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PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS FOR CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION IN THE CZECH-SLOVAK BORDERLAND

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Abstract. This article explores the evolution, legal frameworks, and institutional structures of cross-border cooperation (CBC) between the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic from the early 1990s through the 2020s. It addresses two central research questions: the emergence of dominant institutional formats for CBC, and the identification of best practices for cooperation among public institutions. Drawing on comparative legal analysis, empirical evidence from Euroregions and EGTCs, and recent academic literature, the study reveals the persistence of structural challenges alongside innovative local initiatives. While Euroregions have been instrumental in managing small-scale projects and fostering cultural and environmental ties, the establishment of European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs) has introduced new strategic potential—albeit with uneven implementation. The findings highlight the influence of EU cohesion policy, national legal traditions, and administrative capacity on CBC outcomes. Recommendations emphasize the need for institutional reinforcement, sustainable financing, and closer coordination among regional stakeholders.

Key words: cross-border cooperation, Euroregions, EGTC, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, local government, EU Cohesion Policy, regional development.

Introduction. The national legislation in Central European countries, including Ukraine, permits various institutional forms for cross-border cooperation (CBC) among public institutions, which are the primary actors in this collaboration, in accordance with international norms. The institutions and practices of CBC, formed under different historical and political conditions, take into account the political, legal, socio-economic, and ethnocultural differences among various regions in Europe, including personal (ideological, technocratic, and mental) characteristics of the political leaders involved in these processes, and therefore can be perceived as unique. On the other hand, the international legal norms developed primarily by the Council of Europe (CoE) and the European Union (EU) aim to facilitate integration into the European market and other related areas and policies. This, in turn, could lead to a degree of unification among the various types of institutions involved in CBC. This trend is particularly pronounced in Central European countries, which have been confronting two key challenges since the 1990s and continue to do so today. Firstly, they are addressing the legacy of path dependency from the socialist era. Secondly, they are working towards integration into European common spaces and policies, including the Regional Cohesion Policy. Moreover, these efforts are made more complex by latent ethnic conflicts stemming from the presence of minorities in border regions, as well as the emerging threats posed by the rise of populism and conservatism.

Research goals. The primary objectives of this research initiative are to create a comprehensive institutional map of cross-border cooperation (CBC) between the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic, as well as to identify and analyze exemplary practices for effective interaction between public institutions in both countries. This involves a thorough examination of existing governmental structures, policies, and collaborative frameworks that facilitate transnational cooperation.

The first research question we seek to answer is as follows: *Has a dominant type of institution for cross-border cooperation between the Czech and Slovak Republics been formed during the 1990s to 2020s?*

The second research question can be formulated as follows: *What best practices for interaction between public structures can be identified in the Czech-Slovak cross-border area?*

State of the art and the methodology of cross-border institutional research. Without concentrating research efforts on analysing and systematising the diverse concepts of CBC, we will use the methodology only as a tool for analysing its institutional aspects. Researchers and practitioners commonly define *cross-border cooperation*, based on the CoE's definition of the "transfrontier co-operation" as the process of fostering and developing positive relationships between "communities, authorities or bodies exercising local and regional functions" from the different parts of the shared border (Council of Europe. (1980). European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation). This cooperation aims to address and prevent common challenges while promoting harmonious development in neighbouring communities, districts, and regions. Our research focuses exclusively on cooperation between regions and communities of the Czech and Slovak Republics.

The methodology of *Borderland studies* proposed in this research focuses on cross-border areas that require analytical exploration across four spheres. 1) economic and trade interaction; 2) political activities of various levels of government in territories adjacent to borders; 3) political influences exerted on the inhabitants of cross-border regions by various political actors; 4) the local political culture of the residents (Brunet-Jailly, 2005). In particular, from an academic perspective, a holistic view of cross-border development has been put forward by promoting the concept of *bordering*, which emphasises the socio-political aspects of borders. Bordering is a daily practice of constructing various kinds of borders between communities/groups, using ideologies, discourses, political institutions, relationships, and other political phenomena. Recognizing this reality, EU institutions consider the socio-political significance of reducing border effects in the formulation of Cohesion, Neighbourhood, and Enlargement policies (Scott, 2015).

