

The nature of obstacles and the *b-solutions* initiative



EUROPEAN UNION
European Regional Development Fund

BOOSTING GROWTH
AND COHESION IN
EU BORDER REGIONS



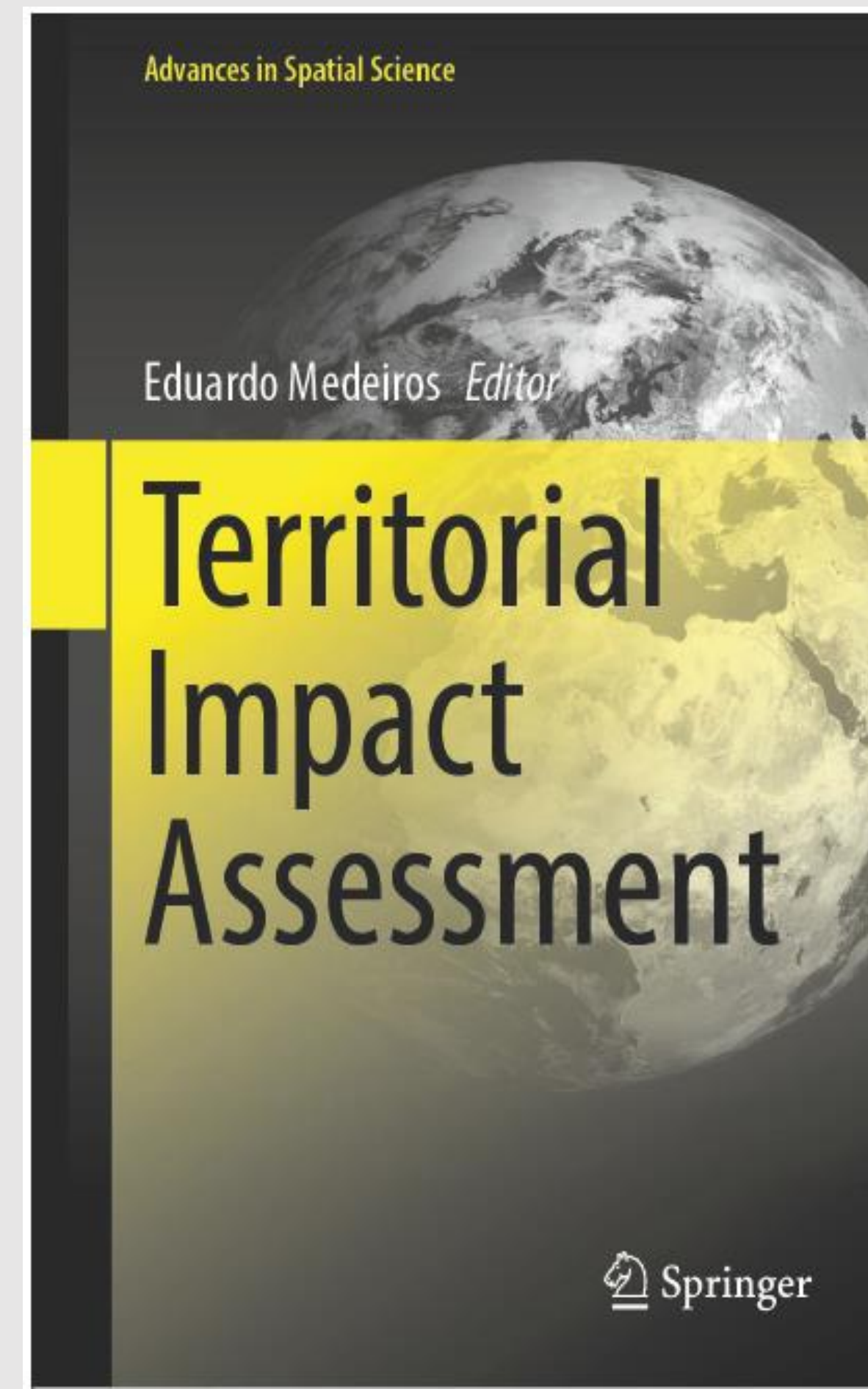
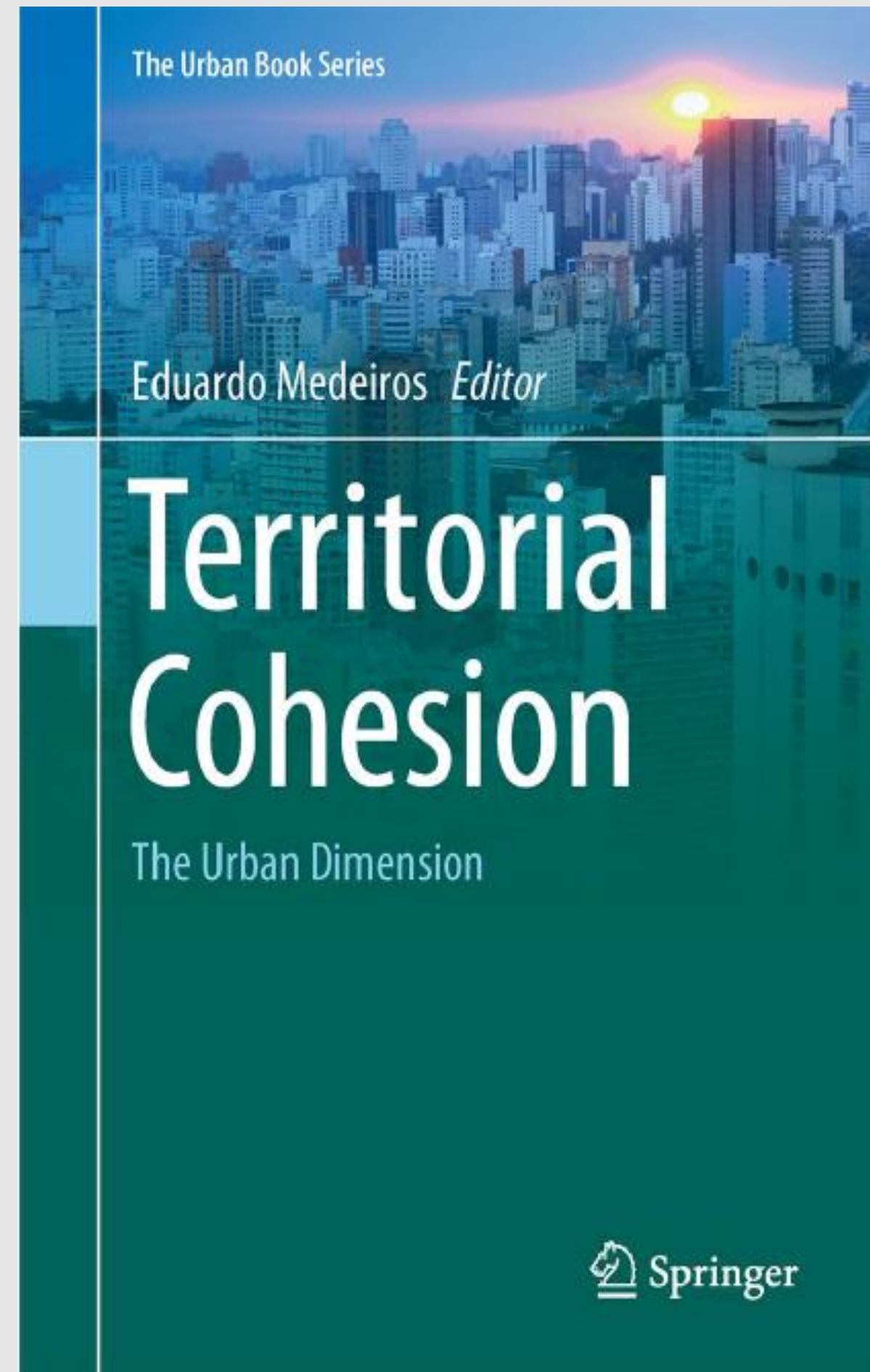
