border cooperation, new aids are highlighted and aimed at promoting initiatives pursued at overcoming the problems arising from the isolation of the regions bordering with relationship to the main centers of economic activity in the EU as a sustainable way; as well as the start-up and development of networks of cooperation between border regions entities interiors and connecting these networks with other community of greater entity.

- **INTERREG III (2000-2006):** This last period of the initiative was conceived with the same objectives which set out in the two previous periods, focusing on supporting cross-border cooperation processes; transnational; interregional, being the first that gets higher percentage of funds (if you look at the distribution of funds in this concept based on the Spanish border spaces, the hispano-lusa border is the most significant funds volume (73,2), followed by the border with Morocco (15) and finally the Spanish border with France (11.8)). In particular, for the development of cross-border cooperation processes include actions aimed at the promotion of urban, rural and coastal development; encourage entrepreneurship in SMEs and employment local; the promotion of the integration of the

labor market and social inclusion; the sharing of human resources and facilities for research, technological development, training, communication and transport infrastructures, sanitation, the creation of stable jobs; encourage the protection of the environment; the increase of energy efficiency; the development of the legal and administrative cooperation. Ultimately, the potential human and institutional increase is so that cross-border cooperation could foster economic development and the social cohesion of these spaces.

3.1.2.2 POCTEP (2007-2013)

Operational Program for Cross-border Cooperation in Spain-Portugal (POCTEP), approved by the European Commission in 2007, has been established with a performance period between 2007 and 2013. It continues the path initiated with the INTERREG initiative, but is focused, on this occasion, on a new priority axis as it is the aim of enhancing the European territorial cooperation. In this respect, the priority is given to those actions which are addressed to enhance connectivity and infrastructure of border areas, competitiveness and employment, the strengthening of networks of cooperation in operation and existing economic relations. From the territorial point of view, the POCTEP implements seventeen Spanish and Portuguese border regions and other sixteen regions located with the previous ones, which more than 267 million euros from the Community Fund of ERDF have been earmarked and other 86 million corresponding to the contribution of the two states involved, which are in total 354 million euros for the period 2007 to 2013. The different administrations, entities and government agencies, interested in obtaining funds for activities in this field, must submit their proposals to a certain course of action as follows:

Line-Axis 1: Cooperation and joint management for the promotion of competitiveness and employment promotion: all eligible initiatives aimed at the improvement of regional resources through the promotion of joint structures for innovation and technological development on both sides of the border; the promotion and improvement of public services through the use of information and communication technologies; the promotion of the development of local economies, competitiveness and job creation; and the promotion and enhancement of the links between companies and organizations to better explore the business opportunities in a cross-border context.

Line-Axis 2: Cooperation and joint management in the environment, heritage and risk prevention: it is dedicated to joint actions of planning and is coordinated management of infrastructure and environmental services; the promotion of measures to protect and improve the environment, natural and cultural resources; and support for the planning and management of human and material resources on both sides of the border, for risk prevention and intervention in the event of a disaster.

Line-Axis 3: Cooperation and joint in management of the territory and accessibility: planning and coordination of public transport network on both sides of the border; establishment of logistics and intermodal transport of cross-border infrastructures; shared energy resources use, especially of renewable energy.

Line-Axis 4: Cooperation and joint management for the socio-economic and institutional integration: sharing services social, educational, cultural, sports and leisure in the border areas.

Line-Axis 5: Technical assistance to the cross-border cooperation process: activities of technical assistance for the implementation of the program (management, monitoring, evaluation and control).

If we compare the community funding from the ERDF between 1st and 2nd call, resolved during the years 2009 and 2011 (Table 1), it can be observed as the global game which has gone from 129.5 to 125.5 million euro, in particular the heading devoted to Axis 1 (initiatives aimed at the promotion of competitiveness and job creation) descended to 13.2% (18 million euro), while the amounts, the rest of axes (2, 3 and 4), increased in relation to the previous call, specifically in the axis 2 funds increased to 2.9% (2.4 million euro), in the Axis 3 to 9% (10.7 million euro) and in the axis 4 to 1.3% (1.2 million euro), in all cases arising out of the important drop on axis 1.

Table 1- Comparison with respect to the availability of ERDF funds for axis, scope, and call (POCTEP).

