



MANIFESTO OF THE IBERIAN EUROCITIES

BACKGROUND

On 5 May 2020, the Mayors of the municipal councils of the of the seven Iberian Eurocities met for the first time in an online forum convened and organized by the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) Eurocity Chaves-Verín.

These are the Political representatives from all Eurocities of the Iberian Border (border between Portugal and Spain) that took part in this meeting:

- Eurocity Cerveira-Tomiño
- Eurocity Tui-Valença do Minho
- Eurocity Salvatierra do Miño-Monçõo
- Eurocity Chaves-Verín, AECT
- Eurocity Ciudad Rodrigo-Fuentes de Oñoro-Vilar Formoso-Almeida
- Eurocity Badajoz-Elvas-Campo Maior
- Eurocity of Gadiana, AECT (Ayamonte-Vila Real de Santo Antonio-Castro Marim)

Throughout interventions the interventions the Presidents and representatives of Eurocities showed agreement on current problems and needs to demonstrate an interest in deepen cooperation links in order to restore citizens' confidence and the economic area. These problems are result of the impact of the closure of the border resulting from the crisis caused by Covid-19.

This alignment of interests is what motivates the creation of this Manifesto by which it affirms a constructive position, the need to restore the freedom of transit in the border of Eurocities and demonstrate that its absence changes the reality that is experienced between 'sisters cities'; recalling that there have been several decades of work from a



perspective in which the boundary concept has been obliterated as a separation point and is observed at an institutional, economic and social level as an interface.

THE REPRESENTATIVES OF EUROCITIES OF THE IBERIAN BORDER DECLARE THAT

- The Iberian Border, the most stable and 1.214 km long border, is considered to be the widest of the European Union in its history. Even in times of conflict, there has always been a permeable space for people who have established networks of social, economic and affective cooperation.
- The partnership links referred to above and established at social level began to strengthen on 1 January 1986, the date on which Spain and Portugal officially entered the European Economic Community and, as members, become active participants of the cooperation policies through which the European Union, in addition to promoting trade relations between States, is seeking to go beyond the economic aspect and involves European society in the construction of a joint project.
- In addition to concrete programmes, the cooperation program counts with the European groupings of cross-border cooperation (so called EGTCs as now) as a valuable tool for the ensigning of existing cooperation links between cross-border territories. But it is in the concept of Eurocity that the cooperation that the EU seeks to promote has reached its highest level. The reason for the high degree of symbiosis between the localities that are part of a Eurocity is that this symbiosis is the consequence of a prior social understanding.

In other words, prior to the formation of Eurocities, there are already commercial, economic, social, family and leisure spaces already divided by the building of agreements between local authorities on both sides of the border. In short, these are an example of *bottom-up* construction.

- In particular, in all Eurocities of the Portuguese-Spanish border, regardless of the different rates of institutionalization, citizens have strong social relationships and historical links that have laid the foundations for cooperation in this territory. The culture of smuggling, a major issue, has also been a common way of life in times of poverty, for the whole of Iberian Border which, for decades, has meant the revitalization of local economies by the development of cross-



border relations, which are considered to be the basis for all these unusual advances.

The cooperation programmes, promoted and funded by the European Union, have strengthened the collectable awareness in the towns that make up Eurocities, so that it is not possible to explain the relationships in trade, gastronomy, culture, recreation, social dynamics or economic structures, without seeing the mechanics of the interaction between all of those forming part of them. When a Eurocitizen of Iberian Border goes between the localities which make up those spaces, it is not perceived as having just changed location, nor is it perceived that there is a border; they simply move elsewhere in the 'whole' of their lives.

- In this context, 70 years after the Schuman Declaration and coinciding with the 25th anniversary of the Schengen Treaty (26 March 2020), as a result of the Covid-19 crisis, the borders are closed without taking into account the exceptional nature of a Eurocity, a figure promoted by the European Union itself and the States that have been part of it for decades. In addition, gradual disenclosed plans do not include a concrete roadmap that would eliminate the uncertainties surrounding the settlement of traffic between these localities.

