

**CESCI 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference**  
**Budapest, 25-26 April 2019**



***Institutional cooperation across borders:  
Obstacles and Opportunities***

**The Association of European Border Regions  
(AEBR – AGE – ARFE)**



# Border Regions and Cross-Border Regions



Border regions are usually considered peripheral, away from decision-making centres, with less infrastructures, low populated, rural, with less access to public services, worst mobility possibilities/conditions, ...

But, if they are considered in their cross-border reality, together with their neighbouring regions, **they might become central** (within supranational integration processes, or not).

# CBC: Cross-Border Cooperation



- CB regions are a small-scale Europe
- Many obstacles to overcome, but also many little daily stories in positive (**CBC belongs to Europe's Positive Agenda, like the Erasmus Programme**)
- Main challenges:
  - **Effects of “re-nationalization” and scepticism** (Brexit, anti-European movements); migration phenomena; and then strengthened border controls
  - **Unemployment and lack of opportunities**
  - ***Brain-drain* and demographic change**
  - **Access to ICTs, (CB) Smart Specialization Strategies (RIS3), innovation practices, etc.**
  - **Response to the exigence of welfare and prosperity for all territories of the EU**





# CBC in Europe is a story of Multi-Level Governance and asymmetries



- 60 years of “**formal**” CBC in the EU; centuries of “**informal**” and “**abnormal**” CBC
- **Laboratories** for European Integration
- Central Europe (Rhine basin), Northern Europe, Mediterranean regions, **Eastern Europe up to the Caucasus, ...**
- **Global CBC for Global Challenges:** the Americas, Africa, Near East and Asia





# Long European Tradition



- **1960:** 20 border regions in Scandinavia, NW Europe and the Rhine basin
  - **1980:** 40 (Iberian Peninsula, the Alps, the Pyrenees and Ireland)
  - **2000:** 120 border regions in Europe
  - **2016:** 200 structures (regions, euroregions, EGTCs)
  - **2019:** more than 300
- Euroregions
  - Working Communities
  - CB Initiatives Cabinets (GIT)
  - EGTCs – ECGs
  - Macroregional Strategies
  - Metropolitan CBC





## Phases in CBC:

- **Information**: common knowledge and **trust** generation across the border
- **Consultation**: before starting measures with potential impact on the other side of the border
- **Harmonization**: of laws, regulations, procedures, uses, culture (also political), etc.
- **Integration**: of territories (single areas)

# CBC, EU and Globalisation:

## Globalisation has placed everyone in its place: **Economy vs. Politics**



- Europe: long institutional, intellectual history, etc., but very few raw materials, energy sources, ... (**we are a huge thematic park**)
- Only strengthening integration we can save the current situation (**upwards and downwards**): **Territorial Cohesion**
- **Knowledge Triangle: EDUC, RESEARCH, INNOV**
- **Triple Helix: Academia-Private Sector- Gov't**
- **Bet for TALENT: "give a bonus to risk"**



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regions Frontières Européennes (ARFE)  
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European Border Regions (AEBR)  
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AEBR/Non-membre de l'ARFE/ Nicht-

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Figure 6. The effect of the initial concentration of the monomer on the polymerization rate.

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AEBV Non-membre de l'ARFE/  
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nde Region in Planung

Inz- und grenzübergreifenden Region

bund für territoriale

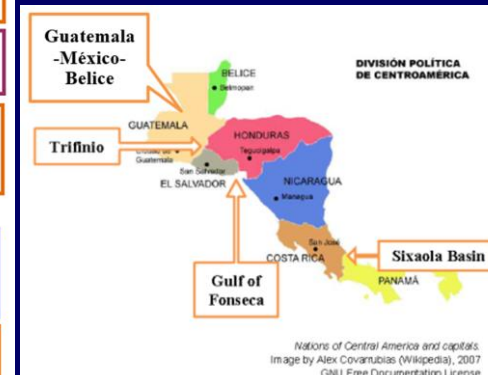
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The map illustrates the geographical context of various processes in West Africa. Key regions and processes highlighted include:

- Southern Mediterranean processes:** Located in the northern part of the map, involving countries like Libya, Tunisia, and Algeria.
- Great Neighbourhood:** A region in the northwest involving Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia.
- Western Sahara / SADR:** A region in the northwest, south of Morocco.
- Terrorism:** A region in the central part of the map, involving Mali and Niger.
- Liptako-Gourma:** A region in the central part of the map, involving Chad, Niger, and Mali.
- Dev's corridor Maradi-Katsina-Kano (MK2):** A region in the central part of the map, involving Niger and Nigeria.
- River Senegal and Karakoro Basin:** A region in the central part of the map, involving Mali, Niger, and Senegal.
- SKBo:** A region in the central part of the map, involving Mali and Niger.
- Potential CBC area Gye (NE-Mali, Burkina Faso, Nigeria):** A region in the central part of the map, involving Mali, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria.
- Trafficking:** A region in the southwest part of the map, involving Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, and Guinea.
- Periodic conflicts:** A region in the central part of the map, involving Mali, Niger, Chad, and Nigeria.
- CBC in West Africa:** A region in the central part of the map, involving Niger, Chad, and Nigeria.
- Challenges, conflicts, ...:** A region in the central part of the map, involving Niger, Chad, and Nigeria.
- CBC processes:** A region in the central part of the map, involving Niger, Chad, and Nigeria.

### Challenges,

**CBC**

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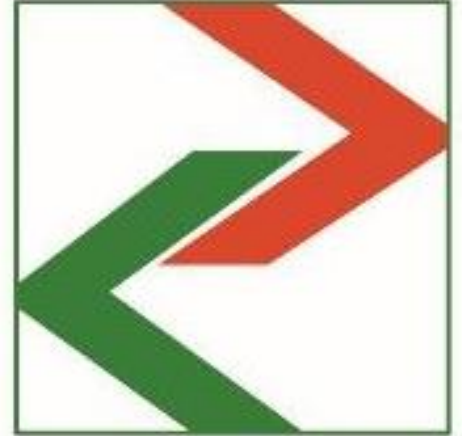




- Part of the ESC
- Started March 2017
- 1-year pilot action
- Co-funded DG Regio
- Managed by AEBR
- Target: EU citizens 10-30 years old
- Hosts: Interreg Programmes and Projects
- Duration: 2 – 6 months
- All volunteers are supported (also financially), insured and mentored



EUROPEAN UNION  
European Regional Development Fund



AEHR – AGEH – ARFE

## Objective:

**identify** and **promote** sustainable methods of resolving border obstacles of a legal and/or administrative nature along EU internal land borders

Working fields: employment, health, transport, multi-lingualism and institutional cooperation

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



# Specific objectives:

- specific solutions addressing concrete legal and administrative obstacles
- innovative proposals to inform innovative approaches
- increased exchange of information and mutual engagement
- raised awareness of key stakeholders at local/regional/national/EU level