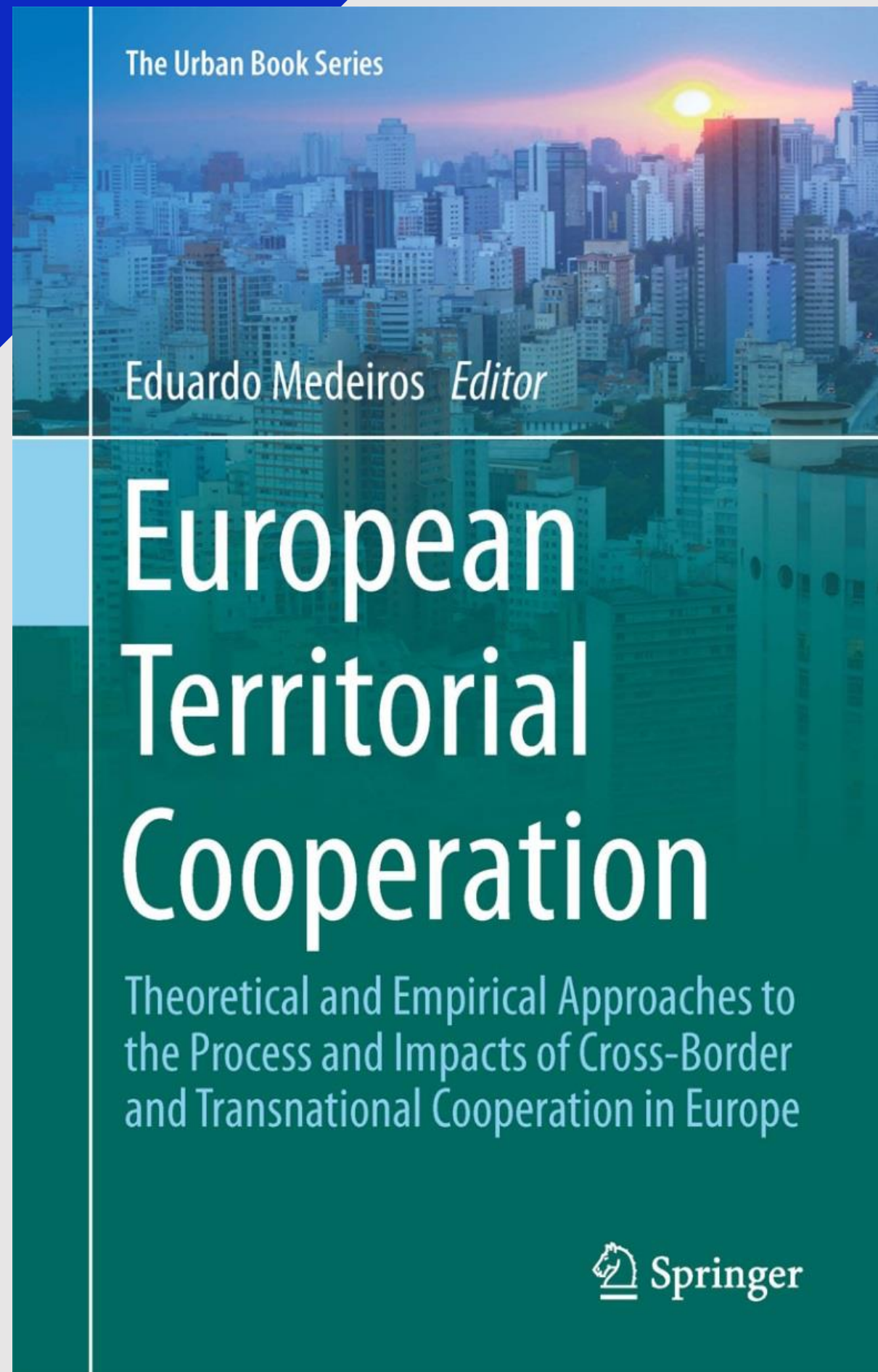
After the successful experience with the first two calls for proposals of *b-solutions* in 2018 and 2019, the European Commission decided to extend it until the end of 2021.

