



b-solutions 2.0: Solving Cross-Border Obstacles

Info session on the call for proposals
4 May 2022

What is *b-solutions*?

- *b-solutions* is an initiative to address legal and administrative obstacles hindering cross-border cooperation in the EU
- Promoted by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional & Urban Policy (DG REGIO)
- Managed by the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)
- Within the framework of the Communication Boosting Growth and Cohesion in EU Border Regions adopted by the European Commission on 20 September 2017 and the report EU Border Regions: Living labs of European integration published on 14 July 2021
- Outputs: 4 calls for proposals (2018-2021) leading to 90 cases showcased in:
 - 2 compendiums of reports
 - 3 thematic booklets
 - 1 illustrated storytelling booklet

Why *b-solutions*?

- Border obstacles persist: legal and administrative obstacles exist and 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 interactions

- These obstacles can affect many aspects of life in border regions such as commuting, getting reimbursement for healthcare costs, working remotely...

Which kind of support is provided?

b-solutions provides technical support

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

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

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

Successful cases do not need to file a report about their participation.

In conclusion of the analysis by the expert, successful cases are requested to fill in a one-page document to evaluate their experience and endorse the report by the expert.

How does it work?

Experts visit successful candidates and stakeholders to carry out the analysis for a maximum of 9 days within a period of a maximum of 3 months.

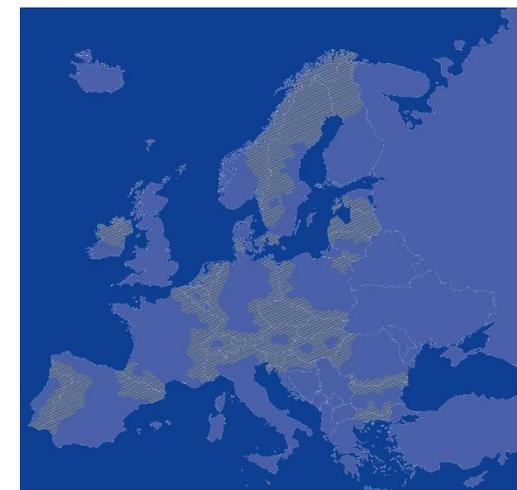
The three-month period starts on the day on which the successful applicant is informed which expert has been assigned to the case.

During the visit, the expert writes a case report, including:

- a description of the obstacle with indication of the legal/administrative provisions causing the obstacle
- a description of possible solutions
- a full list of all legal provisions relevant to the case with the correct citation both in the original language and in English
- an executive summary

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



Objectives of the *b-solutions 2.0* Call for proposals

- To identify and promote further 120 cases and sustainable methods of resolving border obstacles of a legal and/or administrative nature
- Four thematic areas: institutional cooperation, public services, labour markets and education and European Green Deal
- New: *b-solutions 2.0* addresses border regions along EU internal land and maritime borders and along EU borders with EFTA and IPA countries
- But also:
 - Support the implementation of 30 cases of cross-border obstacles of a legal and/or administrative nature beyond funding
 - Publish content to raise awareness of common obstacles that hinder cross-border cooperation and possible solutions (capitalisation)

Strengthening institutional cooperation

Difficulties in cooperation between different entities at the border

Most common issues: different legal applications, limited existence of mutually recognised documents, diverging administrative procedures, lengthy and costly procedures, lack of legislation to allow for common projects in the field of data and information sharing

The graphic has a light blue background. In the top left corner is the AEBR - AGEG - ARFE logo, and in the top right corner is the B SOLUTIONS logo. In the center, there is a yellow rectangular box containing an icon of three people silhouettes with puzzle pieces above them. Below this box, the text 'Institutional Cooperation' is written in a bold, sans-serif font. Underneath that, the question 'Do you face an obstacle to cross-border cooperation?' is written in a smaller, regular font. At the bottom, the text 'Apply to b-solutions 2.0!' is written in a bold, italicized, sans-serif font.



