



A POWERFUL STEP TOWARD EUROPEAN INTEGRATION: SOLVING CROSS BORDER OBSTACLES

b-solutions' Call for Proposals

Cinzia Dellagiacoma, Association of European Border Regions

12 November 2024

Belgrade Art Hotel, Kneza Mihaila 27, Belgrade, Serbia

b-solutions' **objective**

Support local actors in border regions
to solve obstacles

of a legal and/or administrative nature

along EU borders, inclusive along borders
with EFTA and IPA countries



b-solutions' call for proposals

- Goal:** identify and promote further 60 cases of border obstacles of a legal and/or administrative nature
- Target:** public bodies in border regions (including public equivalent bodies);
and
Cross-border structures (EGTCs, Euroregions)
- Scope:** border regions along EU internal land and maritime borders and along EU borders with EFTA and IPA countries
- Themes:** institutional cooperation, public services, labour markets and education and European Green Deal





Who is eligible to take part?

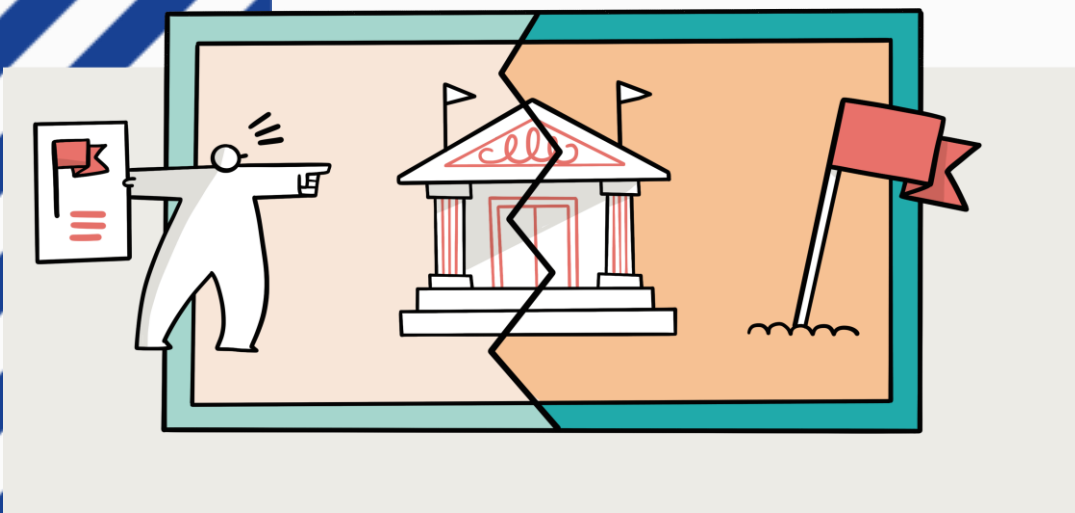
- Public bodies, “bodies governed by public law” or “public equivalent bodies” at the national, regional or local level with a national boundary limiting their territory
- Cross-border entities such as European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs), Euroregions, Eurodistricts, Eurocities and similar cross-border structures
- Located in an EU Member State or neighbouring EFTA or IPA country and share at least one land or maritime border with another EU Member State or with an EFTA country or an IPA country



Which kind of border obstacles do we look at?

Legal and administrative obstacles which arise because of:

- lack of **coherence of legislation** applicable on the different sides of the border
- inconsistencies, non-existence, or overlapping of different **administrative procedures**
- applicable European, national or regional legislation or administrative procedures do not take into account the **specificity of cross-border interaction**



Which kind of support is provided?

b-solutions provides **technical support**.

Participants receive advice by legal experts who cooperate with them to:

- define the obstacle;
- identify a possible solution to it.

