
Cooperation practices amongst local municipalities in Europe

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Local efficiency and democracy

- Size and policy coordination
- Size and democracy
- Territorial reforms
 - the belief in economies of scale that give hope for significant improvements in local government capacity to deliver better services, to be more cost efficient, and to be more competitive
 - the quality of local democracy (with the diminution of interest in public affairs, less confidence in local authorities, etc.) has been at stake

Intermunicipal cooperation

- What do we know?
 - Diversified Picture
 - Common features:
 - Development (growth in numbers)
 - Variety of forms
 - Constant evolution
- Pure forms?
 - All forms fit this definition: situations in which two or more municipalities agree to work together to achieve mutual benefits

Intermunicipal cooperation

- Territory
 - territorial reforms and inter-municipal cooperation do not need to be mutually exclusive strategies
- Scope
 - Service delivery, EU funds, economic development, ...
- Motives
 - Financial constraints
 - Legal (compulsory)
 - Strong top-down incentives (financial / functional)
 - Voluntary, trend effect

Intermunicipal cooperation

- Drivers

A priori	Intrinsic	Extrinsic	A posteriori
Nature of the problem	Identity	External influence	Expected
History of previous collaboration	Power relations	and incentives	outcomes
	Institutional context		
	Organisational profile		

- Actors

Internal	External
Local politicians	Civil society organisations
Local bureaucracy	Private companies
Other inter-municipal organisations	Non-local public authorities
	Citizens



Learning outcomes

- Form:
 - formal and non-binding arrangements
 - e.g., exchange of information between municipalities,
 - legally binding forms of collaboration
 - e.g. creation of autonomous organisational structures.
- Nature
 - voluntary
 - municipalities are free to establish long- or short-term cooperation agreements and also to abandon these in accordance with mutually agreed rules
 - mandatory
 - defined by law and compliance is monitored and sanctioned by the central government.

Learning outcomes

	Institutionalisation	
Nature of cooperation	High	Low
Hard	Service delivery	Contracts
Soft	Coordination	Information

Learning outcomes

- flexibility of cooperation mechanisms
- adaptability to different institutional contexts and the political and social dynamics of different territories
- enabling results similar to those of the objectives outlined for merger processes in municipalities, without, depriving existing municipalities of their autonomy



Learning outcomes

- IMC entities with harder, more institutionalized structures:
 - Bring higher satisfaction to member municipalities;
 - Membership “in the club” is considered more important for their overall activity;
 - (Positive) outcomes are more visible and easy to evaluate by the members;
 - More often occur spill-over to new areas of cooperation among members;
 - Stimulate higher interest of councillors in IMC activity;
 - There are more new municipalities “joining the club”, but also more leaving the IMC entity.

Policy implications

- Alternative scenarios for decentralized cooperative arrangements
- Governance Capacity of Intermunicipal Arrangements
 - Scope
 - Efficiency
 - Institutional nature
 - Democracy
 - Stability
- Incrementalism and diversification



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