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THE PRESIDENT MATEJ ARČON

# Gorizia-Nova Gorica: a unique cross-border city

*EGTC GO is an innovative territorial cooperation tool for Europe*

Following the tragic events of the twentieth century, after the Second World War the eastern border saw the split of the Gorizia territory between Italy and Yugoslavia (now Slovenia), with the birth of the town of Nova Gorica close to the border with Gorizia. Two Cities divided by an iron curtain for 57 years,

today they are characterised by a varied socio-cultural mix. In the most recent period of European programming, the lack of suitable legal tools to provide a common strategy in a cross-border context has really slowed down the creation of joint infrastructure or services between Gorizia, Nova Gorica and neighbouring Šempeter-Vrtojba. Since 2011, however,

the year in which the EGTC GO-European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation “Territory of municipalities: Comune di Gorizia (I), Mestna Občina Nova Gorica (Slo) and Občina Šempeter-Vrtojba (Slo)” was established, the two cities have been collaborating on some crucial issues for the whole area. EGTC GO ([www.euro-go.eu](http://www.euro-go.eu)) is an Italian public body

with legal personality which has authority in the three municipalities: it can go beyond borders and face, for the first time, the challenges of a cooperation that plans and creates at the same time, thinking no longer of three distinct Municipalities, but of a single cross-border city, without any division. Thanks to this tool, a process of rethinking the entire governing

of the cross-border area was carried out to create a unique model in Europe, thanks to the particular shape of the urban agglomeration that allows the three towns to be considered as a “single” city. EGTC GO represents the first case, on a European scale, implementation of an integrated territorial investment (ITI) based on a common strategy as the sole beneficiary

of European funding and the single cross-border commissioning body, thus concentrating some of the most innovative tools made available by Europe to support cross-border collaboration in a single entity. Among the projects of EGTC GO, funded by the Interreg VA Italy-Slovenia 2014-2020 Programme, we have the “Isonzo-Soča



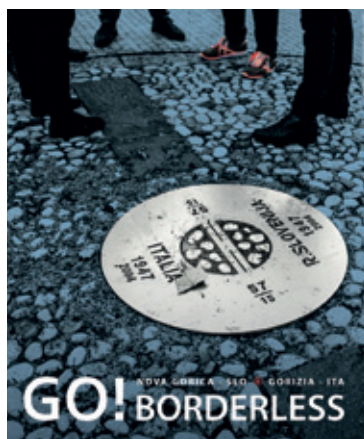
THE ISONZO RIVER AND THE CITIES - THE BORDER IS INVISIBLE





EVENT FOR THE SIGNING OF THE JOINT CANDIDACY OF NOVA GORICA AND GORIZIA AS EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE 2025

◀ Cross-border Park”, which sees the creation of a common cross-border network of cycle and pedestrian paths along the Isonzo river and along the national border connecting Solkan to Šempeter-Vrtojba. The cycle path will run exactly on the border, where there was once a barrier. Other infrastructural works included in the project are the green area with parking spaces for campers in Vrtojba and a cycle/pedestrian bridge on the Isonzo river in Solkan. The Isonzo represents for Gorizia, Nova Gorica and Šempeter-Vrtojba a shared identity heritage and the ultimate goal of the project is precisely to “return” the river to the cities. Furthermore, the “Salute-Zdravstvo” project represents the first attempt to compare, analyse and search for synergies between the Italian and Slovenian social and health services and intends to improve their quality and the quality of life in the Municipalities of Gorizia, Nova Gorica and Šempeter- Vrtojba. In line with Directive 2011/24/EU on patient mobility and developing health-care in the European Union, the “Salute-Zdravstvo” project aims to encourage this mobility in five ar-



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THE MOSAIC LOCATED BETWEEN THE TWO STATES IN PIAZZA DELLA TRANSALPINA/TRG EVROPE

reas: physiological pregnancy, mental health, autism, the creation of a single cross-border booking centre and joint social services. A further direction of growth set to be developed in the next five years is linked to the title of European Capital of Culture. At the end of the year, in fact, the title of European Capital of Culture for 2025 will be awarded to a Slovenian city and a German city. Nova Gorica and Gorizia have jointly drawn up the candidacy programme “Go! Borderless”, which promotes the unique cross-border area. Collaboration

and its challenges will be the central theme and the main strength of the candidacy, together with the use of EGTC GO. The primary and main objective of the European Capital of Culture is to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants of the cross-border territory and its surroundings, strengthening their sense of community. This is a unique opportunity to connect, through cultural commitment, all the potential of the two cities in a single tourist, cultural, economic, training and infrastructural whole, which will allow it to increase economic development and investment, to attract cultural tourists and to improve the quality of life of current and future inhabitants. “Cross-border collaboration - says Matej Arčon, president of the EGTC GO - is the real key to the development and repairing of our territory. Together we are no longer two cities on the edge of two countries, but a single territory in the heart of Europe”. ■

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