The study of CBC draws on *multi-level governance*, *Europeanization theory*, and *regional development frameworks* (Perkmann, 2003; Scott, 1999). The *concept of soft spaces* (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2009) helps to understand the flexible institutional arrangements like Euroregions and EGTCs. Authors such as Böhm (2016) and Halás (2005) emphasize the adaptive capacity of post-communist states to EU spatial policies, especially in border zones.

Between 2014 and 2017, empirical research focused on organizing data for 61 active Euroregions and proposed a set of key institutional forms for cross-border cooperation at EU borders. The list is as follows:

1. *official contacts* between the governing institutions of communities/districts/regions as the sub-national levels of governance;
2. *informal contacts* between the aforementioned governing institutions and other actors of cross-border cooperation;
3. *common events* for the actors of cross-border cooperation: conferences, seminars, round tables, fairs, and other promotional events;
4. *bilateral or multilateral agreements* on key areas of cooperation between the governing institutions of border territories of neighbouring countries and/or the establishment of joint management structures;
5. *institutionalised forms – organisations – of cross-border cooperation between public institutions*: Euroregions, European groupings of territorial cooperation (EGTC), Euroregional Cooperation Grouping (ECG);
6. *institutionalised forms of cross-border cooperation (organisations) between private actors or public-private partnerships*: cross-border clusters, industrial parks, hubs, cross-border functional areas, special economic zones, priority development areas (Durà et al. 2018; Noferini et al., 2019).

As it is evident from the above-mentioned list, public institutions of European countries (mainly governments of regions, counties, communes) apply or could apply the following advanced institutional cross-border cooperation formats:

1. **Euroregions** as associations of subnational authorities, sometimes with the participation of national governments. Euroregions are not a single legal entity but associations of legal entities – community/district/regional public authorities – that operate under the «umbrella» of the national part of the particular euroregion. These CBC institutions do not possess political authority but instead deal with the practical facilitation of cross-border activities and projects, including providing consulting services to the public authorities that are their founders. Euroregions function as cross-border organisations, equipped with a permanent secretariat and a technical and management team that has the capacity to secure its own resources. Cooperation within Euroregions occurs both vertically, with European institutions as well as regional and local authorities, and horizontally, among the organization's participants and similar structures.

Given the broad approach to understanding the essence of euroregions, there is a research perspective that this term encompasses both "classic" Euroregions and also includes Eurodistricts and Eurocities (Noferini et al. 2019; Rodil-Marzábal, 2022). The major international legal act that regulates the activity of Euroregions is already mentioned European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities, the so called Madrid Convention, concluded on 21 May 1980 and two additional Protocols (Council of Europe. ETS – No. 159., 1995; Council of Europe. ETS – No. 169., 1998).

2. **European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)** as a single legal entity with full legal responsibility established by public institutions (communal, county and regional self-governments, regional/local development agencies, public enterprises, universities and other public law entities) from different states. EGTC has to be registered on the territory of the EU member state. The rules for setting up and operating an EGTC were laid down by Regulations of the European Parliament and of the Council in 2006-2013 (European Parliament & Council (2006). Regulation (EC) No. 1082/2006 on a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC); European Parliament & Council (2013). Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 amending Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006).

3. **Euroregional Co-operation Grouping (ECG)**, similar to EGTC, is a type of cross-border cooperation institutional format; however, ECG is a CoE tool operating on the basis of the already mentioned European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation, mainly its additional Protocol No. 3 (Council of Europe. ETS – No. 206., 2009). Like EGTC, ECG is a legally recognised organisation and is subject to the national law of the state in which it is registered as a nonprofit. ECG must be registered on the CoE member state's territory. As of yet, no working ECG is present.

In one of the previous publications, it was argued that the primary political factor influencing the design of institutions and the politico-administrative practices of cross-border cooperation in Central European countries—both during their preparations to join the EU and after they became part of the single European space—is the conditions for obtaining and managing funding from European Union programs and funds (Lendel, 2024). This is especially relevant within the framework of the EU's Cohesion policy. This support is considered by local actors of cross-border cooperation as perhaps the main opportunity to reduce the effects of peripheral status in relation to national centres, which receive more public investments from the budget and are more attractive to private investors. Consequently, in some cases, local actors are more interested in collaborating with partners on the other side of the border rather than with national governments, which in turn raises concerns among the latter, especially in the context of Central Europe.