Outputs:

- a report by the expert with clear explanation of the obstacle and suggestions for concrete solution
- visibility in publications



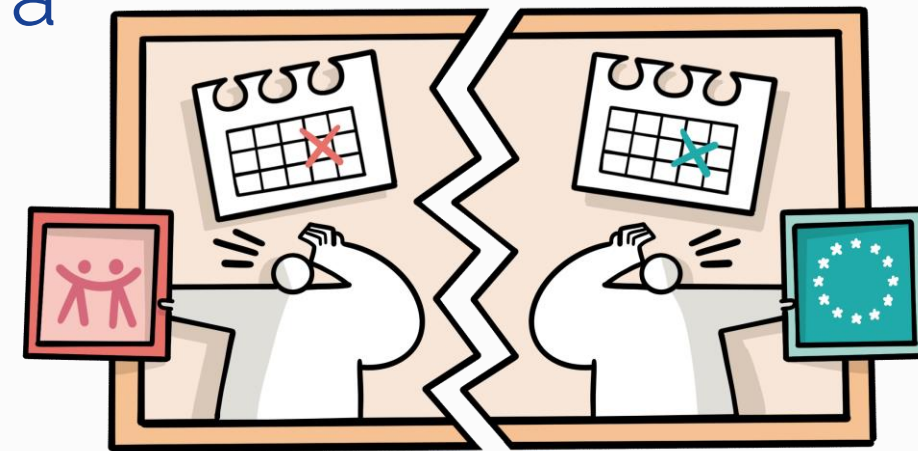
How does it work?

Through field visits, **experts carry out the analysis.**

Experts are assigned to participants for 8.5 days within a period of a maximum of 3 months.

Costs and administration are managed by AEBR.

The expert writes a report about the obstacle and suggests solutions to overcome it.



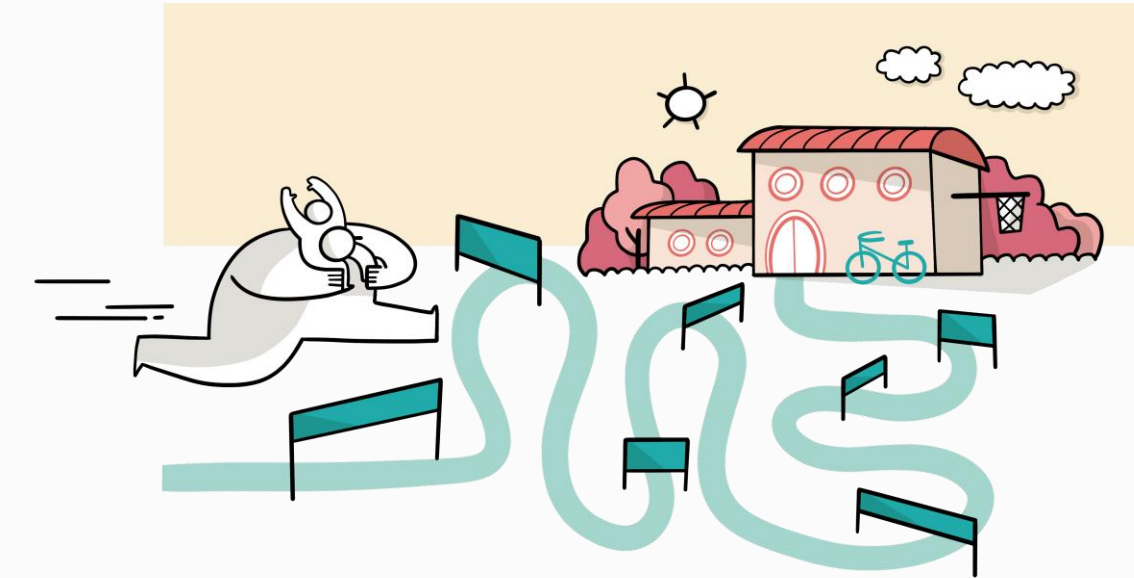
How to apply?

Proposals should be submitted via an **online form**, accessible here:
<https://www.b-solutionsproject.com/call-for-proposals>

Timeline

Deadline: **28 February 2026**

Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis with immediate implementation.





Eligibility criteria

The application form must be submitted electronically via <https://www.b-solutionsproject.com/call-for-proposals> before 28 February 2026

The application form should be completed preferably in English – all 24 official EU languages will be accepted

The applicants must be eligible



Awarding criteria

Each application should address a specific obstacle that the applicant has encountered in its border region.

Applicants demonstrate:

- That the proposed action addresses a real and documented obstacle of an administrative and/or legal nature hampering cross-border cooperation in one of the thematic areas mentioned
- The potential increase in cross-border cooperation if the obstacle is solved
- Its mandate to devise solutions
- The replicability potential of the action



Why participate in the call for proposals



What do you obtain from *b-solutions*?