A 3rd and 4th calls were launched in 2020 and 2021 (despite COVID-19), and first results are already available.

This is one of the actions proposed in the [2017 Communication on Border Regions](#)

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European Territorial Integration

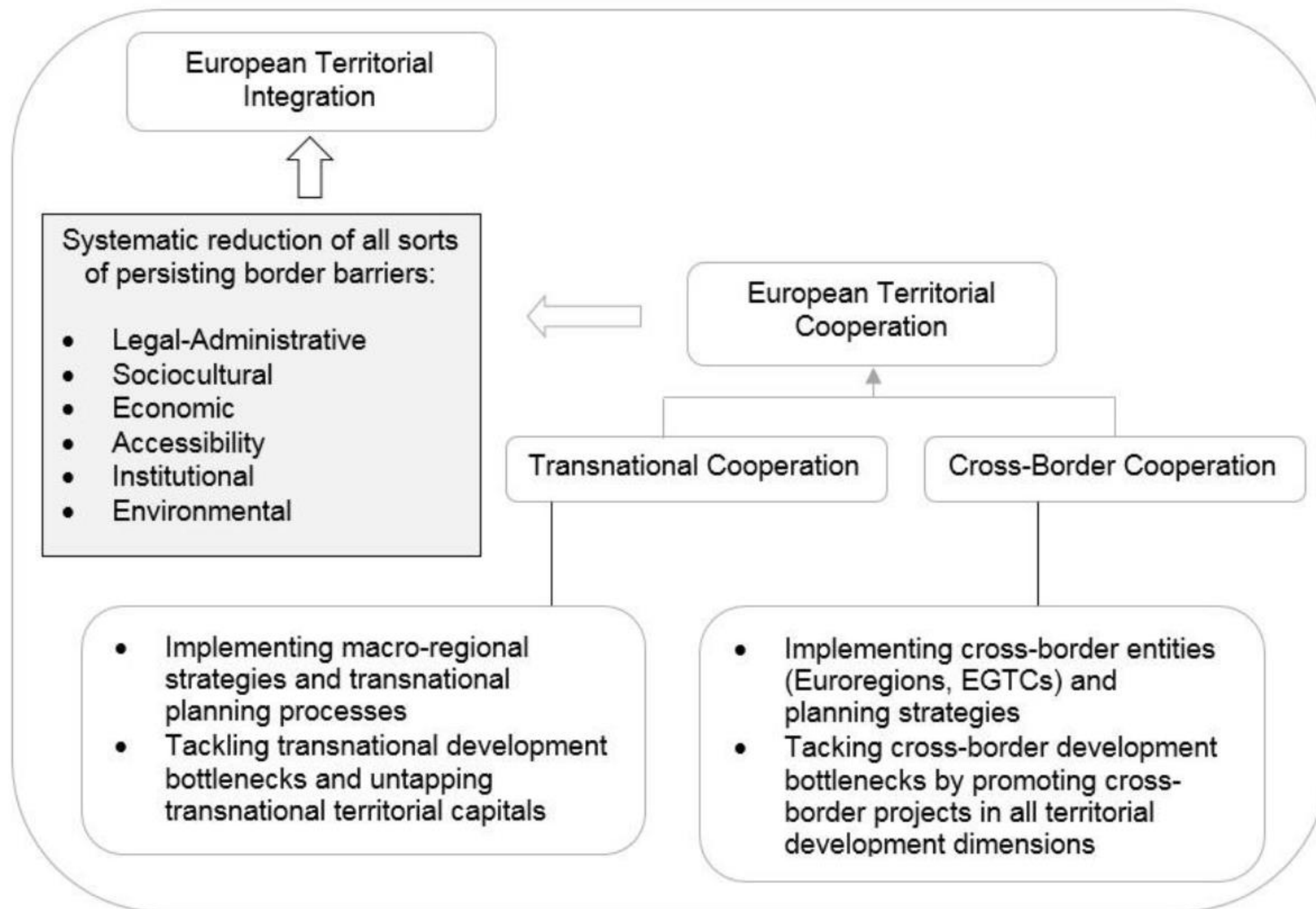


Figure 1. Relation between ETC and European territorial integration. Source: Own elaboration

