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## Interregional cooperation in the Rhine-Alpine Corridor

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## INTERREGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE RHINE-ALPINE CORRIDOR

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### Abstract

Cross-border, transnational regional development in the Rhine-Alpine EU transport corridor represents an ongoing challenge. With 18 partners from five countries, the Rhine-Neckar regional association (*Verband Region Rhein-Neckar, VRRN*) therefore initiated an EU-funded project along the corridor to tackle the task. The INTERREG-financed project used the acronym ‘CODE24’ and developed a joint strategy for developing the Rhine-Alpine Corridor from the perspective of the regional-municipal level. To ensure the continuation of this successful cooperation beyond the running time of the project, a new, permanent organisation was founded: the Interregional Alliance for the Rhine-Alpine Corridor. A European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) was chosen as the legal form. The organisation was founded on 24 April 2015 in Mannheim and was the first EGTC established in Germany, which now comprises 19 members.

### Keywords

INTERREG – CODE24 – Rhine-Alpine Corridor – EGTC – Interregional Alliance for the Rhine-Alpine Corridor

## 1 The Rhine-Alpine Corridor: Challenges for regional development

How should cross-border and transnational cooperation be organised for large-scale regional development? This question will be addressed based on the example of a specific transport corridor, and possible solutions will be identified. The Rhine-Alpine Corridor has been selected as a suitable area to serve as an example on account of the conjunction of issues relating to regional and settlement development and transport planning.

This corridor, which is of critical importance for Europe, essentially follows the course of the Rhine from the Rhine knee near Basel to its mouth in the North Sea; it also runs further south through the Swiss Alps and ends at the Mediterranean Sea near Genoa. The corridor thus connects the North Sea ports (Rotterdam/Antwerp/Zeebrugge) to the Mediterranean Sea (Genoa/Savona/La Spezia). This corridor has long been a central transport corridor in Europe, even in historical terms. The corridor runs through six European countries, one of which is not an EU member state; this fact accounts for complex planning and decision-making situations. The corridor also crosses numerous regions and provinces and thus gives rise to numerous bilateral cross-border challenges. The corridor thus also touches the area of the Hesse/Rhineland-Palatinate/Saarland Regional Working Group, which is in the centre of the corridor area.

The Rhine-Alpine Corridor is the most important north-south corridor in Europe. It runs through the economically strongest areas and densely populated regions in Europe. Its course largely comprises the part of Europe known as the 'blue banana' (Faludi 2015).

The importance of this European backbone for the transport of goods is demonstrated by the fact that around 50 percent of rail freight in the EU is transported along this route. It is also assumed that 1 billion tonnes of freight are transported annually along the Rhine-Alpine Corridor, accounting for about 50 percent of the total north-south freight volume in Europe; a further increase in the volume of goods traffic is to be expected (Rhine-Alpine Work Plan of the European Coordinator 2015: 3 et seq.).

In the past, navigation on the Rhine played a prominent role in this context; it is still an important factor for current transport requirements, which is also reflected in the fact that the Rhine ports of Duisburg, Cologne and Mannheim/Ludwigshafen are by far the largest inland ports in Germany.

Given the projected traffic volume, especially in goods traffic, the cross-border European corridors will have to assume considerable new transport loads, which will be difficult to implement in view of the spatial location of the Rhine-Alpine Corridor.

As part of the new European transport policy, the EU has set ambitious targets for the so-called 'core network corridors' to be achieved by 2030 (cf. Regulations (EU) 1315/2013 and 1316/2013). The Rhine-Alpine Corridor is one of nine core network corridors. An additional corridor network has been defined in addition to these new core network corridors. Overall, the EU plans to implement established standards for

development within the new network (cf. the paper by Patrice Harster and Frédéric Siebenhaar in this volume). The governance structure envisaged for the core network corridors is also significant. A ‘Corridor Forum’ has been established for each core network corridor, in which the main stakeholders are represented; in addition, the European Commission has appointed a Corridor Coordinator for each core network corridor to pool and advance the activities for the development of that corridor.

The planning for the optimisation of transport in the corridors pursues a multimodal approach, which includes hubs and intermodal handling facilities (freight centres) that are essential for efficient transport flows and crucial for hinterland connectivity and for the distribution of the flow of goods. Especially in the case of the Rhine-Alpine Corridor and the Rhine as a European waterway, inland waterways and the numerous ports with their concentration of logistics facilities are of tremendous significance.

