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Interreg

Tackling border obstacles: *b-solutions* and Interreg joining forces!

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Discover: what is *b-solutions*

Why *b-solutions* and Interreg can join forces?

What is *b-solutions*?

- Launched by EU Commission's DG REGIO
- Managed by AEBR
- Addresses legal and administrative obstacles hindering cross-border cooperation in the EU



Brussels, 20.9.2017
COM(2017) 534 final

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL AND THE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

Boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions



Brussels, 14.7.2021
COM(2021) 393 final

**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE
COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE
COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

EU Border Regions: Living labs of European integration

How do Interreg and *b-solutions* complete each other?

Interreg  Co-funded by
the European Union : the financing instrument has had an enormous impact on CBC in Europe

BUT border obstacle persist and affect many aspects of life in border regions such as

- **access to public services:** offer of public transport, reimbursement of healthcare costs;
- **access to the labour market:** administrative burdens, slow recognition, limitation to working remotely;
- **management of common resources or natural areas** (parks, rivers, etc.): lack of governance, incompatible regulations on the protection of biodiversity or on the sharing of energy.

A comprehensive toolbox to tackle border obstacles and build Europe together

Binational treaties (e.g. Aachen, Barcelona...)

Multilateral framework (Benelux)

Ad-hoc bilateral agreements

Interreg funding

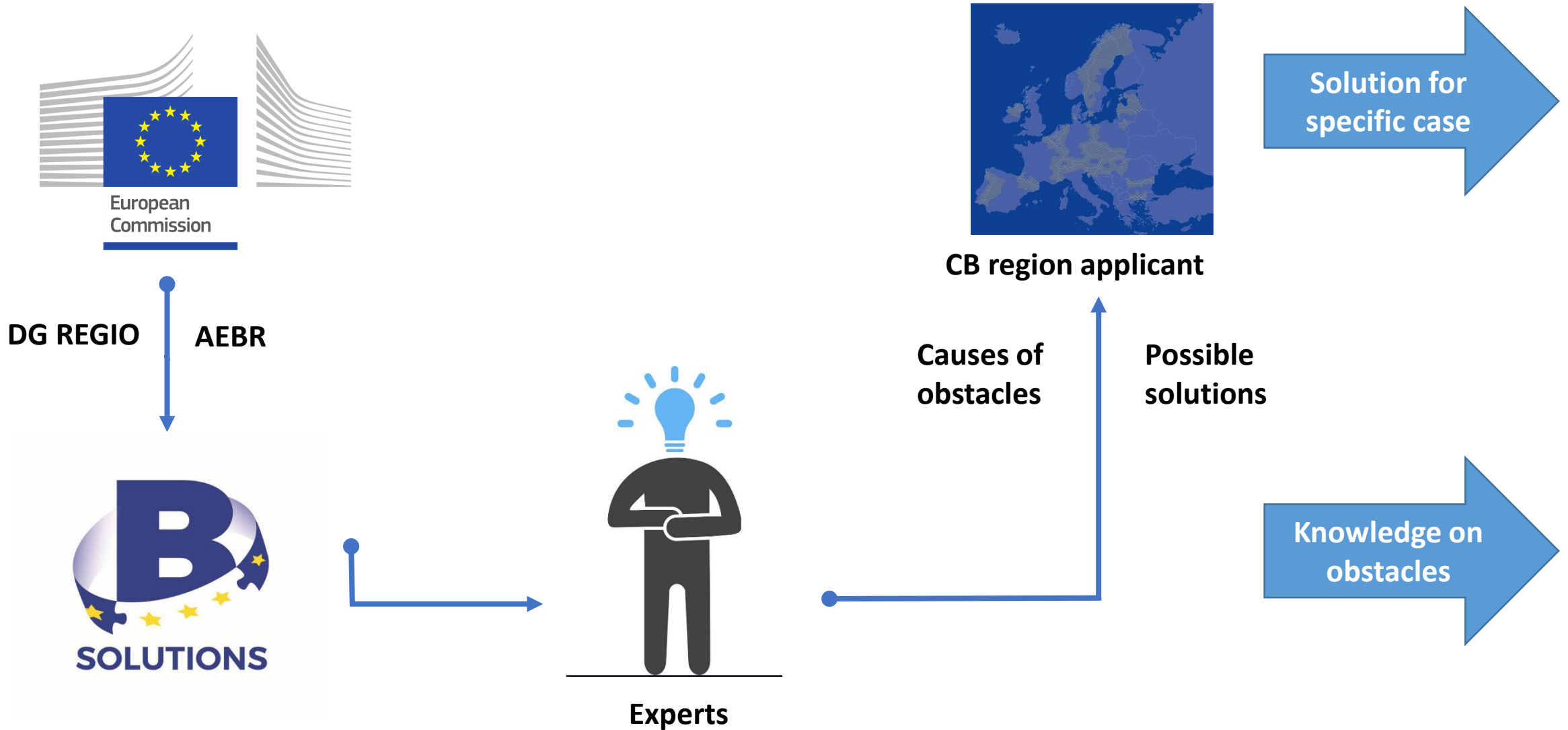
EGTC

b-solutions

Other mechanisms under EU law?



b-solutions: Solving Cross-Border Obstacles



Outputs: 4 calls for proposals (2018-2021) leading to 90 cases showcased in:

- 2 compendiums of reports
- 3 thematic booklets
- 1 illustrated storytelling booklet

Accessible at: <https://www.b-solutionsproject.com/library>



Exchange of good practices

What is *b-solutions*' objective?



Support local actors in border regions

to **solve obstacles**

of a legal and/or administrative nature

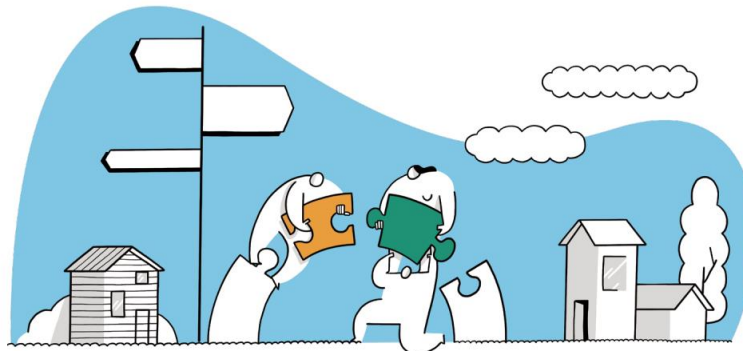
along EU borders, inclusive along borders with EFTA and
IPA countries

Because:

- 40 land borders between the 27 EU Member States, the EFTA countries and the UK
- 448 regions (NUTS 3 level) located alongside at least one border;
- 30% of Europeans live in these regions

Why is *b-solutions* important?

- It supports regional development in border regions:
removing 1/5 of border obstacles could lead to GDP +2% in border regions and 1 million new jobs
- It increases the effectiveness of Interreg:
providing expert support analysis to follow up on the implementation of Interreg projects and the drafting of Interreg project proposals
- It promotes innovative solutions of cooperation («labs of EU integration»):
having CB regions well integrated and CB workers able to smoothly circulate and work contributes to building Europe

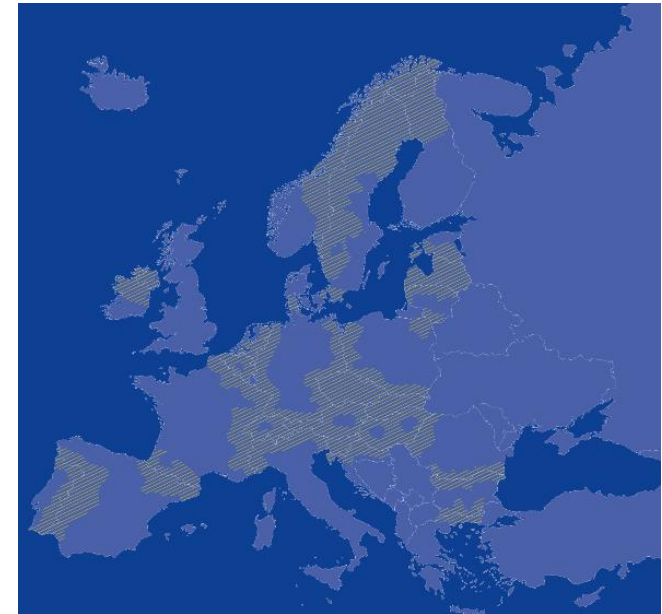


What have we learned so far?

