OVERCOMING OBSTACLES IN BORDER REGIONS
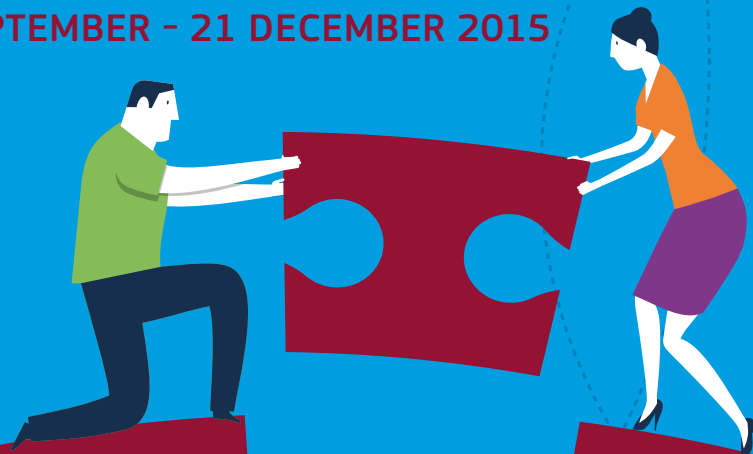
SUMMARY REPORT ON THE ONLINE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

21 SEPTEMBER – 21 DECEMBER 2015

European Commission

Regional and Urban Policy

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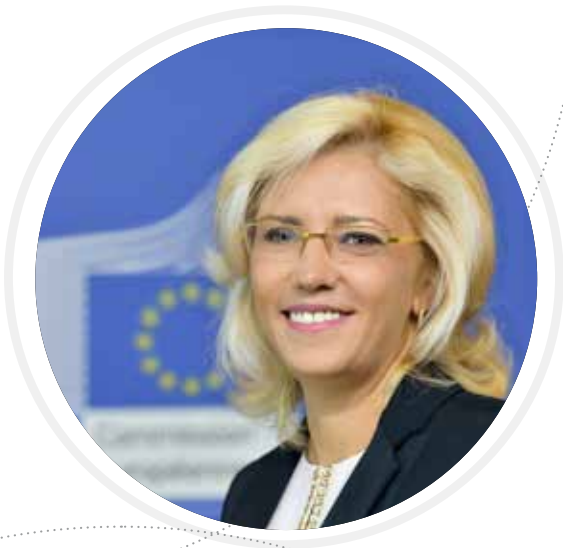
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FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the results of the online public consultation on overcoming obstacles in border regions which I launched in September 2015 in Vienna/Bratislava.

The consultation was open for three months and received 623 replies which are analysed and summarised in this report.

By listening to the opinions of citizens, organisations, businesses and public authorities in European Union border regions, this public consultation aimed at identifying the main obstacles met when interacting across borders, as well as the potential solutions to these identified obstacles.

This public consultation is part of a wider exercise known as the 'Cross Border Review', and is in fact one of its three pillars. The Cross Border Review was launched to celebrate 25 years of EU investments in the 'Interreg' programmes which are active across the Union. Despite such a long tradition in cross-border cooperation, difficulties remain, some of which cannot be solved by Interreg funding alone: for instance, legal and administrative obstacles as well as language barriers.

Using this Review, the Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG Regio) therefore intends to examine the different kinds of obstacles that persist and the possible solutions for them. The other two pillars in this Review include an expert study to draw up an inventory of border obstacles and case studies to illustrate them as well as a series of stakeholders' workshops on the same topic.

Without disclosing the full results here and spoiling your reading, I can already say that the responses confirm a number of important points that DG Regio was already well aware of through its long-standing experience of Interreg cross-border cooperation.

For instance, respondents clearly point towards difficulties linked to labour mobility across borders, taxation and accessibility which are all fundamental aspects of border life but are often negatively affected by the presence of legal and/or administrative obstacles. More surprisingly perhaps, language differences are seen by many respondents as a burden on neighbourly relations. There is a strong call from citizens and organisations alike to promote language learning and encourage cultural exchanges with much greater visibility.

The CB Review will continue until early 2017 when key findings and recommendations will be presented in an Issues Paper. Until then, I invite you to read and reflect upon the interesting findings of this report.

Corina Crețu
European Commissioner for
Regional Policy

CHAPTER 1

Methodology of the public consultation and of this report

THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The European Commission's online public consultation on overcoming obstacles in border regions was launched on 21 September 2015 and ran for three months until 21 December 2015. It took the form of an online questionnaire that included a mix of closed and open-ended questions, and was available through the EUSurvey tool in 23 EU languages.

The survey covered internal European Union border regions as well as border regions between EU countries and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and European Economic Area (EEA) countries. It invited EU citizens, organisations, businesses and public authorities in border regions to give their views on obstacles which still remain when interacting across borders, and to suggest solutions for overcoming them. This report summarises and analyses their replies.

Following the launch of the consultation by Commissioner Crețu, a 'roadshow' involving senior management from the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG Regio) was organised to promote the exercise. Eleven border regions were visited across the EU.[1]

A total of 623 replies were received to the online questionnaire. In parallel, a functional mailbox address[2] was provided to allow respondents to send documents (such as papers, articles and factsheets) directly by email. Thirty-three respondents sent material via the mailbox, of whom 21 provided additional information after they had replied to the questionnaire.

Respondents were given a choice as to how their responses should be published. The options were:

- To allow DG Regio to publish their responses in full, including their identity: selected by 30 % of the respondents;

- To allow DG Regio to publish their responses anonymously: selected by 46 % of the respondents;

- To refuse publication of their responses but to allow DG Regio to use them for analytical purposes: selected by 23 % of the respondents.

The responses from people who agreed to have them published can be consulted on DG Regio's website.

METHODOLOGY USED IN THIS SUMMARY REPORT

Regardless of the conditions for publishing the replies, all 623 contributions to the online questionnaire were taken into account for drafting this summary report, and will be considered for further analysis. The input received via the functional mailbox will also be processed and taken into account into the further work with the Cross Border Review. However, it has not been summarised in this report as the contributions varied in nature, character and scope and were thus more difficult to collate with the structured questionnaire replies.

In Chapter 2, the responses to the series of 'profiling' questions have been analysed in order to provide an overview of the respondents' main characteristics: identity, place of origin, cross-border activity and general awareness of cross-border cooperation. Chapter 3 analyses the main types of obstacles encountered by the respondents and the variations observed according to their different profiles. In Chapter 4, special attention is given to the replies to the open-ended questions on the description of obstacles and finding solutions. Chapter 5 analyses the views expressed by respondents on the evolution of cross-border cooperation in their region over the past decade. Finally, Chapter 6 presents the main conclusions drawn from the responses to the questionnaire.

CHAPTER 2

Profiles of the respondents

Figure 1: In which capacity are you completing this questionnaire?

Figure 1: In which capacity are you completing this questionnaire?

Category	Percentage
As an individual/private person	48%
On behalf of a public authority	23%
On behalf of an organisation	13%
On behalf of a business/private company	7%
Other	4%
As a self-employed individual	2%
On behalf of an academic/research institution	2%
On behalf of a pan-European interest group	1%

IDENTITY AND PLACE OF ORIGIN

Amongst the 623 replies to the questionnaire, **private individuals** form the largest group of respondents, representing just under 50% of the total (see figure 1).

People responding on behalf of **public authorities** are the second largest group, representing almost one in four respondents. Among these public authorities, the vast majority (more than eight in ten) are regional or local authorities in border areas, such as municipalities, county councils, provinces and regions. The rest are mainly national authorities (essentially divisions of ministries) and individual Interreg programmes.

Furthermore, 13% responded on behalf of an **organisation**. Among these organisations, a variety of categories can be identified, including regional development agencies, enterprise and industry confederations, foundations and border networks/border information services.

When taken together, **businesses and self-employed individuals** account for less than 10% of responses. Academic and research institutions form a smaller group, with 2% of the replies. There are six contributions from pan-European interest groups, representing approximately 1% of the total responses.