The Gotthard base tunnel is currently under construction, which provides for the crossing of the Alps over a length of 57 kilometres as part of the New Rail Link through the Alps (NRLA) (cf. on Swiss transport policy: <https://sciendo.com/article/10.1007/s13147-012-0194-7>). The tunnel will be used entirely as a railway tunnel at ground level (flat track), which will allow even heavy freight trains to use this new infrastructure. The opening is planned for 2017. The Lötschberg base tunnel, which opened in 2007, is another important project forming part of the NRLA and enables the Alps to be crossed over a distance of 34.6 kilometres. In the Rotterdam-Genoa corridor, new capacities for transnational goods traffic are created thanks to the Swiss infrastructure expansions under the NRLA with a financial volume of around €30 billion, which will significantly improve the development opportunities for the corridor. However, infrastructure expansions to the north and south of the Alps to accommodate these additional traffic flows are lacking; thus, it is not possible to fully exploit the potential across the entire corridor.

In this context, it is also worth mentioning the completion of the Betuwe line<sup>1</sup> in the Netherlands, which runs for 160 kilometres from Rotterdam to the Dutch-German border near Emmerich as a new line conceived exclusively for goods traffic and thus increases the pressure on the corridor from the north (University of Münster 2013). To make matters worse, this Dutch high-speed route for goods traffic does not continue beyond the Dutch-German border, as the infrastructure required for this has not yet been extended.

It is undisputed that both the EU (European Commission 2011) and the national authorities (*BMVBS* [Federal Ministry of Transport, Construction and Urban Development] 2010) aim to shift goods traffic from road to rail and waterways to a greater extent in future. However, there are numerous conflicts relating to settlement development, transport emissions, in particular noise, and competing demands for routes, which result from and are compounded by generally inadequate rail capacities for long-distance passenger and goods transport as well as for public rail transport systems.

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1 More information on the Betuwe line can be found at <https://www.uni-muenster.de/NiederlandeNet/nl-wissen/wirtschaft/betuweroute/index.html>.

Hence, the envisaged coordinated regional development of the Rhine-Alpine Corridor is a solution which requires complex planning and coordination tasks with different planning agencies and operating methods in several countries with different legal and technical framework conditions.

It is therefore of crucial importance to involve relevant stakeholders in the planning processes as early as possible. In addition to the transport bodies responsible for network infrastructure and operation, these include the loading industry, the logistics sector and, in particular, local and regional authorities; ultimately, civil society must be involved as well.

The situation is made even more difficult by the fact that the available funding is insufficient to implement competing transport projects, meaning that projects must be prioritised in order to make the best possible use of funds. All of the new and expansion projects along the corridor add up to a total of around €35 billion (Scholl 2012). Given the limited financial possibilities, however, the first priority in the future will be to maintain the existing structures and their availability, as well as to increase capacity, especially in the transport hubs, which provide access to the network and are the main bottlenecks. Increasing speeds can also be beneficial for the overall system in appropriate sections, but they are by no means the only means for optimisation.

For these reasons, it is necessary to look at the overall system. This means that considerations must not only include routes and axes, but also the overall network: not only the railway infrastructure, but also the handling facilities such as freight centres; not only the railways, but also other modes of transport such as inland navigation; and not only freight, but also long-distance and local passenger transport, since there is a risk of limited availability when routes are used for regional and local public transport.

Further general conditions that should be noted are congestion points, gaps in connections and bottlenecks that significantly limit the capacity of the entire corridor and present infrastructural and operational deficits for its functioning – all of which have a negative impact on economic and ecological development as well as on settlement structures.

All of this poses significant challenges for cross-border and transnational regional planning and development, especially along the Rhine-Alpine Corridor, given the density of settlements there and the restrictions on land use, as well as the need to reduce environmental pollution, in particular noise emissions.

What are the possible solutions?

## 2 The CODE24 INTERREG project: Regional-municipal cooperation for coordinated corridor development

In 2007, the regional planning associations along the Upper Rhine called for a coordinated strategy to develop the rail network. This collaboration resulted in a joint position paper (Rhine-Neckar regional association 2008), which addressed the following issues:

- > Harmonisation and coordination of national needs and investment plans
- > Increased planning certainty
- > Securing funding
- > Acceleration of planning times
- > Provision of funding
- > Improving public perception
- > Bundling and coordinating activities
- > Reducing noise emissions from goods traffic
- > Requiring regular and systematic assessments of the situation

It also called for the timely expansion of rail projects along the Upper Rhine, which is urgently needed, particularly in view of the groundwork laid by Switzerland with the construction of the new Alpine base tunnels. In the course these works, the determination grew to address these issues in a jointly supported project and to involve other partners along the Rhine-Alpine Corridor. Eventually, the aim to formulate an application for a project, which was to be financed from EU funds, was confirmed.