The division of Czechoslovakia created two separate legal and administrative frameworks for the Czech and Slovak Republics, leading to institutional fragmentation. Jerabek et al. (2021) emphasize that the initial decades after independence were marked by divergent legal interpretations and

unsynchronized administrative procedures, complicating cross-border initiatives. Although both countries ratified international agreements such as the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation (their domestic legal adaptations remain only partially harmonized).

The effectiveness of CBC heavily depends on the capacity of local and regional institutions. Böhm (2016) and Jerabek et al. (2021) describe chronic issues related to limited staffing, lack of financial resources, and insufficient expertise in managing EU funding schemes such as Interreg. These shortages affect the ability to maintain project continuity and strategic planning, especially in smaller municipalities (Zenka, 2015). Moreover, frequent political turnovers lead to a loss of institutional memory, further weakening administrative performance (Böhm, 2016).

Halás (2005) points out that overlapping competencies among municipal, regional, and national bodies often cause delays and inefficiencies. This gap generates legal uncertainty for local and regional authorities aiming to establish joint projects and formal agreements. Perkmann (2003) notes that such challenges are common across European borders, where national sovereignty and complex multi-level governance structures often obstruct effective cross-border governance.

Results and discussion. The first research question we will seek to answer is: *Has a dominant type of institution for cross-border cooperation between the Czech and Slovak Republics been formed during the 1990s to 2020s?*

After the Velvet Revolution in 1989 and the peaceful dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1993, both countries retained cooperative ties across their shared border. Jerabek et al. (2021) note that, for example, the region between Moravia and Western Slovakia was historically cohesive and experienced uninterrupted socio-economic exchange even after the state split.

In both the Czech and the Slovak Republics, local and regional self-governments as public entities play a central role in cross-border cooperation (CBC). The legal foundation for CBC is based on already mentioned Madrid Convention which both countries ratified. Their legal authority to engage in such cooperation stems from national constitutional frameworks, specific legislative acts, and EU regulations. The decentralization processes following 1989 and EU accession in 2004 further enhanced the autonomy and legal competencies of subnational entities.

Specifically, the Constitution of the **Czech Republic** (1993), in Chapter Seven, recognizes the existence of self-governing regions and municipalities/communities. It establishes a framework for their autonomy in both domestic and international matters. Cross-border cooperation between subnational authorities operates within this framework, provided it respects national sovereignty and adheres to international treaties (The Constitution of the Czech Republic, 1992).

The primary legal framework governing cross-border cooperation (CBC) is Act No. 129/2000 Coll. on Regions (Regional Establishment). This law explicitly permits self-governments of regions (*kraje*) to engage in international cooperation, which includes the ability to enter into agreements with foreign partners, as stated in Section 66 (Zákon č. 129/2000 Sb. Zákon o krajích (krajské zřízení)).

Obce (municipalities, communities) operate under Act No. 128/2000 Coll. on Municipalities. Local governments may establish international partnerships, sister-city relations, or joint projects, particularly with towns across borders. They can also co-finance CBC initiatives (Zákon č. 128/2000 Sb. Zákon o obcích (obecní zřízení)).

Researchers highlight that legal provisions directly authorize regions and municipalities/communities to sign agreements with foreign partners and to join mutual public institutions. The legislation allows regions and municipalities to create a single legal entity in partnership with entities from other countries, provided there is a relevant international treaty ratified by the national parliament of the Czech Republic. In other situations, it is necessary to consult with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and obtain consent from the Ministry of the Interior. Additionally, there is a legal requirement for the Ministry of Regional Development of the Czech Republic to oversee the registration and approval of public authorities' and other public institutions' participation in European Groupings of Territorial

Cooperation (EGTCs). This requirement presents an extra challenge to the institutional development of cross-border cooperation (CBC) (Bohm, Drapela, 2021; Halás (2005)).

The Constitution of the **Slovak Republic** (1992), Title Four, guarantees the right of self-government to *obce* (municipalities, communities) and higher territorial units – *kraje* (regions), granting them legal personality and fiscal autonomy (Constitution of Slovak Republic, 1992).

The legal basis for CBC is provided through Act No. 369/1990 Coll. on Municipal Establishment that enables *obce* (municipalities, communities) to cooperate with foreign municipalities and regions, including the creation of cross-border associations, or signing agreements (Zákon č. 369/1990 Zb. Zákon Slovenskej národnej rady o obecnom zriadení).

