



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
REGIONAL AND URBAN POLICY

**CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR CROSS-BORDER REGIONS TO
PARTICIPATE IN A PILOT ACTION ON MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE AND
CO-DEVELOPED CROSS-BORDER STRATEGIES**

Commission européenne/Europese Commissie, 1049 Bruxelles/Brussel, BELGIQUE/BELGIË - Tel. +32 22991111

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- (1) The 8th Cohesion report states that there should be a better governance of functional areas. Under the heading “Strengthening cross-border and interregional cooperation”, it states: “The pandemic highlighted the difficulties of having to cross a national border for work, education, healthcare and other services. Road and rail transport performance are lower in cross-border regions. Addressing these issues requires better governance of functional cross-border areas, a stronger coordination of services, infrastructure and investments, and exchange of experience supported by pan-European research”.
- (2) There are 40 internal land border regions in the European Union (EU), representing 40% of the EU’s territory and almost 30% of its population. Yet, on average, these regions tend to perform less well economically than other types of EU Member State regions. This can be due to a number of unique challenges, including potentially less access to certain public services that contribute to productivity and well-being, such as universities and hospitals, and higher administrative burden for individuals, businesses and public authorities given differences in legal and administrative systems.
- (3) In 2020 and 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic underlined the interdependence of EU Member States and their regions, and put a spotlight on the fragility of cross-border advantages, particularly when limits are placed on freedom of movement across borders. EU Member State actions to close borders and limit movement affected cross-border ecosystems, and aggravated the existing challenges in service delivery and labour markets, particularly in the access to health care, the supply of goods, and the mobility of healthcare and other workers. The pandemic also accentuated the need for better cross-border management, and more systematic and coherent cooperation for cross-border activities among all levels of government.
- (4) The European Parliament has invited the Commission to do a pilot project - called “*Cross-Border Crisis Response Integrated Initiative*” - to address the specific needs of cross-border regions and to build greater resilience in the future. The objective is to help cross-border regions to develop their governance and resilience. The focus will be on multi-level governance and co-developed cross-border strategies. It will start with 5 pilot cross-border regions.
- (5) *Multi-level governance*: Multi-level governance is important to encourage and facilitate greater cross-border institutional cooperation among all levels of government, as well as with civil society and citizens. It also contributes to streamlining funding to cross-border investments and policies so that they become sustainable.
- (6) *Co-developed cross-border strategies*: Co-development¹ is important to get the best ideas and to ensure ownership of the decisions. These strategies would not be based on

¹ Co-development generally refers to stakeholder input into the policy or project design process. It is a component of co-production, which corresponds to the direct involvement of individual users and groups of citizens in the planning and delivery of public services. An umbrella term, it covers a range of specific concepts, such as co-design, co-creation, co-delivery, co-management, co-evaluation and co-review, which

administrative and political borders but on cross-border functional areas². The topics to be covered by these strategies would be in particular: healthcare, transport, employment, education, energy, taxation policy, spatial planning, social innovation, etc..

- (7) The Commission will contract the OECD to provide expertise to the selected pilot cross-border regions. The OECD will work with these regions individually and as a group, as well as with other cross-border stakeholders and institutions, to build the evidence and knowledge bases. The work will cover three elements: actors, ideas and means.
- (8) *ACTORS: How to have the multi-level institutions cooperate together and how to have institutions, stakeholders and citizens co-develop policies in a cross-border context?* Common multi-level governance challenges are more challenging in cross-border regions (e.g. at least two different systems on both sides of the border with different levels of responsibilities, no single level of government can fully deliver alone, etc.). These regions also face specific barriers to a more efficient and effective design and delivery of policy: regulatory or administrative burden arising from different legal systems, labour market mobility restrictions due to professional and educational equivalency regulations (or lack of them), incoherence in policy objectives and planning priorities, differences in service accessibility and quality standards, etc.. Hence, it is important to understand the multi-level governance systems in each pilot region to identify the various institutions / competencies, frameworks and practices (including stakeholder engagement), governance gaps, system strengths and potential weaknesses, etc.. Experimental governance approaches should be explored to build greater flexibility / adaptability in the cross-border governance systems.
- (9) *IDEAS: How to develop and implement integrated territorial strategies in functional areas?* The aim is to work with the pilot regions to clearly articulate the critical obstacles / gaps in co-developing³ and implementing integrated cross-border policies, and then to jointly identify what works and what does not work – in terms of planning, design and implementation. The focus would be on a set of policy fields common to all

reflect the different stages and types of stakeholder involvement and input. For example, governments co-produce with citizens when they release information which is then reused by citizens and businesses to produce improved or new services (e.g. using open data to combine information on local bars and crime data to help people plan safer routes home); or when they partner with citizens or volunteer groups to monitor the physical conditions of public infrastructure and services, or to increase safety in their neighbourhood.