Toward this end, regional planning agencies from the Rhine-Alpine Corridor worked together in a bottom-up approach to address the issues they considered to be relevant. The project application, which was coordinated among the then 15 European partners, was submitted in October 2009 as a ‘strategic initiative’ to the secretariat of the EU’s INTERREG IV B Northwest Europe programme and was approved. The acronym ‘CODE24’ chosen as the project title represents the core of the project, namely CORridor DEVELOPMENT for Corridor No. 24, as it was still referred to in EU transport policy at the time.<sup>2</sup>

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2 More information can be found at: <https://egtc-rhine-alpine.eu/code24/>.

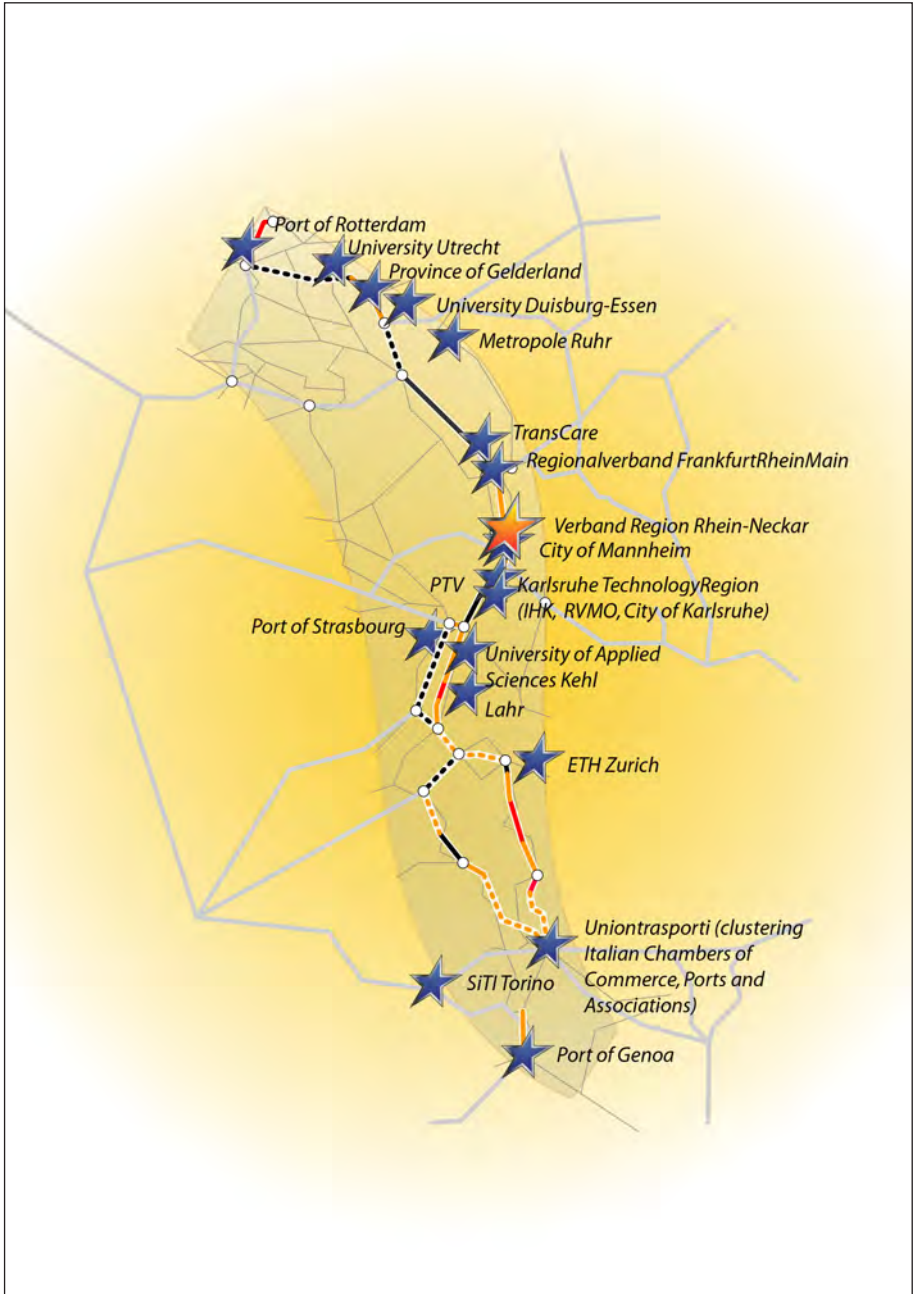


Fig. 1: Registered office of CODE24 project partners /Source: CODE24 Corridor Development Rotterdam-Genoa 2012: 3