The legal framework for CBC at the regional level was established a decade later due to the political challenges faced by the Slovak Republic until 1998. During this period, the central government was hesitant to allow decentralization, which is why support for paradiplomacy and other forms of CBC at this level of governance has been limited.. It was only in 2001 that it was established that the self-governance of higher territorial units (*kraje* – regions) could engage in cross-border relations, sign cooperation agreements, and participate in international organizations or projects that serve the public interest (Zákon č. 302/2001 Z. z. Zákon o samospráve vyšších územných celkov (zákon o samosprávnych krajocho).

The legal data shows that both countries have a strong foundation for local and regional cross-border cooperation. However, Czech legislation provides more explicit procedural mechanisms for agreements and oversight. In contrast, Slovak law focuses on functional autonomy, which is often complemented by guidelines from government ministries. Moreover, in Slovakia, inter-municipal and inter-regional cooperation is formally grounded in Article 66 of the Constitution, which supports associations focused on local and regional development. In practice, these partnerships include not only joint offices but also co-ownership arrangements, shared service agreements, and experimental formats such as SMART city collaborations (Hasprová et al., 2012; Hulst & van Montfort, 2017).

Between 1990 and the 2000s, local authorities in the Czech Republic and Slovakia used their administrative powers to establish three Euroregions along their shared border, one of which was in cooperation with the subnational levels of government from Austria (*Table 1*). As noted in the theoretical analysis, this represents one of the most institutionalized forms of CBC between public entities.

The establishment of Euroregions began in Czechia along the borders with Poland and Germany between 1991 and 1993. However, similar structures on the Slovak side of the border were only able to be formed after 1998 due to political and institutional delays (Halás, 2007). That is the reason why the first Euroregion Pomoraví – Záhorie – Weinviertel was under institutionalization for two years between 1997 and 1999.

Due to the absence of regions and a corresponding degree of self-governance in the Czech Republic during the 1990s, there were no Czech co-founders of Euroregions from public institutions of this nature. However, following the establishment of regional governance in 2000–2001, *kraj* (regions) were invited to engage in Euroregion activities, initially participating as observers.

Table 1

The list of Euroregions established on the Czech-Slovak borderland

Name of Euroregion	Year	States who subnational authorities are co-founders of Euroregions
Pomoraví – Záhorie – Weinviertel (from 2021 – Pomoravi)	1997–1999	The Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, the Republic of Austria
Beskydy	2000	The Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic. The Republic of Poland
Bílé-Biele Karpaty	2000	The Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic

Source: Sites of Euroregions <https://regionbeskydy.cz/euroregion-beskydy/euroregion-beskydy>, <https://www.regionbilekarpaty.cz/introduction>, <https://somjm.webnode.cz/>

In terms of their legal status, the Euroregions functioning in this area operate as 'mirror' non-profit associations of municipalities. These associations are registered within the jurisdictions of the participating states and are governed by an agreement that establishes the Euroregion, along with its statutes and governing bodies. The entities involved in this context comprise the general assembly, the board of directors, the supervisory board, the secretariat, and the working groups (Euroregion Beskydy, Euroregion Bílé-Biele Karpaty, Euroregion, Euroregion Pomoravi).

After the formation of *kraj* (region) as the territorial level of administration in the Czech Republic in 2000, as well as the inclusion of the EGTC format into national legislation after EU regulations some regions took this opportunity to establish this institutional type of CBC (European Parliament & Council, 2006; European Parliament & Council, 2013).

As of May of 2025, according to the list of EGTCs, published by European Committee of Regions there were three EGTCs operating on the Czech-Slovak borderland (European Committee of Regions 14/05/2025 List of European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). Unfortunately, it was not possible to find a website about EGTC Spoločný región limited. Regarding the EGTCs TRITIA and Great Morava, both are registered in the Slovak Republic due to its more favourable legal environment for implementing European Community regulations concerning EGTCs.

According to the Slovak legislature the members of EGTC can be the Slovak Republic, a self-governing region, a municipality, a legal entity under specific legislation with its registered office in the Slovak Republic, an association of legal entities made up of either of state, regions or municipalities (Act No. 90/2008 Coll. on a European grouping of territorial cooperation).