Finally, a very small share of the respondents (3%) selected the option '**other**'. In most cases, those were more closely aligned to public authorities or organisations in general: for instance, municipal councils, urban planning agencies or European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). Some

Figure 2³: Countries where respondents are based
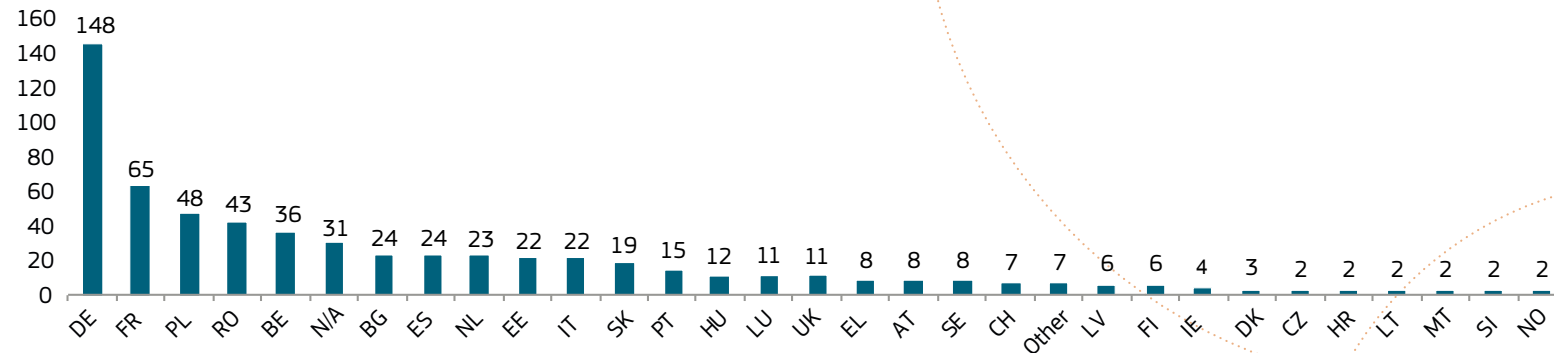
individuals previously involved in different types of cross-border cooperation activities also chose to contribute under this category.

As indicated in figure 2, there is a high concentration of replies in a limited number of countries. Around half of the replies come from just four countries: Germany, France, Romania and Poland. Some countries are not very well represented – in 15 countries the number of respondents is below ten.

The very high participation of respondents from some countries could be partly explained by the number of borders and the intensity of cross-border cooperation activities and funding. This could be the case for Germany, for instance, which shares a land border with nine countries, participates in 12 Interreg A programmes, and attracts a substantial share of the Interreg envelope.

In other countries, such as Romania, the number of internal borders or cooperation programmes cannot be the only explanation for the large number of replies. The greater participation may be due to particularly strong communication efforts in the country.

RESPONDENTS' LINKS WITH BORDER REGIONS

The first questions asked were intended to define the profile of respondents, and in particular their relationship with EU borders. As expected, those who contributed to the consultation are relatively familiar with EU borders:

⊕ More than **eight in ten individuals** and businesses responding to the consultation **are either residents of**, or are **based in a border region** (84%);

⊕ More than **six in ten organisations specialise in either cross-border cooperation** or in a field where they **contribute to easing border obstacles** (64%); 29% said they did not, while the rest gave no response.

Figure 3:
Frequency of crossing the borders

For individuals, self-employed individuals and businesses: how often do you cross the border?

- 2% Never
- 14% Every day
- 18% Weekly
- 28% Monthly
- 33% Occasionally
- 5% Rarely

Figure 4:
Reasons for crossing the borders

For what purpose do you cross the border?

- Leisure
- To buy goods and/or services
- To visit friends and/or family
- Employment
- Business
- Education
- Other
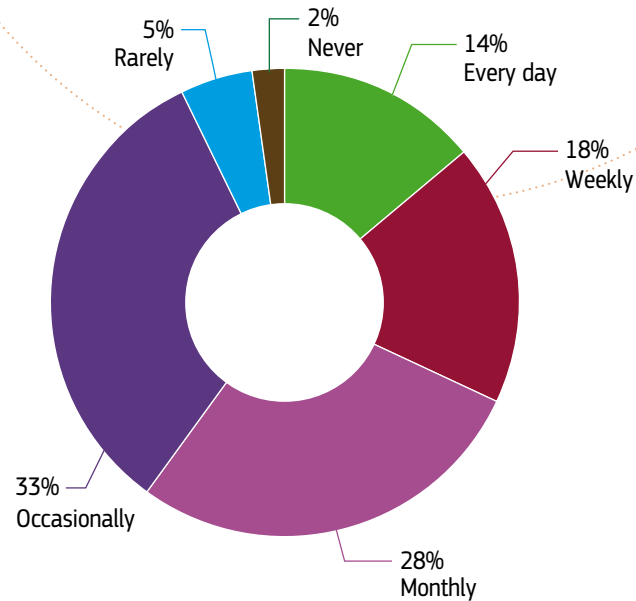
The questionnaire also enabled respondents to specify the frequency with which they cross the border – as individuals, self-employed individuals or businesses. The results in figure 3 show that the respondents are very mobile across borders.

More than one in two respondents crosses the border at least once a month. Around one in three cross it once a week or more. Only 7% cross it rarely or never. In other words, more than nine in ten respondents interact with the other side of the border at least several times a year. This very high

rate of mobility[4] confirms that border issues are particularly relevant to the respondents' daily lives.

Another important piece of information is the reason for crossing the border. Individuals, businesses and organisations were asked

to select from multiple reasons why they usually cross the border; thus the total does not add up to 623.

The most common reason for crossing the border is leisure and tourism, which was cited by almost two in five respondents. This category includes tourism trips, or hobbies.

The second most frequent reason for crossing the border is to purchase goods and/or services – mentioned by more than one in four respondents. The questionnaire specified that this category also included the use of services such as medical care.

Visiting friends and/or family is a reason for crossing the border for around one in five respondents, highlighting the importance of cross-border mobility for social interaction.

Employment, business and most of all education purposes are relatively less frequent. However, when these three categories are combined (and taking into account that respondents could select several reasons for travelling), it appears that four in ten selected at least one of

these three reasons for crossing the border. When the 'other' ca tegory was used, in the majority of cases this described activities that are either strongly related to, or actually fall within the employment category.

As regards the **overall awareness of cross-border cooperation activities**, the respondents show a very high level of awareness, with 89 % saying they are aware of such activities in their region, and 11 % saying they were unaware. Although a lower proportion of them (81 %) said they had heard specifically about European Territorial Cooperation or Interreg, this is still a high percentage.[5]

One explanation for this generally high awareness is that a significant number of respondents mention that, in one way or another, they have been involved in a cross-border cooperation structure. This includes organisations working with cross-border cooperation in general, and institutions directly involved in Interreg programme management.

CHAPTER 3
Obstacles encountered

One of the most important objectives of the online public consultation was to collect views on border obstacles, as well as suggestions on how to overcome them. Therefore, those questions asking respondents to identify relevant obstacles in their region are particularly important.

This analysis is presented in three steps: first, a general overview of the replies is presented. Then, particular trends are observed, connecting respondents' profiles to a given reply. Finally, in Chapter four, each category of obstacles is analysed in more detail, and both the manifestation of the obstacle and the solution proposed are presented separately.

FREQUENCY OF OBSTACLE

Overall, as seen in figure 5, respondents mention legal and administrative barriers as being the most relevant border obstacle for them: more than one in two respondents see it as a relevant obstacle in their region. Language barriers come next: more than one in three respondents considered this relevant. Just behind this, difficult physical access is also mentioned as an obstacle by almost one in three respondents.

These top three are closely followed by the interest shown by public authorities in working together, and economic disparities, each obstacle being mentioned by 29% of respondents. In comparison, sociocultural differences and lack of trust are seen as less relevant, although only mentioned by 20% and 12% of respondents respectively.