Under the auspices of the Rhine-Neckar regional association,<sup>3</sup> a total of 18 project partners (see Fig. 1) from five European countries, consisting of regional planning agencies and local territorial authorities, universities and research institutions, port companies and private engineering firms, joined forces to realise the project.

## 2.1 The project objectives

‘One corridor – one strategy’: this is the main objective of this EU-funded project for the coordinated development of the Rhine-Alpine Corridor (Saalbach 2011: 34 et seq.).

The overall objective is to ensure and, if possible, to accelerate the development of the entire transversal axis, and in particular the northern and southern access routes to the Alpine crossing. It is important to increase economic capacities at all stages, especially in regard to goods traffic and logistics networks, while at the same time minimising the negative impact on the environment and the population. This should lead to the establishment of a rail transport and noise management approach that takes into account both the development of the railway system and sustainable spatial development.

Within the project, cross-border spatial overviews and time frames for expansion and future operation as well as for settlement and spatial development in the intake area of the routes have been elaborated, and the associated correlations and consequences have been identified, as can be seen in the online corridor information system developed within the framework of the project (CODE24 2017). The spatial and operational requirements of the various stakeholders, which are becoming increasingly important in a liberalised railway system, are also of fundamental importance. From the point of view of the regions, this includes the quality and quantity of regional transport deemed necessary; from the point of view of the freight and logistics companies, this includes requirements for the operational quality, volumes and routes of goods traffic and, finally, the relationships and volumes of long-distance transport. The decisive strategic spaces along the route can be identified and the obstacles and benefits illustrated based on these considerations.

The network character of a project of this nature helps to bring the key partners together and to initiate processes and joint initiatives. The project contributes to better networking in economic development, transport and spatial planning. The ground has been laid for concrete investment in innovative solutions for noise protection as well as networking and coordinating logistics facilities and regional transport services. Thanks to the involvement of scientific institutes, problem planning and application planning tools and supporting arguments were elaborated and used.

The consortium structured the project in such a way that a multidisciplinary approach could be pursued over five years in four defined work packages. For each of the four

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3 Information on the Rhine-Neckar regional association can be found at:  
<https://www.m-r-n.com/verband>.



work packages, a responsible partner from the project consortium was appointed (cf. Table 1).

Work packages		Responsible parties
1	Coordinated spatial and infrastructure development	Prof. Dr. Bernd Scholl, ETH Zurich
2	Environment and noise	Birgit Simon, Deputy Director, FrankfurtRheinMain regional association
3	Goods traffic and logistics	Prof. Dr. Drewello, Kehl University
4	Communications and public acceptance	Christian Specht, First Mayor of the City of Mannheim

Table 1: Working structure of the CODE24 project /Source: The authors

The Rhine-Neckar regional association assumed the role of the project sponsor ('lead partner') for the overall CODE24 project. This function included assuming responsibility for the correct implementation of the project, including in financial terms; the decision to award the grant and the contract based on it will be between the project sponsor and the programme administrative authority.

The aim of the project was to elaborate a coordinated development strategy for the corridor. The various aspects of this were dealt with in 20 subprojects (CODE24 2017). These ranged from the development of an online corridor information system on the study of compensatory measures for large infrastructure projects, the analysis of logistics clusters, bottlenecks and hinterland connectivity, to public relations and participation measures, as well as the future governance of the corridor. New planning and decision-making methods were also used in the discussion and evaluation of various development scenarios, in particular the computer-aided Analytical Network Process (ANP). The visualisation of the effects of the scenarios under consideration was made possible thanks to a special laboratory at the Swiss Technical University, ETH Zurich.

Last but not least, the special project management challenges and the intercultural skills needed to successfully carry out the project in the context of this cross-border interregional cooperation across a cooperation area spanning a length of 1,300 kilometres with 18 partners from five countries, are particularly noteworthy.

