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# OPPORTUNITIES AND OBSTACLES OF EU CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION: CURRENT STATE AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Příležitosti a překážky přeshraniční spolupráce EU: Současný stav a budoucí perspektivy

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## Annotation

After more than 30 years of Interreg programmes implementation, citizens and local stakeholders keep facing persistent challenges on the European border land when interacting across the border. Objective of the paper is to provide an overview of opportunities and obstacles of cross-border cooperation and analyze the future perspectives and challenges of cross border regions' development in the EU. Paper also reacts on the actual Covid-19 pandemic situation where borders in the EU are again under subject of attention. Based on the EU cross-border survey 2020, these challenges are especially of language, legal and administrative nature. To reduce undue complications in carrying out certain activities across internal EU borders, especially in the fields of services, EU regional authorities support the adoption of common mechanism and strategies as Border Focal Point or European Cross-Border Mechanism. In the next months, cross-border regions will face to challenges of economic and social recovery after the limitation of cross-border activities related to coronavirus restrictions.

## Key words

cross-border cooperation, EU, Interreg, obstacles, regions

## Anotace

Po více než 30 letech provádění programů Interreg čelí občané a místní aktéři při přeshraničních aktivitách stále přetrvávajícím výzvám v evropském pohraničním území. Cílem příspěvku je poskytnout přehled o příležitostech a překážkách přeshraniční spolupráce a analyzovat budoucí perspektivy a výzvy rozvoje přeshraničních regionů v EU. Příspěvek také reaguje na aktuální situaci pandemie Covid-19, kdy jsou hranice v EU opět předmětem zájmu. Na základě průzkumu EU o přeshraniční spolupráci v roce 2020 mají tyto výzvy zejména jazykovou, právní a administrativní povahu. Za účelem omezení nepřiměřených komplikací při provádění činností přes vnitřní hranice EU, zejména v oblasti služeb, podporují regionální orgány EU přijetí společných mechanismů a strategií, jako je hraniční kontaktní místo nebo evropský přeshraniční mechanismus. V příštích měsících budou přeshraniční regiony čelit výzvám hospodářského a sociálního oživení po omezení přeshraničních aktivit souvisejících s omezeními proti šíření koronaviru.

## Klíčová slova

přeshraniční spolupráce, EU, Interreg, překážky, regiony

**JEL classification:** O18, R11, R58

## 1. Introduction

Border regions are inhabited by approximately 150 million European citizens (almost one third of the entire EU population). The EU internal land border regions represent 40% of the Union's territory and produce 30% of the EU's GDP. Land border regions host almost 2 million cross-border commuters, 1,3 million of which are cross border workers representing 0.6% of all persons employed across the EU. (European Commission, 2017) Border regions and their cooperation represents a special part of the study of European integration. Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)<sup>1</sup> regards and conceptualises border regions as laboratories of integration. (European Commission, 2020b, p.11) Due to geo-political position, border regions are front-runners of the integration process and they indicate in advance what the needs of European integration are. (Durand, Decoville, 2019) Borders regions have their own challenges and opportunities that are often inherited from their unique histories (Basboga, 2020). Article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union recognizes these challenges faced by border regions and stipulates that the Union should pay particular attention to these regions, when developing and pursuing actions leading to the strengthening of the Union's economic, social and territorial cohesion. European Commission (2017) Thus, border regions constitute the EU Cohesion Policy major landmark and after 30 years since the establishment of the Interreg funding programme, thousands of projects have successfully received financial support to better exploit the potential of these territories. (European Commission, 2020b, p.10)

For next years, the European Commission (EC) and European Committee of the Regions (CoR) propose and support a set of actions to enhance the competitive and cohesive situation of border regions, notably by addressing some barriers currently hampering closer cooperation and interaction that have a negative impact on the stakeholders and citizens living and operating across boundaries. (European Commission, 2020b, p.7). Capello, Caragliu, Fratesi (2018) suggest that cross-border cultural obstacles are the most critical barrier to European border regions' growth. Camagni, Capello, Caragliu (2019) also argue that legal and administrative barriers still affect the economic growth of European border regions despite the formation of the European Single Market.

Thus, the paper can be seen as contribution to fast-developing topic on border regions, that is subject of many existing empirical work on European border regions and cross-border cooperation (CBC), see e.g. Basboga (2020); Durand, Decoville (2019), Capello, Caragliu, Fratesi (2018), Camagni, Capello, Caragliu, (2019), Sousa (2013), Medeiros (2018), Suchacek, Walancik, Wróblewski, Urminsý, Drastichova, Sotkovsky (2018), Hruška, et al. (2014), Dušek (2017), Melecký (2016), Staníčková (2016), Wróblewski (2016), Suchacek (2019), Böhlm (2014). Literature review points out the diversity of the thematic approaches to cross-border integration thus shows this process is a multidimensional one (Durand, Decoville, 2019). This research topic is now considered as an important branch of regional studies, particularly at a time when the importance of the open borders is again discussed.

