



***“Cross-Border Cooperation in West Africa:
Support to integrated and sustainable development and
cross-border cooperation between Macaronesia, Cape
Verde and Senegal”***

Summary of Draft Report

Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)

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The opinions expressed in this report are those of the AEBR only and do not represent the official position of the European Commission.

1. Introduction

This is a summary of the draft report of the study and presents the main conclusions and recommendations for consultation with the study partners and all the stakeholders who have contributed to this study which is being carried out by AEFR for the European Commission.

2. Objectives, methodology and work carried out

According to the study specifications its “object is to support the preparation of an **Action Plan** for the development of cross-border cooperation and the enhancement of social, cultural, economic, and environmental sustainable development along the Western African seaboard ... placing particular emphasis on promoting the active participation of regional and local actors ...”.

The study builds on the previous EU study “**Opportunities for CBC in West Africa**” which was carried out by AEFR in 2011-2012 and the EU "Transnational Cooperation Programme Madeira-Açores-Canarias 2007-2013“ (**MAC Programme**), which supports some 50 projects involving a large number of West African partners.

The **desk research** of the study covered the abundant literature on West African borders as well as the growing institutional literature documenting the initiatives and decisions of the AU (notably the AU Border Programme), ECOWAS and UEMOA, inter-state agreements and various interventions.

The **fieldwork** focused on Senegal and Cape Verde. It included an **online survey** through which 55 questionnaires were obtained (40 from stakeholders in Cape Verde and Senegal, and 15 from lead partners of MAC programme projects, mostly from the Canary Islands). Additionally, 40 face-to-face **interviews** were conducted with stakeholders in Senegal and Cape Verde exploring in greater depth their experience, factors that facilitate or constrain CBC, fields with the greatest potential for CBC, methods of support to CBC and lessons learned from various interventions to date.

3. Key findings

The survey and interviews have shown that there is substantial **experience and interest in the broader field of cross-border cooperation**: in the case of Senegal mainly with Gambia and Guinea-Bissau; in Cape Verde predominantly with the Canary Islands; and in Macaronesia (mostly the Canary Islands) with Cape Verde.

The **greatest potential for CBC** is seen in the field of environment, followed by the areas of culture (Senegal) and tourism (Cape Verde and Macaronesia).

Regarding **factors facilitating CBC**, Senegal stakeholders attach top priority to the cultural and linguistic affinity, closely followed by shared awareness/management of problems (which comes top in **Cape Verde**, followed by EU and government support). Macaronesia responses prioritise transport.

The main **constraining factors** in Senegal refer to lack information, inadequate transport connections and delays at border controls. The lack of stability has been emphasised at interviews as a major constraint. Transport related constraints (inadequate connections, delays and costs) stands out in the responses from Cape Verde and Macaronesia.

Overall, there is a clear **geographical differentiation** in the type of cooperation and CBC potential:

- **between MAC (especially Canary Islands) and Cape Verde** there is widespread cooperation but less tangible results, and a strong transnational / knowledge transfer / Europe orientation;

- **between Senegal and continental West African countries** CBC is “under construction” but with potential for concrete results. It is oriented towards “regional integration” and “peace and security” with actions at both state level (harmonisation / normalisation) and local level (joint actions across land borders);
- **between Cape Verde and Senegal** it is limited but with potential to build on shared interests (maritime/fisheries) and people links (diasporas).

4. Main conclusions

The **potential** for cross-border cooperation contributing to sustainable development and regional integration is **great**, for many fields and types of cooperation, **but** it is **under-exploited**.

The **key conditions** for CBC to develop and succeed are **cultural and linguistic affinity**, a good degree of **security and stability**, and **proximity** that makes it possible to cooperate in many different fields and pursue joint actions, and involves lower costs.

There is a growing recognition of CBC in West Africa (“institutional base” and “political trust”) to be built upon and a great variety of initiatives and projects worth nurturing. However, much energy in existing interventions goes to rather “abstract” activities with relatively little concrete results on the ground benefiting people. Thus, it is essential that **in future more should be done** for:

- achieving small and fast practical actions with results on the ground in various sectors, through local cross-border partnerships and direct people involvement;
- strengthening cooperation at regional and inter-state level for sharing and learning;
- building good links between state and local level for an enabling framework and synergies.

It is also important to **explain better** to national policy makers **the added value of “cross-border cooperation”** (and that it should not be confused with “international cooperation”) and to promote the mainstream forms of CBC, i.e. direct cooperation and joint actions by local actors from various sectors (local government, NGOs, business, etc) on either side of a border within a shared “cross-border space”.

5. Draft recommendations

It is suggested that the Action Plan should be a fairly flexible package of interventions, at two inter-connected levels, with a medium-to-long term time horizon, as outlined below.

First, **at regional level**, the aim should be to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the full range of existing initiatives, by promoting and facilitating the sharing of experience, learning and mutual support among national and sub-national level actors and researchers engaged in CBC.

This part of the Action Plan should be under the aegis of the **African Union Border Programme and ECOWAS**, and it should be operationally coordinated by a “**CBC Working Group**” led by technical support attached to AUBP and/or ECOWAS, such as currently provided by GIZ to the AUBP.

Relevant activities at this level could be supported financially from different donors (including development programmes and banks) and even private sponsors, and could include:

- the promotion of a **West Africa platform/network for the exchange of information and experience**, which could be combined with training, information sessions, study

visits (in Africa and in Europe), etc and could be facilitated by an experienced organisation like AEBR;

- support to existing and new **transnational programmes and regional initiatives**, such as a new MAC Programme for 2014-2020 (e.g. with partner search, project development), initiatives in areas of common interest (e.g. maritime cooperation), development of an EGTC-type instrument, promotion of CBC in Public Administration schools and research programmes.

Second, **at sub-national level**, the aim should be to nurture and enhance spontaneous and endogenous CBC activities on the ground and build local capacities for more substantial and structured ones in the future, based on cross-border partnerships and local development strategies.

This part of the Action Plan could take the form of a **regional “CBC Programme” for West Africa under the forthcoming 11th European Development Fund (EDF)**, which could provide TA and Small Projects Fund(s) to support small “people-to-people” projects on the bilateral or trilateral borders of the participating countries. Once the basic CBC institutional capacity is in place, it could additionally support common infrastructures (e.g. health centres, schools, agricultural produce storage / processing, roads) and other more substantial projects.

This programme could initially cover only a **small group of countries** with a good degree of cultural/linguistic affinity, proximity and stability with a view to rolling it out gradually.

Finally, it is essential for “cross-border cooperation” to be recognised as an important dimension in the efforts to achieve peace, stability, sustainable development and regional integration. As such, it should be accorded a higher profile than so far. For this reason the AU’s “African Borders Day” of 7 June should be supported *per se* and, furthermore, it should be adopted globally as the “**International Day of Integration across National Boundaries**”, as it has been proposed by AEBR to the European Union, the Andean Community of Nations, MERCOSUR, the Central American Integration System, several national governments in Europe and America, and the General Assembly of the United Nations, after informing the AUBP.