	1 st Call				2 nd Call			
	Spanish and Portuguese Border		Alentejo-Centro-Extremadura		Spanish and Portuguese Border		Alentejo-Centro-Extremadura	
	Amount (Million/EURO)	% total	Amount (Million/EURO)	% total	Amount (Million/EURO)	% total	Amount (Million/EURO)	% total
Axis 1	60.8	46.9	3.5	15.8	42.4	33.8	9.3	23.1
Axis 2	37.9	29.3	12.2	54.5	40.3	32.1	16.3	41.2
Axis 3	18.8	14.5	3.3	15	29.5	23.6	12.4	30.8
Axis 4	11.9	9.3	1.8	8.4	13.2	10.5	2	5
Total	129.5	100	20.8	100	125.5	100	40.3	100

In the specific case, cross-border cooperation areas are formed by the regions of Extremadura, Alentejo and Centro (NUTS III of Caceres and Badajoz in Spanish territory and Beira Interior Sul, Alto Alentejo, Alentejo Central and Baixo Alentejo in Portugal), as a result of two calls for aid resolved by this community body. It had the adoption of 33 actions (the first 12 and 21 in the second), with a total community fund of 64.4 million euro aid. If we compare these figures with the other areas of cooperation identified in the Spanish and Portuguese border space, we can see the group formed by Extremadura, Alentejo and Centro lain in second place in relation to the number of approved projects (36), after the area of Galicia (62), which corresponds to the area with the highest number of approved projects. With regard to the percentage of community funding achieved area of Extremadura, Alentejo and Centro, it presented the highest amount of the whole area (64.4 million euro), followed by the territory of Galicia (62.3 million euro) and the projects of nature multi-regional - called in this way, because they were involved together with institutions and organizations from the different areas of cooperation identified along the Spanish and Portuguese border (51.1 million euro).

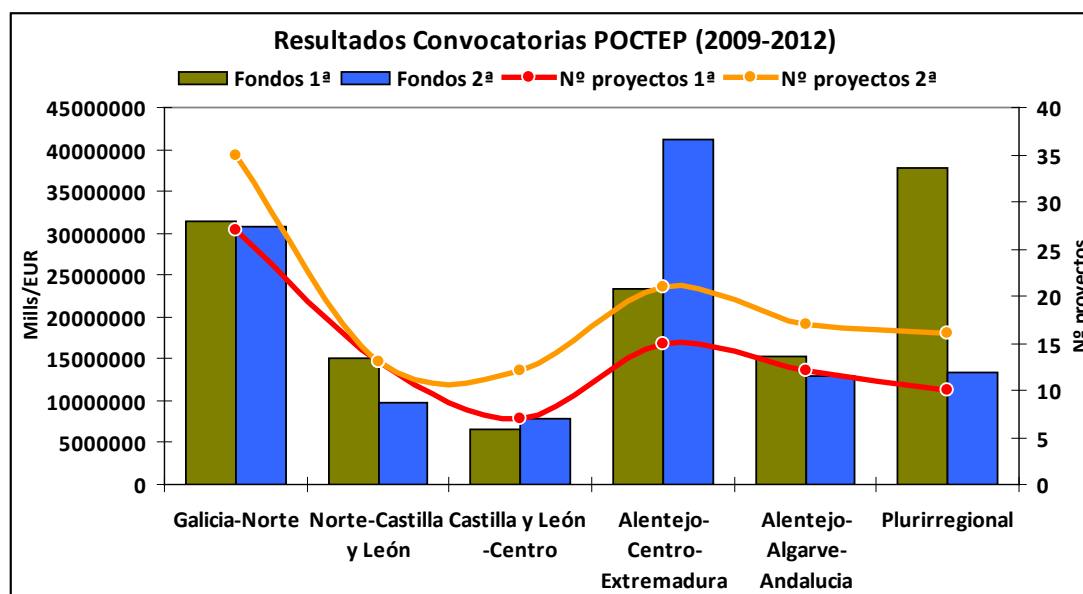


Figure 2 - results of the POCTEP calls for the years 2009 to 2012.