² Cross-border functional areas are mainly defined by interactions and interdependencies between people and stakeholders (mobility, work, health, energy education, leisure, etc...). They are not defined by administrative boundaries.

³ Co-development refers to stakeholder input into the policy or project design process. It covers a range of concepts, such as co-design, co-creation, co-delivery, co-management, co-evaluation and co-review, which reflect the different stages and types of stakeholder involvement and input.

participating pilot regions: healthcare, transport, employment, energy, education, tax policy, spatial planning, social innovation, etc.. It is also possible to have other policy fields for some pilot regions if they are particularly important and challenging in that region. Attention will be paid to the process of overcoming obstacles associated with co-developing cross-border strategies (e.g. how to involve the right stakeholders, how to ensure that they contribute, how to ensure that the results are balanced, etc.).

- (10) *MEANS: How to get sustainable funding sources?* The funding of cross-border investments and policies by the regions has to be sustainable. Therefore, important elements need to be known: available resources, spending capacities, possibilities to reinforce cross-border taxation (equalisation mechanisms, joint budgets, negative externalities on the neighbouring countries, etc.), innovative funding mechanisms, etc..

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE CALL AND OUTPUTS

- (11) Under this call, DG Regional and urban policy seeks expressions of interest from cross-border legal entities involved in cross-border issues wishing to improve their multi-level governance and establish (or improve) co-developed, cross-border strategies. Applications are eligible if they are submitted either jointly by legal entities from each side of the border or by legal entities which are cross-border by nature (EGTCs, Euroregions, etc.).
- (12) Work will be carried out in the framework of a pilot project. The experiences will be disseminated and will feed into reflections on how to improve cross-border governance.
- (13) 2023, Q1 - The pilot will start with a *kick-off* meeting in Paris or in Brussels. At the meeting the five pilot cross-border regions will meet the OECD experts and officials from DG REGIO / Interreg. The objective is to give the OECD the opportunity to describe in detail the project and working methodology, to begin building the team's relationship and to give the pilot regions an opportunity to share insights about their unique areas and challenges.
- (14) 2023, Q2-Q4 -The selected pilot regions would then contribute in two rounds of *focus groups* per pilot region (1 day each, on-the-spot). These focus groups would be organised and animated by the OECD. There may be several focus groups for each pilot region, each on a specific topic (these focus groups would be batched and organised in two rounds). These focus groups would involve the authorities of the pilot regions (multi-level) and the stakeholders. The objective of these focus groups will be to identify the specific needs and challenges of each pilot region and then identify the actions to be implemented. These actions should be proposed, designed and agreed by the members of the focus group (from the region).
- (15) 2023, Q2-Q4 - The selected pilot regions would also contribute to two *peer-2-peer* events between all the selected pilot regions (in Paris or Brussels); there may be additional peer-2-peer webinars on-line. These peer-2-peer events would be organised and animated by the OECD. These knowledge exchange opportunities would gather the

pilot regions to share their experiences, and would be designed around topics arising from the individual pilots. The aim is to generate an open discussion and peer exchange, especially on sharing the way regions perceive the proposed actions for the other ones. The events could focus on multi-level governance and cross-border strategies and / or a specific challenge (as relevant to pilots based on the project findings).

- (16) 2023, Q4 + 2024, Q1 - The result of this work would be several *blueprints* with action plans to improve the cross-border governance in several policy fields of the cross-border region (one for each selected pilot region) and an *analytical tool* based on the experience from the five pilot regions (which will be made available to all cross-border regions). These would be prepared by the OECD. The blueprints will present an analysis of the situation of each region and will provide a toolkit as well as an action plan (specific to each pilot region) to improve their cross-border governance. The OECD would also provide assistance to the pilots by answering their questions (helpdesk) and by accompanying implementation (coaching). Based on the blueprints, the analytical tool will present the key areas of attention for border regions willing to improve their cross-border governance. It would be accompanied by a checklist for ease of use.
- (17) 2024, Q1-Q2 - The results would be presented and discussed in an *international dialogue on cross-border regional governance* (in Paris or Brussels), in a *seminar in the 2023 European Week of Regions and Cities* (in Brussels) and in a *final conference* (in Brussels). The aim of these events is to disseminate the findings and lessons learned through the pilot action to other cross-border regions. These events would be open to non-pilot regions and international actors (and speakers). These events would be organised by the Commission and the OECD.
- (18) For the participating pilot regions, the key output will be a *blueprint* (one per region). The blueprints will follow two rounds of *focus groups* per pilot region (1 day each, on-the-spot) and at least two *peer-2-peer* events between all the selected pilot regions. The blueprints will include:
 - a) An analysis of the situation in each region (needs and challenges);
 - b) A toolkit with different instruments available (legislation, funding, actors, etc.);
 - c) An action plan to improve the cross-border governance in several policy fields of the cross-border region;
 - d) An assistance by the OECD: answering questions (helpdesk) and accompanying implementation (coaching).
- (19) The pilots will require the active participation of the authorities from the cross-border regions. They will need to delegate employees to participate in meetings / conferences

and contribute to / review documents. Further, they are expected to host two rounds of focus groups.