Cross-Border Obstacles in Europe

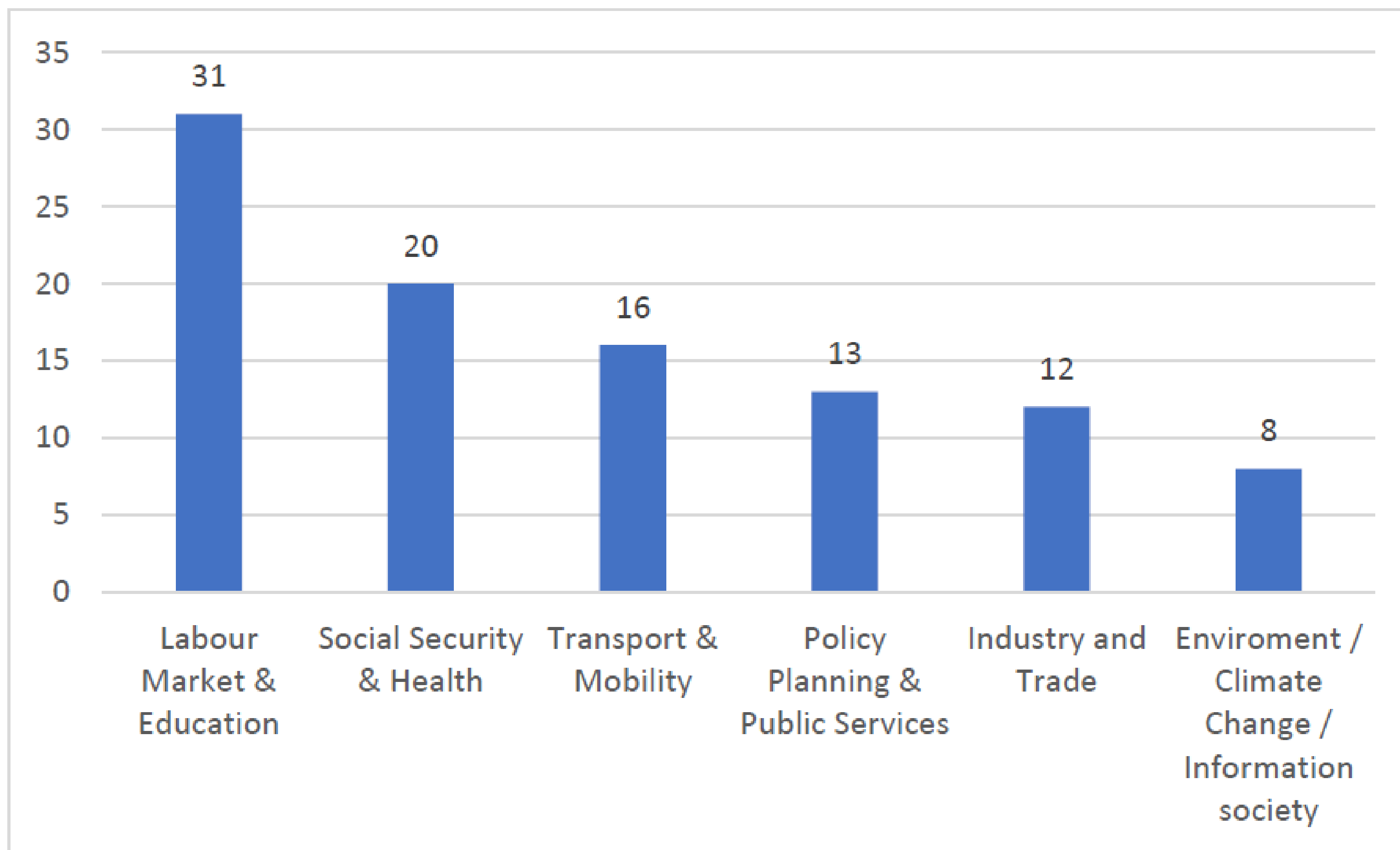


Figure 2. Policy areas and fields of intervention concerned by border obstacles in Europe (%).

Source: own elaboration based on EC, 2017b.

