

# CECICN CONTRIBUTION TO THE: PUBLIC CONSULTATION – OVERCOMING OBSTACLES IN BORDER REGIONS

---

*December 2015*

## QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

The following answers are given by CECICN (Conference of European Cross-border and Interregional City Networks), representing more the 600 cities all over Europe. CECICN offers the vision and position of cities involved in Territorial Cooperation in Europe.

For the last 25 years, the European Union has been investing in cross-border cooperation through Interreg, a financing instrument for regional development across borders. Despite all the progress made, many obstacles persist, and many of these cannot be solved with Interreg financing alone.

The main purpose of this consultation is therefore to collect experiences and opinions from citizens, key stakeholders and experts, in order to get a comprehensive overview of what obstacles persist and of their impact on the daily lives of people and businesses in border regions.

The results will be published online. They will also feed into a study aiming to produce conclusions and practical suggestions on how the EU and its partners can ease remaining obstacles.

For more information on this consultation, please read the background document.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### 1. In which capacity are you completing this questionnaire

- As an individual/private person
- As a self-employed individual
- On behalf of a business/private company
- On behalf of a pan-European interest group
- On behalf of a public authority
- On behalf of an organization**
- On behalf of an academic/research institution
- Other - If you answered 'other', please specify in which capacity you are answering this questionnaire. *50 character(s) maximum*

Your name or the name of the business/organisation/institution on behalf of which you are Responding *50 character(s) maximum*

[Conference of European cross-border and interregional city networks \(CECICN\)](http://www.cecicn.eu)

**If your organisation is registered in the Transparency Register, please indicate your Register ID-number.**

If your organisation is not registered, you have the opportunity to Register now. Then return to this page to submit your contribution as a registered organisation. Responses from organisations not registered will be published separately. Non-registered organisations, please submit your contributions here. For more information about the Transparency Register, click here.

- Yes  
 No

Please indicate your Register ID-number

**Are you a resident of or based in a border region?**

- Yes  
 No

Please fill in your postcode  
1067 Budapest (Hungary)

**2. Your name or the name of the business/organisation/institution on behalf of which you are responding**

Conference of European cross-border and interregional city networks (CECICN)  
- Jean Peyrony, Executive Director of CECICN

**3. Contact e-mail address**

[cesci@cesci-net.eu](mailto:cesci@cesci-net.eu) (Head office of the CECICN)

**4. Where are you currently resident or based?**

BE - Belgique - België	FR - France	<b>HU - Magyarország</b>	SK - Slovensko
BG - България - Bulgaria	HR - Hrvatska	MT - Malta	FI - Suomi - Finland
CZ – Česká Republika	IE - Ireland - Eire	NL - Nederland	SE - Sverige
DK - Danmark	IT - Italia	AT - Österreich	UK – United Kingdom
DE - Deutschland	CY - Κύπρος - Kýpros	PL - Polska	IS - Iceland
EE - Eesti	LV - Latvija	PT - Portugal	LI - Liechtenstein
EL - Ελλάδα - Ellada	LT - Lietuva	RO - România	CH - Switzerland
ES - España	LU - Luxembourg	SI - Slovenija	NO – Norge
Other* :			

If you replied 'other', what is the country where you are currently resident or based?

**5. Language in which I complete the questionnaire.**

български (bg)	français (fr)	polski (pl)
čeština (cs)	hrvatski (hr)	português (pt)
dansk (da)	italiano (it)	română (ro)
Deutsch (de)	latviešu valoda (lv)	slovenčina (sk)
eesti keel (et)	lietuvių kalba (lt)	slovenščina (sl)
ελληνικά (el)	magyar (hu)	suomi (fi)
<b>English (en)</b>	Malti (mt)	svenska (sv)
español (es)	Nederlands (nl)	

## 6. How should we publish your response?

- In full (I consent to the publication of any information in my completed form, including my identity).
- Anonymously (I consent to the publication of any information in my completed form, apart from my name/the name of my organisation, the e-mail/contact address provided and the Transparency Register ID).
- Not at all (My response will not be published. It will be used within the Commission only).

## 7. Does your organisation specialise in cross-border cooperation or in working to ease or remove border obstacles?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know/Not applicable

## CROSS-BORDER ACTIVITY

### 1. How often do you cross the border?

Explanation: Pick the option that corresponds most closely to your usual behaviour, taking into account all the cross-border activities you engage in, including work, seeing friends and family, conducting business or shopping.