- (20) The cross-border regions participating in the pilot will benefit from the expertise from the OECD to analyse and address their needs. There will be no funding provided to the pilot cross-border regions (except the reimbursement of travel costs for meetings / conferences in Paris and Brussels).
- (21) Some of the costs associated with the pilots will have to be carried out by the authorities and stakeholders of the cross-border regions themselves. This is in particular the case for the focus groups (venue, catering, travel costs, translation, interpretation).
- (22) Interested authorities of cross-border regions should in their expressions of interest demonstrate their commitment and organisational readiness (e.g. appointment of a dedicated team) to work with the OECD experts.
- (23) The expected result of this Call is a shortlist of five pilot cross-border regions from those who submitted their expressions of interest.

3. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- (24) For the pilot cross-border regions, the expected outcome will be some actions implemented following the blueprint (specific to their cross-border region) and a better understanding of the issues through the peer-2-peer, international dialogue and final conference.
- (25) For the cross-border regions at large, the expected outcome will be a better understanding of the issues through the international dialogue and the final conference as well as some further improvements in their regions if they use the analytical tool.

4. WHO CAN APPLY UNDER THIS CALL? ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

(26) To be eligible, the expression of interest will have to meet all the following eligibility criteria:

| ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA | | REFERENCE IN THE APPLICATION FORM |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| 1.A | LEGAL ENTITIES - Applications are eligible if they are submitted either jointly by legal entities from each side of the border or by legal entities which are cross-border by nature (EGTCs, Euroregions, etc.). These legal entities can be local authorities, universities or research centres, European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), Euroregions, etc. (in this case a single legal entity is eligible). These legal entities should be in the EU, in Candidate countries or in Switzerland, Norway, Andorra, Monaco and Liechtenstein. | Section 1 |
| 1.B | CROSS-BORDER - The application should concern a cross-border territory and involve relevant national, regional and local authorities as well as stakeholders and citizens of the cross-border region. | Section 2 |
| 1.C | COMMITMENT - Appointment of a dedicated interlocutor and team to work in close cooperation with the OECD on the pilot project. | Section 3 |
| 1.D | INVOLVEMENT - Involvement of the relevant national, regional and local authorities as well as stakeholders and citizens of the cross-border region | Section 4 |

5. CRITERIA FOR SHORTLISTING EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

(27) The eligible expressions of interest will be assessed against the following assessment criteria (each criteria will be given points ranging from 0 (too poor to be considered) to 5 (excellent); each criteria has the same weight):

| CRITERIA FOR SHORTLISTING EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST | REFERENCE IN THE APPLICATION FORM |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 2.A MOTIVATION - It is important to have a strong motivation to participate in the pilot project. This will be reflected by the commitment to make the necessary resources available. This includes a strong interest in self-assessment / evaluation and openness to peer expertise and working with internal and external stakeholders / expertise. | Section 3 |
| 2.B INVOLVEMENT - Working on multi-level governance and co-development of strategies implies relevant national, regional and local authorities as well as stakeholders and citizens of the cross-border region. The partnership should be broad. In addition, there should be an involvement from both political and technical / administrative. | Section 4 |
| 2.C POTENTIAL - The pilot should have a potential to improve the multi-level governance and co-developed cross-border strategies in the cross-border region. The pilot should be operational (concrete, specific, realistic, etc.). | Section 5 |
| 2.D RELEVANCE – The policy areas on which to focus the work should be relevant in the context of the cross-border region. | Section 6 |

6. ASSESSMENT PROCESS

- (28) Expressions of interest will be assessed against the eligibility criteria and shortlisted based on the assessment criteria of this call.
- (29) The assessment will be carried out by a selection panel consisting of representatives of the European Commission. The final decision on a shortlist will be taken by the European Commission.
- (30) If several applications show the same level of quality and merit (same number of points - see § 5. -), a geographical balance will be sought (to cover the diversity of situations in the European Union).
- (31) Each applicant will be informed about the decision taken.

7. PROCEDURE FOR SUBMISSION OF EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

- (32) Applicants expressing their interest to participate in the call are requested to complete the application form provided in the Annex 1.
- (33) The application form is to be filled-in in English.
- (34) The expression of interest should be submitted electronically to the following email address: REGIO-D2-CROSS-BORDER-COOPERATION@ec.europa.eu

8. DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

- (35) The deadline for submitting an expression of interest is **Friday 30 September 2022**.
- (36) Expressions of interest submitted after the deadline of this call will not be considered.

9. CONTACT

- (37) In case of any questions, please contact:

REGIO-D2-CROSS-BORDER-COOPERATION@ec.europa.eu

- (38) All information related to this Call will be published online in the section “Call for expression of interest” of https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/.