

EUROPEAN
U R B A N
I N I T I A T I V E



Co-funded by
the European Union

How City-Region Cooperation Crafts Sustainable Innovative Ecosystems

EUI Capacity Building training
Brussels, Belgium
09 October

Event report prepared by Marion Cugnet &
edited by Zoé Fournand

For the European Urban Initiative Capacity
Building team

All photos ©Magda Baidan



EUROPEAN
U
R
B
A
N
I
N
I
T
I
A
T
I
V
E

EUROPEAN
U
R
B
A
N
I
N
I
T
I
A
T
I
V
E



Co-funded by the European Union

Participant

City of Innsbruck

ÖBERG

liv



Co-funded by the European Union

Participant

City of Athens

DEFE

Management System

MOLENAAR
Bart

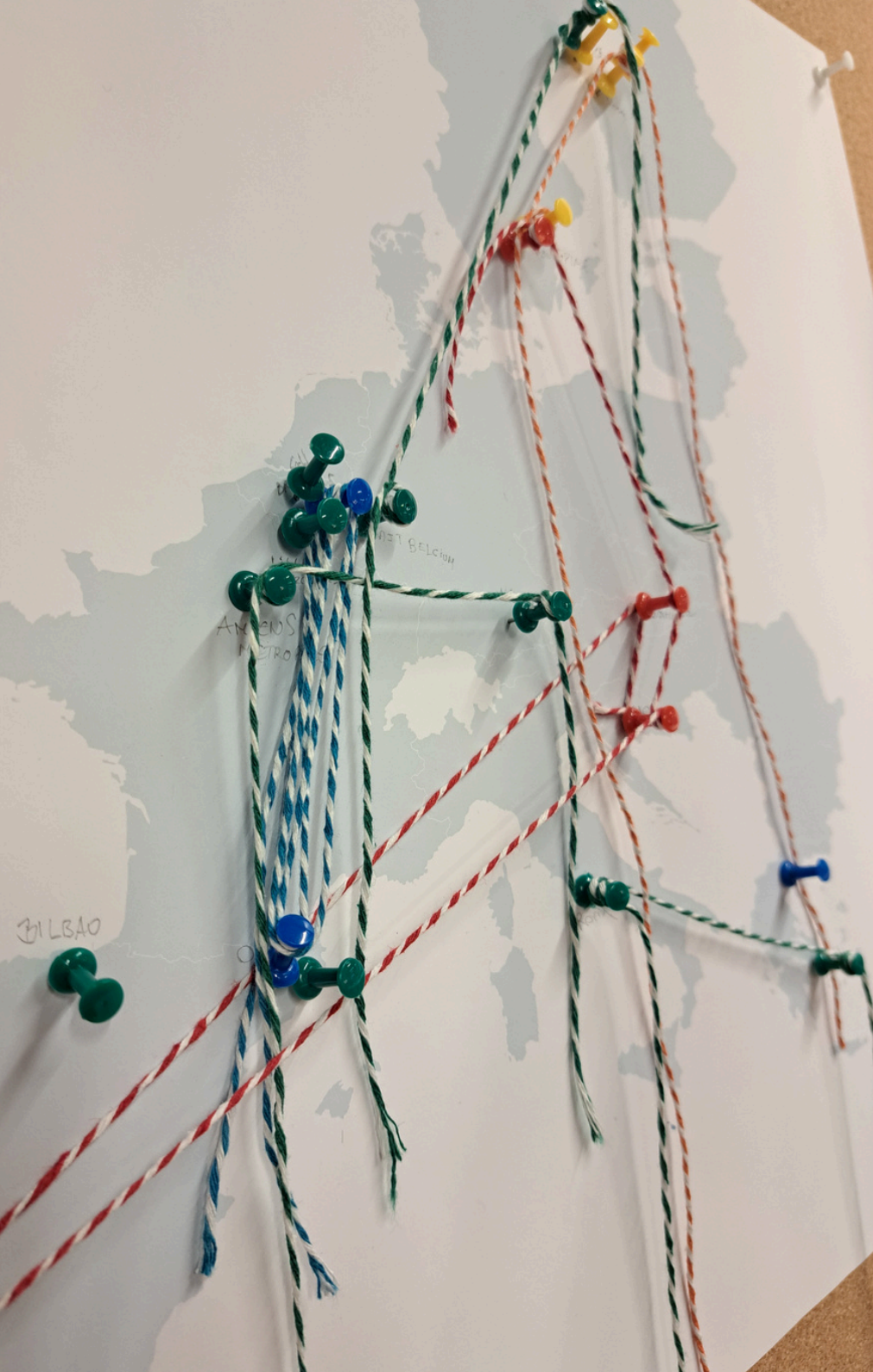
Metropolitan Theme Co-ordinator
Schiedt | Hengstl | Hengstl
Participant