- Legal and administrative obstacles are many and different, as are their root causes
- There are *no off-the-shelf solutions!* Solutions must be tailored to the specificities of the territories involved – every region, every country is different

- Solutions can involve several options:
 - Change in legal frameworks
 - Harmonise administrative practices
 - Use of complementary tools such as INTERREG, EGTC

- It is important to have:
 - Deep analysis
 - Political commitment
 - Information sharing
 - Multi-level engagement
 - Capacity building



Get support: how you can benefit from *b-solutions 2.0*

How *b-solutions* and Interreg can join forces?

b-solutions 2.0

Goal : identify and promote further 120 cases and sustainable methods of resolving border obstacles of a legal and/or administrative nature

Target : Public bodies in border regions (including public equivalent bodies); and
Cross-border structures with legal personality, established under public or private law

Scope: border regions along EU internal **land and maritime borders** and along EU borders with EFTA and IPA countries

Themes: institutional cooperation, public services, labour markets and education and European Green Deal

Which kind of border obstacles do we look at?

Legal and administrative obstacles which arise because of:

- lack of coherence of legislation applicable on the different sides of the border
- inconsistencies, non-existence, or overlapping of different administrative procedures
- applicable European, national or regional legislation or administrative procedures do not take into account the specificity of cross-border interaction

Which kind of support is provided?

b-solutions provides technical support

> Participants receive advice by legal experts who cooperate with them to:

- define the obstacle;
- identify a possible solution to it.

Output:

Report by the expert with clear explanation of the obstacle and suggestions for concrete solutions



How does it work?

Through field visits, experts carry out the analysis.

Experts are assigned to participants for 9 days within a period of a maximum of 3 months.

Costs and administration are managed by AEBR.

The experts are selected with an open [call for expression of interest](#) and are “matched” with the selected cases on the basis of their expertise, their language proficiency and their understanding of specific territories. The expert is hired and paid directly by AEBR.

Participants **do not need to file** a report about their participation and only fill in a one-page document to evaluate their experience and endorse the report by the expert.



What do you obtain from *b-solutions*?

- A full report with a detailed analysis of the specific obstacle faced in the region, and proposals for concrete solutions
- Participation in a compendium illustrating a variety of obstacles and possible solutions to enhance cross-border cooperation

This publication and the takeaway from the expert report can be used by actors in border regions to:

- Demonstrate the cross-border obstacles they face
- Move towards solutions
- Raise awareness of cross-border cooperation
- Be part of a European as living labs of European integration

Take part: *b-solutions'* call for proposals

Interreg and Interreg beneficiaries joining forces with *b-solutions*

How to apply?

Proposals should be submitted via an online form, accessible here:

<https://www.b-solutionsproject.com/call-for-proposals>

Guidelines to the application and FAQs can be found in the link above.

Timeline

Deadline: 10 November 2023

Applications are reviewed on a **rolling basis** with immediate implementation.

Eligibility criteria

- The application form must be submitted electronically via <https://www.b-solutionsproject.com/call-for-proposals> before 10 November 2023
- The application form should be completed preferably in English – all 24 official EU languages will be accepted
- The applicants must be:
 - Public bodies, “bodies governed by public law” or “public equivalent bodies” at the national, regional or local level with a national boundary limiting their territory
 - Cross-border entities such as European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs), Euroregions, Eurodistricts, Eurocities and similar cross-border structures
 - Located in an EU Member State or neighbouring EFTA or IPA country and share at least one land or maritime border with another EU Member State or with an EFTA country or an IPA country

Awarding criteria

Each application should address a specific obstacle that the applicant has encountered in its border region.

In the application form, applicants should demonstrate:

- That the proposed action addresses a real and documented obstacle of an administrative and/or legal nature hampering cross-border cooperation in one of the thematic areas mentioned
- The potential increase in cross-border cooperation if the obstacle is solved
- Its mandate to devise solutions
- The replicability potential of the action

Applicants may submit more than one case, but each application should address a different obstacle.

Quality assessment

AEBR scores each award criterion on a scale from 1 to 5. **A minimum of 12 points** is needed to be selected.

All applicants will be notified at the end of this process of the decision taken on their proposals.