3.2 MAJOR AGREEMENTS IN THE SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE AREA

In the particular case of the Portuguese–Spanish border, we are faced with the most ancient border of Europe, established after the signing of the Treaty of Alcañices between the kingdoms of Castilla y Leon and Portugal in 1293. For centuries, both kingdoms kept divergences on the route initially marked as they outlined different wars, as well as numerous treaties dated until the end of the 19th century (Treaty of Alcañices, 1293), Peace of Lisbon, 1668), Oranges War, Treaty of Badajoz, 1801, and etc.). Finally, the Treaty of Lisbon (1894) definitely set the imaginary line currently recognized border and subdivided both countries. In one or another way, until the beginning of the 20th century, relations between Spain and Portugal are characterized by exposures contrary to the use of the synergies resulting from the cooperation between both territories which historically had influenced negatively on the Spanish and Portuguese border spaces. It will not be until the end of the 1930's, when the first agreement of alliance, through the Friendship and Non-aggression Treaty, signed on 17 March 1939, subsequently supplemented by three additional protocols in 1940, 1948 and 1970 and by the Iberian Pact of 1942, through which agree to the territorial limits of both states after the civil war.

In general, these treaties favored the relations between the two countries. However, they still not be contemplated in any initiatives case on cooperation. Finished dictatorships Spanish and Portugal, it started a new stage since the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, signed in November 1977, stated the intention to maintain relations of good-neighborliness and cooperation through the adoption of measures to promote trade between the two countries. In addition, we have for the first time a section dedicated entirely to the cooperation in the border areas, in particular Article VII where both countries coordinate their efforts to achieve greater and more harmonious socio-economic development of the border areas. Thus, influencing the adoption of measures to facilitate the transit border, they improved channels of communication between these two countries and established a mutual assistance in cases of accidents in the common border regions. A decade later, as a result of income of Spain and Portugal in the European Economic Community in 1986, current EU, the border territories began to acquire a different account

from the one followed until then, to become a border inside the EU and therefore subject to the agreements emanating from the European administrative body in this sense. Both governments of the Convention European Framework on cross-border cooperation between communities or territorial authorities of 1980 known generically as Treaty of Madrid added further ratification in 1990.

In this community area, it also developed two events that led to a strong impact on the relations that aroused along the internal borders of the EU, such as the Schengen Treaty (1985) and the Treaty of Maastricht (1992). Border controls were removed through the same and canceled substantial legal obstacles and administrative (single market), by encouraging the free movement of persons, goods, and services between the two countries and the rest of the union. However, it still remains important obstacles to develop in an effective manner to different entities of Spain and Portugal created on both sides of the border (communities of work, Euro-regions, and etc.) addressed by effective cooperation initiatives, as in the case of Royal Decree 1317/1997, of 1 August, on previous communication to the general administration of the state and official publication of the conventions of cross-border cooperation of autonomous regions and local entities with foreign territorial entities through which the Spanish government obliges all entities involved in cross-border cooperation initiatives, to submit the agreements reached with the other side of the border for its review by the state administration, without being effective until its adoption and publication in the official state bulletin. Also, the decisive step in addressing the process of cross-border cooperation between Spain and Portugal was given in the year of 2002, through the Treaty on Cross-border Cooperation between Entities and Territorial Bodies (Treaty of Valencia). It reflected the concerns mentioned in the 1977 and Treaty and the Framework Convention of 1980, improving deficiencies and marking the legal regulation on cross-border cooperation between territorial actors of Spain and Portugal, delimiting their powers and respecting, at the same time the right of the two states, the community and the international commitments made respectively. Likewise, it has defined the various cooperation agencies with or without legal personality and purpose of each one of them. Therefore, in the relation to the evolution of the process of cross-border cooperation, we should not ignore the recent bilateral agreements on cross-border health cooperation in 2009. The object of them is that residents in border areas can benefit from continuous independent health care if it lies to one side or another of the border, without any type of restrictions, posed a significant improvement of the quality of life of the inhabitants of these territories characterized mostly by low population density and a marked aging.