Figure 5: Relevance and frequency of obstacles

Obstacle	Yes
Legal and administrative barriers	53%
Language barriers	38%
Difficult physical access	32%
Economic disparities	29%
Public authorities' interest in working together	29%
Sociocultural differences	20%
Other	14%
Lack of trust	12%

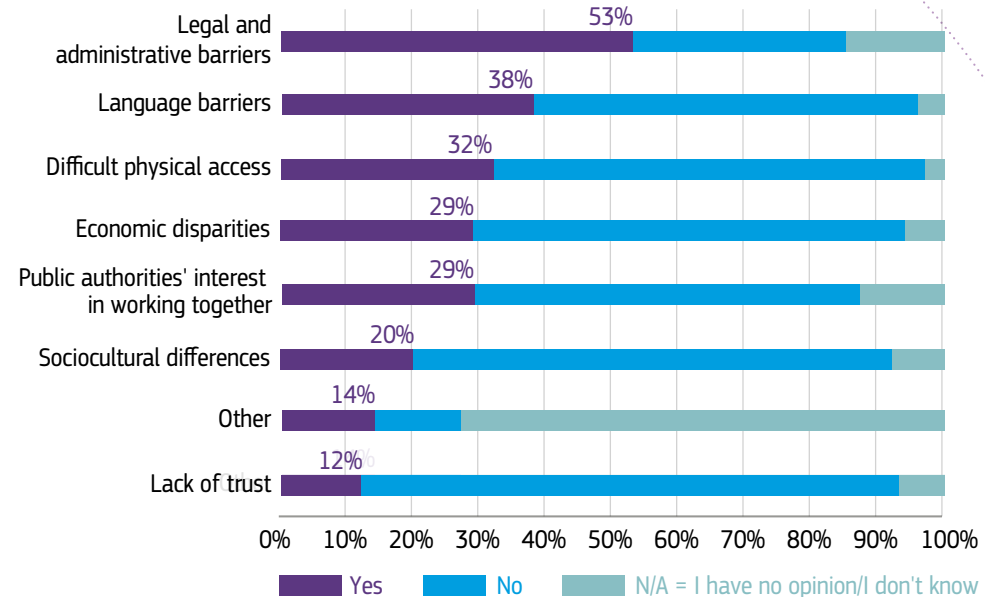Yes   No   N/A = I have no opinion/I don't know

Table 1: Type of respondents and obstacles selected

Type of respondent	Difficult physical access	Language barriers	Legal and administrative barriers	Lack of trust	Economic disparities	Sociocultural differences	Public authorities' interest in working together
As an individual/private person	30%	28%	47%	12%	33%	17%	37%
On behalf of a business/private company	9%	31%	33%	9%	20%	27%	18%
On behalf of a public authority	41%	52%	59%	10%	22%	23%	14%
On behalf of an organisation	36%	53%	79%	20%	35%	27%	31%

Most of the 'other' category replies cover aspects which can be related to the predefined categories, mainly difficult physical access, various legal and administrative barriers and a lack of interest in cross-border cooperation. Some of the 'other' replies also cover issues that can be considered cross-cutting, such as a lack of access to information, a lack of a common structure for cross-border cooperation, and limited access to cross-border data. Other issues are media/ICT-related matters such as geo-blocking, roaming charges and a lack of cross-border media outlets.

OBSTACLES ACCORDING TO BROAD TYPES OF RESPONDENTS

Closer scrutiny of the results reveals that some obstacles are mentioned more frequently by certain types of respondents, according to three different dimensions:

CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT

The first dimension is the link between the types of respondents (in particular individuals, businesses, organisations and public authorities) and the choice of relevant obstacles.

As shown in the table above, **several interesting variations can be seen**, for example:

⊕ Difficult physical access is mentioned as an obstacle by less than one in ten businesses while individuals, public authorities and organisations put a greater emphasis on this.

⊕ Language barriers are more frequently mentioned by organisations and public authorities compared to individuals and businesses.

- Legal and administrative barriers apply more to individuals, public authorities and organisations than to businesses.

- Individuals and organisations are more critical of public authorities' lack of interest in working together, than businesses and the public authorities themselves.

FREQUENCY OF BORDER CROSSING[6]

Another way of looking at the results is to analyse the relation between obstacles selected and the frequency of crossing the border.

From the table below, it can be inferred that **the more often a person crosses the border, the less likely he/she is to mention lack of trust as an obstacle in border regions**. The same logic applies to language barriers and sociocultural differences, with some minor deviations. This should be interpreted with caution as it is not possible to establish the presence or 'direction' of causality. For example, do people find that language is less of an obstacle because they cross the border often (and know the neighbour's language)? Or do they cross the border often precisely because they do not experience language barriers? In any case, these trends can be observed and questioned.

On the contrary, **the more often a person the border, the more likely he/she is to mention legal and administrative barriers as obstacles in border regions**. One possible interpretation is that the frequency of travel multiplies the opportunity to encounter such obstacles; in other words, obstacles of this nature are more strongly felt when mobility across the border is higher and more frequent.[7]

The relationship between the frequency of border crossing and difficult physical access, economic disparities or public authorities' interest in working together is more difficult to interpret as it is not as clear cut and linear.

Table 2: Frequency of crossings and obstacles selected

Frequency of border crossing	Difficult physical access	Language barriers	Legal and administrative barriers	Lack of trust	Economic disparities	Sociocultural differences	Public authorities' interest in working together
Every day	40%	19%	69%	4%	44%	15%	37%
Weekly	32%	29%	65%	4%	35%	13%	37%
Monthly	24%	28%	42%	10%	25%	19%	29%
Occasionally	24%	31%	29%	16%	28%	17%	33%
Rarely or never	31%	38%	35%	27%	35%	38%	46%

Table 3: Purpose of crossings and obstacles selected

Purpose of border crossing	Difficult physical access	Language barriers	Legal and administrative barriers	Lack of trust	Economic disparities	Sociocultural differences	Public authorities' interest in working together
Employment	36%	29%	55%	11%	35%	13%	29%
Business	26%	32%	54%	13%	32%	20%	32%
Education	30%	28%	53%	9%	40%	23%	30%
To buy goods and/or services	24%	27%	52%	10%	28%	19%	32%
To visit friends and/or family	34%	28%	53%	7%	30%	16%	41%
Leisure	25%	28%	46%	12%	28%	18%	32%

PURPOSE OF BORDER CROSSING[8]

Finally, it is also interesting to compare the obstacles selected by respondents with their reasons for crossing the border.

From this angle, variations are less clear, although some general observations can be made:

⊕ Legal and administrative barriers seem to be felt strongly by all categories of respondents, and are only slightly less relevant for those crossing for leisure purposes.

⊕ Lack of trust is generally considered to be of lower relevance as an obstacle, and is even lower for respondents crossing the border to visit friends and/or family.

⊕ Respondents crossing the border for this purpose also tend to say that public authorities' (lack of) interest in working together is an obstacle, more so than the other categories.

CHAPTER 4

Description of obstacles and solutions proposed

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to answer a series of open-ended questions about the obstacles that may occur in border regions when interacting across the border.

Each respondent could select up to three obstacles which they felt posed the most problems and to explain them, describing the form each obstacle took and its impact on their lives. Solutions could also be suggested. This chapter analyses these aspects.

It should be noted that this section in the questionnaire was optional for the respondents, thus the number of explanations provided differs according to the type of obstacle. For example, about four in ten respondents commented on concrete expressions of legal and administrative obstacles, while only one in ten made a more specific mention of expressions of and solutions to public authorities' (lack of) interest in working together – despite it being considered relevant by 29% of the respondents.

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE BARRIERS

As referred to below, the most frequently mentioned obstacle is legal and administrative barriers, considered relevant by more than half of all respondents (53%).

Obstacles

One striking feature of the responses is that employment, as a broad theme, is a major concern in relation to legal and administrative barriers. **It is clear from the respondents that legal and administrative barriers make it more difficult to be employed on one side of the border while living on the other**.

