



A POWERFUL STEP TOWARD EUROPEAN INTEGRATION: SOLVING CROSS BORDER OBSTACLES

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About AEBR

- Established **1971**
- Members: around **100**
- **Mission:**

Its mission is the representation of the common interests of border and cross-border regions inside and outside the European Union, identifying obstacles to cooperation and possible solutions, and promoting exchanges between stakeholders to enhance CBC and territorial development in general, with full respect to regional diversity.

- Balkans office since **2014**





**Karl-Heinz Lambertz
AEBR President,
2020-present, and 2010-2017**

“

**...to overcome borders,
one should be allowed to cooperate,
should want to cooperate,
and be able to cooperate...**

”





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b-solutions

- Promoted by DG REGIO and managed by the AEBR as one of the actions proposed in the Communication “Boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions”.
- Established in **2018**
- Open for EU external borders since **2022**
- Number of *b-solutions* cases: **175**
- Number of *b-solutions* experts: **141**



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b-solutions

Specific Objectives

- specific solutions addressing concrete legal and administrative obstacles
- innovative proposals to inform innovative approaches
- increased exchange of information and mutual engagement
- raised awareness of key stakeholders at local/regional/ national/EU level

Pillar 2: Implementing Solutions



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b-solutions main goals



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- Mitigate cross-border obstacles
- Increase the understanding of every specific obstacle Promoting sustainable methods to solve cross-border obstacles
- Involving public bodies
- Stimulating an increased exchange of information and mutual engagement
- Fostering the replication of these approaches





SOLUTIONS



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Legal and Administrative obstacles at EU internal borders

Thematic areas:

- **Institutional cooperation**
- **Public services**
- **Labour market and education**
- **European Green Deal**



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Institutional cooperation



3Land-Bridge over the Rhine — the way to the state treaty

Advised entity: Eurodistrict Trinational de Bâle / Trinationaler Eurodistrict Basel

The 3Land project between France, Germany and Switzerland includes the creation of a cross-border bridge dedicated to trams, pedestrians and cyclists between Huningue in France and Basel-Kleinhüningen in Switzerland. This bridge would be an innovative achievement and a step forward for cross-border cooperation in terms of urban, economic and sustainable development. Nevertheless, different rules of competition and construction for the bridge (work permits, tax and customs provisions, border control facilities, etc.) are an impediment to the development of the project.



Hiring of cross-border workers with two jobs

Advised entity: AECT- Hospital de Cerdanya / GECT-Hôpital de Cerdagne

The EGTC-Hospital de Cerdanya (GECT-HC), located in Puigcerdà (Catalonia, Spain) is the first cross-border healthcare centre in Europe. Currently, all the French workers at the cross-border hospital are hired by the “Centre Hospitalier de Perpignan”, and then seconded to the EGTC-HC. But to hire workers who already have a job in France, and thus would be considered cross-border multi-occupational workers, is a complex and long administrative procedure due to the differences in the social security contributions between the two countries. Simplifying the procedure would facilitate the curtailment of cross-border health workers having several work occupations.



HOSPITAL DE Cerdanya / HÔPITAL DE Cerdagne
AECT - Agència Europea de Cooperació Territorial / GECT - Groupement Européen de Coopération Territoriale



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Cross-border acknowledgement of dealer plates

Advised entity: EUREGIO

A lack of cooperation between competent authorities in Germany and the Netherlands creates obstacles for car dealers, workshops or manufacturers in the EUREGIO border area who use so-called “dealer plates” for vehicles in their businesses. Dutch and German dealer plates differ with regard to the requirements for obtaining it as well as its appearance, and although the EU Commission has urged member states to recognise foreign dealer plates, this is not the case between Germany and the Netherlands. As a result, car dealers often face difficulties or even have to fear police measures if they want to cross the border for a test drive or have cars repaired in the neighbouring country.





Public services



Health service

Advised entity: EUROBEC

Having access to the hospital located in Badajoz, Spain, is fundamental for Portuguese citizens from Elvas and Campo Maior because of the distance of such hospital. The limited possibility to make use of its services affects the provision of public services of citizens in this border area and Portuguese patients must travel further away to another Portuguese city when they look for medical assistance.