3.3 INVOLVEMENT IN COOPERATION OF THE ENTITIES LOCATED IN THE BORDER REGIONS OF EXTREMADURA, ALENTEJO AND CENTRO

The process of cross-border cooperation between Extremadura (Spain) and Alentejo and Centro (Portugal) already had a long way behind, even very recent time from which the Extremadura region had its own statute of autonomy adopted in 1983, which is more between the main objectives set therein and is distinguished as a priority objective of Extremadura institutions "pushing the narrowing of human ties" cultural and economic with the neighboring nation of Portugal ", which demonstrates the interest and willingness of the regional administration for closer union on the other side of the border since its inception, continuing during all these years and being reinforced by the membership of the

government of Extremadura and the commissions for coordination and regional development of Alentejo and Centro to the association of European border regions since 1992.

The result of the effort is to boost and promote cross-border cooperation initiatives and to institutionalize this process with neighboring border regions, the Extremadura government signed two key documents to ratify them in the years of 1992 and 1994 respectively, referring to the cooperation protocols signed with the Coordination Commission of the Alentejo and later with the Coordination Committee of Centro. In one way or another, the process of cooperation between Extremadura (Spain region) and Alentejo and Centro (Portugal regions), it was also continued during these years with the signing of new agreements of collaboration in health, environmental, business, environment, civil protection and academic among others, reaching the point more height of this whole process on September 21, 2009, by signing the Convention on Cross-border Cooperation between the Autonomous Community of Extremadura and the Committee on Coordination and Regional Development of Alentejo and the Committee on Coordination and Regional Development of Centro, for the Constitution of the community of work of the Euro-region Alentejo-Centro-Extremadura (EUROACE), under the terms of the signed Treaty between the Kingdom of Spain and the Portuguese Republic on cross-border cooperation between entities and territorial authorities, allowing thereafter work to three regions within a same institutional body which extinguishes previous protocols signing. Likewise, in reference to the process of cross-border cooperation developed between the regions of Extremadura, Alentejo and Centro, it should be noted the recent adoption of the law on the reform of the statute of Extremadura, in which a new article exclusively devoted to the treatment of the cooperation with Portugal, confined next to demonstrate once again the importance that was from the beginning in 1983 and remained for the Extremadura region across the "stripe". However, not only the regional administrations have boosted cross-border cooperation in recent years but also other entities and agencies of different management and scale of performance have emerged in this territorial area (employment, environment, research and development, heritage, and etc.), that they work together in order to overcome the obstacles arising from the border effect and for the socio-economic improvement of the regions of Extremadura, Alentejo and Centro. We currently have a total of nine legally constituted entities as shown in Table 2:

EUROACE: The Euro-region, called Euroace (Euro-region Alentejo-Centro-Extremadura), comes with the fundamental objective of promoting cross-border and interregional cooperation between the three regions, promoting the comprehensive development of their territories and improving the living conditions of its citizens. In this regard, it highlights the development of a strategy called EUROACE 2020 for the coming years. Through this strategy is based on the document submitted by the European commission "Europe 2020" under the main weaknesses identified at European level, the possible lines of action and priority sectors in which should influence the efforts of cross-border cooperation, with the aim of obtaining greater synergies resulting of the geographical proximity of these three regions have been established.

Table 2 - main cooperating agencies located in the area of the border regions of Extremadura and Alentejo and Centro region.

AGENCY	FIELD	MEMBERS	TOP
Euro-region Alentejo-Centro-Extremadura (EUROACE)	Regional	3	2009
AECT Guadiana Central	Local-Provincial	16	2009
Grouping 7x7	Local	14	2008
Community Work Tajo Internacional	Local-Provincial	12	2010
Euro-region ExtremAlentejo	Local	9	2008
Association La Raya-A Raia	Local	9	1993
Cross-border Association Municípios das Terras do Grande Lago de Alqueva	Local	11	2008
Border Iberian Urban Triangle	Local	4	1997
Iberian network of cross-border cooperation entities	Inter-regional	10	2009

AECT Guadiana Central: European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation has set itself the aim of grouping which facilitates and promotes the management of territorial cooperation activities in strategic sectors of social, economic, natural, and/or among others, as well as remedying the problems derived from the existence of different on each side of the border administrative, fiscal and legal procedures.

Grouping 7 x 7: This set of municipalities forms a network of "informal" type that we are not under any of the administrative figures considered in relation to cross-border cooperation. The aim of this network is focused on economic and social development of the Spanish and Portuguese municipalities involved, through participation in calls for European cooperation projects.