- A full **report** with a detailed analysis of the specific obstacle faced in the region, and proposals for concrete solutions
- Participation in a **compendium** illustrating a variety of obstacles and possible solutions to enhance cross-border cooperation

Support to:

- Demonstrate the cross-border obstacles you face
- Move towards solutions
- Raise awareness of cross-border cooperation
- Be part of a European project to bring European integration forward



Why *b-solutions* matters for the European Commission?



“There are two major outcomes: one, for the specific border, we get the solution for the specific case – and this may be a game-changer. Secondly, from a macro-perspective, looking at the whole Europe, we get knowledge on obstacles – and this helps us shape policies”

Ricardo Ferreira, European Commission



What you can solve with *b-solutions*?

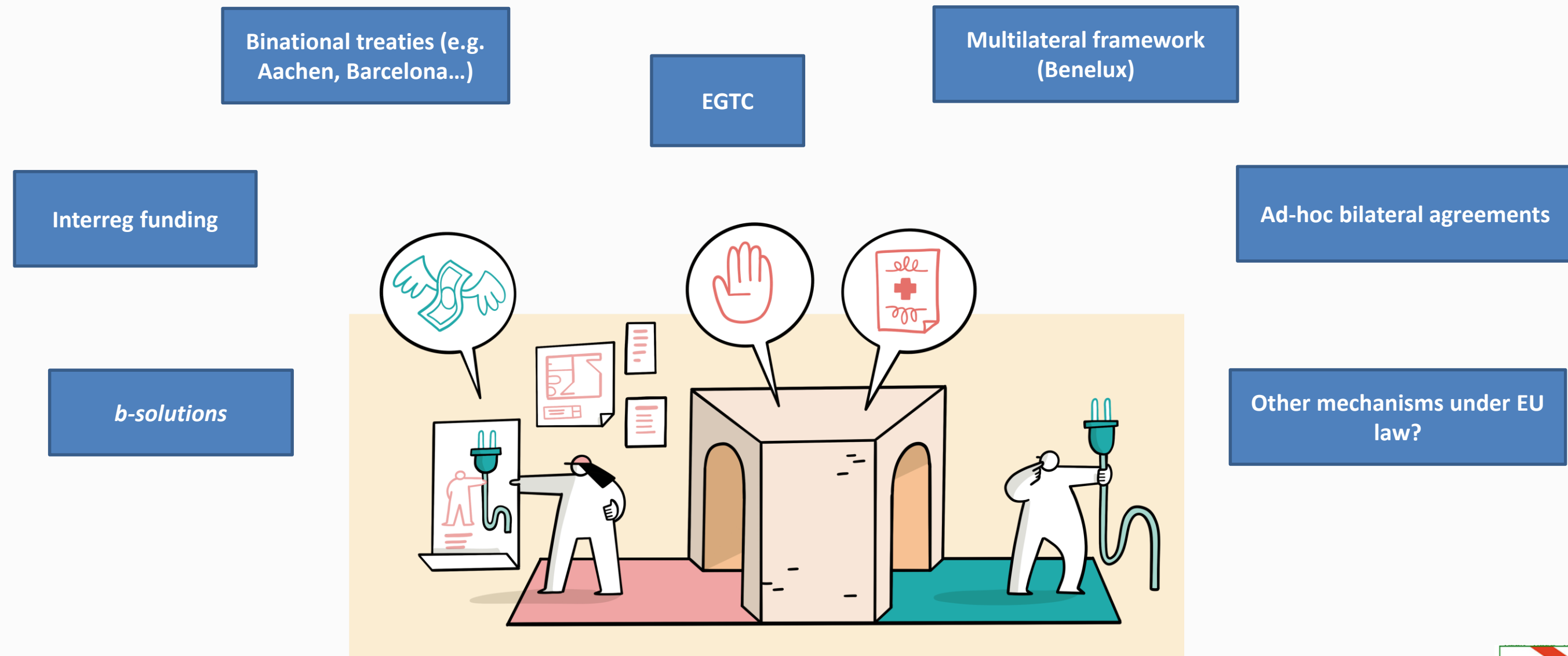
Border obstacles persist and affect many aspects of life in border regions such as

- access to public services: offer of public transport, reimbursement of healthcare costs;
- access to the labour market: administrative burdens, slow recognition, limitation to working remotely;
- management of common resources or natural areas (parks, rivers, etc.): lack of governance, incompatible regulations on the protection of biodiversity or on the sharing of energy.



