

# EGTC GO goes for an “integrated territorial investment” for the interreg italy-slovenia programme!

EGTC GO was established in 2011 on the Italian-Slovenian border to enable joint strategic programming for the area of the three participating municipalities. One of its main goals was to develop a cross-border local development plan - the EGTC GO Area Strategy. With the new legal possibility for a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) to become an intermediate body for the integrated territorial investment (ITI), the EGTC GO and the Task Force of the Italy-Slovenia 2014-2020 Cross-border Cooperation Programme recognised their chance to jointly work on sustainable development of the area. Sandra Sodini, Director of the EGTC GO, provides an overview of the benefits that the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation offers to its members.

By Aleksandra Rapp, Project Manager, and Mauro Novello, Coordinator, INTERACT



Credit: EGTC GO

## What does the Interreg Italy-Slovenia programme expect from the ITI managed by the EGTC GO?

Laura Comelli (Managing Authority)  
*“We hope the ITI creates a framework for a stable and strategic cooperation in an urban area which currently is divided by a border. At the same time, it is a pilot project which can be hopefully replicated in the current and future programming periods.”*

Tatjana Renner (Monitoring Committee Member)  
*“After years of sporadic cooperation, though certainly important from the point of view of neighbourhood relations, we are finally seeing a strengthening of relations between the communities joined in EGTC GO. EGTC managed to design a long-term cross-border strategy for the benefit of citizens that are divided by administrative borders. A certain amount of funds was allocated to the EGTC GO for the implementation of two priority actions through the new mechanism ITI within the Cooperation Programme IT-SI 2014-2020. Hence, the Programme (still in a draft stage) first responded to the clear needs of the functionally connected urban areas, and secondly decided to test a true EU principle of multi-level governance. Now, it's up to all players involved, not just of the EGTC GO partnership, to justify the practical solutions of the intensified cooperation.”*

Flavia Zuccon (Monitoring Committee Member)  
*“Both the choices to have an ITI and an intermediate body to manage it were political decisions. The ITI financial size goes beyond the scale of a pilot project. A multi-funds approach using ETC and Investment for Growth and jobs programmes, under the urban policy, would have been more apt. The projects outlined inside the ITI proposal do not show a strategy, yet. The challenge is to demonstrate, also to the stakeholders, that it can produce positive effects on the overall programme area and that it won't be a totally separated sub-programme.”*

## EGTC GO exists for already 3 years - what does it mean to be an EGTC?

In case of our EGTC which was established by three municipalities governing three “facing cities” it means:

- To be a unique point of governance of cross-border matters for citizens and institutions, instead of the piecemeal approach we had in the past;
- To be a point of discussion, comparison and solution of problems effecting EGTC territory thanks to the Assembly and the Committees, where Italian and Slovenian representatives participate in a balanced way and thus are perceived as a common body;
- To be an innovative tool to provide new perspectives and a new cultural approach towards common challenges: to improve the life of citizens in a concrete way.

**That sounds impressive. With such a background, involving EGTC GO into the implementation of the Italy-Slovenia 2014-2020 Cross-border Cooperation Programme must have come quite naturally. How did the idea of EGTC GO being responsible for management and implementation of an ITI for that programme actually start?**

The life and the economy of the three cities have been influenced by the border for 60 years. When Slovenia joined the European Union, no one imagined that the fall of the border meant the end of an economic and social model. Therefore, to meet the challenge of common growth, it was necessary to act on more objectives in order to integrate the two territories.

An ITI represented the integrated delivery mechanism of this challenge, being able to act on the necessity of sharing services, of strengthening the economic potentials and of exploiting the common cultural and natural heritage of the EGTC GO area.

