



## Cross-border deal

In favor of cross-border territories, for a stronger, more united Europe beyond borders

The workshops\* of the Borders Forum 2024 brought together stakeholders from various levels of cooperation - local, national and European - to exchange and propose concrete recommendations on ten key themes of cooperation; the objective: to resolve the cross-border «blockages» that affect the daily lives of local residents of cross-border living areas, and restore confidence in Europe by developing a sense of «cross-border» and «European» citizenship.

Here are the proposals of the ten workshops:

### CITIZENSHIP AND BELONGING

Workshop #1 Cross-border citizen participation: Fact or fiction?

► **Choose topics of general and cross-border interest for citizen participation:** Deploy a citizen participation approach on topics that make sense and are of common interest to the territories on both sides of the the border. These topics must respond to cross-border issues and help create communities with shared goals.

► **Co-construct a common framework for cross-border citizen participation:** Define a framework for cooperation and experimentation adapted to the legislative and cultural differences of the territories. Clearly identify who will lead the process, and who will be responsible for collecting opinions, as well as the stakeholders responsible for implementing the projects resulting from this dynamic.

► **Take into account and provide feedback on the opinions collected:** Integrate feedback from citizens, including negative feedback, to reinforce confidence in the system. If projects are proposed, particularly as part of participatory budgets, guarantee transparency in their implementation or explain any limitations encountered.

► **Plan for the use of tools facilitating cross-border citizen participation:** Anticipate and cover specific costs (interpreting, logistics, meeting venues, etc.) and implement suitable arrangements to guarantee access for all.

Workshop #2 Culture as a vehicle for cross-border citizenship

► **Connecting people across borders through culture,** (via democracy, literature, heritage, history, everyday life...), because they touch the hearts of citizens (through emotion).

► **Give a central place to multilingualism,** as part of the identity of cross-border territories.

► **Follow up on cooperation initiatives over time and secure what has been achieved.** Simplify access.

► **Recall that cross-border territories are the laboratories of the European Union,** cross-border areas are centers, not sidelines.

► **Create a new category of European cross-border capital of culture,** namely «cross-border territory – European capital of culture» to support cross-border initiatives and draw attention to these areas.

► **Make cross-border areas visible:** design and promote symbols and places in cross-border living areas (shared signage, festivals spread across the living area, label for "green" towns).

► **Enhance the richness and variety of border territories,** as each border has its own particularities and history. Life on the border is an art of living and a sense of belonging.

► **Support "city twins"** and revive sister-city networks separated by borders.

► **Create cross-border routes and trails** between our regions with symbols, meeting places (third places).

\* Find the [press release](#) and the [program](#). During the sessions, discussions were fueled by speakers and moderators, as well as by the active participation of registrants (over 300 participants at the event) from a wide range of European and international borders. The proposals were then presented in a plenary session to national and European representatives.

### Workshop #10 Eastern borders: between war and enlargement

- ▶ **Greater recognition of the difficult situation and gatekeeper role of eastern border regions** as a result of Russian aggression in Ukraine. The EU must support them, notably via cohesion policy.
- ▶ **Regarding border security**, focus on overall security and crisis preparedness.
- ▶ **Support Interreg projects**, which are even more important in wartime (many immediate challenges would not have been solved without them).
- ▶ **Learning from the Western Balkans to envision a positive, more resilient future for all regions on the eastern borders.** The Western Balkans suffered from war 20 years ago. These countries know how important Interreg has been in helping them in the aftermath of war, and in reviving the possibility of more prosperous future cross-border cooperation, with a view to enlargement.

## PUBLIC SERVICES THAT CONNECT US

### Workshop #4 Cross-border public transport: A co-development challenge

- ▶ **Develop cross-border mobility schemes** based on living areas and household-travel surveys.
- ▶ **Involve local residents by organizing Citizen consultations** to incorporate the needs and opinions of users in border regions.
- ▶ **Coordinate transport operators by encouraging cooperation via initiatives such as Interreg** (harmonization of timetables, common ticketing) and consider a specific European status for cross-border transport lines.
- ▶ **Prioritize cross-border living areas by concentrating efforts on inter-regional links**, complementing major international connections.
- ▶ **Harmonize cross-border contracts** by reducing overlap with national contracts and Promote common contracts between both sides of the border.
- ▶ **Encourage cross-border Mobility Payments** by enabling companies on the other side of borders to contribute to the financing of cross-border mobility initiatives.

### Workshop #7 Europe and cross-border healthcare, cooperation and governance

- ▶ **Developing extraterritorial law and exercising the right to experiment.**
- ▶ **Obtain automatic recognition of diplomas** for doctors and nurses in cross-border areas of the European Union.
- ▶ **Developing a single status and tax regime** for cross-border EGTC workers.
- ▶ **Removing boundaries for teams and emergency medical vehicles.**

### Workshop #8 Public services for cross-border citizens?

- ▶ **Enhancing local skills and expertise.** Expertise exists, but it needs to evolve by developing context-specific training for public service operators.
- ▶ **Strengthen mutual knowledge and compatibility** between public service operators, between counterparts on both sides of the border, by bringing operators and administrative languages closer together.
- ▶ **Guarantee legibility and clarity for the user.** Identify totem places, visible service counters, cross-border services.
- ▶ **Recognize the status of «cross-border citizen» and create an enforceable European right to information** on the issues raised by cross-border life.
- ▶ **Guaranteeing the «right to stay» for cross-border citizens:** the need for national and European support beyond local initiatives, to overcome regulatory obstacles and **guarantee universal, accessible cross-border public services at every border.**

## SHARING OUR RESOURCES

### Workshop #9 Cross-border financial solidarity: Global workshop

► Moving from coordination and cooperation to collaboration and cross-border fiscal solidarity.