Cross-border commercial passenger transport

Advised entity: Chamber of commerce, industry, crafts and agriculture of Bolzano

Taxis and rental cars with drivers travelling from Italy to Austria (and vice versa) are considered as not authorised to carry out cross-border passenger transport according to the German and Austrian authorities. Transport with vehicles with up to 9 seats such as taxis or rental cars with drivers could therefore be deemed illegal and punished with fines and confiscation of the vehicle. This creates a considerable difficulty for cross-border commercial passenger transport and by extension for tourism in the Alpine regions of Tyrol, South Tyrol and Trentino.



CHAMBER OF COMMERCE,
INDUSTRY, CRAFTS AND
AGRICULTURE OF BOLZANO



Comparison of water tourism regulations on the Slovakian-Hungarian border

Advised entity: Arrabona EGTC

The Danube river and its natural branch system offer outstanding water tourism opportunities along the Hungarian-Slovak border. However, cross-border tourism in this area is currently limited due to different regulations for water hiking between the two countries (e.g. the age-related obligation to use a life jacket, personal conditions for steering watercraft).



Animal health law exemptions between Netherlands and Germany

Advised entity: Cross-border nature park Maas-Swalm-Nette

Recreational horse riding is popular in the cross-border nature park Maas-Swalm-Nette, which straddles the Netherlands and Germany. However, the conditions for developing this activity are hampered, particularly due to a restriction in the European Animal Health Law that demands a health certificate issued by a veterinarian for animal crossing national borders.

In a cross-border context, such a rule impedes the promotion of recreational horse riding and limits the joint use of the territory.



Franco-Belgian mutual recognition of lifeguards

Advised entity: Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai

In the neighbouring cities of Lille, Kortrijk and Tournai, several French schools used to travel to Belgian swimming facilities for sport classes. However, the schools were discouraged from doing so because Belgian lifeguards' status is not recognised by French national education system.

Automatic recognition of lifeguard professional qualifications across borders would result in increased safety for the students and provide more possibilities for outstanding teaching.

EUROMÉTROPOLE
EUROMETROPOOL
LILLE • KORTRIJK • TOURNAI



Limitations to cross the Nymfaia - Makaza Pass

Advised entity: Chamber of Commerce & Industry of Xanthi

Despite a bilateral agreement enabling the passage of small vehicles along the Border Crossing Makaza – Nymphaia between Bulgaria and Greece, larger vehicles, such as trucks and buses, are not permitted to cross. Allowing the passage of these larger vehicles would benefit the cross-border region in a variety of ways, including improving access for tourist buses to cultural and natural sites across the border, creating job opportunities for drivers and border residents, and using more sustainable modes of transportation than private vehicles.



**CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
AND INDUSTRY OF XANTHI**



Comparison of fishing rules on border rivers

Advised entity: Mura Region EGTC

The Mura river has been for several years the destination of a lively fishing tourism community. However, since the border between Croatia and Hungary runs through the middle of the river, regulations and conservation efforts for the same river differ greatly between each side. Overcoming these differences would greatly improve a coordinated conservation effort as well as increase the attractiveness of the leisure area leading to various benefits for the region.





Labour market and education



Cross border DUAL VET Euroregion Galicia Norte Portugal

Advised entity: Galicia Norte Portugal EGTC

Even though there is a lack of specialised workers in some fields, the cross-border mobility of Vocational Education Training (VET) qualified workers is limited between Galicia and the North of Portugal. It is mostly due to different procedures of recognition for non-university education, which are lengthy and costly for applicants and which raise tax credits issues for the companies on both sides of the border.



Mapping cross-border skills involving Employers: Building & Construction

Advised entity: Regione autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia

Employers in the Italian-Slovenian border region, especially SMEs, encounter difficulties when trying to hire new employees from the other side of the border. There is a lack of a common methodology to compare and evaluate the skills of cross-border workers, whose professional training varies according to the academic system of their respective country. Standardising data would potentially improve the placement of workers with businesses and allow for specific training opportunities to be offered.



Cross-border employment at the Croatian-Hungarian border

Advised entity: Pannon EGTC

The national provisions of Hungary and Croatia on employment and tax law are not aligned and do not take into account specifically the cross-border context. This results in unclear and long bureaucratic procedures for employers trying to recruit nationals from the other side of the border.



Going beyond obstacles in yachting internship and training

Advised entity: Province of Lucca

The project “E-JOB” – Excellence Job on board led to the creation of a training programme between France and Italy for the strengthening of on-board yachting professional profiles: chefs, stewards, engineers. However, Italian and French students are subject to different regulatory constraints for recognition of diploma and internship conditions. Bringing a solution would strengthen cooperation in the yachting sector, which is a driving economic sector for the French and Italian regions bordering the Mediterranean.