By the time the EU-funded project is completed in March 2015, all the main projects in the work plan will have been implemented.

An overview of the results of the CODE24 project is provided in the Essential Results booklet.<sup>4</sup>

4 More information can be found at: <https://egtc-rhine-alpine.eu/code24/>.

### **3 The cooperation structure for the future: Institutionalised cooperation within a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)**

#### **3.1 Creation of a permanent successor organisation**

It is clear that the tasks and challenges ahead in the Rhine-Alpine Corridor cannot be carried out fully and conclusively within the time constraints of a single project. It is assumed, instead, that the close and successful collaboration that has started with the CODE24 project must be expanded and continued on this basis.

The planned creation of a sustainable form of organisation for the future cooperation of interested partners is therefore an important step towards representing these interests, especially of the regional and local level of the Rhine-Alpine Corridor, vis-à-vis national and European authorities. The seamless transition from the CODE24 INTERREG project to the EGTC ensures that the tried and tested cooperation can continue without interruption.

As part of the CODE24 INTERREG project, at the time of the project application the project partners had already planned the establishment of a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) based on a proposal by the VRRN. The reason for setting up the EGTC was to create a form of cooperation as seamlessly as possible after the end of the project period of CODE24 to ensure that the collaboration within the project could continue in the long term without any time limit. The decisive consideration was the conviction that dealing with corridor development issues was an ongoing task that could not be finalised within a limited project period.

To this end, the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) was established after comparing various possible legal forms. This European legal form for collaborations between public organisations is based on an EU regulation (Regulation No. 1302/2013/EU). There are currently 53 EGTCs, most of which relate to specific cooperation projects in neighbouring border areas, such as the joint sponsorship of a hospital in a border area.

#### **3.2 Establishment**

The establishment of an EGTC is subject to certain formalities contained in the relevant Regulation (EU) No. 1302/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council of 17 December 2013 amending Regulation (EC) No. 1082/2006 on the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). In particular, an agreement and statutes must be signed by the founding members. These agreements regulate the objectives and tasks of the EGTC, the envisaged organs (General Assembly of Members, Executive Board, director), how meetings are to be handled, voting, etc., and the anticipated location of the registered office of the EGTC.

As part of its role as lead partner of CODE24 and as the responsible project partner for the subproject to prepare for the establishment of the EGTC, the VRRN prepared drafts for both documents and coordinated them with the potential members from the group of previous project partners. As a result, expressions of interest for membership were collected based on internal decisions about future members, including territorial authorities that were not previously part of the CODE24 project consortium.

In a further step, a joint declaration of intent on the establishment of the EGTC was signed in Mannheim on 20 November 2014 as part of the Second International Corridor Conference, which was also the final event of the CODE24 INTERREG project. This declaration was signed by the following 14 future members which comprised both previous CODE24 project partners and new members who had not participated in the CODE24 project:

- > Port of Rotterdam Authority
- > Provincie Gelderland
- > Hafen Duisburg
- > Region Köln-Bonn e. V.
- > Regionalverband FrankfurtRheinMain
- > Verband Region Rhein-Neckar
- > Stadt Mannheim
- > Regionalverband Mittlerer Oberrhein
- > TechnologieRegion Karlsruhe GbR
- > Stadt Karlsruhe
- > Stadt Lahr
- > Regionalverband Südlicher Oberrhein
- > Regione Piemonte
- > Uniontrasporti

Additional legal procedural steps were necessary before the formal founding meeting could finally take place in Mannheim on 24 April 2015. The EGTC regulation requires each potential member to obtain approval from the relevant national approval authority. Such approvals must then be submitted to the approval authority which is centrally responsible for approvals for establishment in the area of the proposed registered office of the EGTC. In an ordinance of the federal state of Baden-Würt-

temberg to implement the EGTC regulation, the Freiburg regional government was designated as the approval authority, which is thus also responsible for the overall approval for the establishment of an EGTC based in Baden-Württemberg.

It has been shown that the competent authorities used the maximum possible time limit for approval under the EU regulation; as a result, only ten members – partly due to approval applications that had been filed too late – were initially able to satisfy the necessary conditions by the date of incorporation and thus obtained approval to sign up as a founding member. Finally, the new transnational EGTC was launched and the founding agreement was signed with the ten members who had met all the legal requirements by the agreed date of incorporation. Subsequently, the certificate of approval for the newly elected chairs of the EGTC was handed over by the head of the Freiburg regional government.