# Background information

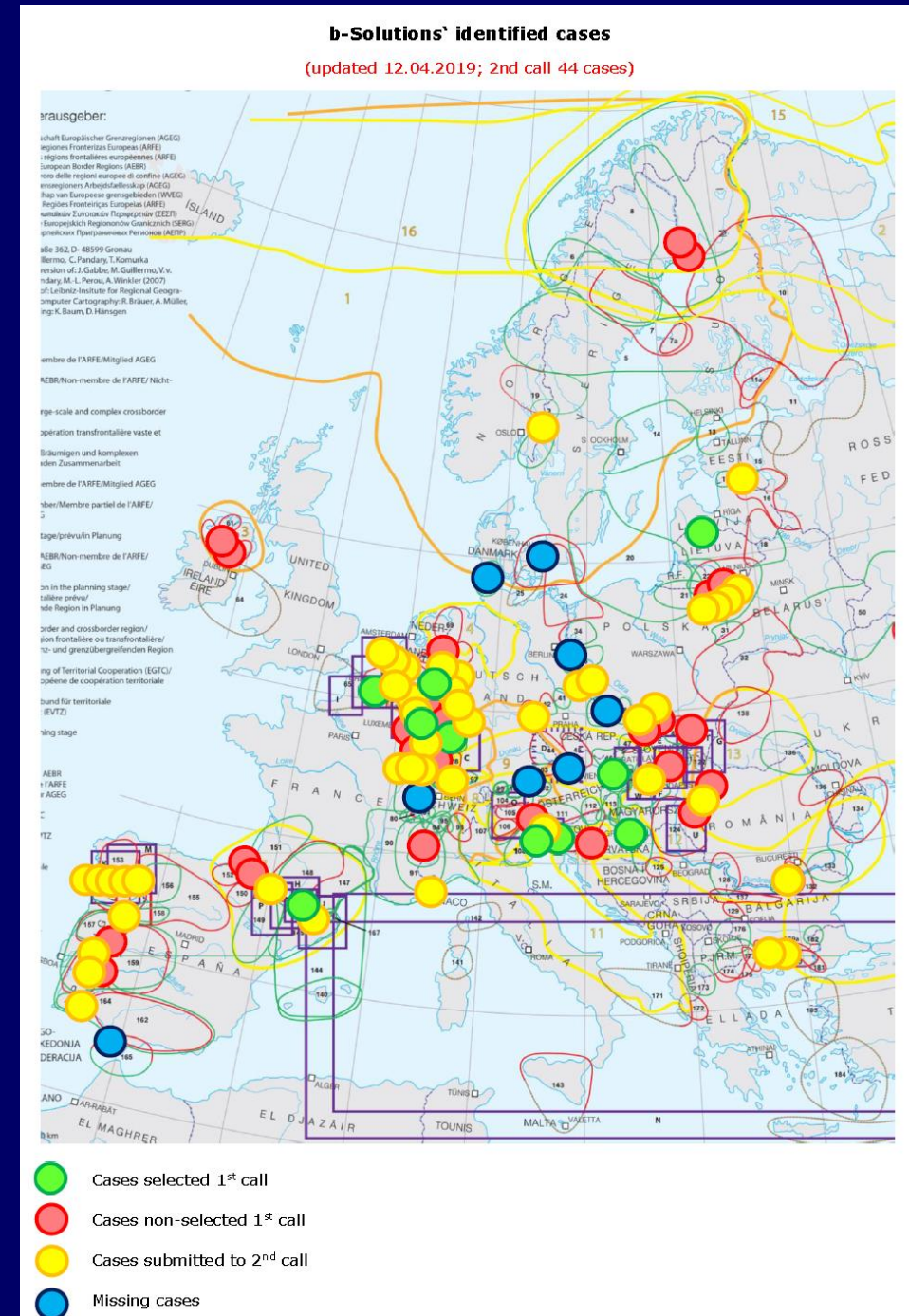
- 40 land borders between the 28 EU Member States and EFTA countries
- 448 regions (NUTS3 level) located alongside at least one border;
- 30% of Europeans live in these regions

These regions and their citizens suffer from lack of infrastructures and persist in facing challenges

> obstacles are a clear brake to the development of the endogenous growth potential of border regions

# Timeline and results of the project

- Call for Proposals: 01 February – 30 April 2018
  - > 36 applications received
- Screening of the applications received: May – June 2018
  - 31 applications passed eligibility check
  - 10 cases won the grant
- Implementation of the actions: August 2018 – September 2019
- Analysis and reporting of the initiative: October – December 2019
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Call on Feb-Apr 2019: 44 proposals



# Main Tasks of the AEBR



- **Lobby towards European institutions**
- **Support to CB Structures**
- **Information to players**
- **Studies on CB Themes**
- **Preparation, implementation and evaluation of projects**
- **Training in CBC (capacity building)**
- **Design of CB Strategies**





# European Institutions

- **EU Parliament**: Committee on Regional Development
- **EU Commission** REGIO, SANTE, GROW, MOVE, NEAR, ...
- **Committee of the Regions**: annual work agreement since 2005
- **European Economic and Social Committee**: opinion on Euregios
- **Council of Europe**: "Congress of Local and Regional Authorities", „the Committee of Experts on Border Issues“, Madrid Outline Convention, 3rd Draft Protocol; regional aspects (Black Sea, Mediterranean, others)



# AEBR Task Forces

- External Borders (TFEB)
- Cross-Border Health
- Languages, Multilingualism, Minorities
- Cross-Border Culture (T4CBC)
- CB Labour Market
- CB (Interreg) Projects' Management
- (Future of) Schengen
- CB Data and Innovation
- CB Gender issues
- AEBR Global Initiative
- Scientific Committee (*Beirat*)
- Project partnerships