Participant

DEFE

Management System

01 Introduction



THE WORKSHOP' NUMBERS AT A GLANCE



0.5 day
DURATION



46
PARTICIPANTS



11
COUNTRIES
REPRESENTED



12
CITIES



4
CASE STUDIES



6
SPEAKERS

SETTING THE SCENE

Cities and regions play a major role in the sustainable and resilient development of territories in Europe. They lead on the climate and digital transition, the fight against social inequalities and play a critical role in driving inclusive innovation. However, to truly unlock the full potential of their territories, cities and regions cannot act alone and must collaborate across different levels, creating strategic partnerships and governance models that amplify their impact and harness the strengths of their diverse innovation ecosystems.

In May 2024, the European Urban Initiative (EUI), in collaboration with Innocities, organised a Capacity Building training 'Leveraging Innovation Ecosystems for Sustainable Cities.' Building on this event, and recognising the need for deeper exploration of strategic partnerships and multi-level governance, EUI developed a follow-up Capacity Building workshop. This workshop, held during the European Week of Regions and Cities 2024, was organised in collaboration with the Région Hauts-de-France, Lille European Metropolis, and Amiens Metropole. It explored how collaboration between cities and regions can strengthen innovation ecosystems and drive inclusive

economic growth, and provided an opportunity to dive deeper into the topic of multi-level governance as an enabler of transformative change.

GOVERNANCE FOR INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS

Multi-level governance is a complex process of coordinating and collaborating across various levels of government - sub-regional, regional, national and EU -, and different (innovation) actors across the quadruple (or even the quintuple) helix, to develop and implement effective territorial innovation strategies.

Multi-level governance is a powerful catalyst for fostering collective ownership of, and commitment to policies and strategies, ensuring they are more participatory and inclusive. Multi-level governance is about effective decision-making, strategic synergies as well as better use of, and access to, funding and resources.

In Europe, several frameworks and initiatives have been developed to encourage the development and implementation of multi-level governance as a driver and enabler of the development of innovation ecosystems. Collaboration, coordination and stakeholder diversity are the fundamentals of efficient multi-level governance.



02 Multi-level governance within Smart Specialisation Strategy

Multi-level governance within Smart Specialisation Strategy

Smart Specialisation Strategy is an EU policy framework that aims at promoting regional innovation through tailored, place-based strategies.

It encourages collaboration and policy alignment across multiple governance levels - region-city, cross-regional and cross-border level, and stakeholder engagement across the triple and quadruple helix. Multi-level governance in S3 relies on four pillars: Complexity, Emergence, Context Specificity and Reciprocity. It enables entrepreneurial-led and innovation-led strategies.



Advancing multi-level governance for competitive growth

The case of Bilbao Ekintza, Spain

Presented by Oihana Eizmendi Sasiain, Bilbao Ekintza

Bilbao Ekintza's approach to multi-level governance builds on the framework of the RIS3 Basque Country Strategy 2030. It primarily focuses on the development and growth of its **knowledge-intensive business services (KIBS)**.

Through the establishment of working groups gathering stakeholders from the triple helix, Bilbao Ekintza has implemented a **new model of relationship**.

With strong coordination, it has successfully mobilised its innovation ecosystem, enabling the co-design of efficient policies for Bilbao's competitiveness through shared vision and leadership, as well as the co-design of tangible collaborative innovation-driven 'tractor projects' to support KIBS to scale and compete regionally, nationally and globally.



Bilbao's challenge

However, despite the successful mobilisation of its innovation ecosystem, challenges persist. One of them is **how to embed a shared sense of ownership across all governance levels and partners**, whereby the responsibility to drive new initiatives is spread across multiple partners and stakeholders rather than under one leading organisation (Bilbao Ekintza).



Recommendations from peers

- 01 Encouraging **diverse and shared ownership** by shifting the organisation's approach to initiative e.g. trying and stepping back, allowing space and time for others to take initiative and lead.
- 02 Providing **reassurance** for organisations that may be more risk-averse by implementing a robust **shared risk principle and plan**. This will help reassure more risk-averse organisations that they will have the support they need to manage risk (e.g. risk around funding, managing regulatory complexities, etc.).
- 03 Developing **trust-based contracts or pledges** signed by all actors, including politicians and business owners, are useful tools to ensure commitment from all.