However, in order for the EGTC to acquire full legal personality, the agreement and statutes had to be published in the Common Official Gazette of Baden-Württemberg, which eventually occurred on 27 May 2015. This means that the EGTC now has full legal personality and is authorised, for example, to sign contracts, open a bank account, arrange the necessary insurance or submit project funding applications.

Shortly after the establishment of the EGTC, three other organisations were able to submit their national approvals: the Port of Rotterdam, Uniontrasporti/Milan and the Piedmont Region. Before these organisations could officially become members, however, the consent of the other national approval authorities was again required. Hence, the establishment of the EGTC proved to be a very cumbersome, lengthy and bureaucratic process, yet shortly after its foundation, the EGTC had 13 members.

### 3.3 Objectives and tasks of the EGTC

The creation of this interregional alliance for the Rhine-Alpine Corridor was primarily intended to ensure that the corridor becomes more visible and that the coordinated interests of its members are represented in future with one voice to the outside world. The EGTC's action space is shown in Fig. 2.

The future objectives and tasks of the Interregional Alliance for the Rhine-Alpine Corridor EGTC, which the EGTC is to carry out for the corridor area, are listed in the approved agreement:<sup>5</sup>

- 1 Consolidating and pooling the common interests of its members in relation to national, European and infrastructural institutions
- 2 Organising and implementing joint lobbying activities for the development of the Rhine-Alpine Corridor
- 3 Representing EGTC members in the EU Rhine-Alpine Corridor Forum

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<sup>5</sup> The signed agreement can be found on the EGTC website [www.egtc-rhine-alpine.eu](http://www.egtc-rhine-alpine.eu).

- 4 Continued work on the joint development strategy for the multimodal Rhine-Alpine Corridor
- 5 Coordinating regional development in the Rhine-Alpine Corridor, taking into account local and regional perspectives
- 6 Considering transport infrastructure projects and land-use conflicts along the Rhine-Alpine Corridor
- 7 Using funding for corridor-related activities and projects
- 8 Informing the EGTC members about funding opportunities for corridor-related projects
- 9 Applying for new EU-funded projects and joint management of EU funding
- 10 Providing a central platform for the mutual exchange of information and experiences and for interacting