Cross-Border Obstacles in Europe

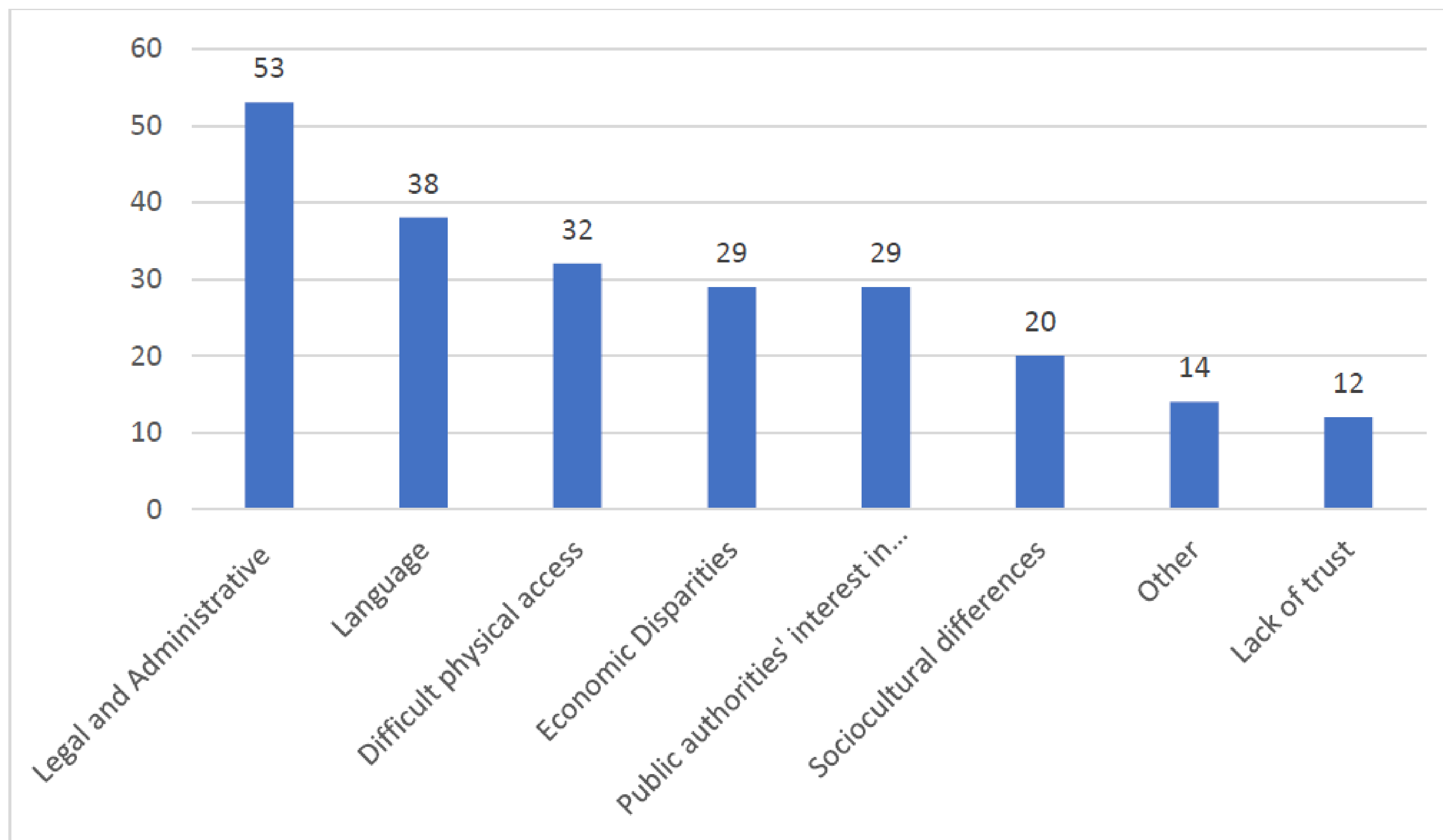


Figure 3. Relevance and frequency of cross-border obstacles to respondents to an EC online survey (%). Source: own elaboration based on EC, 2016.

Border Barriers in Europe and B-solutions

Table 2. Top 20 specific border barriers mentioned in the CBR

Type of Barrier	%	N° Pilot Actions	N° Advice Cases
Language	15.62	1	0
Legal Asymmetries (tax-visas-laws)	13.51	3	8
Public Transport / Transport	8.95	2	7
Poor Connectivity	8.14	0	0
Public Authorities' Involvement	7.24	0	0
Economic Disparities	6.83	0	0
Administrative Asymmetries	6.59	0	1
Education	4.15	0	1
Labour Market	3.99	2	6
Rail Connections	3.01	0	0
Cultural Differences	3.01	0	0
Health	2.69	2	5
Trust	2.60	0	0
Transport Rules, Regulations, Prices	1.95	0	0
EU Bureaucracy and Budget	1.71	0	0
Information	1.55	0	0
Fiscal Issues	1.22	0	2
Use of Technology / E-services	1.06	0	2
Other	6.18	0	1
Total	100	10	33

Source: Own elaboration based on the EC online public consultation on overcoming obstacles in border regions