## 2. Aim and methods

Main aim of the paper is to provide an overview of opportunities and obstacles of cross-border cooperation and analyze the future perspectives and challenges of cross border regions' development in the EU. To achieve this goal, the methods of a literature review, analysis and synthesis of secondary data are used. The research carried out based on these methods can be used for basic exploring the current state and possibilities of future development of cross-border cooperation.

The first section of the paper provides a glance on the evolution of the cross-border cooperation and Interreg programmes. The second section will then discuss the most persisting border obstacles in the EU based on the available literature and supporting by the analyzing of recent relevant EU surveys. Following section elaborates on EU policy vision and measures to reduce of border obstacles and support of cross-border cooperation in the post-2020 period. The scope of paper is more descriptive and comprehensive, and does not claim to provide any explanatory elements to the phenomena it depicts.

## 3. Evolution of the EU cross-border cooperation and Interreg A

European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), better known as Interreg, is one of two goals of the EU Cohesion Policy and provides a framework for the implementation of joint actions and policy exchanges between national, regional and local actors indifferent Member States. The overarching objective of ETC is to promote the harmonious

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<sup>1</sup> AEBR is the only Europe-wide organization representing border and cross-border regions in 25 out of 27 Member States and beyond, with a huge contacts data base. It actively maintains contact with local, regional, national and European authorities and organizations in order to improve knowledge and understanding of key cross-border issues, and to advocate for border regions. (European Commission, 2020b, p.11)

economic, social and territorial development of the Union as a whole. Interreg is built around three components of cooperation: cross-border (Interreg A), transnational (Interreg B) and interregional (Interreg C). Interreg A (cross-border cooperation), which supports cooperation between adjacent NUTS 3 border regions at least two different EU Member States and/or some countries outside the EU. It aims to develop the untapped growth potential of border areas, as well as enhancing cooperation to support the harmonious development of the Union. (European Commission, 2020a, p.7)

The EC has been providing continuous financial support for CBC activities under INTERREG programmes since 1990 (top-down approach the EU level). Main CBC actors and beneficiaries are Euroregion (independent cross-border entity representing bottom-up driven approach) and European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (cross-border entities with a recognized legal personality under EU law). (Basboga, 2020, p. 536)

In 1990, Interreg was developed by the EC as a Community Initiative in with a budget of just EUR 1 billion covering exclusively cross-border cooperation. INTERREG Community Initiative was created with the intention to prepare EU border areas for the implementation of the Single Market. Medeiros (2018, p. 3) Later, Interreg has been extended to transnational and interregional cooperation. The share of allocation for the cross-border cooperation has been increasing during time period, from 73.86% in 2007-2013 to 74.05% in period 2014-2020. Moreover, since 2014 ETC is one of the two goals of the EU Cohesion Policy besides Investment for Growth and Jobs. (European Commission, 2021a; Council of European Union, 2006; European Commission, 2015a). In the period 2021-2027, approximately 71.2% of total ETC allocation is devoted to INTERREG VI-A.

**Tab. 1: Evolution of Interreg and cross-border allocation**

	INTERREG I 1990-1993	INTERREG II 1994-1999	INTERREG III 2000-2006	INTERREG IV 2007-2013	INTERREG V 2014-2020	INTERREG VI 2021-2027
Legal status	Community initiative	Community initiative	Integrated into structural funds regulation	Integrated into structural funds regulation	Own regulation	Own regulation
Benefiting member states (internal borders)	11	11/then 15	15/then 25	27/then 28	28	27
Commitment budget (Eur, bn)	1.1	3.5	4.9	7.8	8.9	8.0
From this commitment budget Interreg A (Eur, bn)	1.1	2.6	3.9*	5.6	6.6	5.7

\* The allocated funds were defined for all Member States on the basis of the number of the population of the border regions along the external EU borders, the peripheral regions and the regions neighbouring Central and Eastern Europe. Minimum 50% of this had to be spent on cross-border co-operations, 14% on transnational co-operations and 6% on interregional co-operations.

Source: European Commission (2020d), European Commission (1996), Panteia (2010), European Commission (2015b), European Council (2020); authors' processing (2021)

The goal of Interreg A, funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), is realized by the cross-border cooperation programmes along NUTS 3 border regions including those with EFTA countries (in the period 2014-2020 it was 60 cross-border programmes). The Interreg (ETC) has undergone several metamorphoses in adapting to mainstream EU development agendas (Lisbon and Gothenburg Agendas and EUROPE 2020). As a consequence, the goals of CBC programmes have changed overtime, while covering a wide spectrum of policy goals and themes (Medeiros, 2018, p. 3). In 2021-2027 Interreg is tackling climate change and contributes to a greener Europe (European Commission, 2020c). Cross-border programmes should change from primarily managing and distributing funds toward acting as institutions of exchange, facilitating cross-border activity and being a centre for strategic planning. CBC programmes have contributed to transformation of border regions and activate the potential for economic growth (Durand, Decoville, 2019). The main achievements include: increased trust, higher connectivity, improved environment, better health and economic growth. (European Commission, 2017) Literature review shows that the impact of Interreg-supported CBC activities goes beyond the scope of one-off projects. The impact is not limited to a few project actors at an individual level but extends to more institutions across borders. (Basboga, 2020) Estimations show that the opening of national borders for free movement of people is associated with a 2.7% increase in regional gross value added per capita for the border regions. A country's membership in the EU itself has huge spillover effects on the economic development of border regions. (Basboga, 2020, p. 542).

