



Jean Monnet Network – Borders in Motion
Réseau Jean Monnet – Frontières en Mouvement

Manifesto on the future of cross-border cooperation in Europe

(07 October 2021 – English version)

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I. Background

- European border regions are **living laboratories for European integration**
 - About one third of the European population lives in border regions.
 - More than 40 % of the European territory are border regions; there are many cross-border conurbations in Europe, some of which have several hundred thousand inhabitants.
 - Border regions are characterized by the existence of numerous interactions that reflect a real interdependence between neighbouring regions: commuter flows (work), but also leisure, trade, health, etc.
 - A high proportion of European cross-border economic, occupational and social mobility takes place in border regions; the functioning of the EU- internal market has to be tested in border regions: they are true laboratories of European Integration.
 - The economic, occupational and social development of European border regions is often conditioned by the possibility of making a smooth use of the four freedoms of the EU.
- Existing **legal and administrative obstacles** hinder an integrated space development
 - Cross-border living and economic orientations are often hampered by legal-administrative obstacles: the transaction costs of cross-border activities are significantly higher than in the national context.
 - Legal-administrative obstacles in border regions lead to a loss of 3% of European GDP.
 - If these obstacles were completely dismantled, there would be a growth spurt of 485 billion euros and creation of 8 million new jobs in border regions.
 - Cross-border institutions have until now mostly no robust decision-making and implementation authority.
 - If the EU has started to work on the legal-administrative obstacles in border regions during the Luxemburg presidency in 2015 and by the realization of its cross-border Review from 2015 to 2017, the national states remain forces of resistance (as the blockage of the EU regulation draft on ECMB by the Council has shown).
 - Cross-border structures have not enough influence on the elaboration of national rules and their impact on border regions.

- The **Corona pandemic** has shown how fragile cross-border cooperation still is after several decades
 - Unilateral border closures and reinforced border controls and have strongly limited European mobility or brought it to a standstill from one day to the next; they were unproportional in their way of implementation.
 - Policy approaches to fight the crisis were not enough coordinated across borders and they were partially counterproductive; different rules on each side (i.e. the closure of business just on one side of the border) have partially led to an increase cross-border flows in order to benefit from less strict rules in the neighbouring country.
 - Cross-border workers were/are confronted with partly different regulations and standards, different national rules on test obligation and quarantine have led to considerable uncertainty and were felt as discriminating,
 - For small cross-border mobility, too few exception rules were applied (like the 30 kilometre zone in France).
 - National states were not really aware of the important flows that were existing at borders and underestimated the consequences of their decisions on people living in border regions.
 - National policy approaches in many border regions were partly developed and implemented without consulting the locally and regionally responsible bodies.
 - Cross-border bodies – with the exception of the Franco-German border regions- were often not heard at the beginning of the crisis and were not very effective in the cross-border coordination of public policies; however, the dependence of the health and care sector (but also other sectors) on cross-border workers became evident during the pandemic.
 - There are considerable obstacles to cross-border home-office from the legal and fiscal point of view.

- The population and the economy in border regions expect a significant facilitation of **cross-border mobility**.
 - The differences in development on either side of the border are tending to narrow, but can sometimes be resented and can result in tensions: pressure on land, difficulties in finding housing, etc.
 - 30 years after the establishment of Infobest-structures, the same questions are still being asked by cross-border commuters and citizens; obviously, Europe has developed very little at this level. The reason is that central legal and administrative competences are still exclusively national (social law, tax law, economic law, vocational training law, etc.) and there is too little intergovernmental coordination and recognition of border region's specificities. The maintenance of strong differences is partly due to the low convergence of national legal systems in Europe.
 - For the young generation in particular, cross-border employment is not necessarily an attractive option; conversely, they expect to be able to move around in the real world just as easily and without borders as they can in the social media and digital formats of their home country. However, differences in language learning and the

pervasiveness of English language learning mean that people tend to lose the ability to speak their neighbour's language and thus to understand each other.