- Every day (4-7 times a week)
- Weekly (1-3 times a week)
- Monthly (1-3 times a month)
- Occasionally (a few times a year, but less than once a month)
- Rarely (once every 2 or 3 years)
- Never

### 2. For what purpose do you cross the border?

- Employment
- Business
- Education
- To buy goods and/or services (including medical care)
- To visit friends and/or family
- Leisure (tourism, to engage in a hobby, etc)
- Other - If you replied 'other', please state the purpose for which you cross the border.  
*100 character(s) maximum*

To assist actors of cross-border cooperation, among them mainly cities and local authorities.

## BORDER OBSTACLES

### 1. How do you view the border in your region?

- As an opportunity
- As an obstacle
- It has no impact
- Other
- Don't know

If you replied, 'other', please say how you view the border in your region.  
50 character(s) maximum

## 2. Are any of the following border obstacles relevant in your region?

Explanation

Yes = this obstacle is relevant in my region

No = this does not apply in my region.

n/a = I have no opinion. / I don't know.

	yes	No	n/a
Difficult physical access, e.g. "I can't cross the border because there is no bridge/tunnel//It takes too long to travel to the other side//There are no/too few buses and trains to the other side".	X	X	
Language barriers, e.g. "I don't speak the language they speak on the other side of the border//The people on the other side don't speak my language".	X		
Legal and administrative barriers, e.g. "The national taxation systems/pension systems are different//My professional qualifications are not recognised on the other side of the border//I'm not allowed access to certain medical services/education schemes".	X		
Lack of trust, e.g. "I don't trust the people from across the border".	X	X	
Economic disparities, e.g. "It's too expensive on the other side of the border//There is too big a gap between economic conditions on either side of the border".	X	X	
Sociocultural differences, e.g. "I don't like the way society works on the other side of the border//I have better access to my rights on my side of the border".	X	X	
Public authorities' interest in working together, e.g. "Local politicians don't seem to be interested in working together//Political debate doesn't include border issues".	X	X	
Other - If you replied "other", please state which obstacle(s) apply/applies. 100 character(s) maximum The study realized by ISIG for the Council of Europe identifies 6 categories of factors for remaining cross-border obstacles, which are more or less overlapping the categories cited above. Most cross-border territories face simultaneously several of these obstacles, evolving over the time, and which are never resolved once and for all (for example language problem or lack of trust).	X		

## 3. Please select up to 3 obstacles from the previous question. Choose those you think pose most problems in your region.

Explanation: Please state what form this/these obstacle(s) take(s) in your region and how it/they affect(s) your life. Use one box per obstacle.

Obstacle 1 500 character(s) maximum

**Note: what follows is a general observation that needs to be declined and adapted for each cross-border territory.**

**Obstacles related to the border as a separation between 2 national systems (policy/institutional, technical/administrative/functional, economic etc.)**

≡ Institutional asymmetry on both sides of the border.

- ≡ Absence of harmonisation or of coordination concerning national regulations: social, fiscal, legal and technical.
- ≡ Weakness in cross-border governance (Euroregions, cross-border territories), both in terms of political portage and of territorial engineering.
- ≡ Sectoral dividing of internal services at States' and local communities' level, resulting in a low consideration for cross-border issues.
- ≡ Horizontal and vertical external division between structures.
- ≡ Cross-border issues remain marginal in strategies, short term approach.
- ≡ Predominant sectoral strategies, lack of integrated territorial approaches.
- ≡ Economic disparities: differences in terms of taxation or work costs, what makes economic relationships highly competitive, hindering cooperation.

#### Obstacle 2 500 character(s) maximum

##### **Obstacles related to the border as a separation between 2 communities (individual links, knowledge, shared visions)**

Relations of cooperation are closely related to the exchanges between people, but several factors may hinder this cooperation:

- ≡ Lack of knowledge of the partners' languages.
- ≡ Difference of political and administrative cultures.
- ≡ Lack of knowledge of the cross-border territory and its national parts (problem of cross-border data), and of a shared vision.
- ≡ Lack of confidence, difficulty to open up to one another. Before truly working together, a period of long mutual knowledge is necessary (the change of contact persons requires often a new period of adaptation).

This is especially true in the context of the current crisis (security, refugees etc.).

#### Obstacle 3 500 character(s) maximum

##### **Obstacles related to INTERREG and the lack of synergy with the local/regional/national policies**

- ≡ Lack of cross-border diagnosis, mainly due to the lack of cross-border data.
- ≡ Lack of specific border policies and territorial approaches of the programs.
- ≡ Lack of articulation of the INTERREG programmes among one another and with other programmes (regional, national).
- ≡ Territorial and socio-economic actors are insufficiently represented in the programme governance.
- ≡ Difficulty in mobilising the private sector (businesses), partly because of the respect of competition rules.
- ≡ Complexity and heaviness of the programs.
- ≡ Reduced political involvement.
- ≡ Difficult perpetuation, insufficient use of the cooperation results and of the encountered difficulties.