Community Work Tajo International: The purpose of this community work focuses on the promotion of balanced and sustainable development of the border area of the Caceres province and the municipalities of Beira Interior Sul and Alto Alentejo in Portugal, mostly located in the vicinity of the Tagus River, through tourism and the natural environment protection.

Euro-region ExtremAlentejo: This community of work deals with joint projects for the benefit of the grouping in order to internationalize companies of their environment. The purpose of the project focuses on the diagnosis of the internationalization of the market, creating shared commercial networks, the implementation of a system to retain the customers, as well as the preparation of promotional material of the initiative in participating municipalities.

Association La Raya-A Raia: The origins of this partnership date back to the year of 1993 when after the implementation of the European Program Leader I, various local action groups located on both sides of the border saw the possibility of working together in cooperation in the border area. Its activities include the holding of an annual fair, located every year on a side of the border; the creation of working groups on different areas (agriculture, tourism and business, and etc.); making a socio-economic database on the territory of action and promoting cross-border cooperation with young people and the elders.

Cross-border Association Municípios das Terras do Grande Lago de Alqueva: Its scope is limited to the environment of the Alqueva Lake, to promote cross-border cooperation and develop the border space next to the lake, through different actions. Others include those aimed at the sustained and balanced development of the territory; logistical capabilities of coastal peoples; promoting the articulation of the territory through the water; and

expanding and diversifying the tourism offer of the environment.

Border Iberian Urban Triangle: These groups of cities are considered European grouping of economic interest with the aim of promoting economic and social development of the same through cross-border cooperation programs implemented by the EU. With this initial approach, members of the Association Councils established a series of challenges in various areas of work (culture, business, tourism, and etc.).

Iberian network of cross-border cooperation entities: This cross-border network took its first steps in June 2009 in the city of Cáceres, with the intention of bringing together different agencies working on cross-border cooperation in the context of the Portuguese–Spanish border, and became a decisive body in this sense, against the governments Spanish and Portuguese as well as the EU. Through what is concerning the main objectives set by the members of the network, we can highlight the interest to promote a space for reflection on the role of cross-border organizations in the development of the Iberian cooperation and visibility at European level; develop a strategy of working on cross-border issues of European interest, in general, and on the Spanish and Portuguese border, in particular.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Firstly, the conclusion emphasizes the analysis of the main protocols and treaties of cross-border cooperation at all levels and as well as the main financial instruments put in place from these and managed by different entities and authorities located in the European border environment, which have suffered a progressive since the mid-20th century evolution, starting from the larger scales to the closest level which is for the citizen (European - National – Regional - Local) derived to a large extent to the commissioning of the first which has been laying the foundations for the latter, which in every year the number of joint activities has been increasing, and what is more important as regional and local administrations has taken, at the expense of state structures. In this sense, since the entry started into the force of the framework convention of 1980 and the Treaty of Valencia in 2004, the states of Spain and Portugal have signed a total of twenty-nine cooperation agreements of which fourteen have been signed between local entities and fifteen do among regional entities. On the other hand, we must also mention the different initiatives and projects made under these agreements and supported by community funds (INTERREG, POCTEP, and etc.), which have largely managed a breakthrough to reduce socio-economic imbalances identified between the various European regions and strengthened territorial cohesion, particularly the border areas, striving to increase the well-being of the residents in these territories. However, although the various initiatives and cooperation programs are underway more than thirty years, nowadays they even remain different obstacles in a way or another to the complete development of the various processes initiated in the European context, with the objective of eliminating the disadvantages arising from the border effect and that we can contrast in the specific case of the Spain and Portugal regions of Extremadura, Alentejo and Centro (fiscal, postal locks, different administrative structures, infrastructure and facilities, public transport, and etc.). Finally, with contrary to what you might think, we want to see the need to continue betting for the elimination of disadvantages such a European policy that recognizes the everyday real problems facing the inhabitants of these territories, through the perception of these. In the majority of cases, it linked to the shared use of facilities, services optimization, and homogenization of the contributive and fiscal system (implementation of business activities), so that these spaces can be truly competitive in the European context.

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