► **Improve access to cross-border data** through the development of a cross-border database enabling the efficient diagnosis of border regions and facilitating the comparison of situations between European countries and with the rest of the world.

► **Develop project management and financing tools at all scales (from local to transnational)** by introducing appropriate instruments (including taxation), going beyond Interreg, an essential but limited tool.

► **Encourage the exchange of information and institutional collaboration through formal agreements** (such as treaties or committees), common strategic frameworks; develop common institutions; and organize planning exercises, to move towards functional and sectoral (possibly asymmetrical) complementarity, conditions for strong cross-border governance.

### Workshop #3 Urban planning across borders

► **Promote cross-border mechanisms to regulate land rights**, by adopting EU-wide legislation.

► **Integrate the cross-border dimension into Domestic urban planning legislation** to harmonize approaches between countries.

► **Promote mutual understanding of the planning practices and cultures of neighboring countries**, taking into account the specificities of vocabularies and technical approaches, while devoting the time, technical expertise and political support required for this cooperation.

► **Strengthen specialized human resources** by recruiting qualified experts to meet the human and technical needs of cross-border urban planning.

► **Adapting the resources of local authorities** to cope with the additional workload induced by the cross-border dimension.

► **Train urban planning professionals** on cross-border issues to develop their skills and improve their efficiency.

### Workshop #5 Water across borders: A source of cooperation?

► **Strengthen cross-border water resource management**, particularly within existing cross-border structures such as EGTCs.

► **Promote actions coordinated by flexible governance bodies and joint groups** bringing together cross-border public and private partners.

► **Increase and sustain the European funds available** for cross-border projects acting on cross-border water management.

► **Encourage States to adapt national management plans** implementing the Water Framework Directive to cross-border contexts.

► **Making the European Blue Deal a priority** for European water policy.

### Workshop #6 Ecological planning in cross-border living areas

► **Declare the challenges of ecological transition** as a necessity and a priority for cross-border cooperation and the European Union's cohesion policy.

► **Strengthen existing cross-border governances or redefine ad hoc governances** to act collectively at different territorial scales.

► **Mobilize strategic and political stakeholders (planning), adapt operational Tools (contractualization, engineering, training)** to support and anticipate future developments and guarantee a win/win situation in cross-border living areas.

► **Take into account the specific assets and needs of cross-border territories when implementing ecological planning and the European Green Deal.**

# Who is the Cross-border deal for?

► **For European decision-makers** on matters concerning European action, notably the European Parliament, the European Commission, and the European Committee of the Regions, the voice of the regions and territories within the EU.

► **For national decision-makers**, so that they can take better account of cross-border issues in national policies and adapt public action to the specific characteristics of these territories; to national parliamentarians, in particular elected representatives from border constituencies; to ministers, in view of the need for inter-ministerial coordination on cross-border issues; to associations of local authorities, so that they too can better support the needs of border communities.

► **For local and regional elected representatives in border areas**, so that they politically support the needs specific to their territory, and promote the emergence of cross-border projects through local cooperation with their neighbors. Improving daily life in cross-border living areas can only be achieved with the support of local decision-makers, who are willing to develop common visions, ambitions, and actions.

## WHY A CROSS-BORDER DEAL?

► Over the past 20 years, we've been living in an increasingly uncertain world, where crisis follows crisis, whether economic, environmental, health, democratic or even military. **What if we dared to talk about the future and ask ourselves what our cross-border territories will look like in 2050?**

► Because our **resources and common goods** are becoming increasingly scarce and require us to go beyond our mental and administrative borders, and because they themselves have no borders, what if we dared to manage, preserve, and develop them **on the scale of cross-border areas?** What if we dared to imagine a differentiated model?

► As we Europeans gradually begin to add the term «European» to economic, energy and agricultural sovereignty, and at a time when the sovereignty of a European state is being threatened to the east of our continent, what if we dared to speak of **«cross-border sovereignty»** to meet the needs of our current and future populations?

► Because the European promise has always been not only peace between peoples, but also economic and

social prosperity, and territorial cohesion, what if we dared to really give ourselves the means of a cross-border cohesion policy? And what if, beyond convergence and solidarity, we gave ourselves the means for genuine **cross-border co-development?**

► Because citizenship represents a bond of belonging, a political bond as well as a historical and cultural bond, what if we dared to speak of **«cross-border citizenship»** by promoting our common cultures and histories through education, or by enabling the expression of a cross-border democracy in which citizens would have the right to participate?

► **Because over the decades, we have gone from a state of «faith» in Europe to a state of «doubt», even though Europe is the solution; because at a time of major transitions, resilience must prevail over resignation; and because the everyday Europe and the feeling of belonging to Europe are played out first and foremost at its internal borders, what if we dared to make a societal, democratic and citizen-centric «cross-border deal»?**



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