Non-selected applicants (receiving less than 12 points) can still reapply after improving their proposal based on AEBR's feedback.



Cross-border public services

OBSTACLES	
LEGAL	OTHER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional and local levels do not have legislative competence to set up or operate services • Laws do not provide for automatic recognition of foreign diplomas of service professionals • The presence of different national rules that regulate services • Technical standards/requirements for the functioning of services are regulated differently • Laws regulating the provision of services do not take into account the cross-border dimension • Conflicting transposition of EU Law in cross-border regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lengthy diploma recognition procedures • Absence of joint administrative mechanisms that facilitate the operation of services • Lack of knowledge of border stakeholders about facilitative legal frameworks regulating certain services • Different approaches to data collection as a preliminary step towards implementing public services • Presence of many actors with varying levels of administrative competence in certain fields




Employment and Education

Do you face an obstacle to cross-border cooperation?
Apply to b-solutions 2.0!



Cross-border labour markets and education

OBSTACLES	
LEGAL	OTHER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EU framework contains general provisions, leaving room for interpretation • The provisions in place are not adapted to the complexity of cross-border contexts • National provisions on contracting, taxation and financing are not aligned • The regulations in place do not provide for automatic recognition of diplomas/certificates • The provisions regulating new fields/conditions of work and life are insufficient or outdated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The presence of complex/unclear bureaucratic procedures • The absence of joint administrative mechanisms • The existence of different protocols and administrative approaches • The lack of knowledge of the already facilitative nature of the framework(s) in place



Border Regions for the European Green Deal

OBSTACLES	
LEGAL	ADMINISTRATIVE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The joint establishment and management of infrastructure • Diverging national rules on permits to design and build infrastructure • Inconsistent legal competence on spatial planning • Different regulations on necessary technical requirements • The lack of revision of the law • The lack of specific provisions considering the cross-border dimension • The lack of EU-wide standardised norms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different spatial dataset references for mapping and collecting data • Different technical standards for environmental management criteria • The absence of an ad-hoc cross-border structure or entity in charge for the coordination of the natural site • The absence of a joint mechanism to regulate the exchange of data



European
Commission

“There are two major outcomes: one, for the specific border, we get the solution for the specific case – and this may be a game-changer. Secondly, from a macro-perspective, looking at the whole Europe, we get knowledge on obstacles – and this helps us shape policies”

Ricardo Ferreira, European Commission

Share the obstacle you face: make of a specific problem a European solution!

Thank you!

<https://www.b-solutionsproject.com/>

Contact us

Email: b-solutions@aebr.eu

Telephone: +49 176 42 090 666

Book a slot for an individual call: <https://calendly.com/b-solutionsaebr/30min>

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Guiding questions for criteria number 1: **description of the obstacle**

- What is the general context in which the obstacle arises?
- By which legal or administrative provisions do you think the obstacle is caused?
- How is the cooperation with your neighbour(s) affected by the obstacle?
- Which kind of actions or services is prevented or limited by the obstacle? (i.e. it obstructs cross-border mobility of citizens and/or workers, it poses limits to the accessibility to healthcare services to citizens residing on the other side of the border, etc)

> share what obstacle you face in your region!

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Guiding questions for criteria number 2: **potential increase in cross-border cooperation**

- Is the theme relevant for cross-border interactions in your region?
- Is the specific obstacle causing an impactful reduction of these interactions?
- If the obstacle is solved, would cross-border cooperation increase?
- How so? (more frequent exchanges, more willingness to cross the border, easier to make business, etc)

> share what obstacle you face in your region!

b-solutions 2.0 - call for proposals

Guiding questions for criteria number 3: **mandate of the applicant and co-applicants if any**

- Do you have legal mandate to promote cross-border cooperation and to intervene on the theme of the obstacle?
- If you don't have legal mandate to promote cross-border cooperation and on the theme of the obstacle, who would you involve in the implementation of the solutions?
- How can you involve the competent body identified?

> share what obstacle you face in your region!

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Guiding questions for criteria number 4: **replicability**

- Where else do you think a potential solution could be successfully implemented?
- Along other borders in different areas of the EU?
- Or in some other borders in the EU with very specific characteristics? Or on other borders of the same countries, in very specific conditions?

> share what obstacle you face in your region!