Basic information

2018/2054(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions **Subject** 4.70.05 Regional cooperation, cross-border cooperation	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
REGI Regional Development	HETMAN Krzysztof (PPE)	07/12/2017
	Shadow rapporteur PICULA Tonino (S&D) FLACK John (ECR) MIHAYLOVA Iskra (ALDE) ANDERSON Martina (GUE/NGL) ROPĖ Bronis (Verts/ALE) D'AMATO Rosa (EFDD)	

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
EMPL Employment and Social Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
ITRE Industry, Research and Energy	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
IMCO Internal Market and Consumer Protection	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
TRAN Transport and Tourism	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	

	CULT Culture and Education	ZAGORAKIS Theodoros (PPE)	25/10/2017

European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner
	Regional and Urban Policy	CREȚU Corina

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
20/09/2017	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2017)0534	Summary
19/04/2018	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
10/07/2018	Vote in committee		
18/07/2018	Committee report tabled for plenary	A8-0266/2018	Summary
10/09/2018	Debate in Parliament		
11/09/2018	Decision by Parliament	T8-0327/2018	Summary
11/09/2018	Results of vote in Parliament		
11/09/2018	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2018/2054(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 165
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	REGI/8/12576

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE620.924	17/04/2018	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE622.062	23/05/2018	

Committee opinion	CULT	PE620.999	25/06/2018	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A8-0266/2018	18/07/2018	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T8-0327/2018	11/09/2018	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Commission document (COM)	COM(2017)0534	20/09/2017	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2018)829	11/03/2019	

Boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions

2018/2054(INI) - 20/09/2017 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: to propose measures and issue recommendations that make it easier for internal land border regions to cooperate, contribute to reducing hurdles and help border citizens and businesses use the full potential of these regions.

BACKGROUND: EU internal border regions contribute significantly to the socio-economic wealth of Europe. They are **geographic areas where European integration processes are experienced** in everyday life by individuals, businesses and public authorities.

The European Union (EU) and its immediate neighbours in the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) count 40 internal land borders. The EU's internal border regions cover **40% of the Union's territory**, represent 30% of the population (150 million people), produce 30% of the Union's GDP and see nearly 2 million commuters pass through, including 1.3 million cross-border workers who represent 0.6% of the Union's working population as a whole.

Since 1990, **Interreg** funding has supported cross-border cooperation programmes along EU border regions including those with EFTA countries. Interreg has made a genuine difference to border regions and has contributed to their transformation. This work continues today, with just under **EUR 6 billion** from the EU budget earmarked for the Interreg 2014-2020 cross-border programmes.

However, evidence gathered by the Commission demonstrates that **border regions generally perform less well economically than other regions within a Member State**. Access to public services such as hospitals and universities is generally lower in border regions. Navigating between different administrative and legal systems is often still complex and costly.

The Commission considers it necessary to **act at EU level**, in cooperation with Member States, regions and other stakeholders to better exploit the potential of border regions. It suggests that the resolution of border problems be placed at the heart of cross-border cooperation programmes in the future.

A recent study on the economic impact of border obstacles on GDP and employment levels in internal land border regions suggests if only 20% of the existing obstacles were removed, border regions would still gain 2% in GDP. The estimated impact on jobs is equally important, with potential for over 1 million jobs.

CONTENT: this Communication highlights ways in which the EU and its Member States can **reduce the complexity, length and costs of cross-border interaction** and promote the pooling of services along internal borders.

The Commission advocates the implementation of **10 measures** which will be facilitated by the creation of a **"border focal point"** within the Commission whose role will include ensuring that future key actions by the Commission take into account cross-border regional aspects and share experiences and good practices with stakeholders.

- **Deepening cooperation and exchanges**: the Commission urges Member States and regions to establish a regular dialogue on border issues. It will set up an EU-wide professional online network where legal and administrative border issues and solutions can be presented and discussed between border stakeholders.
- **Improving the legislative process**: in its Better Regulation package adopted in 2015, the Commission proposed measures to ensure that territorial aspects are factored into policy options.
- **Enabling cross-border public administration**: the Commission will urge its ongoing and future e-government projects to engage border stakeholders in order to deliver cross-border public services that meet the needs of individuals and businesses.
- **Providing reliable and understandable information and assistance**: it is essential to have access to reliable and available information and problem-solving services on the living or working on the other side of the border. Once adopted, the proposed Regulation on the establishment of a "single digital gateway" shall contribute to this.
- **Supporting cross-border employment**: the positive effects of tools such as the European network of employment services (EURES), the rules on the coordination of social security systems, the EU Employment and Social Innovation Programme (EaSI) and the European Social Fund

have not reached their full potential in border regions. Member States and regional authorities shall strengthen cooperation between public employment services in border regions.