This issue concerns a number of aspects. One of the most cited concerns is the **lack of recognition of education and qualifications**. Despite progress being made in harmonisation in this field, job-seekers claim that they often face a lack of knowledge about foreign education from the employers' side. Some go as far as referring to actual discrimination in access to jobs across the border.

Differences in social security, pension and taxation systems are also frequently cited as placing a heavy burden on cross-border workers. In certain cases, these issues put workers at a disadvantage because of the difficulty in claiming benefits or different taxation-related issues, leading to a high level of insecurity for the individual concerned.

The **general complexity of administrative procedures** is in itself a telling aspect, which is described as discouraging individuals from crossing the border for work. Respondents sometimes underline workers' lack of knowledge concerning the rules that apply across the border, as well as public administrations being unfamiliar withsituations concerning cross-border workers. Although this can be more generally attributed to a cross-cutting issue of a lack of information, it is still often mentioned as a specific administrative or legal obstacle.

Other more specific regulatory issues mentioned by some respondents include, for example, rules that prevent the use of teleworking solutions for cross-border workers, putting them at a disadvantage compared to domestic workers.

However, it is also important to mention that a number of replies point to cross-border workers as being in an advantageous situation because their mobility facilitates access to certain public services, such as health care, on both sides of the border.

"The different tax and social security systems cause individuals to fall between the systems. Because of the different legislation, situations arise in which an employee finds himself deprived in both countries of benefits which nationals of both countries are entitled to."

"Legal and administrative obstacles don't encourage people to work in a neighbouring region. All extra administration regarding social security, taxes, etc. is very demanding for frontier workers."

"Some certificates awarded in the home country have no validity in the neighbouring country, which means that it is not possible to pursue the same profession or that costs have to be incurred in order to acquire the relevant certificate in the neighbouring country."

However, employment is not the only area in which difficulties arise from legal and administrative barriers. **Businesses and entrepreneurs also face these barriers**, although this theme is referred to about

half as often as employment (which may be because individual citizens represent about half the responses to the consultation). **Differences in technical standards and regulations for products as well as certain services act as de facto barriers for entry to specific markets across the border.**

For businesses, the issue of **information and awareness** of legal and administrative rules that apply on the other side of the border (in terms of taxation, insurance, accidents in the workplace, etc.) are also seen as relevant.

"Different social, labour, tax and company law presents a barrier to cross-border activities."

"Different standards and national regulations, including national test requirements (especially in Germany) hinder cross-border trade. […] For medical products, different information requirements on packaging mean that the same packaging cannot be used even

if language requirements are the same (e.g. Sweden/Finland). Lengthy approval procedures also create barriers."

"Legal and technical differences prevent French companies from responding to German calls for tender."

Broadly considered, **specific issues of a legal and administrative nature that come up most frequently and pose problems to all categories of respondents are the different taxation and social security systems, including health care and pension systems**. In particular, these are presented as major obstacles to workers' mobility.

In some responses, in addition to a lack of harmonisation between national systems, inadequate **coordination between national administrations**, including incompatible administrative rules and problems of transferring information between systems, is also quoted. Furthermore, comments are made about the **general uncertainty of cross-border solutions**, whereby

differences in legal and administrative competences hamper the possibilities for broader or more structured cooperation, or the cross-border solutions identified are not adequate for all types of cooperation (e.g. European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation). These issues go beyond cross-border administrations and touch national, centralised matters, too, although they appear to be felt most acutely by those who live in border regions and actively cross the border for various purposes.

"If, for example, I were to lose my job, the administrative formalities that I would have to go through before receiving unemployment benefits would take a very long time. This applies to all the social security institutions, which is stressful in the medium and long term."

In the replies, **legal barriers are also described as putting border regions' residents at a disadvantage as consumers, when they purchase/access certain goods and services**. This is particularly true in the following areas:

- ⊕ **Banking**: unfavourable conditions for opening bank accounts, access to consumer loans, insurance, real estate mortgage, etc. on the other side of the border, or non-acceptance of certain means of payment. Some say it is essential to have a bank account on both sides of the border to manage daily life as a border citizen;

- ⊕ **Telecommunications and post**: roaming charges for mobile phones, barriers to accessing foreign mobile phone subscriptions, special numbers not valid abroad, geo-blocking on internet websites, and high postal charges taking no account of geographical proximity;

- ⊕ **Health services**: absence of either coordination or information on conditions for accessing health care abroad;

- ⊕ **Transport sector**: different ticket fares and systems, difficulties when purchasing a vehicle on one side and registering it on the other side of the border.

Some also mention the lack of agreement for emergency and rescue services to operate on different sides of the border (e.g. an ambulance is not allowed to cross the state border to take a patient to the nearest hospital).

Potential solutions

Possible solutions include: **encouraging more convergence in regulatory frameworks or arrangements, more flexibility and mutual agreements; strengthening the relevant levels of competencies; and providing more information to citizens, businesses and organisations**.

A significant number of respondents point to differences in the implementation of EU rules (directives) as creating legal and administrative obstacles. They plead for **better coordination and harmonisation of the implementation of regulatory arrangements** in border regions, for example through border impact assessments, with a view to promoting greater convergence.

More **flexibility is also requested for the general implementation of national/ regional legislation** in border regions: the idea of 'freeing' a border region from national legislation, or adapting it to border regional conditions, is suggested several times. In order to find the best solutions for cross-border regions, some respondents claim there should be a right to experiment and to conduct projects that are outside the national regulatory framework, for example through pilot projects.

"If you want to work on the removal of barriers, it is necessary to standardise all the regulatory arrangements affecting both territories. […] It is essential for the European Commission to draw up clear guidelines that are the same for all countries."

"Harmonise procedures; find agreements between Member States on social security, tax regulation, etc."

"Advisory bodies should be expanded, expertise should be pooled in order to

resolve specific issues and proposed solutions should be forwarded to relevant bodies (e.g. task force on border workers). It should be possible to introduce experimental clauses in border areas. Projects should be allowed to deviate from national legislation or standards."

"Provision under European law for possible derogations from national legal provisions in the interests of sensible cross-border solutions in the field of regional development."

The **question of administrative competencies** is also raised in a few replies: the **asymmetries between administrative structures on different sides of the border** are considered an obstacle to cooperating and finding agreements.

Some replies discuss the interest of further developing structures such as Euroregions and EGTCs, giving them either more funding or more power to act. Although these entities are perceived by some respondents as a potential source of sustainability in cross-border

cooperation, many see them too small in size and scope to address all current challenges and opportunities – hence new structures should be explored.

"As there are various problem areas, some of which involve lengthy processes and procedures, well-placed and well-integrated cross-border institutions would seem to offer the best solution as they are able to identify, work on and, where necessary, forward these issues on. […] However, certain problems can only be resolved at national or European level. Subsidiarity is key."

Differences in the ways in which administrations operate, as well as a lack of exchange of information are seen as issues that **can be partly tackled through IT developments**. Enhancing data exchanges could simplify procedures, relieve some burden on the individual and shorten sometimes lengthy procedures. Exchange of good practice in general is also discussed.

"Even if the harmonisation of law is not possible, the national administrations

(of social security, for example) should work together, to simplify at least the administration procedures. Maybe data exchange can also simplify some procedures."

"Set up a single office to centralise documents that need to be sent to the social security institutions in both countries so that people do not have to go to several offices (all communication between social security institutions goes through us and sometimes there is a lot of back and forth and misunderstandings)."

Finally, it is important to emphasise that numerous obstacles mentioned as being of a legal and administrative nature are seen as **stemming from a general lack of both awareness and information** concerning 'life' on the other side of the border. Many feel they lack information on the legal and administrative rules, particularly with regards to cross-border employment. Solutions suggested include the development of awareness and information campaigns. Another idea involves appointing

or identifying more people to be in charge of informing the public in municipalities and public services about the opportunities on the other side of the border. The information aspect is also clearly linked to language barriers, where language learning – not just for cross-border workers, but for public administrations dealing with them, is described as one way to enhance access to information.