#### 4. How can this/these obstacle(s) be overcome?

Explanation: Please write your answers in the order in which you ranked the obstacles in question 3 above. Use one box per obstacle and include:

- ≡ all aspects of your potential solution, such as any administrative procedures that need to be changed and any national, regional or local regulatory provisions that you think affect the situation;
- ≡ any organisations, groups or individuals you think should be involved in the process;

- ≡ any other factors that might help overcome the obstacle(s).

If you have any real-life examples of projects or solutions to a similar problem from elsewhere in Europe, please mention them too.

*Solution to obstacle 1 - 500 character(s) maximum*

**In order to resolve the obstacles, a multi-level action is needed:**

Level 1/3 - local/regional:

- ≡ In each border region, on the basis of existing law: administrative coordination, organization of cross-border governance (territorial engineering, observation, political portage etc.), improvement of mutual knowledge.
- ≡ In each local authority, taking into account, within the strategic documents, the border context and the existence of neighbouring territories with their strengths and weaknesses.

Level 2/3 - national:

- ≡ On each border, states need to cooperate in order to coordinate in all sectors, their legislation, policies (or even make them evolve), statistical observation.
- ≡ We need better regulation at national level, take into account the impact of the new laws on cross-border territories.
- ≡ In each state, we need to have a representative on cross-border cooperation in each Ministry, organize interdepartmental coordination, a follow-up and a thematic border guidance.
- ≡ We need to put cross-border cooperation at the heart of cohesion policy (including to coordinate on each border the elaboration and follow-up of the partnership agreements etc.).

Level 3/3 - European:

- ≡ At European level, it has to be taken into account by sectoral policies and more coordination:
  - European Commission: taking into account by the DG, inter-service process.
  - European Parliament: committees (REGI etc.), and with the national parliaments.
  - Council: advance regularly cross-border issues at the GAC and the informal Minister meetings (cf. Luxembourg presidency 2015).
- ≡ There is a need to better legislate at the European level (impact of the new laws on cross-border territories), and for new tools like the one proposed by the Luxembourg.

*Solution to obstacle 2 - 500 character(s) maximum*

**In border regions, one should also act on/with civil society:**

- ≡ Develop people-to-people projects.
- ≡ Encourage the learning of the language of the neighbour (primary education, colleges, high schools, life-long-learning).
- ≡ Create on each border perennial places for training and capitalization, like the Euro-Institute of Kehl.
- ≡ Develop a cross-border and European citizenship via a common teaching of history (example of the French-German history book), of culture.
- ≡ Promote cross-border mobility of all publics (students, apprentices, students, workers etc.).
- ≡ Develop cross-border media.

*Solution to obstacle 3 - 500 character(s) maximum*

**At the level of the INTERREG programmes:**

The INTERREG programmes should:

- ≡ Promote the linking of partners. Relations need to build durably to be able to create common

built projects.

- ≡ Strengthen the role of local communities and cross-border groupings in the INTERREG programmes, to build territorial and cross-border regions, also through the integrated territorial development tools.
- ≡ Develop innovative forms of cross-border territorial governance, development via a cross-border territorial engineering, with the support of INTERREG programmes.
- ≡ Develop the financing of 'people to people' projects (micro-projects etc.) designed for civil society actors.
- ≡ Improve mutual knowledge, information mechanisms, cross-border consultation, and strengthen the feeling to belong to a common area.

Moreover:

- ≡ There is a clear need for cross-border territorial observation, a basis for comparable and reliable data gathering and processing and a common methodology of cross-border territorial impact assessment.
- ≡ There is a need to coordinate the CP (cooperation programmes) among themselves and with other regional and national programmes.
- ≡ Network programs (INTERREG Europe, Urbact, Interact, ESPON) need to take into account the issue of cross-border integration, each on in its field.
- ≡ One has to mobilize the national MPs (mainly each states' deputy as well as the MEPs) to identify the problems and propose solutions. Programme managers should provide these elements consistently, as well as to the DGs concerned, to allow a better taking into account of the cross-border reality.
- ≡ These aims to build up a true Europe, the initial vocation of INTERREG, with a genuine desire of the states to cooperate and to harmonize.

## COOPERATION ACROSS BORDERS

### 1. Are you aware of any cross-border cooperation activities in your region?

- Yes
- No

Please specify. *300 character(s) maximum*

The CECICN follows cross-border cooperation via its member networks at borders all over Europe, in a thematic, territorial and multilevel approach.