Euroregions in the Czech-Slovak borderland, as voluntary associations, are primarily composed of municipalities and communities. In contrast, EGTCs are established by regions. For instance, the EGTC Great Moravia was formed in 2022 through a collaboration between the South Moravian Region of Czechia and the Trnava Region of Slovakia. This initiative came nearly ten years after the creation of the EGTC TRITIA, which was also founded by the Moravian-Silesian region of the Czech Republic, the Žilina Self-Governing region of Slovakia, and the Silesian and Opole regions of Poland.

EGTCs (European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation) differ from Euroregions in several key ways. They possess legal personality, have dedicated staff, established budgets, and defined decision-making structures. Böhm (2014) provides a thorough analysis of the internal structure of EGTC TRITIA, highlighting its budgetary framework, which combines financial contributions from member regions and utilizes EU funds to implement joint initiatives. However, Böhm also points out the coordination challenges that arise due to differing national administrative traditions and legal systems. These differences necessitate ongoing negotiation and adaptation. Additional barriers persist in harmonizing national laws, simplifying funding processes, and addressing the varying strengths of institutions across member bodies.

Table 2

European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation with the participation of public institutions from the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic

Name of EGTS	Year	States who subnational authorities are co-founders of euroregions	Official websute
EGTC TRITIA limited	2013	Republic of Poland, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic	https://egtctritia.eu/en/
EGTC Spoločný región limited	2013	The Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic	https://www.spolocnyregion.sk
EGTC Veľká Morava/ Velka Morava/Great Morava	2022	The Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic	https://www.ezusvm.sk/

Source: European Committee of Regions 14/05/2025 List of European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). Retrieved from https://cor.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2024-11/Official_List_of_the_EGTCs.pdf

The second research question can be formulated as follows: *What best practices for interaction between public structures can be identified in the Polish-Czech cross-border area?*

The primary focus of this section is on best practices in addressing cross-border issues and responding to the opportunities and challenges faced by Euroregional institutions operating along the Czech–Slovak border.

Three Czech–Slovak Euroregions – Pomoraví–Pomoravie, Beskydy, and Bílé–Biele Karpaty – play pivotal roles in supporting local development, environmental cooperation, and cultural exchange (Halás, 2007; Jeřábek et al., 2024). The Euroregion Pomoraví–Pomoravie, connecting the South Moravian and Trnava regions, was among the pioneers in launching cross-border infrastructure and education projects, particularly under the EU programmes.

The Euroregion Beskydy, established in 2000, spans parts of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Poland, including cities like Frýdek-Místek, Žilina, and Bielsko-Biała. It is recognized for its initiatives in youth and cultural exchange, tourism promotion, and grassroots participation in regional development (Halás, 2005). The Euroregion Bílé–Biele Karpaty, also founded in 2000, brings together communities from the Zlín region (Czechia) and the Trenčín region (Slovakia). Its key focus areas are environmental protection, sustainable tourism, and balanced development.

By the end of the 1990s, Czech–Slovak Euroregions had established relatively efficient mechanisms to access EU funding, initially through the PHARE CBC programme (1994–2004) and subsequently via Interreg. These Euroregions became central actors in administering and distributing funds for small-scale cross-border initiatives. The Small Project Fund (SPF), managed by Euroregions, was particularly significant in supporting micro-projects in civic engagement and cultural cooperation.

Studies underline that Euroregions have played an important role in enhancing regional development and competitiveness by effectively utilizing Interreg resources (Chilla & Lambracht, 2022; Martín-Uceda & Rufi, 2021). For instance, Jerabek et al. (2021) report that over 70 micro-projects were implemented by Euroregion Bílé–Biele Karpaty alone between 2007 and 2015. In the case of the Beskydy Euroregion, public awareness of SPF activities reached 74%, with around 33% of residents participating in at least one project, reflecting their social and cultural significance (Wróblewski & Kasperek, 2019). Environmental cooperation, especially in protected areas like Bílé–Biele Karpaty, has also been a success story (Böhm, 2016).

Nevertheless, some critical evaluations also emerged. Zalt (2013) highlights challenges during the 2007–2013 Interreg CBC period, including administrative burdens, weak engagement of local governments, and overreliance on EU funds.