"Clear awareness-raising campaigns aimed at businesses and individuals. Clearly identified persons to deal with cross-border issues in the services of municipalities and treasury offices dealing with the public."

"In order to enable cross-border workers to familiarise themselves with the legal position in the country of employment, it would be helpful if the authorities' webpages and the documents to be filled in were provided in more than one language – at least in border regions."

LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Overall, language is viewed as a relevant problem in border regions by 38 % of respondents, making it the second most mentioned type of obstacle.

Obstacles

First, it is important to mention that **language is a cross-cutting obstacle, transcending the defined categories in this public consultation**. Apart from being mentioned in its specific dedicated category, it is continuously referred to in relation to the other obstacles and solutions. For instance, lack of knowledge of a neighbouring country's language is considered as significant for cooperation between public administrations and between local politicians. Consequently, it was sometimes mentioned in relation to legal and administrative barriers, or public authorities' interest in working together. Furthermore, cultural exchanges and language training are seen by many as a way of achieving cultural understanding and tolerance, whereas, on the contrary, spea-

king different languages can contribute to tensions and mistrust. Thus, it was often coupled with comments in relation to sociocultural differences and lack of trust. In most cases, however, respondents do not specify a policy area in which language barriers are most problematic.

As to the effects of language barriers, **various groups are affected by them and thus should be targeted by measures, according to the respondents**. Some consider the issue from a **broad societal perspective**, emphasising how **language barriers can restrict interaction in everyday life**, for instance the lack of engagement in community actions or civil life. Others put more emphasis on **language barriers in the professional world**, focusing on the potential for greater mobility of human resources in cross-border regions. In this context, an inadequate command of technical vocabulary in the foreign language is highlighted as a key obstacle. In another category of replies, respondents claim that **the potential for exchange of good practices between administrations**

is significantly hampered by language barriers. Therefore, strengthening language competencies in administrations in order to better communicate with citizens and other administrations is a priority for some respondents.

Potential solutions

Solutions are to be found on both the supply side (availability of training) and the demand side (fostering interest in language learning).

The main issues cited are the lack of language learning opportunities, as well as a perceived lack of interest among border residents in learning a neighbouring language. Thus, respondents suggest, for example, **more financial support to training and life-long learning of languages**. Some respondents place an emphasis on work-related training, with a view to improving employment perspectives in a neighbouring country. Others refer to language learning at school and in the

educational system more broadly: in this respect, European classes or cross-border bilingual schools could be promoted and learning the language of the neighbouring region should be developed in border regions.

The idea of **language exchange programmes** receives a lot of support from many respondents. These programmes should be suitable for children and adults, and financial support is requested to make them more accessible for citizens. Administrations and public authorities are also mentioned as an important target for such measures and for language learning in general, as a means of creating trust and mutual respect.

Many respondents stress that **language learning should go alongside developing an interest in the neighbouring country and understanding its social and cultural norms**. This is why language teaching is often described by respondents as something which should also integrate social and cultural competences.

"Language abilities should be improved. Early years learning should focus on bilingualism, by means of joint child-care facilities or, e.g. dual-language schools, qualifications obtained from which are recognised on both sides."

"Language projects in border regions, not only for children or students, but also easily accessible language courses for adults at low prices. Firms could also provide language facilities to employees or students."

Moreover, according to the respondents, language barriers do not only rely on the availability of language teaching, but are also a matter of fostering citizens' interest in language. Many regret the fact that some border residents show limited interest in learning a neighbour's language. **Communication around the benefits of learning the language** of the neighbouring country is key here, according to several contributors. Some take this further by introducing the idea of making it compulsory to learn a neighbouring language at school,

and/or for public administrations to have minimum language standards. However, many others do not challenge the voluntary nature of language learning.

In some very specific cases, preserving a shared minority language is presented as one way of reinforcing the common cross-border identity. There are also very mixed views about the use of a third language (most often English) for communication in border regions. While some see it as the realistic alternative to learning each other's languages, many advocate the need to protect the use of the cross-border regions' own languages.

"Long-term education programmes for improvement of language skills, visible advantages of understanding the neighbour (statistics showing the situations on the labour market, forecast on which skills are needed on the labour market, free access to data for citizens)."

"Learning the language of one's immediate neighbour should be compulsory in all

schools in border regions (i.e. within 50 km of the border) in order to acquire at least the basics of the language. In addition, it is the task of the media to expose people to the neighbouring country's language, show the benefits of learning it, and regularly broadcast a large number of radio and TV programmes in that language within the border region. There needs to be regular contacts for teachers, pupils and students."

DIFFICULT PHYSICAL ACCESS

Difficult physical access is the third most frequently cited obstacle (relevant for 32 % of respondents).

Obstacles

Like legal and administrative barriers, difficult physical access provoked a very high number of comments in response to the open-ended questions: one in three respondents commented further on this, describing its impact on their lives and suggesting solutions.

The main concerns were the:
- lack of infrastructure
- low quality/safety of infrastructure, insufficient upgrading and maintenance
- lack of integrated public transport systems at the border
- lack of connections (in particular rail), and the low frequency of connections
- different rules and standards in relation to transport
- congestion and long commuting time
- cost of crossing the border.

The lack of transport connections is mentioned in various contexts, although there is one fundamental difference: in some instances, there is a need for **better infrastructure/more crossing points** to overcome poor integration and limited accessibility of border regions (for example, **natural borders** such as rivers and mountains). In these situations, physical access is a very fundamental problem, which impacts the other cross-border interactions. In other cases, interaction across the border is not hindered by natural obstacles, **but the higher degree of interaction leads to even greater needs in terms of transport and connections** (such as a high number of commuters but limited public transport links).

A frequent topic concerns **integrated public transport services** in border regions, and is one of the main problems respondents face in their daily lives. Different public transport systems functioning in isolation from one another without taking into account what happens beyond the border are often mentioned. Respondents link many obstacles to integrated public transport services to the complexity of rules, legislations and administrative procedures that hinder cooperation. Some emphasise that **market forces often lead to a level of transport service provision unable to match the needs of some border region residents**, forcing them to use their cars as the only viable mean of cross-border transport.

Different networks are also discussed: some focus primarily on road and rail networks connecting big cities, while others refer to secondary networks and more local

connections. Comments highlight both the **insufficient number of links and the poor quality of infrastructure and how it is maintained. The state of infrastructure and the transport options are also discussed alongside complaints about congestion and long travel/commuting times**. Border checks and procedures are mentioned as obstacles that lead to longer travel times, while a few people mention the safety of roads.

The **issue of cost is also important for respondents** who find it too expensive to travel across borders on a frequent basis. This is particularly the case in border regions where large-scale infrastructure investments have been made (for example, the Channel between the UK and France/Belgium, and tunnels in mountainous regions). Once again, market forces are used to explain the high prices that do not match the needs of frequent travellers, and contribute, de facto, to less interaction across borders.

"A large number of Lubawka's residents work in the Czech Republic and their problems have been resolved by their employers, who provide transport from Lubawka. This solution does not, however, cover tourists. Although there is a rail link in the summer, outside this period there is just a bus. The number of connections is insufficient."

"Accessibility: public transport usually stops at the border, which means that access to the neighbouring country is an obstacle. One can then use a train or bus connection, but this is not always reliable."

"Transport links are much worse than within the respective countries. There is no direct rail or bus link between Freiburg and Colmar – a situation which would be unthinkable in the case of two towns located so close to one another in the same country. Cross-border rail links should not only be assessed from the viewpoint of cost/benefit. They could also have a leverage effect; they are the only way of enabling young French people, for example, to commute to Germany."

Potential solutions

Many of the proposed solutions are based on **the central idea of public investment in transport** links and infrastructure, as well as public (financial) support to reduce the price of accessing the other side of the border. Some respondents refer to EU projects and targets, for instance the development of the TEN-T corridors in border regions.

Respondents highlight the need to **think about transport between countries in an integrated way**, seeing functional areas beyond borders. Cross-border strategies, adequate planning, and coordination between key players are at the centre of many suggestions. Respondents also express a wish to see private initiatives, among national transport companies, carriers, or in the tourism sector, for instance, and the development of more public-private partnerships to improve physical access.