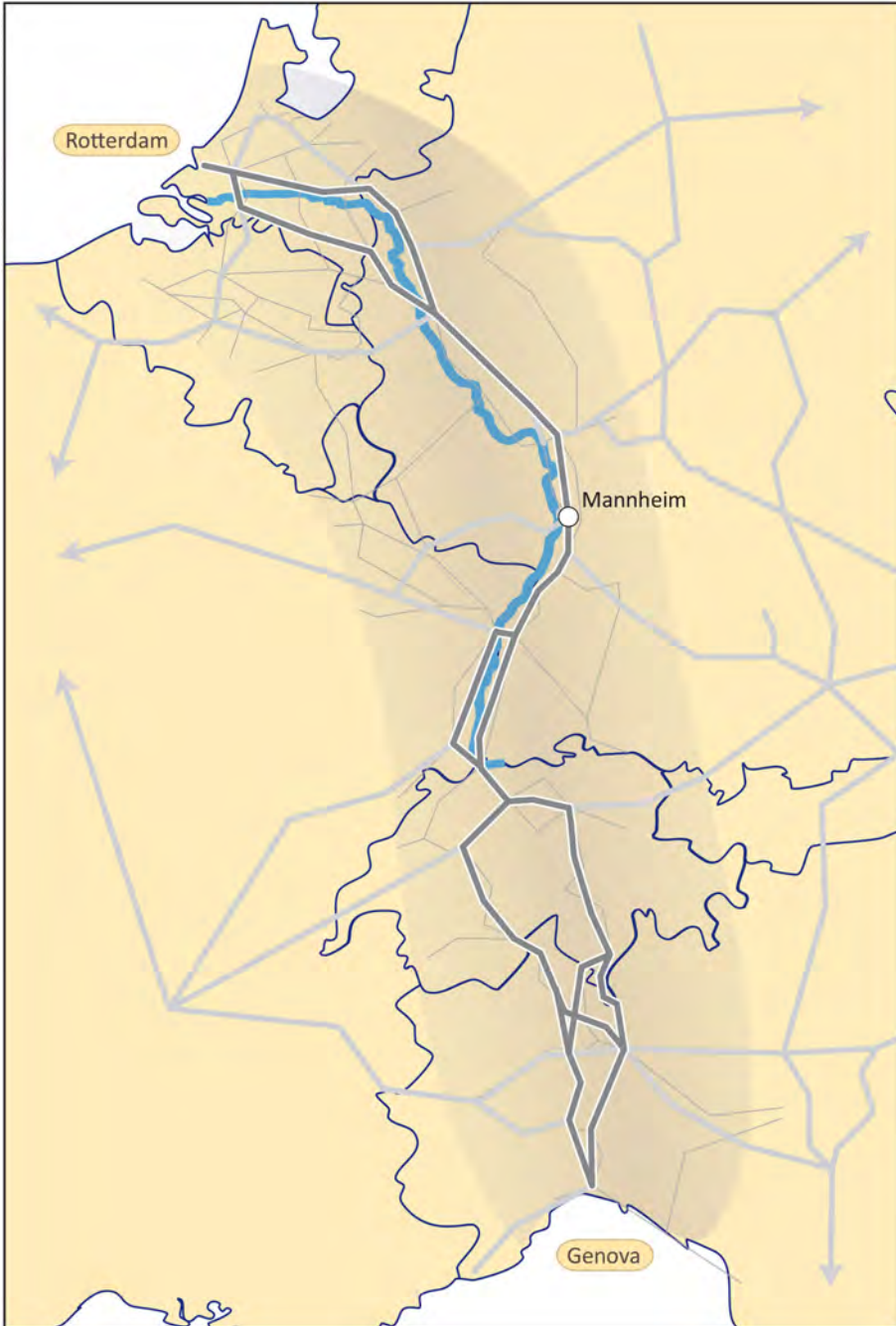


Fig. 2: Action space of the EGTC /Source: Convention of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation 'Interregional Alliance for the Rhine-Alpine Corridor EGTC' of 24 April 2015

- 11 Organising meetings of members
- 12 Ensuring the transmission of information
- 13 Continued operation of the corridor information system developed under the CODE24 project
- 14 Maintaining the website developed as part of the CODE24 project:  
<https://egtc-rhine-alpine.eu/code24/>
- 15 Improving the visibility and public perception of the corridor
- 16 Organising corridor events (conferences, workshops, etc.)
- 17 Preparing and disseminating publications (newsletters, leaflets, pamphlets)
- 18 Taking over and continuing the mobile exhibition developed as part of the CODE24 project

### 3.4 Organisational structure and financing of the EGTC

The agreement and the statutes of the new EGTC also stipulate that the registered office of the EGTC and its headquarters in Mannheim are to be located at the premises of the Rhine-Neckar regional association.

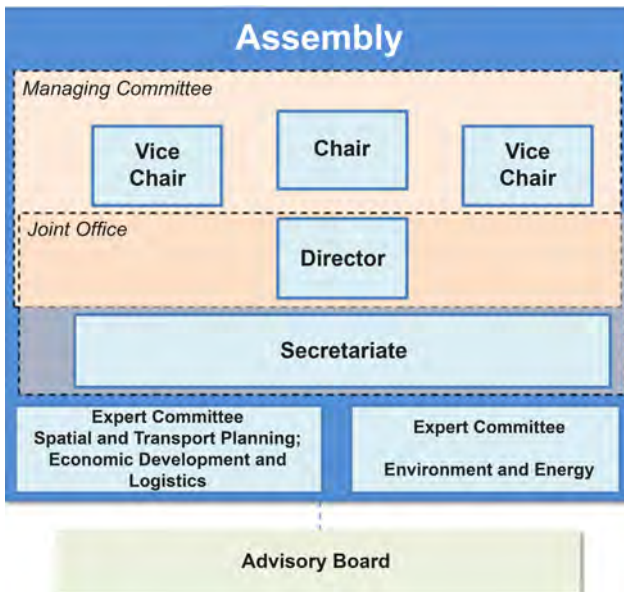


Fig. 3: Organisational chart of the EGTC / Source: The authors

The 2015/2016 Action Plan was discussed at the founding meeting, along with the election of the members of the Executive Board and the appointment of the Director. Furthermore, it was decided at the founding meeting to set up two expert commissions, one for spatial planning, infrastructure, the economy and logistics and another for issues relating to the environment and energy. In addition, it was agreed to establish an advisory board to appoint people who are relevant for the work and achievement of the objectives of the EGTC but who are not actual members of the EGTC. These include representatives of industry and science, as well as representatives of the infrastructure operators (see the organisational chart in Fig. 3).