Location of b-solutions projects and barrier effect

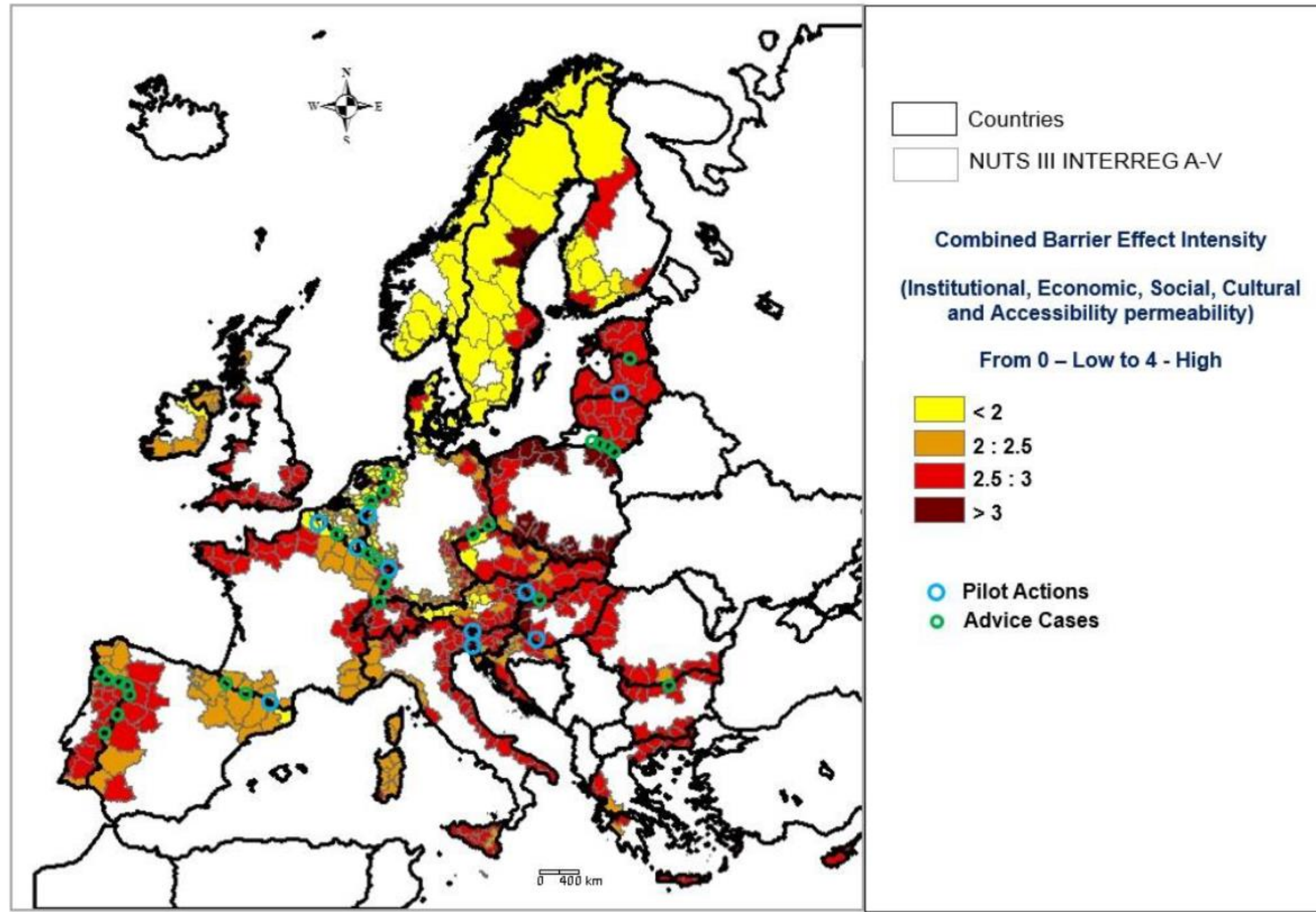


Figure 4. Location of the b-solution approved projects and combined barrier effect in the INTERREG-A border NUTS III. Source: own elaboration

Table 3 – Potential use of the ECBM in the Advice Cases taken by the replies provided by the experts who wrote the reports

Type of Barrier	YES	NO	Partial
A - eGovernment	1	0	0
B - Employment	1	2	2
C - Evidence and Data	0	0	0
D - Health	3	2	0
E - Information Services	0	1	1
F - Institutional Cooperation	4	4	1
G - Multilingualism	1	0	0
H - Transport	3	5	2
Total	13	14	6

Source: Own elaboration

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GOALS

- A number of obstacles to CBC are addressed
- An increased understanding among key stakeholders
- Sustainable methods to solve these obstacles are identified and promoted
- Public bodies are involved and committed to work jointly
- An increased exchange of information and mutual engagement between the variety of administration levels in border areas
- These approaches are replicated, available and promoted in other CB contexts

Who were the eligible applicants?

1. **Public** (or public equivalent) bodies with a national boundary limiting its territory
2. **Cross-border** entities

How did they apply?

Applications were submitted **online**. AEBR Team and the European Commission implemented the **eligibility check** and the **selection process** according to the agreed criteria.



Eligibility Criteria



General eligibility criteria

- Format issues (correct form; in English; Consortia; timing; budget)

Specific eligibility criteria

- Address a real and well documented obstacle...;
- ... direct and effective involvement of the partners from the different sides of the border;
- ... one (or more) internal land border(s);
- be clearly within one of the 5 topics eligible under the call;



Selection criteria

- Adequateness and feasibility to tackle and effectively solve the addressed obstacle (which should be of a legal or administrative nature);
- The partners' mandate to devise possible solutions;
- The replicability potential of the action in other borders;
- The contribution to cross-border interaction;
- The general quality of the proposal;
- The expected visibility.

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Current situation

43 cases selected under the 1st and 2nd calls for proposals. Their reports were included in the **first Compendium**:



Vol. 1 [b-solutions: Solving Border Obstacles](#) (background, methodology, thematic overview and conclusions, lessons learned and policy recommendations)

Vol. 2 [Annex: summaries of the 43 reports](#), corresponding to the 43 cases selected in 2018 and 2019.

47 selected under the 3rd (23) and 4th (24) calls received legal support (most already finished). These reports will be made public on the online platform *Border Focal Point Network*, and their summaries will be published in a **second Compendium**.

All **90** cases will serve as material for the creation of **specific thematic publications** to support practitioners working in the field of CBC. This material will also be utilized for the creation of a **publication targeting European citizens** showing the benefits of CBC.

Selection of experts, matching with cases, and field work

Open call for expressions of interest launched on 17 June 2020 (open until 30 June 2021) to select legal experts in CB contexts.

Some 50 experts were selected in various EU Member States.

Selected experts were matched with the cases to support in defining the obstacle, identifying a possible solution, and outlining the legal framework to proceed. His/her analysis leads, in each advice case, to a case report including:

- i. a clear description of the legal obstacle;
- ii. a clear indication of the legal dispositions causing the obstacle;
- iii. a roadmap towards a possible solution;
- iv. an indication of the entities to be involved in the possible solution; and
- v. an indication of the **potential role of the European Cross-Border Mechanism (ECBM)** to solve the obstacle.

The experts did weeklong study visits at the premises of selected applicant in the 1st and 2nd calls, but most tasks during the 3rd and 4th call had to be made online.