In practice, border closures are equivalent to building walls between neighbourhoods of the same town. The current situation affects family relationships, social projects, the interdependent commercial networks and local economic dynamics; these dynamics shaping the normal life of a Eurocity. But what can be even more impactful is the effect that this situation, which is prolonged over a long period of time, can have in mutual trust. This is the main effect that should be avoided because, if it breaks down, it will be very difficult to regain the pre-Covid dynamics.

- From an economic point of view, the closure of borders has an added impact on the severe situation caused by the containment in both countries that, while there is a willingness to move forward in the recovery of economic area, in Eurocities of the Spanish-Spanish border, the existing dynamics require the flow of citizenship among the population of the Eurocity regardless of the Border where they are. The main sectors at the border, such as hotels, commerce, culture or leisure, require cross-border traffic to become visible, irrespective of the conditions which undertakings must take in the post-Covid scenario.



STATEMENT OF INTENT BY EUROCITIES OF THE PORTUGUESE-SPANISH BORDER

In view of the above, representatives of Eurocities of the Portuguese-Spanish border place the following intentions:

- Open borders or, more specifically, grant the free movement of citizens of the Eurocities of the Portuguese-Spanish border among the population of which they are composed.
- To establish a specific protocol for the border between Spain and Portugal, taking into account the disclosed phases in which the territories are immersed, which gives citizens, regardless of their country of residence, the similar legal guarantees and the level of public health control.
- Recognize the *status* of “Eurocity” in the two states in order to define a protocol of action in crisis situations where the uniqueness of these border areas is considered, making it possible to establish specific measures for the localities that make up these areas.
- To call for funding from the European Union and the Member States through the Spain-Portugal Operational Programme for Cross-Border Cooperation 2014-2020 or through the cross-border ITIEs (Integrated Territorial Investments) in order to alleviate the economic impact of the Covid-19 crisis so that local and economic operators from Eurocities can be supported.
- Include a plan for the recovery of border areas based on the projection of Eurocities as secure cross-border conurbations, far from contagion centers, which together focus on safety, health and well-being in their commercial offers for gastronomic, cultural, touristic and production levels.
- Promote outreach and close communication campaigns to the citizen in order to rebuild trust and improve the social and entrepreneurial culture of cooperation in Eurocities before the closure of the border



SIGNATURES IN FAVOUR OF MANIFESTO

1. Eurocity Cerveira-Tomiño

Sandra González Álvarez — Mayor of Tomiño.

Fernando Nogueira — Mayor of Vila Nova de Cerveira

2. Eurocity Tui-Valença

Enrique Cabira González — Mayor of Tui.

Manuel Rodrigues Lopes — Mayor of Valença.

3. Eurocity Salvatierra de Miño - Monção

Marta Valcárcel Gómez — Mayor of Salvatierra de Miño

Antonio Barbosa — Mayor of Monção.

4. Eurocity Chaves-Verín

Nuno Vaz — Mayor of Chaves.

Gerardo Seoane Fidalgo — Mayor of Verín.

5. Eurocity Ciudad Rodrigo-Fuentes de Oñoro-Vilar

Formoso-Almeida

Marcos Iglesias Caridad — Mayor of Ciudad Rodrigo

Isidoro J. Alanís Marcos — Mayor of Fuentes de Oñoro

Manuel Gomes - Presidente da Junta de Freguesia de Vilar Formoso

Antonio Machado — Mayor of Almeida

6. Eurocity Badajoz-Elvas-Campo Maior

Francisco Javier Fragoso Martínez — Mayor of *Badajoz*

Nuno Mocinha — Mayor of Elvas



João Muacho — Mayor of Campo Maior

7. Guadiana Eurocity (Ayamonte-Vila Real de Santo Antonio-Castro Marim)

Natalia Santos Mena — Mayor of Ayamonte

Maria da Conceição Cipriano Cabrita — Mayor of Vila Real de Santo Antonio.

Francisco Augusto Caimoto Amaral — Mayor of Castro Marim.

9 May 2020 — Europe Day (70th anniversary of Schuman Declaration)