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THE ROLE OF THE HUMAN ELEMENT

Informal interpersonal relations often play a key role in the establishment of partnerships and structured institutional projects.

Certain players are naturally positioned as intermediaries between potential partners, fostering communication and exchanges of information and helping to organise meetings and joint working sessions. Initially, small numbers of partners are brought together in order to foster an understanding of each other's methods and establish priorities for action. Once it has been firmly established, the partnership can potentially be opened up to a wider range of players, including entities on the other side of the border if some operators have specific linguistic and intercultural skills.

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Cross-border cooperation is thus strongly dependent on the human element – i.e. awareness-raising, and even strong determination, on the part of certain key individuals at the outset.

And yet, the increased mobility of staff amplifies the phenomenon of turnover – which, although it provides new competences, causes the loss of knowledge and know-how acquired through cross-border experience.

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## “FUNCTIONAL” GOVERNANCE

Finally, the very nature of the globalised economy, in the European context of the single market, calls for governance with variable geometry that is flexible and evolves over time – “functional” governance (or Type II governance, to use the categorisation employed by Hooghe and Marks),<sup>122</sup> rather than institutional (Type I) governance. It is natural to choose this type of governance in a cross-border context. The need for flexibility necessitates the implementation of exchange platforms and limited-term agreements between players, etc., rather than the use of legal frameworks and the establishment of permanent ad hoc structures.

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The territory portraits show that configurations of economic development partnerships differ greatly from one country to the next, with links between territorial authorities, chambers of commerce and industry and economic development agencies varying in terms of both their strength and the extent to which they are formalised.

¹²² Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, *Types of Multi-Level Governance*, Les Cahiers européens de Sciences Po, No 03/2002 (www.cee.sciences-po.fr/erpa/docs/wp_2002_3.pdf)