Co-diplomation: reinforced cross-border student mobility

Eurométropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai

Joint university programmes can offer greater academic diversity by bringing together perspectives and skills from different countries.

That is why the Eurométropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai on the French-Belgian border wishes to support ways to offer co-diplomation in the border region. However, present co-diplomation procedures are burdened by regulatory complexities. They should be simplified and harmonised by close collaboration among educational institutions, regional and national governments, and European agencies, allowing academic cooperation to reach its full potential across borders.

European Green Deal



Legalise border crossings for French-Spanish rescue services

Advised entity: Pyrénées-Atlantiques department Fire and Rescue Service - SDIS64

Despite the existence of legal and administrative acts to optimise public assistance at the Franco-Spanish border, firemen and rescue services encounter difficulties in crossing the border to intervene. Identifying the relevant authorities on the two sides of the border is key to make the emergency service more efficient in the border region.



Operation and distribution formats — Renewable energy plants Advised entity: Euregio via salina e. V.

In Bavaria and Austria, different legal requirements for the construction of renewable energy plants (hydropower, photovoltaics, wind energy) and for the establishment of cross-border renewable energy communities or cooperatives are impediments to the development of the energy transition in the border region. Sharing energy would drive the expansion of decentralised energy systems, create economic incentives and allow people to purchase energy as a regional product.

EUREGIO  VIASALINA



District heating without borders

Advised entity: GECT Euregio Senza Confini

Connecting the district heating network across the Italian-Austrian border is not regulated and thus local citizens and business cannot benefit from the commercial exchange of thermal energy. This is due to different interpretations of the legislation and a regulatory opacity on how thermal energy for heating should be transferred and under which taxation system. Clarifying the regulatory scope would enable a cross-border heat exchange, respectful of the environment and promising for the development of new cooperation



Improvement of ecological continuity

Advised entity: Doubs Horloger Regional Natural Park

The Regional Natural Parks of Doubs in Switzerland and Doubs Horloger in France are located on each side of the Doubs river and share the goal of improving environmental cooperation. However, French and Swiss environmental protection mechanisms do not necessarily have the same purposes, realities, or legal scopes. Understanding the differences between these environmental protection mechanisms will enable the development of coherent and successful environmental policies across the border.



Obstacles for Border transport of recyclable plastic waste

Advised entity: EGTC Euregio Meuse-Rhine

In spite of environmental objectives on the EU level to reduce plastic waste and virgin plastic, there are many contradicting procedures and regulations between Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands when it comes to recycling and transporting plastic feedstock. This hinders effective cross-border collaboration to jointly address plastic waste. Solving these legal and administrative obstacles would allow the creation of a network of “Smart Specialized Plastic Recycling Hubs” that would increase cross-border synergies in the plastic recycling value chain.



Lessons learned

These lessons expect to raise awareness among CB practitioners and inspire others to identify their own obstacles:

- Variety of obstacles
- Variety of causes
- Tailored solutions
- A long process
- Changes in legal frameworks
- Complementary tools
- Political commitment
- Multi-level engagement
- Deep analysis
- Information sharing
- Capacity building
- Interreg and EGTC potential

Policy recommendations

1. Capacity building of local stakeholders in border regions:

- improved training provision for LRA & CBC actors;
- support for information /coordination units at the LRA;
- commissioning detailed comparative studies;
- strengthening capacity within professional service firms

2. Promotion of effective multi-level engagement and responses

- Legal mechanisms
- Joint commissioning of CB studies & analyses
- Enhanced forums of dialogue

3. Maximising the value of EU tools and instruments

- Interreg and other existing EU instruments



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CONCLUSIONS

- Establish and reinforce the implementation of CBC entities with effective bottom-up cross-border planning processes for greater capacity building, network formation, trust building and mutual (structural) understanding, benefitting mutual coordinative rather than individualistic responses
- Establish and reinforce the implementation of CB strategies focused on reducing cross-border barriers of all sorts with a multi-level governance approach between all territorial levels with a view to mitigating the most persisting border obstacles, including those of a legal or administrative character (e. g. participating in the b-solutions initiative).
- Foster potential cross-border functional regions towards an increased integrated cross-border area in all policy levels: socioeconomic, environmental, institutional, planning and governance.





**THANK YOU FOR
YOUR
ATTENTION!**

Martín Guillermo Ramírez
Secretary General, Association of European Border Regions