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Geographical distribution of the cases selected under every call for proposals, indicating where the applicant is based:

Member State	I	II	III	IV	Total
<input type="checkbox"/> Austria					(1 +0+1+1) 3
<input type="checkbox"/> Czech Republic					(0 +2+0+1) 3
<input type="checkbox"/> France	(2	+5	+4	+4)	15
<input type="checkbox"/> Spain	(1	+7	+4	+3)	15
<input type="checkbox"/> The Netherlands	(1	+1	+3	+3)	8
<input type="checkbox"/> Belgium	(0	+5	+2	+1)	8
<input type="checkbox"/> Germany	(0	+3	+2	+3)	8
<input type="checkbox"/> Italy	(2	+1	+0	+3)	6
<input type="checkbox"/> Hungary	(1	+1	+4	+0)	6
<input type="checkbox"/> Lithuania	(1	+3	+0	+1)	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Portugal					(0 +1+2+0) 3
<input type="checkbox"/> Luxembourg					(1 +1+0+0) 2
<input type="checkbox"/> Poland					(0 +1+0+1) 2
<input type="checkbox"/> Sweden					(0 +0+1+1) 2
<input type="checkbox"/> Bulgaria					(0 +1+0+0) 1
<input type="checkbox"/> Estonia					(0 +1+0+0) 1
<input type="checkbox"/> Slovakia					(0 +0+0+1) 1
<input type="checkbox"/> Slovenia					(0 +0+0+1) 1

RESULTS

90 cases selected and analyzed* within 8 thematic areas (identified in the *Communication*):

i. Institutional Cooperation	(4	+12	+8	+9)	33
ii. Employment	(3	+6	+5	+8)	22
iii. Health (incl. emergency services)	(1	+6	+4	+6)	17
iv. (Public) transport of passengers	(1	+7	+2	+1)	11
v. Multi-lingualism	(1	+1	+1	+0)	3
vi. Evidence and Data	(0	+0	+2	+0)	2
vii. e-Government	(0	+1	+0	+0)	1
viii. Information services	(0	+0	+1	+0)	1

(*) 43 completed, 23 reporting phase finished, 24 analyses finished

Cases selected under [b-solutions 3rd call for proposals \(I\)](#)



#	Name of the applicant	Title of the advice case	Border(s)	Thematic area
1	Eems Dollard Region (EDR)	Transparent solutions in the border region for efficient treatment and reimbursement of medical expenses for Dutch and German patients	NL-DE	Health
2	Community of Municipalities <i>Pyrénées Haut Garonnaises</i>	Financing cross-border pupil's education	ES-FR	Multilingualism
3	Conseil départemental du Haut-Rhin	Facilitating health data accessibility to initiate cross-border public policies	FR-DE-CH	Evidence and data
4	EGTC ZASNET	ZASNET-Meseta Ibérica Transboundary Tourist Observatory	ES-PT	Evidence and data
5	Ister-Granum EGTC	CB staffing difficulties – ambiguous application of social and health insurance regulations	HU-SK	Employment
6	City of Aachen	CB Transport of Medical Goods per Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (a.k.a. "drone")	NL-DE	Health
7	EGTC Galicia-Norte de Portugal	Removal or simplification of the procedure to obtain the Car Circulation Guide for CB Workers	ES-PT	Institutional cooperation
8	Nouvelle-Aquitaine Region	Rolling stock approval to foster rail transport between France and Spain	ES-FR	Transport
9	EGTC Euroregion Nouvelle-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarra	KOMPAR - Promoting employability in the health & social sector	ES-FR	Employment
10	EGTC Linieland van Waas en Hulst (in cooperation with Euregio Scheldemond)	Making crossborder internship worthy	NL-BE	Employment
11	The Svinesund Committee	Perceived border obstacles linked to wood construction – Sweden and Norway	SE-NO	Information services
12	Centro de Estudos Eurorexiniais Galicia-Norte de Portugal	Elimination of barriers and 360° evaluation of the mobility of students from vulnerable groups in the higher education ecosystem of the GNP Euroregion	ES-PT	Institutional cooperation

Cases selected under [b-solutions 4th call for proposals \(I\)](#)

#	Name of the applicant	Title of the advice case	Border(s)	Thematic area
1	Extremadura Avante	Spanish and Portuguese customs system <u>compatibility</u> to benefit borders regions of Extremadura (Spain), <u>Alentejo</u> and Centro (Portugal) EUROACE Euroregion	ES-PT	Institutional cooperation
2	EGTC " <u>Territory of municipalities: Gorizia (IT), Mestna občina Nova Gorica and Občina Šempeter-Vrtojba (SI)</u> "	GO2GO Cross-border Bike Sharing (GO2GO BIKE)	IT-SI	<u>Transport</u>
3	County Administrative Board of Dalarna	<u>Transborder vocational quality education</u>	SE-NO	Employment
4	Stichting euPrevent	Applying the GDPR and national legislation in CB public health cooperation	NL-BE-DE	Health
5	Saarpfalz-Kreis	Establishment of a single cross-border entrance situation for the European Archaeological Park at <u>Bliesbruck-Reinheim</u>	FR-DE	Institutional cooperation
6	Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai	CB mobility of jobseekers engaged in vocational training: <u>centre and company accessibility</u>	FR-BE	Employment
7	Województwo Dolnośląskie – Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Dolnośląskiego	s4g – <u>solutions for good</u>	PL-CZ	Employment
8	RRA Severne Primorske Regijska Razvojna Agencija D.O.O. Nova Gorica	Setting up of a special economic zone on the CB area Nova <u>Gorica</u> - Gorizia (SI-IT)	SI-IT	<u>Institutional cooperation</u>
9	Istituto Nazionale Previdenza Sociale (INPS) - National Institute of Social Security	<u>Fa.Re</u> : Facilitating Recovery activities across Italian-Slovenian border	IT-SI	<u>Institutional cooperation</u>
10	Municipality of Trysil	Cross border riding and dog sledge guided tours	NO-SE	<u>Employment</u>
11	EGTC Galicia-Norte de Portugal	Simplification procedures for hire: to work in ES and PT simultaneously; worker in teleworking in a company not established in the worker's country	ES-PT	<u>Employment</u>