What is the context of *b-solutions*?

A comprehensive toolbox to tackle border obstacles and build Europe



Why is *b-solutions* important?

It supports regional development in border regions:

removing 1/5 of border obstacles could lead to GDP +2% in border regions and 1 million new jobs

It increases the effectiveness of Interreg:

providing expert support analysis to follow up on the implementation of Interreg projects and the drafting of Interreg project proposals

It promotes innovative solutions of cooperation («labs of EU integration»):

having CB regions well integrated and CB workers able to smoothly circulate and work contributes to building Europe



What have we learnt so far?

Legal and administrative obstacles are many and different, as are their root causes

There are no off-the-shelf solutions! Solutions must be tailored to the specificities of the territories involved – every region, every country is different

Solutions can involve several options:

- Change in legal frameworks
- Harmonise administrative practices
- Use of complementary tools such as INTERREG, EGTC





How to complete the call for proposals





Information required:

- General information on the applicant
- Title of the proposed advice case
- Description of a real and documented obstacle encountered
- Explanation of the potential increase in cross-border cooperation the obstacle were solved
- Description of the applicant's or partner's mandate to devise the solutions
- Explanation of the replicability potential of the action
- Definition of the specific border

Awarding criteria

Each application should address a specific obstacle that the applicant has encountered in its border region.

Applicants demonstrate:

- That the proposed action addresses a real and documented obstacle of an administrative and/or legal nature hampering cross-border cooperation in one of the thematic areas mentioned
- The potential increase in cross-border cooperation if the obstacle is solved
- Its mandate to devise solutions
- The replicability potential of the action



How do I describe the obstacle?

Understanding criterion 1

Explain in detail what kind of obstacle of an legal and/or administrative nature you have encountered.

The obstacle may arise because of:

- lack of coherence of legislation applicable on the different sides of the border;
- inconsistencies, inexistence, and overlapping of the different administrative procedures;
- applicable European, national or regional legislation or administrative procedure do not take into account the specificity of cross-border interactions.



How do I describe the obstacle?

Understanding criterion 1

Guiding questions:

- What is the general context in which the obstacle arises?
- By which legal or administrative provisions do you think the obstacle is caused?
- How is the cooperation with your neighbour(s) affected by the obstacle?
- Which kind of actions or services is prevented or limited by the obstacle? (i.e. it obstructs cross-border mobility of citizens and/or workers, it poses limits to the accessibility to healthcare services to citizens residing on the other side of the border, etc)

How do I describe the obstacle?

- General description of the context of the „North Sea Port“ - where the obstacle is identified - and of its cross-border features;
- Identification of the legal/administrative nature of the obstacle > the problem arises because of the existence of a certain law (183 days law) that limit cross-border employment at the Port
- Explanation of the practical consequences of the law on the daily life of cross-border workers and clarification of the administrative and financial burdens: *„all employees are obliged to daily maintain an Excel file, where they have to fill in the location where they'll work that specific day“* and *„when employees exceed a certain amount of days on the other side of the border (183) they have to pay taxes in both sides“* or again *„the way of calculating a 'day' across the border differs from tax specialist to tax specialist“*.



How do I describe the potential increase in cross-border cooperation?

Understanding criterion 2

Outline the consequences you expect to see in cross-border cooperation if the obstacle you present with this application is solved



CRITERIA FOR SELECTION 2:

POTENTIAL INCREASE IN CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

Guiding questions:

- Is the theme relevant for cross-border interactions in your region?
- Is the specific obstacle causing an impactful reduction of these interactions?
- If the obstacle is solved, would cross-border cooperation increase?
- How so? (more frequent exchanges, more willingness to cross the border, easier to make business, etc)



How do I describe the potential increase in cross-border cooperation?

“There will be a sustainable effect for cross-border workers and cross-border mobility regarding work. The current administrative confusion discourages many workers to apply for job posts at the Port”

“Solving these obstacles would be a best practice and should be set as an example and would attract new businesses”

“with the removal of the obstacle, hiring doctors from a neighbouring country would be quicker, resulting in better functioning of a cross-border hospital. This has a clear impact on the lives and health condition of the citizens residing in the border area”

How do I describe the applicant's or co-applicants' mandate to implement solutions?

Understanding criterion 3

Provide information on the **authority** you or your co-applicant(s) have to act on the territory to implement potential solutions to the obstacle identified or to propose policies.