The running costs, in particular for the headquarters and for public relations, are funded from the membership fees. These are determined annually by the General Assembly of Members and based on the number of members and specific tasks in the financial year in question. The membership fee is not staggered, but is equal for all members.

In addition, funding for EGTC projects will be sought.

### **3.5 Initial activities of the EGTC**

The 2015/2016 Action Plan (unpublished) lists the initial activities of the new EGTC. This particularly includes the continued elaboration of the development strategy jointly established within the framework of CODE24, which is considered to be the basis of the work of the EGTC. Preparing for new EU-funded projects will also be addressed; in particular, the funding programmes for European Territorial Cooperation (ETC; INTERREG) and the ‘Connecting Europe’ Facility (CEF, see the paper by Caesar/Heilmann/Saalbach/Schreiner in this volume). Before the completing of the CODE24 project, new projects were considered and proposals were discussed. However, applications could only be made after the EGTC had officially acquired legal personality. This is now the case after the agreement and the statutes have been published in the Common Official Gazette of Baden-Württemberg. A first application has now been submitted by the EGTC under CEF; this relates to optimisations in the ‘urban nodes’ along the corridor, which is one of the priorities identified in the CEF call for projects in 2015.

Last but not least, appropriate measures are to be taken to raise awareness of the EGTC. These include presentations on the EGTC at various conferences and events as well as through targeted events hosted by the EGTC itself, which are to be organised in Brussels, for example.

It is also important for future cooperation within the EGTC that projects, coordination activities and events in this large corridor area should also take place between neighbouring regions, which means that, as with CODE24, the EGTC should sensibly serve as an umbrella for regional and interregional activities at the regional interfaces. However, these will then again need to be coordinated with and integrated in the overall area.



With regard to the corridor forums (cf. the paper by Caesar/Heilmann/Saalbach/Schreiner in this volume), an important concern of the EGTC was also to obtain a seat and a voice in the corridor forum for the Rhine-Alpine Corridor in order to represent the interests of the local and regional level in a bundled manner. Cooperation with the EU-appointed corridor coordinator at the EU level is also of vital interest to the EGTC. Fortunately, this important objective has now been achieved.

### **3.6 New members of the EGTC**

The newly established EGTC has set itself the goal of growing and attracting new members; this aims to increase the weight and significance of the EGTC through expert members. In addition to other regions or provinces, more (large) cities are to be encouraged to become members.

Following the establishment of the EGTC, the Port of Antwerp and the Canton of Basel-City have already submitted an application for admission to the EGTC in accordance with the statutes, which was unanimously approved by the General Assembly of Members. These new members still have to undergo the approval procedure required by the EGTC regulation with the previous national approval authorities in the Netherlands, Italy and Germany, since the two new members are from countries not yet involved in the EGTC, namely Belgium and Switzerland. With regard to Switzerland, however, it should be noted that organisations from this 'third country' cannot directly become members of the EGTC, as it must first be ensured that Switzerland will recognise and proceed according to the EGTC regulation of the European Union when it comes to the examination and approval of memberships; the necessary steps have already been taken to this end.

At the Third General Assembly of Members, which took place in Novara on 11 April 2016, it was decided to accept the following additional members:

- > Liguria Region
- > Lombardy Region
- > South Holland Province
- > Port of Strasbourg.

If the six future members above complete the necessary approval procedures, the EGTC will have 19 members.

There is already intense contact with other potential parties interested in membership of the EGTC, such as organisations in Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland and Italy.

## 4 Conclusions

The example of the Rhine-Alpine Corridor has shown that cross-border interregional cooperation can also produce successful results over long distances and for large areas. It has proved advantageous to implement cooperation within the framework of the EU funding programmes offered, as has been done in this case with the INTERREG programme for northwestern Europe. The project duration was also used to prepare a permanent form of collaboration beyond the project duration at an early stage; to this end, a European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation' (EGTC) was chosen as the legal form. The choice of the legal form of an EGTC has since proved to be suitable for the desired objectives and activities. The 'Interregional Alliance for the Rhine-Alpine Corridor', founded by the original project partners of the CODE24 INTERREG project in 2015, is the first EGTC to be based in Germany. The pioneering work involved has not always been easy, but the bureaucratic effort has paid off. The choice of the EGTC legal form has helped to enhance the visibility of the cooperation structure and to increase its acceptance among the relevant stakeholders.

Last but not least, one of the benefits of an EGTC is that it can submit projects for and manage EU funding.

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