An ITI concept is not included either in the Italian or Slovenian Partnership Agreements since the individual Cooperation Programmes of the European Territorial Cooperation objective do not constitute part of them. However, the ITI is mentioned in the document (draft version) of the Cooperation Programme Italy Slovenia 2014-2020 in Section 4 “Integrated Approach to Territorial Development” with Reference to Article 8(3) of ETC Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013. Moreover, the EGTC GO is mentioned in the Joint Declaration signed by the two governments on 27 May 2014, as a “pilot case in building joint and sustainable development of urban area composed of three towns”.

## How did the EGTC’s preparation process for being involved in implementation of the ITI look like? How did it start?

Three main pillars have been taken into consideration when finalizing the EGTC GO Area Strategy:

- Capitalisation of the two European programming periods of the Italy - Slovenia Programme, in order to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of public investments;
- Revitalisation of the “border economy” - thanks to an innovative approach converting the point of strengths of the area;

*“Only a qualitative leap in cross-border planning can lead to the achievement of tangible results and with the ITI we are ready to GO for it! ”*

Sandra Sodini  
 Director of the EGTC GO

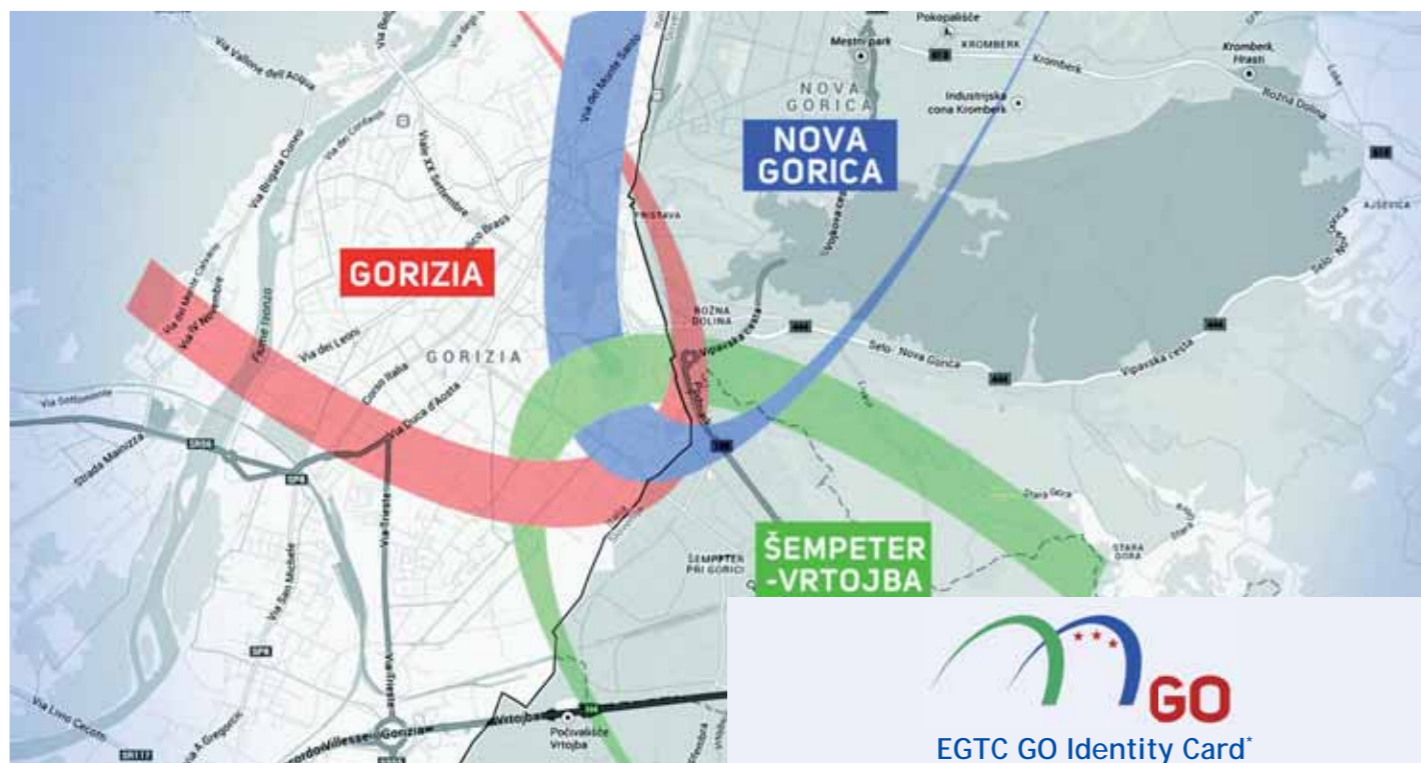
- Growth of joint local services to the citizens of the three municipalities, enhancing the excellence of the territory.