Building resilient specialisation: multi-level governance in Hauts-de-France's smart specialisation strategy

The case of the Hauts-de-France Region, France

Presented by Mélanie Vallée, Hauts-de-France Region

Building on the Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3)'s core principle that regions and cities should focus on their strengths and seek to align their innovation strategies with others that share similar or complementary priorities, the Hauts-de-France Region has identified **7 key strategic sectors**: mobility, health & food, bioeconomy, creative industries, material, energies, digital robotic.

Building on these priority sectors, the Region has developed a multi-level governance approach, inviting cities with strong sectoral dynamics to collaborate.

It has also identified and engaged with actors within its local and regional ecosystem - Sectoral clusters, Competitiveness R&D clusters, Innovation parks, universities, research centres. Together, under the strong coordination of the Region Hauts-de-France, and within the multi-level governance framework, they developed a strategy that emphasised the need to reach a level of intensity in their specialisation to realise the region's ambition to become Europe's region of the 3rd Industrial Revolution.



Hauts-de-France's challenge

Although there is a strong agreement on the fact that regional and local innovation and growth will be better achieved through cooperation rather than competition, one of the challenges that the Region Hauts-de-France faces is to **build meaningful cooperation** between all actors to collectively reach the level of intensity for a resilient regional specialisation.



Recommendations from peers

- 01 Embedding a **degree of flexibility** in the adopted governance system to continue leveraging the strengths of multiple actors and governance layers.
- 02 Doing research in the field to ensure resilience - resilience is a **long term game** and needs to be adapted to the changing territorial contexts.
- 03 Being **clear on why cooperate**. Organisations need to understand what they will get by cooperating within the multi-level governance framework, and that they have a clear role to play e.g. accessing funding and financing.
- 04 Mapping out and **engaging the right stakeholders for the right activity/work strand**. Businesses/SMEs need to be fully part of it.

03 Multi-level governance within territorial development strategies

Multi-level governance within territorial development strategies

There is an increasing recognition of the important role of cooperation between cities and their surrounding municipalities, peri-urban and rural areas to ensure territorial cohesion and climate neutrality through innovation-driven territorial governance models.

Promoted both by the European Territorial Cohesion policy - through for example, the JRC's 'Handbook for Territorial development beyond cities, functional urban areas and metropolitan areas' and the EU mission for Climate-neutral and smart cities , multi-level governance innovation models and tools are being developed to enable new experimental and participatory cooperation between all levels of government and stakeholders. These approaches include soft and/or formal territorial cooperation arrangements, stakeholder engagement across the quadruple / quintuple helix, policy-design and integrated territorial approaches.



Cross-border collaboration and multi-level governance for innovation and infrastructure

The case of Umeå (Sweden) and Vaasa (Finland)

Presented by Susanna Slotte-Kock & Suvi Aho, city of Vaasa

Vaasa and Umeå have a long history of informal and more formal cross-border cooperation and collaboration. However, with challenges getting more complex, the need for more robust coordination and scale has led the two cities to develop a more formal organisational and institutional structure, building on the European grouping of territorial cooperation's multi-level governance framework.

The **joint development of the Umeå and Vaasa 2030 Strategy**, the first strategy across the 2 country borders, has been a key milestone. The role of multi-level governance proved a key driver and enabler for efficient cross-border cooperation between the two cities in, and for, the Kvarken region.



Through their multi-level and multi-partner governance approach, Vaasa and Umeå are fostering a thriving co-creation and innovation ecosystem. For example, one major project that they are looking to develop is the **Nordic Connector** as a transport connector and living lab within the two cities, involving stakeholders from the quadruple/quintuple helix.

Vaasa's challenge

Despite the long cooperation history and the more recent advances in formalising their multi-level governance approach, questions remain on how and whether multi-level governance can help address - **or hinder? - the needs of effective and secure infrastructure** at a cross-border regional level.



Recommendations from peers

- 01 Assessing the **varying level of maturity** of the many actors involved, and factoring it in the multi-level governance approach. This will help build a cohesive and trusting group.
- 02 Ensuring a **clear alignment on stakeholder engagement** between the national and regional/city level. Different levels of engagement between the 2 countries/cities can be counterproductive.
- 03 Initiating cooperation by starting with **federating projects/initiatives** that require multiple levels of engagement.
- 04 Accessing and/or pooling **funding** always helps.