Cases selected under [b-solutions 3rd call for proposals \(II\)](#)

#	Name of the applicant	Title of the advice case	Border(s)	Thematic area
13	External Action Directorate-General, <i>Junta de Extremadura</i>	Improvement of conditions for cross-border aerial forest fire control	ES-PT	Institutional cooperation
14	Lower Austrian Health Agency / EU Affairs & Healthcross	Introducing cross-border healthcare into regular operation	AT-CZ	Health
15	Province of Limburg	Cross-border authorizations of tramway personnel	NL-BE	Transport
16	euregio rhein-maas-nord	The problem of the children's sickness certificate for frontier workers working in Germany and residing in the Netherlands	NL-DE	Employment
17	Arrabona European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation Ltd.	Coorcurity: Facilitating the coordination of social security systems for cross-border workers and pensioners	HU-SK	Employment
18	EGTC-Rio Minho	Minho River Nature 2000. Boosting Cross-Border Multi-level Governance	ES-PT	Institutional cooperation
19	EGTC <u>Eurocity Chaves-verín</u>	Cross-border emergencies Team	ES-PT	Health
20	Gemeente Baarle-Nassau	Problem analysis and possible solutions concerning access to enclaves	NL-BE	Institutional cooperation
21	Provincie West-Vlaanderen (on behalf of the Euregio Scheldemond)	Cross border obstacles on cross border transport and use of manure	NL-BE	Institutional cooperation
22	Mura Region EGTC	Tour guide practice and their activity on both sides of the Hungarian and Croatian border	HU-HR	Institutional cooperation
23	Gate to Europe EGTC	Analyze of legislative borders in employment, especially in agricultural field	HU-RO	Institutional cooperation

Cases selected under [b-solutions 4th call for proposals \(II\)](#)

#	Name of the applicant	Title of the advice case	Border(s)	Thematic area
12	<u>Grenzinfopunkt Aachen-Eurode</u>	Corona Pandemic and Home Office – Consequences for the social security and taxation of cross-border workers	DE-BE-NL	<u>Employment</u>
13	<u>euregio rhein-maas-nord</u>	Mini-jobs cause big problems in a cross-border context	DE-NL	<u>Employment</u>
14	Atlantic Transpyrenees Conference	Cross-border cooperation on social benefits and access to social rights	FR-ES	Institutional cooperation
15	EGTC <u>Eurocity Chaves-Verín</u>	Cross-Border Nursing	ES-PT	Employment
16	Provincie Oost-Vlaanderen on behalf of Euroregion Scheldemond	Stimulating cross-border LEADER projects by creating a cross-border regulation and system.	BE-NL	Institutional cooperation
17	<u>Public institution Marijampole hospital</u>	Opportunities to improve cross-border provision of health care and related services	LT-PL	Health
18	Gemeente Winterswijk	Cross-border renewable energy exchange	NL-DE	Institutional cooperation
19	Stadt Emmerich am Rhein	Registering labour migrants in a cross-border context	DE-NL	Institutional cooperation
20	Karlovy Vary Region	Cross Border Health Services, Mountain Rescue Service and Patient Transfer	CZ-DE	Health
21	Observatoire Franco-Belge de la Santé	Towards simplified procedures for cross-border health professionals	FR-BE	Health
22	EGTC Via Carpatia with limited liability	Legal status of a branch office of an EGTC in the partner country	SK-HU	Institutional cooperation
23	<u>Provincie Zeeland</u>	Cross-border healthcare and the reimbursement of cross-border healthcare costs	NL-BE	Health
24	EGTC European Region Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino	On safe legal ground - CBC in disaster response	IT-AT	<u>Health</u>



Lessons learned

These lessons expect to raise awareness among CB practitioners and inspire others to identify their own obstacles.

- a) Variety of obstacles
- b) Variety of causes
- c) Tailored solutions
- d) A long process
- e) Changes in legal frameworks
- f) Complementary tools
- g) Political commitment
- h) Multi-level engagement
- i) Deep analysis
- j) Information sharing
- k) Capacity building
- l) Interreg and EGTC potential
- m) ECBM potential

AEBR identified some indicative **policy recommendations** addressing **policymakers involved in CBC at all levels**: EU institutions, national authorities and sub-national ones (regions, provinces, councils, districts and municipalities):

1. **Capacity building** of local stakeholders in borders regions
 - a. Improved training provision for LRA & CBC actors
 - b. Support for information/coordination units at the LRA
 - c. Commissioning detailed comparative studies
 - d. Strengthening capacity within professional service firms
2. Promotion of **effective multi-level** engagement and responses
 - a. Legal mechanisms
 - b. Joint commissioning of CB studies & analyses
 - c. Enhanced forums of dialogue
3. Maximising the value of **EU tools and instruments**
 - a. The proposed ECBM
 - b. *Interreg* and other existing EU instruments

These are available for consultation at the dedicated section of the compendium (vol. 1) on [b-solutions' website](#).

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