The mandate can derive from the **legal constitution** of the applicant (or co-applicant) or its **statutes**.



CRITERIA FOR SELECTION 3:

APPLICANT'S OR PARTNER'S MANDATE TO DEVISE SOLUTIONS

Guiding questions:

- Do you have legal mandate to promote cross-border cooperation and to intervene on the theme of the obstacle?
- If you don't have legal mandate to promote cross-border cooperation and on the theme of the obstacle, who would you involve in the implementation of the solutions?
- How can you involve the competent body identified?

How do I describe the applicant's or co-applicants' mandate to implement solutions?

“Creation of a „partnership“ - the Euroregion does not have legal competences so one of its participating Provinces had to vouch for it and submit the application.”

“As a cross-border structure, the EGTC has a mandate to intervene on the field. Among its priorities we see: The contribution to the development and reinforcement of the economic and social cohesion of its territory“.



How do I describe replicability?

Understanding criterion 4

Explain how the case you present could serve as **an example for other instances** and, as such, if the solution could inspire, or benefit, stakeholders in other border regions to find solutions to similar obstacles.



CRITERIA FOR SELECTION 4:

REPLICABILITY

Guiding questions:

- Where else do you think a potential solution could be successfully implemented?
- Along other borders in different areas of the EU?
- Or in some other borders in the EU with very specific characteristics?
Or on other borders of the same countries, in very specific conditions?

How do I describe replicability?

“Solving the fiscal problems limiting the hiring of personnel from the other side of the border than from where an EGTC has its registered office can potentially be replicated to many other borders where similar structures operate.”

“Solving the obstacle(s) that prevent the creation of an interoperable digital public procurement platform to be used by economic actors located on both sides of the border can be replicated on all the boundaries where there are cross-border structures entitled to launch a call for tenders on both sides.”

“The solution could be implemented by other cross-border enterprises, the whole Dutch-Belgian border and border regions with similar social-economic characteristics.”

Inspirational Cases



AEBR - AGEG - ARFE



SOLUTIONS



Funded by
the European Union



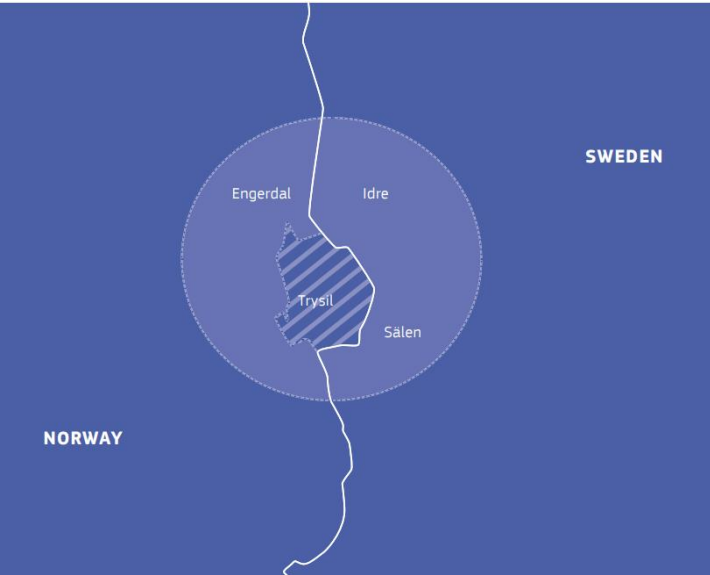
GO2GO Cross-border bike sharing

Sustainable urban mobility has been gaining attention in the border region between Italy and Slovenia. Implementing a convenient cross-border cycling infrastructure will serve as a catalyst for change towards sustainable mobility and will be especially relevant, given that in 2025, the local grouping of cities **Nova Gorica (Slovenia) and Gorizia (Italy)** will be the first cross-border European Capital of Culture. The two border cities have agreed to integrate their urban mobility strategies and create a **collective bike sharing system**. The current challenge, however, is to resolve the issues posed **by currently having two separate systems with two different service providers**.

OBSTACLES:

The obstacles preventing the effective implementation of the project are primarily due to the presence of regulatory and administrative differences between Italy and Slovenia.