Formalising multi-level governance for climate action

The case of Empower - Bruxelles, Ixelles, Schaerbeek and Innoviris, Belgium

Presented by Maria Giovanna Zamburlini, municipality of Schaerbeek, and Victoria De Meue, Innoviris

Driven by the need to deliver on the Brussels-Capital Region's climate city contract as part of the EU mission for Climate-neutral and smart cities, and the commitment to achieving carbon neutrality objectives and ensuring more effective links between regional and local priorities and resources, Innoviris, together with the City of Brussels and the municipalities of Schaerbeek and Ixelles, have come together to develop a **new collaborative model for climate action**.

Through various iterations of the development of the **EMPOWER project** (Empowering local energy independence through electricity sharing & solar production), the institutional multi-level governance has evolved over time and taken shape.



The project is now at a stage where the multi-level governance needs to be **formalised into a more robust framework**, to support the successful implementation of the project but also to create a model that can be scaled to enlarge the collaboration to other municipalities in the Brussels-Capital region, and make the collaboration a more mature and longer term one.

Empower's challenge

Although the almost organic way the multi-partner multi-level partnership adopted so far has proven the right approach to develop the successful EMPOWER project, the partnership now needs to explore a **new approach to translate and convert its informal cooperation into a more formalised efficient multi-level governance model**, with clear added value and without creating additional burden and inefficiencies.



Recommendations from peers

- 01 Avoiding duplication and additional burden.** Exploring whether there is a clear need to create a new governance layer/group or whether it could be built on existing ones.
- 02** Implementing a **Go/No-Go approach** to the development of a formal governance model and within its functioning as well. This can help with efficiency.
- 03** Identifying and engaging with **change makers**.
- 04** Engaging with the **middle management level** too is crucial for lasting uptake, and success of a good governance model.

05 Conclusions



Despite challenges to the implementation of multi-level governance in diverse contexts, when managed effectively, **multi-level governance is an instrumental lever to promote more inclusive, innovative, and effective policy-making across Europe**. From convening partners and stakeholders around a shared vision, to ensuring ongoing active engagement and facilitation of relationships within the ecosystems, to better resource efficiency and coordination, multi-level governance, in particular between cities and regions, is crucial for the realisation of a knowledge and innovation-driven Europe and for ensuring territorial cohesion through coordinated efforts.



Throughout the case studies and discussions during the workshop, **common threads** were around:

- The need for collaboration and alignment at all levels
- The importance of creating legitimacy - whether contextual, historical or structural
- Shared leadership and shared ownership
- Learning from each others, building capacity for the future
- Experimenting, with and within the ecosystem.

WHAT WERE THE KEY LEARNINGS IN THIS WORKSHOP?

01

A shared vision is important, but shared leadership and ownership are key: it is important to know when to step back to let others take the lead.

02

Trust-based contracts or pledges signed by all actors, including politicians and business owners, are useful tools to ensure commitment from all.

03

In multi-level governance, as in any territorial development matters, one size / one model does not fit all. Playing to the local strengths and collaborating to address weaknesses is key.

04

Multi-level governance should not be superficial or an additional administrative burden and should clearly add value to all and at all levels. It does not always need to be formalised and it can happen organically within a territory or an ecosystem.



Apply for a City-to-City Exchange!

To learn more about multi-level governance, connect with cities with hands-on experience that have experienced it, or explore collaboration opportunities, apply now to an [**EUI City-to-City Exchange!**](#)

EUI City-to-City Exchange provides the ideal 'easy entry' point for cities wishing to learn directly from other cities across Europe.



Apply for a Peer Review!

If you have already developed your multi-level governance framework or strategy and want to improve its design and implementation approach, apply now to the [**Call for Peer Reviews**](#), by 13 November 2024, 12:00 CET.

EUI Peer Reviews are a great way to build your expertise on operational challenges from policy design to evaluation with peers from all over Europe.

For more information or advice about the call, book your [bilateral online consultation](#) with the EUI Secretariat.



What is City-to-City Exchange?

Key features

- Best price guarantee
- Data and easy to integrate
- Integration with other solutions in the office
- Open to various staff and external clients
- Flexible and robust contract model
- Pay as you go
- Access to any data history in real time
- Multiple data feeds to integrate with other systems
- A flexible and secure data exchange

The process

1. Register
2. Connect
3. Configure
4. Integrate
5. Monitor
6. Optimize

The City-to-City Exchange process

The City-to-City Exchange works as a fully managed solution to help you manage your data exchange with other cities.

Application phase: Join with your data and connect to the City-to-City Exchange platform.

Decision phase: Select your data and configure your integration.

Integration phase: Integrate your data with the City-to-City Exchange platform.

Implementation phase: Implement your integration and start exchanging data.

Monitoring phase: Monitor your data exchange and optimize your integration.