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Title **Key Characteristics of Sub-national Cross-border Cooperation in Europe: Three Types of European Geo-political Contexts Compared**

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**Abstract** Subnational (i.e. local and regional governments) cross-border cooperation in Europe is, based on the EU policy documents, a highly important phenomenon. EU policies and academic research present subnational cross-border cooperation as a “miracle cure” for regional problems—as borders are seen as institutional barriers to regional cohesion and growth. Given this importance, it is remarkable that little is yet known about the subnational cross-border cooperation in Europe. What are the key characteristics of subnational cross-border cooperation in Europe? Why in some European geo-political contexts subnational cross-border cooperation is successful whereas in other contexts it is not?

The present study aims to fill this gap through a novel research design. The paper distinguishes between four broad factors that drive subnational cross-border cooperation: expected gains from cross-border cooperation, transaction costs involved, resources for cross-border cooperation, and institutional context subnational governments are operating in. To study the factors driving subnational cross-border cooperation in Europe, firstly, datasets about cross-border cooperation initiatives in Europe were studied. We discovered that despite the importance of subnational cross-border cooperation highlighted in EU policy documents, there is an absence of a Europe-wide database about CBC initiatives which makes researching subnational cross-border cooperation in Europe challenging. Only one type of CBC initiative – that use an EGTC form – is currently monitored .

Secondly, information obtained from various datasets was complemented with information gathered from European Union cross-border cooperation related policy documents. Finally, to conclude the research, case studies about subnational cross-border cooperation in Europe, discussed in academic literature and various documents oriented to practitioners, were researched.

This paper is a conclusion of a multidisciplinary research as we integrated perspectives, concepts and research from multiple disciplines to provide a systematic view about the key characteristics of the subnational cross-border cooperation in Europe.

We report the results of the analyses of those documents and observe that the key characteristics of and drivers for subnational cross-border cooperation systematically vary between three different types of European geo-political contexts: Traditional Europe, New EU Member States, and Non-EU countries. We compare those three geo-political contexts against each other by using the four broad factors that drive subnational cross-border cooperation: expected gains, transaction costs, resources and institutional context.

We discuss our results with reference to future studies and implications for practice.