- Citizens increasingly think and move globally in the private sphere; the fact that a cross-border lifestyle creates many opportunities, but still causes much higher transaction costs than, for example, a private holiday trip, can no longer be conveyed.
- **Global and structural challenges** such as the consequences of climate change, demographic change, migration, natural disasters etc. affect border regions just as much as other European regions. Meeting these challenges preventively and effectively (in the event of an emergency) with integrated policy approaches to civil protection and disaster management is hampered by the still sometimes considerable differences in the evolved national political-administrative systems.

II. Objectives

1. The conditions for the realisation of cross-border living, economic, working and educational opportunities in border regions should not differ from European regions without a border connection.
2. Legal and administrative obstacles should be reduced through integrated multi-level cross-border governance; border regions are examples of particularly successful administrative cooperation in Europe.
3. Border regions make use of their socio-economic development potentials and are thus recognised as model regions of European integration and function as European model regions; they contribute effectively to problem solution and conflict prevention at borders.
4. Border regions are places of experimentation of a cross-border and European citizenship enriched by mutual encounter and diversity.

III. Demands

Mutual Recognition

1. Mutual recognition of vocational and academic qualifications.
2. Mutual recognition of administrative and technical standards, especially in the field of public services.
3. Enabling divergent national legal statuses on the basis of intergovernmental de minima regulations and developing adjusted legal and administrative prescriptions including regulations for exceptions (like it is provided in the treaty of Aachen art. 13).

Obstacles

4. Systematic dismantling of non-tariff barriers with the involvement of all the specialist

agencies involved.

5. Acting on all levels to lift obstacles to cross-border cooperation and establishing a mechanism for identifying and analysing cross-border obstacles before bringing them up the right level and solving them.
6. Strengthening impact assessment of European and national legislation for border regions and coordinating its implementation on each border; creating a mechanism where national states discuss how directives should be transposed in national legislation in order to avoid cross-border gaps.
7. Fighting against obstacles resulting from different cultural and linguistic policies and from a lack of knowledge and information.

Competences, public service and crisis management

8. Endowing public authorities at the border and cross-border groupings with all necessary resources, competences and procedures that they need.
9. Establishing an efficient European framework for cross-border public services; priority financial support for local and regional cross-border initiatives and projects in the area of public services and basic infrastructure (targeted development of cross-border shared services).
10. Developing joint cross-border strategies for further deepened cooperation, including the definition of procedures in the event of a crisis (resilient border regions with clearly defined contact persons, etc.); harmonizing border crisis management at EU level.

Cross-border governance

1. Establishing efficient cross-border governance structures –EGTCs but also others - with binding support functions for permanent cross-border tasks, grounding within stable structures in the multi-level network from EU to local level and direct election of political representatives.
2. Strengthening evidence-based policy development by expanding the analysis, planning and monitoring capacities of cross-border institutions.
3. Setting-up observatories of cross-border integration in border regions, within a framework of multi-level networks.

Citizens

1. Associating border citizens to the Conference on the Future of Europe; strengthening cross-border citizen participation in the planning and realisation of central public projects; expanding cross-border encounter formats at citizen level and non-bureaucratic funding opportunities for civil society actors and mutual information of public institutions.
2. Promoting cross-border language acquisition and intercultural education as compulsory modules in all educational phases and forms of education.
3. Promoting active exchange between school classes and cross-border teacher and student mobility at primary, secondary, higher education and vocational training level.

EU-Policy

1. Associating border regions to the Green Deal and the relaunch plan “Next EU Generation”.
2. Reopening negotiations for the ECBM mechanism.
3. Simplifying Interreg procedures and developing Interreg programmes that are not regional development agencies but that provide real support to public actors and policies.
4. Replacing cross-border regions at the heart of EU policies.

FRONTEM is a Jean Monnet network of 7 universities and educational structures in Europe and Canada whose aim is to develop international and multidisciplinary research linking European Studies and Border Studies. The network seeks to facilitate a new reading of the role of the borders in European integration by considering that there is not only one model of perception and management of borders in and around the European Union, but that these also depend on the specificity of each border region concerned.

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