- **Promoting border multi-lingualism**: Member States, regions and municipalities are urged to use life-long learning opportunities to step up efforts to promote bilingualism in border regions.
- **Facilitating cross-border accessibility**: lacking, insufficient or low-quality public transport services are still a reality for many citizens in border regions. A Commission study of missing rail links along internal borders will be available in 2018. Member States, regions and municipalities are therefore urged to step up their efforts to provide individuals with better quality, more integrated public transport services.
- **Promoting greater pooling of health care facilities**: a comprehensive mapping of cross-border health cooperation across the EU by the Commission will identify good practices and analyse future challenges. The communication mentions in this context the institutionalised agreement establishing seven organised cross-border health care zones on the Franco-Belgian border has been used by more than 20 000 patients who have received health care closer to their residence in the neighbouring country.
- **Considering the legal and financial framework for cross-border cooperation**: a number of Member States are considering the merits of a new instrument that would allow, on a voluntary basis and in agreement with the competent authorities, the regulation of a Member State to apply in the neighbouring Member State for a specific project or action of limited duration implemented in a border region at the initiative of local and /or regional authorities. A dialogue should start on how future funding programmes could contribute to solving cross-border problems.
- **Demonstrate cross-border interaction to inform decision-making**: Member States, under the coordination of the Statistical Office of the European Union, shall seek innovative methods of data collection that lend themselves to cross-border analysis.

The Commission will take action still in 2017 and in the coming years. The Border Focal Point will soon become operational so that the proposed actions can be implemented swiftly.

Boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions

2018/2054(INI) - 11/09/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 594 votes to 58, with 35 abstentions, a resolution entitled ‘Boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions’.

Internal border regions of the European Union represent as much as 40% of its territory and are home to 150 million of Europeans. They also generate a quarter of Europe’s GDP. Despite these facts, the border regions are facing persistent obstacles, which hamper their growth and development and, as a result, they perform worse economically than regions situated deeper within the Member States.

Members welcomed the document presented by the Commission as a valuable insight into the current challenges. They stressed the importance of applying and disseminating best practices and success stories and carrying out a similar analysis with regard to the Union's external border regions.

Targeting the persistent obstacles: the problems and challenges faced by the border regions are common to some extent, but also vary from region to region, Parliament encouraged **tailor-made, integrated and place-based approaches**, such as Community-Led Local Development (CLLD).

The Commission and the Member States were invited to:

- maximise their efforts and step up cooperation to remove barriers to **access to public services** and to promote and establish the use of **egovernment**, especially when related to health services, transport, construction of vital physical infrastructure, education, culture, sport, communications, labour mobility, the environment, as well as regulation, cross-border commerce and business development;
- step up efforts to **overcome obstacles** related to the recognition of diplomas and qualifications obtained after retraining, health care, transport and access to information on job vacancies and on social security and tax systems by strengthening skills;
- allocate more funds and sufficient flexibility for regional and local authorities in border regions to better **coordinate neighbouring national legal and administrative systems** in order to improve the quality of life of cross-border workers;
- promote convergence by better aligning relevant legal provisions on the adoption and enforcement of **labour and commercial law**, as well as on taxation, procurement and social protection systems, according to the difficulties posed by cross-border areas; **one-stop shops** could enable employees and enterprises to meet their obligations and fully exercise their rights;
- take better account of the difficulties of **small and medium-sized enterprises** (SMEs) by examining the possibility of providing them with additional support;
- dedicate an adequate budget to the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) axis, to be dedicated to filling the missing links in sustainable transport infrastructure in border regions;
- improve **access to health care services** on both sides of borders so as to allow full use of health care facilities and cross-border intervention by emergency and rescue services;
- improve cooperation and coordination in **internal water management** to avoid natural disasters such as floods.

Enhancing cooperation and trust: Parliament called for more coordination and dialogue, more effective exchange of information and more **exchange of best practice** between authorities, especially at local and regional level. It urged the Commission and the Member States to enhance such cooperation and provide **funding for cooperation structures** in order to ensure adequate functional and financial autonomy of respective local and regional authorities.

The resolution stressed the importance of:

- introducing the teaching of the languages of neighbouring countries into the curriculum from primary school onwards and to encourage the adoption of a **multilingual approach** at all administrative levels;
- facilitating **mutual recognition** of qualifications, diplomas, training and professional qualifications from neighbouring regions;
- adopting measures to combat all forms of **discrimination** within border regions and remove obstacles to the employment of vulnerable persons and their integration into society;

- creating **electronic portals** for cross-border business initiatives;
- using Interreg programmes and promote the exchange of best practice between local and regional authorities in border areas in the framework of **refugee** integration;
- ensuring effective cooperation in the field of cross-border provision of **emergency services**, such as healthcare, policing and fire services;
- exploring the possibilities of enhancing cooperation and overcoming barriers to regional development at the **external borders** with neighbouring regions, in particular, with regions of those countries preparing for EU accession
- taking account - by making aid available to them - of the EU regions most affected by the consequences of **Brexit**.