### 2. Has cross-border cooperation improved in your region over the last decade?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Why has cooperation improved? *500 character(s) maximum*

- ≡ In terms of financing, the INTERREG programmes, which initiated and facilitated cross-border cooperation, were decisive, even if they are not the only sources of funding (cross-border funds, projects funded by the States, etc.).
- ≡ The bottom-up approach facilitated the rise of projects from the territories and their actors.
- ≡ Cooperation has allowed to increase over the time the mutual knowledge, the networking of existing actors and structures, and the development of common structures mutualizing skills and tools, and the dissemination of foreign pilot actions, as well as the quality of the projects.

The CECICN via its members networks (MOT, CESCO, UBC, MedCities, FAIC, CAAC, CoDCR, CTA), and more generally all the structures dedicated to cross-border cooperation (AEBR, Euro-Institute in Kehl and the network TEIN) contributed to promote cross-border cooperation.

Why has cooperation not improved? *500 character(s) maximum*

Many obstacles to cross-border cooperation persist at all levels: administrative, institutional, economic and cultural obstacles, as well as a lack of knowledge, confidence and commitment of the actors.

Approved projects are not always perennial. If their quality tends to improve, particularly since the 2007 programming generation, they are not always synonymous with concrete and sustainable contribution to the territories and stakeholders.

### 3. Have you heard of Interreg or European Territorial Cooperation?

- Yes  
 No

What does it mean to you? *300 character(s) maximum*

INTERREG is an indispensable tool to strengthen partnerships and implement joint projects, but also to bring peoples closer and therefore to build a concrete Europe close to the territories. It is necessary to reaffirm INTERREG, via the "old borders" of Western Europe, faced with the temptation to say that they would no longer (or less) need INTERREG, because they have been supported for 25 years. In fact, one has to redouble the vigilance, the generations follow on another, the new generations no longer learn the language of the other, no longer see the importance of the (re)conciliation. All borders need to continue to be supported via INTERREG, which needs to adapt to the realities of today and of tomorrow.

### 4. Any further comments? *500 character(s) maximum*

Local authorities, states and Europe need, each one at their own level, to learn from the results of each project and erase what makes subsist the borders. It is not enough to only fund projects. We also need to continue building the Union, gradually harmonize social, fiscal, economic tools etc. For a constructive and lasting cooperation, the territories should continue to participate using the measures and tools not only in a short-term perspective, but also with a medium and long term policy vision.

### 5. Do you have any publications about border obstacles that might be relevant to this consultation?

If so, please upload it here. If it takes up more than 1MB, please email it to REGIO CONSULTATION BORDER OBSTACLES.

List the publication(s) as follows:

- ≡ Title;
- ≡ date of publication (YYYY-MM);
- ≡ author;
- ≡ Full URL link to the site where the publication is posted (if it is online).

As you are responding on behalf of a pan-European interest group, please upload your input on obstacles in border regions here. Select "file to upload". If the publication you want to upload exceeds 1MB, please email it to REGIO CONSULTATION BORDER OBSTACLES and clearly



list the publication(s) as follows: Title, date of publication (YYYY-MM), author, and full URL-link to where the publication can be retrieved (if published online).

We welcome input from organisations and public authorities in any official language. However, if you provide your input in English, French or German (preferably English), the Commission will be able to process it faster.

The following information should be included in the document:

- ≡ Name of organisation submitting the document.
- ≡ Country where headquarters located/country of establishment.
- ≡ Contact details, including an email address.

If your organisation is registered in the Transparency Register, indicate your Register ID-number. If it is **not** registered, you have the opportunity to **Register now**. Then submit your contribution as a registered organisation. For more information about the Transparency Register, click [here](#).

When replying, please bear the following questions in mind:

1. What in your opinion are the main obstacles to cross-border activities in the EU? This can concern several aspects, including difficult physical access, language barriers, legal and administrative barriers, lack of trust, economic disparities, sociocultural differences, public authorities' lack of interest in working together.
2. What form does this obstacle/do these obstacles take in daily life?
3. What could be done to surmount this obstacle/these obstacles? Include all aspects of the potential solution as you see it, including:
  - ≡ administrative procedures that need to be changed
  - ≡ organisations, groups or individuals that need to be involved
  - ≡ national, regional or local regulatory provisions incompatible with one another

Please upload your file

**Please choose how you would like your response to be published**

- In full (I consent to the publication of any information in my completed form, including my identity)
- Anonymously (I consent to the publication of any information in my completed form, apart from my name/the name of my organisation, the e-mail/contact address provided and the Transparency Register ID).
- Not at all (My response will not be published. It will be used within the Commission only).