Many legal and administrative elements are also identified as the source of difficulties in providing better physical access, such as the lack of harmonised standards or cross-border ticketing solutions.

"Support from EU funds should focus mainly on basic building-up of the obsolete infrastructure in border regions on both sides of the border."

"Public transport services (bus and train) should be planned across borders. Prices must be harmonised."

"From a national/regional perspective, these problems are largely caused by the local public transport system, which fails to take account of the neighbouring region. […] An initial step in the right direction would be to introduce cross-border ticketing solutions and travel information for the local public transport network. Improved coordination relies on the good will of transport associations and large-scale operators."

PUBLIC AUTHORITIES' INTEREST IN WORKING TOGETHER

Public authorities' interest in working together is the fourth most cited obstacle, and is considered as relevant by 29 % of respondents. This topic prompted significantly fewer comments and suggestions in response to the open-ended questions than other obstacles.

Obstacles

Local authorities and politicians are the most discussed entities in these replies, as are their regional equivalents, to a certain extent. **First, to a large extent, cross-border cooperation is seen as being very dependent on the specific local context**. This means that the individual contacts, the political party and/or the will of individual politicians play a significant role in determining the degree of cooperation. Thus, the spirit of cooperation is far from being the norm in public authorities and sometimes there is an imbalance of interest on different sides of the border.

The fundamental issue referred to in many replies is **the impression that local politicians are actually not aware of or convinced by the benefits of cross-border cooperation**.

The lack of interest in working together is also explained as originating in societal, cultural, linguistic differences which make personal contact very difficult. The mere fact of not understanding the neighbouring language and its administration constitutes an obstacle at the level of local authorities.

Some respondents say they have the impression that **national authorities** do not have border regions' concerns on their agenda, or that cross-border issues do not affect enough people for an interest to be taken at the national level.

Potential solutions

Some solutions are centred on **raising awareness with local and regional politicians about the benefits of cross-border cooperation**, for example, through economic analyses and efforts to scientifically research border needs. Furthermore, a considerable number of the proposed solutions involve **fostering links and exchanges at both a personal and administration level** in order to nurture mutual understanding. Different events mixing relevant cross-border cooperation stakeholders with local and regional authorities are discussed as one way to proceed.

Some comments place the responsibility on the shoulders of citizens and civil society as a whole, claiming that it is up to them to change the situation and make public authorities more interested in cross-border cooperation. In a way, **public authorities' lack of interest in working together is presented (in these replies) as reflecting the lack of interest among citizens themselves**. More initiatives at the level of citizens are thus one approach to a solution. In a few responses, public authorities are even presented as being ahead of civil society, but with no real broad support. However, it must also be said that other respondents highlight the fact that civil/citizen initiatives do exist but are not adequately supported by politicians and the relevant authorities. Nevertheless, beyond these discussions and local differences, these contributions reveal that a dynamic does exist between civil society and the authorities regarding a general will to work together.

"At a political level, cross-border cooperation is not yet a given or automatic. Cross-border activities are more of a 'nice accessory' than part of the solution to problems that no one can solve on their own." → *Solution proposed: "Communication between administrations, e.g. staff exchange programmes, should be improved."*

"Too little politicians are convinced of the benefits of cross border cooperation." → *Solution proposed: "More animation towards local authorities highlighting the benefits of cross border cooperation for their local communities."*

"Create a yearly cross border political event."

"Establishing and maintaining contacts are mostly facilitated by civil society organisations. It would be good to have support from higher levels as well."

ECONOMIC DISPARITIES

In order of frequency, **economic disparities** represent the fifth most-cited obstacle, being seen as relevant by 29 % of respondents and referred to by around 15 % in response to the open-ended questions.

Obstacles

Economic disparities are **often described as a two-sided issue** – i.e. they are both an obstacle and an opportunity (at least for certain specific groups). When identified as an obstacle, one

of the most frequently mentioned aspects concerns **differences in the labour market and wages** which tend to attract people on one side of the border, creating a one-way flow. To a certain extent, this can be beneficial as regards cutting the unemployment rate, but it also brings with it a great risk of putting the other side of the border at a disadvantage, making it less attractive and draining its human resources. This difference may be emphasised even more by different fiscal policies and taxation systems, which also create significant imbalance at the local tax level.

From a consumer's perspective, the other major issue raised is the fact that some goods and services are more expensive on one side of the border, discouraging residents on the other side to travel to the neighbouring country. These **economic disparities are conducive to asymmetric flows** between border regions and are described as leading to a 'slump' in trade on the more expensive side of the border. **Different levels of taxes and VAT are also cited as a component of such economic disparities**. As to buying goods and services, **different currencies make economic exchanges across the border more difficult**, or create uncertainty due to variations in exchange rates.

Another aspect mentioned is the fact that different economic structures on either side of the border limit opportunities for economic cooperation and **reduce shared interests between neighbouring regions in cooperating because of different challenges and priorities**.

"The higher cost of living in Greece in comparison with Bulgaria does not allow frequent or lengthy visits to that country."

"Luxembourg has an unfair competitive advantage over France as employers' charges and social security charges are disproportionate […] As a result, employment is drying up all along the French side of the border, with 'cross-border' companies systematically choosing to base themselves in Luxembourg."

"Not easy to find municipalities or regions facing the same challenges."

Potential solutions

A distinctive feature among these comments is the particularly high number of cases (approximately one in four) where **no corresponding solution is suggested – sometimes simply indicated by a 'don't know' or '?'. Respondents often say that it is a difficult problem to solve, at least in the short term, and/or that the situation is slowly evening out**.

However, some broad categories of solutions can be identified:

⊙ **(Jointly) developing the side of the border which offers fewer opportunities**, lower wages, etc. This encompasses a variety of measures such as better coordination between education systems and human resources needs, more emphasis on local areas of specialisation. In particular, Cohesion Policy and Interreg are seen by some as having the potential to achieve convergence in the long run.

- **Acting on national policies, particularly fiscal policies that create incentives for** businesses and people to move, and taxes. In some cases, respondents call for greater harmonisation. Suggestions are also made about making it mandatory for authorities to carry out cross-border impact assessments on economic consequences when making changes to taxation systems or VAT.

- **Creating compensatory or corrective systems when discrepancies cannot be avoided**, such as a tax compensation system which is both national and cross-border.

"At the moment it is very difficult to find solutions to this obstacle. Taxation might ease the situation."

"It would be pointless to try to fight against Switzerland's economic pull. France would be better off identifying sectors that show promise and raising levels of professional qualification. To this end, the implementation of a strategy to develop higher education in the Genevois Français region (the area surrounding Greater Geneva) would also provide a more effective response to the needs of local enterprises and stem the loss of manpower."

"Create a fiscal compensation system based on the number of cross-border workers or even their income."

SOCIOCULTURAL DIFFERENCES/ LACK OF TRUST

Sociocultural differences and lack of trust were the two obstacles respondents selected least often, achieving 20% and 11% respectively.

Obstacles

In response to the open-ended questions, sociocultural differences were discussed about twice as much as lack of trust. **The comments share many similarities and are sometimes also de facto coupled with each other by the respondents within their own categories, for example, 'mentality', which invites a common analysis**.

Generally speaking, a lack of understanding of different sociocultural contexts is presented as a factor which is closely related to lack of trust regarding neighbours. It is **sometimes also described simply as a lack of interest**. Unfamiliarity with the neighbouring culture and society is referred to at all levels. In some cases, the lack of trust is directly referred to as having been **inherited through history, which will take time to recreate or rebuild**.

Potential solutions

The majority of the solutions suggested involve **developing different types of exchanges and intercultural/educational projects of various shapes and sizes**, for example smaller peer-to-peer projects as well as broader cultural projects from an early age to allow for deeper, systemic and longer-term cooperation. **Language is also identified as another key**

factor for enhancing trust and helping to mitigate sociocultural differences. In addition, projects are recommended for all ages and at all levels, including for politicians and public administrations. Erasmus/Erasmus+ is cited as one concrete programme that is already a facilitator in this field, but which could be better used to solve this problem. Some respondents go further and suggest the creation of a common cross-border identity through the teaching of common history or culture, for example.