Under Interreg V-A Slovakia–Czech Republic 2014–2020, over 125 joint projects were funded with a total budget exceeding €90 million, including approximately €10 million for institutional cooperation. However, direct involvement of Euroregions in large-scale projects remained limited. For example, the Beskydy Euroregion implemented only three tourism-related projects during this period (Jerabek et al., 2021).

The current Interreg VI-A NEXT Slovakia–Czech Republic 2021–2027 programme has shifted toward systemic priorities such as disaster management, digitalization, and green transformation (Programme Interreg SK–CZ). Developed with broad stakeholder input, this programme also emphasizes cultural tourism and social innovation as strategic pillars. According to Jerabek et al. (2021), such initiatives are essential for strengthening soft integration and fostering cross-border social capital.

The broader use of Cohesion Fund instruments, including Interreg, has also led to the professionalization of Euroregion secretariats and better preparedness for potential transitions to European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs). The ex-post evaluation of Interreg Europe 2014–2020 confirmed strong programme outcomes and increased stakeholder participation.

Despite these advancements, Czech–Slovak Euroregions have demonstrated lower responsiveness and institutional capacity compared to their counterparts along the borders with Germany and Poland.

Typically operating with limited administrative resources, they nonetheless play a vital role in building regional identity, facilitating economic exchange, and fostering civic participation (Böhm, Boháč & Wróblewski, 2023). However, persistent legal and administrative barriers on the Slovak side – particularly in areas such as service provision, permits, taxation, and procedural regulation – continue to hinder the full potential of cross-border cooperation (Nováčková, Paškrťová & Vnuková, 2023).

The formation alongside with Euroregions of three EGTCs along the Czech-Slovak border – TRITIA, Spoločný región, Great Moravia – illustrates how EU Cohesion policy encourages subnational governments to seek ways to enhance cross-border collaboration.

Despite high expectations and initial institutional support, the practical outcomes in this case did not mirror the successes observed in other European border regions. One of the key ambitions was for the TRITIA association to manage the Small Project Fund (SPF) within the framework of Interreg programmes, following the model applied by Euroregions. Moreover, TRITIA sought to attain the status of a managing authority for an independent trilateral Interreg programme for the 2014–2020 programming period. Although this initiative initially received support from the European Commission, it was ultimately blocked by national governments, with the backing of established Euroregions (Böhm & Drapela, 2021).

Currently, no verified information is available regarding the activities of the EGTC Spolocny region, as its official website is non-functional. Similarly, the EGTC Great Morava, being a newly established entity, has not yet produced measurable results. However, in 2023, it adopted a strategic framework prioritising tourism and mobility, the protection of cultural heritage, environmental sustainability, and the exchange of professional experience among employees in social service institutions and secondary schools (EZUS Velká Morava).

Conclusions. Both the Czech and Slovak Republics possess a comprehensive legal framework for cross-border cooperation (CBC), aligned with European standards and regional development policy. Their legislation grants broad autonomy to local and regional governments for engaging in CBC, provides legal avenues for participation in Euroregions and European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs), supports strategic planning and access to EU financial instruments.

However, the practical effectiveness of CBC depends on political will, institutional capacity, and coordination between administrative levels. Persistent challenges include legal asymmetries in administrative procedures between Czech and Slovak partners, a lack of stable co-financing mechanisms at the local level, and limited capacity in smaller municipalities to manage EU-funded CBC projects. These factors often limit engagement in larger-scale, long-term initiatives.

Euroregions have played an important role in fostering cultural and social cohesion, notably through Small Projects Funds (SPF), developing administrative linkages via working groups, and enabling multilevel governance involving regions, municipalities, and civil society actors. Nevertheless, their limited legal authority, fragmented institutional frameworks, and reliance on external funding continue to hinder their impact and sustainability.

Despite these challenges, CBC between the Czech and Slovak Republics has demonstrated resilience and adaptability over three decades. The shared language, administrative traditions, and EU integration have facilitated collaboration. The establishment of Euroregions and EGTCs has provided institutional frameworks for cooperation, while national legislation has generally supported local-level initiatives.

To enhance the long-term effectiveness of CBC, researchers recommend deeper institutionalization, the development of sustainable financing mechanisms beyond EU programming cycles, and improved coordination among regional stakeholders. Without such measures, CBC initiatives risk remaining fragmented and project-based, rather than evolving into durable, strategic partnerships.

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