Exploiting EU tools for better coherence: Members welcomed the contribution of European territorial cooperation programmes to removing obstacles at borders, but believed that significant improvements can still be made in this area. They therefore strongly supported the continuation of European territorial cooperation and the **increase of the budget** allocated to it in the next programming period (2021-2027).

At the same time, the report stressed the need to **simplify programmes** and to better exploit the potential offered by the EU's macro-regional strategies.

Lastly, Members welcomed the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the creation of a mechanism to resolve legal and administrative obstacles in a cross-border context.

Boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions

2018/2054(INI) - 18/07/2018 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Regional Development adopted an own-initiative report by Krzysztof HETMAN (EPP, PL) entitled 'Boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions'.

Internal border regions of the European Union represent as much as 40% of its territory and are home to 150 million of Europeans. They also generate a quarter of Europe's GDP. Despite these facts, the border regions are facing persistent obstacles, which hamper their growth and development and, as a result, they perform worse economically than regions situated deeper within the Member States.

Members welcomed the document presented by the Commission as a valuable insight into the challenges and obstacles faced by the internal EU border regions and appreciate the proposed solutions. They stressed the importance of applying and disseminating best practices and success stories and carrying out a similar analysis with regard to the Union's external border regions.

Targeting the persistent obstacles: while arguing for a tailor-made approach for each border region, Members acknowledged the shared development potential of cross-border regions in general. They encouraged tailor-made, **integrated and place-based approaches**, such as Community-Led Local Development (CLLD).

The Commission and the Member States were invited to:

- maximise their efforts and step up cooperation to remove barriers to access to public services and to promote and establish the use of egovernment, especially when related to health services, transport, construction of vital physical infrastructure, education, culture, sport, communications, labour mobility, the environment, as well as regulation, cross-border commerce and business development;
- step up efforts to **strengthen skills** and allow for greater powers, funds and sufficient flexibility for regional and local authorities in border regions to better coordinate neighbouring national legal and administrative systems in order to improve the quality of life of cross-border workers;
- better align relevant legal provisions on the adoption and enforcement of **labour and commercial law**, as well as on taxation, procurement and social protection systems, according to the difficulties posed by cross-border areas; **one-stop shops** could enable employees and enterprises to meet their obligations and fully exercise their rights;
- take better account of the difficulties of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by examining the possibility of providing them with additional support;
- dedicate an adequate budget to the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) axis, to be dedicated to filling the missing links in **sustainable transport infrastructure** in border regions;
- improve access to health care services on both sides of borders so as to allow full use of health care facilities and cross-border intervention by emergency and rescue services;
- improve cooperation and coordination in **internal water management** to avoid natural disasters such as floods.

Enhancing cooperation and trust: Members called for more coordination and dialogue, more effective exchange of information and more exchange of best practice between authorities, especially at local and regional level. They urged the Commission and the Member States to enhance such cooperation and provide funding for cooperation structures in order to ensure adequate functional and financial autonomy of respective local and regional authorities.

The report stressed the importance of:

- encouraging the adoption of a multilingual approach at all administrative levels;
- facilitating **mutual recognition** of qualifications, diplomas, training and professional qualifications from neighbouring regions;
- adopting measures to combat all forms of discrimination within border regions and remove obstacles to the employment of vulnerable persons and their integration into society;
- creating electronic portals for cross-border business initiatives;
- using Interreg programmes and promote the exchange of best practice between local and regional authorities in border areas in the framework of refugee integration;

- ensuring effective cooperation in the field of cross-border provision of emergency services, such as healthcare, policing and fire services;
- taking account - by making aid available to them - of the EU regions most affected by the consequences of Brexit.

Exploiting EU tools for better coherence: Members welcomed the contribution of European territorial cooperation programmes to removing obstacles at borders, but believed that significant improvements can still be made in this area. They therefore strongly supported the continuation of European territorial cooperation and the increase of the budget allocated to it in the next programming period (2021-2027).

At the same time, the report stressed the need to **simplify programmes**, to ensure that European territorial cooperation is more consistent with the European Union's overall objectives and to increase the flexibility of the programmes.

Lastly, Members welcomed the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the creation of a mechanism to resolve legal and administrative obstacles in a cross-border context.