Respondents also stress **the media's role in promoting neighbouring culture**: interest and curiosity can be facilitated by developing cross-border media, or enhancing coverage of cross-border issues by such media. General information campaigns are also advocated.

Finally, both obstacles are also described by some as being more time consuming and harder to solve although, **once solved, they will facilitate the creation of solutions in other areas as well**, as they will lead to more active cooperation.

"Create occasions to meet the neighbours in all fields: schools (exchanges), labour (joint vocational training, joint labour market), leisure and private life (public celebrations)."

"Promoting economic activity and investment in border areas, greater attention to the local media writing about current affairs in the neighbouring area across the border."
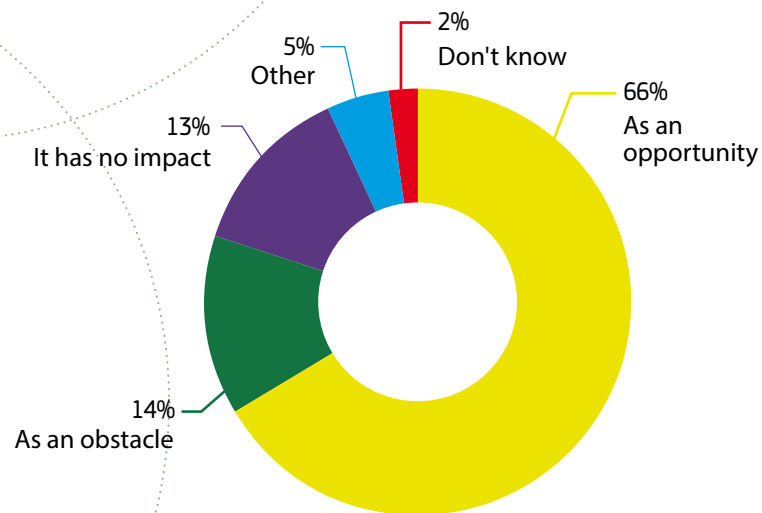
"More encouragement to learn languages; more school projects and excursions to the other country."

"Cross-border TV broadcasters (such as ARTE DE-FR)."

CHAPTER 5

Views on cross-border cooperation

Figure 6: How do you view the border in your region?

- 2% Don't know
- 5% Other
- 13% It has no impact
- 14% As an obstacle
- 66% As an opportunity

Linked to the various questions on border obstacles, respondents were also asked to give their views on the border in their region, and the evolution of cross-border cooperation over the last decade.

As shown in figure 6, two in three respondents consider the border to be an opportunity, while the other third is split, mainly between seeing it as an obstacle (14%) and considering that the border has no actual impact (13%).

When asked about the development of cross-border cooperation in the region over the last decade, figure 7 shows that two-thirds of respondents feel it has improved while about one in five think it has not improved. Almost a quarter of respondents said they do not know.

The respondents were then asked to explain their choices. The main improvements stated were:

⊕ A perceived greater interest in and awareness of the advantages and the necessity of cooperating including, for example, greater access to cross-border data, closer ties between the border communities as well as more political support for cooperation.

⊕ The general competences around cross-border cooperation, especially relating to coordination, operational issues/ management and in some cases integration of cross-border policy objectives in 'regular'/domestic affairs. There is also more cooperation between public authorities, agreements and exchanges of ideas and experience, including study visits, data exchanges, cross-border trainings and joint projects.

⊕ More cross-border events and communication about cross-border cooperation as well as more visibility surrounding projects and programmes. There has also been an increase in knowledge about the opportunities for cross-border projects, alongside substantial development of such projects across a variety of areas. Partners have gained experience in cross-border cooperation and broadened the scope of activities, too.

⊕ More funding possibilities and more awareness of funding opportunities for cross-border initiatives, including EU-funding where Interreg in particular is often mentioned as a specific initiator and facilitator of cooperation in border regions.

Figure 7: Has cross-border cooperation improved in your region over the last decade?

Don't know
22%

66%
Yes

12%
No
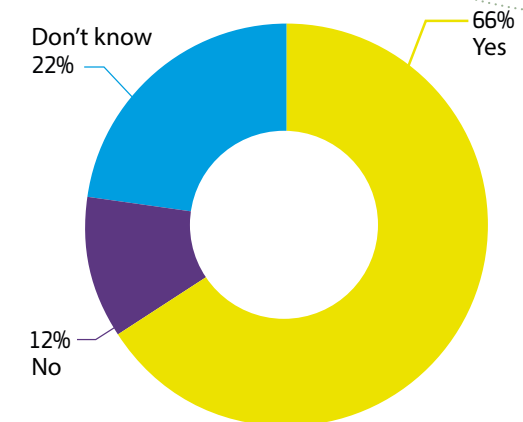
In general, Interreg is frequently mentioned as having been a positive force in cross-border cooperation across Europe. Furthermore, in several instances, the country context is seen as having had a major influence on the conditions for cross-border cooperation. For example, accession to the Schengen Area and/or accession to the EU are described by some as major milestones which have greatly improved the preconditions for cross-border cooperation.

On the other hand, improvements are still required in the following areas:

⊕ The level of interest in cross-border cooperation is described in some cases as relatively unequal among partners. Some comments are made about the sustainability of cross-border cooperation where connections are created but not maintained in the long term through, for example, permanent or inefficient and inadequate cooperation structures.

⊕ Criticisms are also voiced about financing whereby the application procedures are sometimes complicated, and funding for cooperation projects is limited to EU programmes.

The economic crisis is described in general as having constituted a negative context for cross-border cooperation. In some cases, it is cited as having resulted in "inward-looking" attitudes. Some concerns are also raised about "stagnation" or even a lowering of interest in cross-border cooperation. In addition, some specific comments referred to the need for greater cooperation efforts in the business sector, to complete the single market.

"Better analysis on joint CB problems, issues and needs. Better coordination of EU, national and regional political objectives (multi-level governance). Better integration of cross border regional policy aims."

"Without a doubt, the broadening and diversification of Interreg over its 25 years of activity has vastly improved cross-border cooperation (CBC) on the majority of European borders, although there is still a lot of work to be done on all of them."

"The municipality did not maintain and foster the international connections it had previously created."

