

# **The Europeanization of territorial policies and inter-municipal cooperation: some evidence from Portugal and Italy**

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Over the last couple of decades, a “new” model of urban policy has been spreading across Europe. Some of its main features are territorial integration, local actors involvement and a creative approach of multi-level governance. These features are particularly important in dispersed urbanization contexts, where inter-municipal cooperation is a crucial aspect of territorial development. The European Union played a key role in the spreading of this ‘model’, particularly in less developed regions, where EU-funded programmes were often responsible for the introduction of important institutional innovations. This “Europeanization” process did not produce homogeneous results, however, as the same instruments often generated varying outcomes between and within member-states.

The paper compares the implementation of a Community Initiative – Territorial Employment Pacts - in Portugal and Italy, focusing in particular the institutionally innovative aspects of this experience related with inter-municipal cooperation in two urban dispersed contexts, the Sousa Valley (Portugal) and Agro Nocerino Sarnese (Italy). Territorial Employment Pacts differed from other EU-funded programmes for the type of targeted areas (usually wider than a municipality, but smaller than a region), their integrative approach and their emphasis on strategy and local-level, broad-based partnerships. This cross-national comparison is focused on the factors that may be responsible for divergent results, such as specific local aspects, political cultures or diverse ways of responding to common structural challenges. We aim to learn more about the role of Europeanization on the introduction of creative approaches of territorial policy tackling inter-municipal, dispersed urban contexts.

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