Institutional Cooperation

Do you face an obstacle to cross-border cooperation?

Apply to b-solutions 2.0!

Creating cross-border public services

Difficulties in promoting or implementing the development of cross-border public services (health, education, culture, transport, leisure, etc.)

Most common issues: service accessibility issues in remote areas, sharing scarce resources, developing innovative synergies, managing common resources, different systems and costs of services



Cross-border
Public Services

Do you face an obstacle to
cross-border cooperation?

Apply to b-solutions 2.0!

Promoting labour markets and education

Difficulties in fostering labour and education mobility and creating a cross-border labour market

Most common issues: completing an apprenticeship, having one's skills and competences fully recognised, accessing job vacancies, recruiting staff, obtaining legal certainty on fiscal issues, securing full social security coverage, obtaining professional insurance for medical staff, complicated procedures to obtain professional certificates and information provision



Implementing the European Green Deal

Difficulties in coping with the challenges linked to climate change and the environment in a cross-border dimension

Most common issues: uncertainties on how to establish a green public transport system (bike sharing), different national standards for resource management (water, wind turbine), lack of coordination and information exchange between the border authorities managing a nature reserve/park/protected area



Eligibility criteria

- The application form must be submitted electronically via <https://www.b-solutionsproject.com/call-for-proposals> before 13 May 2022
- The application form must be completed in English
- 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 implement solutions
- The replicability potential of the action

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

Example: cross-border employment

Advice Case

Oost-Vlaanderen Province, Euregio Scheldemond

The Netherlands - Belgium

Title: 183 days rule obstructing cross-border mobility

Obstacle: Complex rules on income taxation and social insurance standards cause great restrictions for staff management at the North Sea Port



Awarding criteria 1: Description of the obstacle

- General description of the **context** of the „North Sea Port“ - where the obstacle is identified - and of its **cross-border features**;
- Identification of the **legal/administrative nature** of the obstacle: the problem arises because of a specific law („183 days law“) that limits cross-border employment at the Port;
- Explanation of the **practical consequences** of the law on the daily life of cross-border workers and clarification of the **administrative and financial burdens**:
 - *“all employees are obliged to daily maintain an excel file, where they have to fill in the location where they’ll work that specific day“*
 - *“when employees exceed a certain amount of days on the other side of the border (183) they have to pay taxes in both sides“*
 - *“the way of calculating a ‘day’ across the border differs from tax specialist to tax specialist“.*

Awarding criteria 2: Potential increase in cross-border cooperation

How would solving the obstacle foster cooperation along that specific border?

„There will be a sustainable effect for cross-border workers and cross-border work mobility. The current administrative confusion discourages many workers to apply for job posts at the Port. Solving these obstacles would be a best practice, it would set an example and would attract new businesses.“

[...]

„To maintain growth growing, the region needs to attract enterprises that would like to settle in the region. The chances of attracting new businesses increases, when a (border)region is able to provide a certain foundation. Location, infrastructure, mobility and (skilled) workers form a vast package of what could trigger these companies. However, the border region, e.g. cross-border mobility and excessive administration for employees and the companies in question, appears to have a severe disadvantage above a non-border region. If these obstacles could be solved, it could be a potential boost for growth and cohesion in this EU border region.“

Awarding criteria 3: Mandate to implement solutions

Creation of a “partnership” - the Euroregion does not have legal competences so one of its participating provinces has to vouch for it and submit the application.

Awarding criteria 4: Replicability

3 dimensions: other cross-border enterprises, the whole Dutch-Belgian border and border regions with similar social-economic characteristics.

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.

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

Deadlines: 13 May 2022, 30 June 2022, 21 October 2022

The advice periods between the experts and the selected applicants will take place in the period from:

- June 2022 to August 2022
- August 2022 to October 2022
- December 2022 to February 2023



Thank you!

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

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