



Arbeitsgemeinschaft Europäischer Grenzregionen (AGEG)  
Asociación de Regiones Fronterizas Europeas (ARFE)  
Association des régions frontalières européennes (ARFE)  
Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)  
Comunità di lavoro delle regioni europee di confine (AGEG)  
Europæiske grænseregioners Arbejdsfællesskap (AGEG)  
Werkgemeinschaft van Europese grensgebieden (WVEG)  
Associação das Regiões Fronteiriças Europeias (ARFE)  
Σύνδεσμος Ευρωπαϊκών Συνοριακών Περιφερειών (ΣΕΣΠ)  
Stowarzyszenie Europejskich Regionów Granicznych (SERG)  
Ассоциация Европейских Приграничных Регионов (АЕПР)  
Európai Határ Menti Régiók Szövetsége (EHMRS)  
Associació de les Regions Frontereres Europees (ARFE)



# Cross-border cooperation, *b-solutions* and the path to European Integration

B-Solutions Workshop – 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2024 – Belgrade, Republic of  
Serbia

Caitriona Mullan, AEBR Cross-Border Co-operation Expert/Advisor for B-  
Solutions project

Association of European Border Regions (AEBR/ARFE/AGEG)

# EU Cohesion Policy and the role of Border Regions



- The EU's cohesion policy is aimed at building a smarter, greener, more connected and more social Europe that is closer to its citizens.
- It enhances economic, social and territorial cohesion by reducing imbalances among regions.
- For 2014-2020, the EU invested EUR 352 billion in its regions and cities. This has risen to EUR 392 billion for 2021-2027, around a third of the EU's budget.
- Europe of the Regions.
- A stronger Europe = connected border regions.
- 30% of the EU population lives in a border region,
- 40% of EU territory is border region.

# Border Regions- Living Labs of European Integration



- **July 2021 – COMMISSION Brussels, 14.7.2021 COM(2021) 393 final REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS EU Border Regions: Living labs of European integration**
- Recognised the role of EU Border Regions in delivering the full impact of the European project for all citizens;
- Border regions – places of diversity, intersectional identify, flexibility, creativity, places where innovation can grow- new solutions to problems of service delivery, new markets
- i: Resilience through deeper institutional cooperation
- ii: More and better cross-border public services
- iii. Vibrant cross-border labour market
- iv. Border regions for the European Green Deal
- Functional areas which cross jurisdictional boundaries – historical cohesion, cultural affinities and diversities
- Border Regions- how they function = a microcosm of how Europe can work now and in the future
- [REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION](#)

# What Border Regions need is what the EU Needs:



- Cross-border trade;
- SME development;
- Cross-border innovation zones – combining totality of a border region’s assets- release a potential greater than the sum of the parts (strengthen and add to national economies – everyone benefits);
- Cross-border labour markets;
- Cross-border arrangements to support mobility of trade and workers - labour markets: skills, education, taxation, social insurance, healthcare access, transport;
- Cross-border healthcare access and innovation to tackle health inequalities: co-operation on economies of scale, cross-border patient catchments and population health outcomes; EU post-Covid priorities of Mental Health, tackling health inequalities, and creating more resilient health systems- regional territorial ecosystems are key; in border regions this can be even more innovative;
- Cross-border connectivity- physical infrastructure, multimodal transport, energy, digitisation;
- Cross-border social cohesion- local development systems, urban and rural development networks; information and support for citizens to access their rights; support for vulnerable groups; multilingualism;
- Civil society – participative and deliberative democracy;
- Institutional relationships – trust, mutual support, shared visions and actions.

# *b-solutions* as a tool for regional development cooperation (and EU integration)



While there are many EU level frameworks, these are not always transposed by Member States in a way which works for border regions. The EU needs the solutions that border regions can offer, in order to function to its full potential.

*b-solutions* offers the following to border regions and their local, regional and national Governments:

With Objective 1 (Expert case study – the first step):

- Evidence-based solutions for cross-border obstacles of a legal and/or administrative nature;

With Objective 2 (implementation, capacity building for embedding solutions, building trust and working relationships which must underlie successful development cooperation):

- Expert support to host organisation – facilitation, multilevel stakeholder brokerage and buy-in, key enabling products e.g. draft legal text, protocols for co-operation- and a facilitated space to build the necessary relationships for the solution to take hold;
- Support and engagement from AEBR – amplification of policy issues, scaling-up of issues, connection with other border regions and institutional stakeholders- added value; we follow the pathway with you towards a solution.

# Cooperation and Collaboration in Border Regions- the European project in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century



- The daily work of cooperation for integration;
- Small innovations to release bigger potential;
- A Europe closer to citizens; European values of equality, social inclusion, innovation can give meaning to higher level policy agendas in terms of the daily lives of citizens, communities and communities of interest;
- As a community of practice, you are the leaders of European integration through the work you do in border regions;
- This work and the relationships it builds are a present-day testimony to the European project;
- B-Solutions is there to assist you in tackling obstacles that can help your border regions release their full potential, address the economic and social needs of society;
- Stability to underpin our peace. Economic and social cohesion to address the legacy of conflict. What connects us is greater than what divides us. We can do cooperation and collaboration and embrace our diversity, and provide an inspiration for Europe in a challenging geopolitical environment;
- Transforming border regions from the scars of history into seams, strong connective zones, and a better future for all our children and generations to come.

# Thank You for your Attention

[B-solutions@aebr.eu](mailto:B-solutions@aebr.eu)

For information on *b-solutions* Project Opportunities for support to solve cross-border obstacles \*call currently open – visit

[Home | b-solutionsproject](#)

For further information on AEBR's overall activities visit

[www.aebr.eu](http://www.aebr.eu) or email [info@aebr.eu](mailto:info@aebr.eu)