- Obstacle 1: the main obstacle is that the **two bike sharing systems are completely different and significantly incompatible**. To this end, a **new operator** must be selected through **public procurement**, and to do so, it is necessary to first determine **which law is applicable**.
- Obstacle 2: it must be determined whether the operator, who currently manages the system on the Slovenian side, could be hired through “**direct assignment**” to operate the Italian side as well.
- Obstacle 3: important **regulatory and procedural aspects related to taxation and potential revenues** must be addressed.



Cross-border riding and dog sled guided tours

Trysil is a small municipality in Norway, bordered by Sweden and known for its winter activities, including **dog sled tours and horseback riding**. It also has the distinct feature of being situated on the border between an **EU Member State (Sweden)** and a **non-EU country (Norway)**. An obstacle has been identified in Trysil due to **non-harmonised rules on the sanitary requirements for the transportation of animals (dogs and horses) across the border for commercial or tourism purposes**. This situation clearly has an impact on the tourism sector in the area, as these animals are mostly involved in cross-border tourism activities in the local nature parks. In this regard, it will be necessary to foster increased coordination between the two countries on this aspect, and outline joint solutions.

OBSTACLES:

The obstacle primarily arises from coordination **challenges related to customs and veterinary requirements**. In this regard, administrative and operational barriers are also evident

- Specifically, the lack of **harmonised rules on animal transport** is due to both **differing customs rules and veterinary requirements**, which results in an additional **administrative burden and extra costs** for tourism operators. In addition, the process of **crossing the border** with animals is quite **time-consuming and inefficient**, since the process is not digitalised.
- Even though regulations for horses and dogs are relatively similar in Sweden and Norway, there are some differences, for example, in how the customs deposit sum for a horse is calculated.
- In terms of veterinary regulations, each border crossing made with these animals requires a **veterinary certificate** obtained within the previous **48 hours**, confirming the health of the animal. This is often a problem for tour operators who do not have access to veterinary services before crossing the border with the animals.



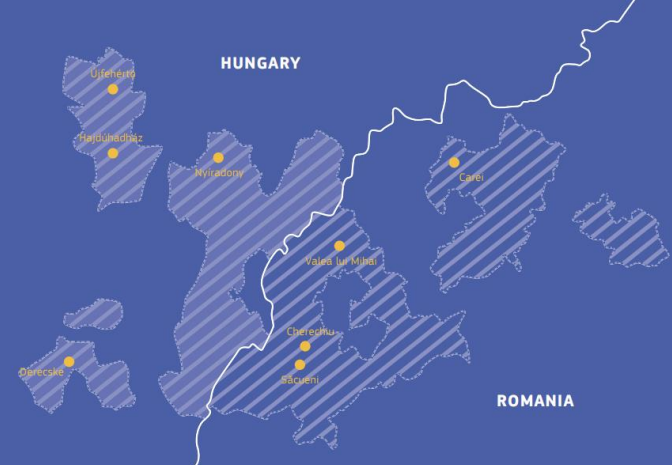
Simplification of the procedures for hiring and teleworking across the ES-PT border

Spanish and Portuguese residents, especially those living in the border region between these two countries, have enjoyed the freedom of movement guaranteed to all European citizens, including the right to live in one Member State but work in another. However, since the COVID-19 pandemic, new challenges have arisen that have upended the very way that we work today, highlighting the need for flexibility and adaptability in response to the restrictions, containment measures and frequent border closures. Remote work and the telework modality are gaining ground, which in theory would allow an **employee to reside in one country and work in another**. In reality, however, the administrative **procedures and formalities** that the hiring entity must carry out for these types of workers in this border territory are usually so **complex and time-consuming**, that hiring cross-border or remote employees is often difficult.

OBSTACLES:

The obstacles primarily arise due to a **lack of knowledge on how to interpret European legislation** and because of the costly and lengthy administrative procedures required to hire cross-border workers. Two main obstacles were identified regarding **uncertainties about the applicable law for employment contracts, taxation and social security benefits** in two specific situations:

- residing in one country but working simultaneously in two countries;
- residing in one country and remotely working for a company located in another country.



Analysis of legislative borders in employment, especially in the agricultural field

The territory of the **Gate to Europe EGTC** is comprised of a total of 35 local authorities along the **Romanian-Hungarian border**, formed by small cities and villages, in which the local economy is highly dependent on the agriculture sector. The **small-scale farmers and producers** in this border area, who are primarily self-employed and work in agriculture full-time, face several difficulties when attempting to **sell their goods** (mainly fruit and vegetables) **across the border**. In general, this is due to various factors, such as a lack of knowledge on the procedures to follow, language barriers, low production capacity, difficulty in accessing credit, and not being officially registered in the system, among other issues. Here, the goal is to promote fairer access to local products without geographical constraints.