"Cooperation is limited to the implementation of EU programmes that require a thematic focus. Large infrastructure investments are difficult to obtain, since decisions on them would require funding from the EU. However, political priorities tend to focus on more urban and densely populated areas."
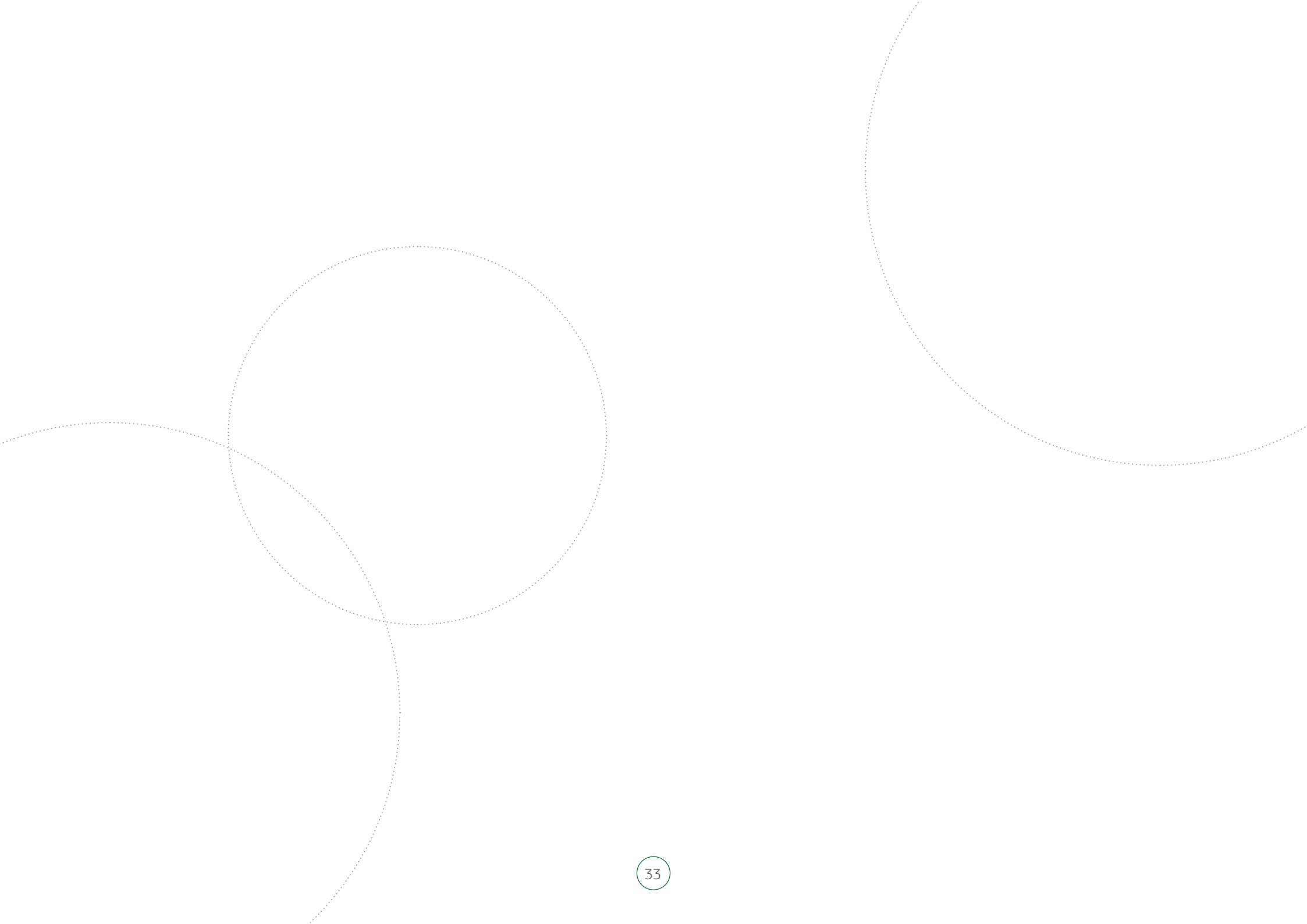
CHAPTER 6
Conclusions

This summary of the results of the public consultation carried out by DG Regio shows that **despite Interreg's contribution to the development of cross-border cooperation in the EU, many obstacles in border regions go beyond its direct reach** and pose a multitude of different challenges. These are sometimes multidimensional which means, for example, that the definition and origin of an obstacle differ in nature – for example, in some cases inadequate cross-border transport systems (falling under the difficult physical accessibility category) are explained as originating in a lack of harmonisation of technical standards (coming under legal and administrative barriers). Nonetheless, several obstacles are referred to repeatedly – it is obvious that legal and administrative barriers are the most frequently mentioned regardless of context or respondent profile.

However, a multitude of solutions to these barriers have been proposed by the respondents, indicating that in the long run there should be greater opportunities to overcome or at least mitigate most of the obstacles. Thus, the Cross-Border Review will now focus on analysing the large group of legal and administrative obstacles in more depth. Positions, ideas and suggestions submitted in response to this public consultation will be taken into account together with other material gathered during the process. The end result will be concrete recommendations on what could be done to overcome remaining obstacles, presented in the form of an 'issues paper', due in 2017.

This public consultation also reveals that language barriers and difficult physical access are also frequently mentioned as obstacles. The very high relevance of barriers to physical access in this survey confirms that the work on cross-border mobility is a must in border regions, and that plans, policies and priorities should be better adapted to the specific needs of these regions. The same can be said about language barriers, which is a recurrent and cross-cutting theme. The responses imply that many of the obstacles faced by border regions often originate from a lack of understanding of neighbouring languages, hampering access to information, as well as an inadequate general sociocultural knowledge of the neighbouring society. This reminds us of the fact that interactions do not happen in a linguistic vacuum, but

are based on personal exchanges that could be facilitated by languages which are similar in nature or language learning. **These two overarching themes could be considered as basic preconditions for the development of border regions. The fact that they are discussed extensively in the contributions to this public consultation suggest that they should not be overlooked, and that cooperation in these fields should be both safeguarded and promoted**.

On the other hand, the relatively rare mention of lack of trust as an obstacle in border regions is reassuring in the sense that it indicates that there is a good basis for border regions to continue to make progress in cooperation. **The fact that trust, as well as sociocultural differences and language barriers, are even less of a problem for those who cross the border more frequently is particularly encouraging**. It suggests that more interaction with the neighbouring side of

the border goes hand in hand with a better understanding. And, even if it is difficult to say which comes first, **it advocates fostering exchanges as much as possible**. This is also supported by the solution often proposed for a perceived lack of trust and sociocultural differences is to engage in cultural and language exchange projects.

The consultation also reveals a relatively large group of respondents who perceive public authorities (lack of) interest in working together as a border obstacle in itself. **Although this may simply be a perception rather than a reality, it should act as a wake-up call in terms of the communication efforts made by public authorities involved in cross-border cooperation**. There is also a need for more dialogue between the various levels of public administration, as many replies indicated a perceived discrepancy between the priorities of border communities and those of higher levels of public administration.

The replies to this consultation will possibly not be surprising to those involved in cross-border cooperation – most of the obstacles cited are already well known, and widespread efforts are being made daily by a wide range of actors to try to solve them. But, if used well, these results can provide a constructive point of departure for a relaunched discussion on ways to proceed in future.

We could also see them as encouraging for further work. The large number of obstacles mentioned together with corresponding proposed solutions show that there is a great will to improve and intensify cross-border cooperation across Europe. DG Regio would therefore like to end this summary report by thanking everyone who participated for their valuable contribution to this exercise.

FIND OUT MORE

Useful links:

The Cross-Border Review:
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/
en/policy/cooperation/european-
territorial/cross-border/review/#1

Interreg:
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/
en/policy/cooperation/european-
territorial/

FOOTNOTES

1 For more information about the senior management roadshow, please visit: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/cross-border/review/#1

2 REGIO-CONSULTATION-BORDER-OBSTACLES@ec.europa.eu

3 Among the 38 respondents who selected 'other' as their country of residence, or who did not reply:

– six are pan-European organisations and were therefore not asked to reply;

– 24 gave the name of an EU country, or a region or a city located in an EU country in the open response box: 4 DE, 4 FR, 4 RO, 2 NL, 2 PL, 2 UK, 1 GR, 1 LV, 1 FI, 1 HU, 1 LT, 1 PT

– five come from outside the EU: two from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, one from the United States, one from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and one from Georgia

– three gave the name of a cross-border region/programme: 1 ES/PT, 1 IE/UK, 1 FR/CH.

4 This can be compared to the results of the Flash Eurobarometer no: 422 in which 47% of surveyed residents in border regions have never travelled to the other side of the border. For more information, see: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/cross-border/#5

5 By comparison, the Flash Eurobarometer no: 422 showed that 31% of people living in EU border regions are aware of EU-funded cross-border cooperation activities. This could be explained by the fact that respondents to the public consultation contributed on a voluntary basis, whereas the methodology of the Eurobarometer involved interviewing a randomly selected sample of residents in border regions. In this public consultation, 19% said that they had not heard about European Territorial Cooperation or Interreg.

6 This question was only relevant for individuals (citizens and self-employed) and businesses.

7 The Flash Eurobarometer no: 422 also shows high levels of legal and administrative barriers declared by residents in border regions where cross-border mobility is high.

8 This question was only relevant to individuals and businesses. Reasons for crossing the border were not mutually exclusive; respondents could select more than one.

9 All quotes in this brochure have been translated for this purpose, regardless of the original language of the reply.

Publications Office