# Annual Priorities

- **2019, Dresden (Elbe-Labe DE-CZ): CB Culture**
- **2018, Oulu (Bothnian Arc): Youth, capacities and employment**
- **2017, Badajoz-Elvas (EuroACE): Periphery-in the centre of Cohesion**
- **2016, Görtlitz-Liberec (DE-CZ): 7<sup>th</sup> Cohesion Report**
- **2015, Brussels (BE): Future CBC**
- **2014, Rzeszów (PL): Innovation and SMEs**
- **2013, Liège (BE): Urban-Rural Interaction in CBC**
- **2012, Berlin: CB Labour Market**
- **2011, Kursk (Euroregion Yaroslavna, Russian Federation): Pan-European CBC**
- **2010, Dundalk-Newry (IE-UK): Territorial Cohesion in a Post-Crisis Scenario**
- **2009, Ghent (Euregio Scheldemond, Belgium): CBC after 2013**
- **2008, Plauen (Euregio Egrensis, Germany): CBC in Higher Education**
- **2007, Lappeenranta (South Karelia, Finland): CBC in the Neighbourhood Policy**



# Challenges for Integration Across Borders



- **Different identities, feelings, systems, etc...** will collide at the borders in the years to come (diversity)
- **Difficulties to normalize relationship across borders:** mental borders
- **Economic, management, administrative differences**

## OPPORTUNITIES

- **Common objective of the EU (and far beyond):** from an economical alliance to a political entity
- **CBC closes gaps in integration processes:** there is no way back

# Day-to-day at border areas: Preliminary conclusions



- The work made by CB structures can only be successful if supported by citizens and regional/local politicians from both sides of the border, generating **trust**
- At the borders, the citizens deal with practical aspects of Europe every day (Laboratories for European Integration)
- There will be no regulation compatible with all countries (except EGTC / ECG) ...ECBM?



# Diversity

from being an obstacle to create opportunities



## Various:

- Cultures and social systems
- Administrative structures and powers
- Fiscal and social legislations
- Many other political activities

## **... meet at the borders**

- Citizens have grown up in very different environments
- They will not sacrifice aspects of everyday lives for the European ideal
- No State will alter its tried and trusted structures

# Conclusions:

## 1<sup>st</sup> step: REMOVAL of OBSTACLES



- **Stronger participation of the sub-national level and civil society**
- **CB solutions to handle main problems**
- **Potential for integration still underestimated**
- **Examples of fields in need of a CB approach:** CB services of public interest, natural resources, trade networks, control of illegal activities, business development, emergency teams, touristic routes, etc.
- But also **huge transnational projects** remain infra-supported: delimitation and demarcation of borders, transport networks, normalize and extend CBC
- Stronger participation of this approach within **other EU Policies**, including **EU Neighbourhood Policy**, other EU and bilateral policies, the **European Development Fund**, etc.



# Recommendations



- **The following steps and frame conditions are needed:**
  - **Political will** of affected countries
  - **Bottom-up approach**, where local/regional players have the main role in collaboration with national governments (external partnerships, avoiding conflicts of competence)
  - **Involvement of politicians** at all levels in both sides of the border, to build up a lobby in favour of CBC
  - **Participation of all players** in both sides of the border (public/private and equivalents, NGOs, etc.) to create a solid basement for CBC using existing knowledge in both sides of the border
  - **Conscience of socio-cultural cooperation:** so important as economic cooperation (and often a pre-condition for successful CBC)
- **First phase: informal cooperation based in private law**
- **Afterwards: creation of permanent CB structures based in public law**

# Importance of Cohesion Policy for the future of the EU and CBC



- ❖ European Cohesion is the cornerstone for a community of political values, bringing the Union closer to the citizens
- ❖ **It should involve all regions and citizens**
- ❖ Fighting disparities between and within MSs
- ❖ **Balanced, harmonious and sustainable development of the territory**
- ❖ Polycentric development balancing urban and rural areas
- ❖ **CBC as cement of this European House**

# Cohesion and Regional Policy as European Strategy



- ❖ **After 2020 all regions should be involved in these policies, and all essential EU policies should be taken into account (well coordinated and polycentric)**
  - ...**promoting and anticipating regional change**
  - ...**responding to territorial characteristics**
- ❖ **Concentrating only on growth is dangerous:**
  - **Political consensus would be uncertain**
  - **Nationalism would grow**

# Cohesion, Regional Policy and CBC



- ❖ **Growing together across borders through CBC is a pre-condition for European integration**
  - ...taking into account geographical diversity (they are not handicaps but potentials)
  - ...increasing CB "critical mass" through CB projects
- ❖ **The regional/local level is the most appropriate to implement many EU policies:**
  - **Subsidiarity and partnership remain indispensable**
  - **CBC always add value to integration ( $1+1=4$ ), therefore it should be a European priority and a political objective of the EU**



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## THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ATTENTION



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