On the basis of these three pillars, EGTC GO started to work concretely taking advantage of the “work on the field” developed by its Committees (Health, Culture, Energy, Urban Planning, Youth, Transport). From late April to November 2012, we carried out the first public consultation of the three citizenships called “Your voice in the EGTC GO”. Next, the results were presented during a public conference in the framework of the “Open Days - Local event” still in 2012. After that, we collected all the feedback from local public and private stakeholders and elaborated the document “Objectives, actions and planning proposals for the EU Programming Period and the establishment of the Strategic Plan”. It was accepted unanimously by the EGTC GO Assembly

in November 2013 and presented officially a month later to the President of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region and the President of the Republic of Slovenia, on the occasion of the Opening Ceremony of the EGTC GO Premises in Gorizia.

On the basis of the Strategic Plan endorsed by the Assembly, EGTC GO started to elaborate the pilot actions in accordance with the public authorities. We decided to go for a strong participatory approach. In June 2014, EGTC GO formally asked the Task Force of the OP to present the Strategic Plan on one of the Task Force meetings. In July 2014 we got the confirmation from them and from that moment together we were working on implementing it within the ITI. In September 2014, the Task Force officially decided to take the idea on board.






**How did the Member States participating in the programme react?**

The decision to include an ITI by EGTC GO was deeply discussed at several Task Force meetings. The positions of the members were various: some were absolutely against, some in favour. In the end, considering the high added value and the innovative approach of the work performed by EGTC GO, the Task Force decided to allocate 10 million euro for the realisation of the pilot actions connected to two of the three measures of the strategy. That allocation was the result of a negotiation between EGTC GO and the Task Force of the Cooperation Programme, taking into account the pilot actions to be performed. EGTC GO operation may represent the first “EU cross-border laboratory” to understand the real value of the tools provided by the new EU regulations in achieving the objectives of the 2020 Strategy.

**So summing up, what in your opinion was the key success factor for including the EGTC in the implementation of the ITI in the programme?**

The awareness at all decision-making levels! Everyone is aware that in the previous programming period interventions got fragmented into single projects that were carried out without a real cross-border strategy of the area covered by the EGTC GO. Only a qualitative leap in cross-border planning can lead to the achievement of tangible results and with the ITI we are ready to GO for it!



**Members:** Gorizia (IT), Nova Gorica (SLO) and Šempeter-Vrtojba (SLO)

**Headquarters:** Gorizia (Italy); temporarily c/o Informest

**Operative office:** Gorizia (Italy); Trgovski Dom, Corso Verdi 52

**Established:** 2011

**Duration:** unlimited

**Objectives:** Supporting and developing the territorial cooperation programmes aimed to reinforce territorial and social cohesion in different fields: energy, environment, transport, culture and tourism, urban planning. Main task of the EGTC is the strategic coordination of development policies related to the metropolitan area.

**Legislation:** Italian

**Juridical form:** Recognised non-profit association with juridical personality operating under public law

**Territorial jurisdiction:** Members’ territory; Participation to the EGTC is open to other public institutions or operating under public law as ‘associated members’ - conditions settled by the Assembly

**Working languages:** Italian and Slovenian

**Webpage:** [www.euro-go.eu](http://www.euro-go.eu)

Source: “EGTC Monitoring Report 2013. Towards the New Cohesion Policy”, Committee of Regions

**Do you have any recommendations for other EGTCs that would like to be involved in ITI?**

- Work on a territorial strategy connected to real needs through a strong participatory approach;
- Convert strategy into concrete territorial actions with clear results and indicators;
- In order to achieve results within the EU programming period, go for operations whose decision-making process depends on local actors.