OBSTACLES:

- obstacles in **crossing the border to sell their goods**: there are different legal and administrative documents for each country, **different permits are required**, among others.
- **different national regulations** regarding the **trade of local agricultural products and permits**, with a territorial limitation of sales. Distinct regulations have been applied during COVID-19, since only producers in **possession of a working permit** are allowed to cross the border, making it **difficult for** those with **self-employed status (especially informal)** to produce such documents;
- **language barriers**, especially for Hungarian citizens. However, the Romanians in this territory also speak Hungarian as their mother tongue, allowing them to overcome this barrier;



The problem of the children's sickness certificate for frontier workers working in Germany and residing in the Netherlands

The German social security system provides employees with a continued payment of wages if they are unable to work due to illness, which also applies to family members of the employees who become ill. These wage replacement benefits, which include the **salary paid** by the employer and benefits from the health insurance fund, also apply to **parents while they care for their sick children**. In border regions, however, children's sick pay is **hardly ever made use of**, particularly for those **living in the Netherlands but working in Germany**. In this case, several administrative and information-related barriers were observed that prevent cross-border workers from applying for such benefits.

OBSTACLES:

- an administrative obstacle with regard to the **medical note that parents must obtain for their children**. In the Netherlands, a medical note from the doctor that confirms the child's illness is not required for receiving children's sick pay, therefore **doctors in the Netherlands generally do not issue one**. This makes proof of the illness difficult to demonstrate and further complicates the issue for Dutch residents who work in Germany;
- **lack of knowledge or awareness of this benefit**: because of the difficulty faced in obtaining the children's sick note, along with the administrative hurdles involved, many workers are unaware that they are even entitled to such benefits;
- difficulty in providing proof of illness: parents must be able to **prove** to both their employers and the health care institution in charge of granting the benefits **that their child is indeed "ill enough"** for them to have to request time off from work.



Cross-border emergencies team

The **EGTC Eurocity Chaves-Verín** is a group of territorial entities located along the border of the autonomous region of **Galicia, in Spain and northern Portugal**. Due to its location and environment, the region often faces natural disasters on a yearly basis, such as **floods and forest fires**. Cross-border cooperation is therefore essential when conducting emergency operations in this area, highlighting the need for a well-structured alert and response system at the local level.

OBSTACLES:

- **Issues in radio communication** among emergency teams from each country, since Portugal and Spain each use **different radio frequencies**. There is currently no international provision that requires the emergency teams to use the same radio frequency.
- **Insurance-related concerns** for emergency workers or firefighters **in the event of injuries or accidents** during cross-border emergency operations.
- **Lack of information sharing** between emergency teams in the case of wildfires, flood risks or other environmental emergencies. For example, there is a **gap in the existing emergency response protocol between Spain and Portugal**, highlighting the need to create a coordinated flood risk alert when floods are detected on either side of the border.



Improvement of conditions for cross-border aerial forest fire control

The border area between the **Spanish region of Extremadura and Portugal** is rich in flora and fauna and is home to several national parks and nature reserves. In recent years, however, the natural environment has been facing severe threats due to climate change and extreme weather. More specifically, **recurrent forest fires** have been one of the greatest risks to this area, amounting to personal and material damage in both countries and making this a truly critical issue that requires strong cross-border cooperation. However, several important barriers remain to achieve an agile response in the context of emergency fire control operations.

OBSTACLES:

- a **lack of mutual recognition of the Special Operator Certificate** from one country in the neighbouring country. For example, if Portugal does not recognise the Spanish certificate, **Spanish aviation crews cannot enter Portuguese territory to assist them;**
- **language skill requirements for civil aviation crew:** the crew must either speak English or the respective national language (Spanish or Portuguese), which is a real obstacle since **most crew members do not speak English sufficiently** in order for this to be a common language for aerial communications.



How to contact us

<https://www.b-solutionsproject.com/>

Email: b-solutions@aebr.eu

Telephone: +49 176 42 090 666

Book a slot for an individual call: <https://calendly.com/b-solutionsaebr/30min>

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