Credit: European Parliament

# mercedes bresso

She has an impressive background. For example, she served as President of the Province of Turin and President of the Piedmont Region, both in Italy. She held the Presidency of the Committee of Regions, being the first woman ever in reaching this achievement. In July 2014 she was elected Member of the European Parliament in Italy. Under these lines, Mercedes Bresso shares with us some aspects of the new European parliamentary term.

By Laura Belenguer, INTERACT Valencia

**You are an expert in environmental economics, having published many books and essays. How did you end up in the European field?**

I would prefer to say that from the beginning I wanted to be active at the European level. In both my academic and political career, my commitment to Europe has been absolutely central. One of the first books I wrote, in 1979, a few years after becoming professor for Economics and Environmental Economics at the Faculty of engineering in Torino was about the structural policy of the European Communities. 1979! It was the real beginning of the European structural policies after the founding of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in 1975. I wrote this book with other authors but one can see that already back in 1979, I was focused on the European topic and especially on structural policies.

At the same time as an environmental economic expert, I have the certitude that our European continent is the best framework for the economy to develop its full potential. Ecological policies cannot be efficient if they are created inside national borders since resources, such as groundwater tables, don’t know national borders. I love my region - that’s why I have been President of the Region Piemont- but I always understood that the future of Europe lays in the subsidiarity and our capacity to integrate the local level of political action within the European mechanisms.

**Working on bringing Europe closer to society is a constant in your career. In this sense, how would you like to address this objective in your work as a MEP?**

I truly understand the growing critique of people saying that Europe creates too much regulation. From my point of view as a legislative actor I don’t think this is always the case because we are working on very concrete issues which make the life of European citizens better. Maybe these issues are too specific like the power of light bulbs or the size of some vegetables. Nevertheless, this is the perception of the majority and we have to act to change. Otherwise, all the efforts since 1957 will be sunk in a massive Europhobic wave.

As a MEP I have two concerns. The first one is to make my work understandable by the majority and to keep in mind that every report or project that will become a European law needs to have a direct effect on the population. The European Union will earn more credibility through concrete actions and a better communication of what Europe is and does for its citizens. The second key factor is re-orientating the direction that Europe is taking. For many people the European Union is perceived only as an economic alliance and this is obviously a problem because the European Union is far more than that. We need to re-write the European project in order to make it understood and truly accepted by the population.

**Interreg just became Goal 2 of the Cohesion Policy. In your long experience, you have witnessed the evolution of Territorial Cooperation. How do you see its role in the 2014-2020 period?**

Interreg becoming Goal 2 of the Cohesion Policy was a big step forward because territorial and cross-border cooperation was beginning to be taken seriously by the European Commission. In the EU 28, more than 62% of the territory of the EU is in the cross-border zone, which means all have connections -economic, social, political or cultural bindings with the neighbour country or region. Making the continent more united and coherent is mainly to not suppress the differences but to suppress the negative side-effects of still having borders. Cooperation is about solidarity and understanding, values we absolutely need in this period of political, social and economic crisis.

**Interreg should be more present in the political debates. How do you think this can be achieved in the specific debates at the European Parliament?**

2014 and 2015 are two years that are crucial for Interreg and broadly for the territorial and cross-border policies of the Union. In 2014, the Parliament judged the last programming period and gave recommendations for the next programming period. One focus will be to push forward the Goal 2 of the Cohesion Policy because especially in times of crisis the synergies created between regions can bring better results than the action at a local level in a national context. As former president of the Committee of the Regions, I will especially focus on this issue.