## 4. Opportunities and obstacles of cross-border cooperation

Despite the 30 years successes of the Interreg funding scheme, national boundaries still pose many obstacles to the growth of European border regions. 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. Individuals, businesses and public authorities in border regions face specific difficulties when navigating between different administrative and legal systems. (European Commission, 2017) This suggests that there is greater potential for authorities at all levels to learn from the best practice and experience of border regions, in particular about measures that are needed at a legal or administrative level in order to sustain and stabilise co-operation in border regions. (European Commission, 2020b, p.7)

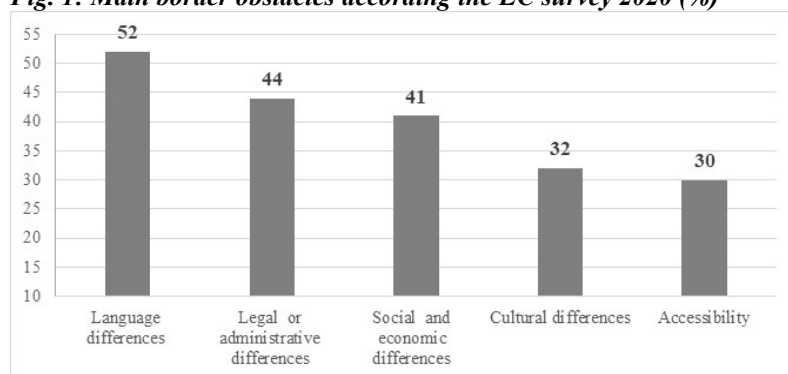
### 4.1 Current state and challenges of cross-border cooperation

To address these difficulties and propose a series of new concrete actions, on 20 September 2017 the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) adopted its Communication "Boosting Growth and Cohesion in EU Border Regions". (European Commission, 2017)

In 2020, EU cross-border cooperation survey was conducted to compare the state with the previous survey in 2015.<sup>2</sup> It was found out, that awareness of EU funded cross-border activities has declined by 7pts since 2015. Only 24% of respondents who reside in the border regions covered by Interreg cross-border cooperation programmes have heard of any EU-funded cross-border cooperation activities in their area. (European Commission, 2017) Strongest decreases observed among border region residents in Poland (20%, -20pp), the Czech Republic (31%, -19pp) and Ireland (26%, -17pp). Contrary, the lowest decreases in awareness can be observed in the regions covered by the programme CB030 Slovakia-Czech Republic (-15pp).

Respondents are likely to consider living in a border region more as an opportunity than an obstacle. The majority of respondents (55%) say it has no impact, while 38% consider it more of an opportunity, and just 3% say it is more of an obstacle. Following figure shows the type of obstacles that are considered by respondents as major or minor problem for cooperation between their country and its partner country or countries.

Fig. 1: Main border obstacles according the EC survey 2020 (%)



Source: European Commission (2020a); authors' processing (2021)

Main problems for cross-border cooperation according of respondents are language differences, the legal or administrative differences (proportion has decreased slightly by -2pp compared to previous survey), social and economic differences (proportion has also decreased by -5pp since the previous edition survey), cultural differences (proportion has remained stable since the 2015 edition), accessibility, e.g. geographical barriers or transport infrastructure (proportion has remained stable since the previous edition). These obstacles are observed in the EU countries in different proportion.

In line with the previous edition of this survey, respondents in programmes involving Germany, the Czech Republic and Poland are the most likely to mention *language differences* as a problem for cross border cooperation,

<sup>2</sup> This survey was carried out by the Gallup International network in the border regions covered by the Interreg CBC programmes (total of 54 Interreg cross-border cooperation programmes) of the 27 Member States of the European Union, Andorra, Lichtenstein, the United Kingdom, Norway and Switzerland between February and April 2020. Some 41,091 respondents were interviewed and asked to identify the specific challenges and obstacles of cross-border cooperation, for more details see European Commission (2020a).

it is found out in programmes CB009 Germany-Czech Republic and CB011 Germany-Poland (both 80%), CB002 Austria-Czech Republic and CB019 Germany-Poland (both 77%), and CB017 Germany-Czech Republic (76%). Conversely, respondents are less likely to mention language differences as a problem in the following programmes, e.g.: CB004 Austria-Germany (10%), CB048 United Kingdom-Ireland (13%), CB030 Slovakia-Czech Republic (14%). The highest proportion of citizens considering *legal or administrative differences* as problematic can be found in the following programmes, e.g.: CB035 Italy-Switzerland (65%), CB042 Italy-Croatia and CB041 France-Switzerland (both 60%), and CB020 Greece-Italy, CB009 Germany-Czech Republic (both 58%). *Social and economic differences* are crucial problem for cross border cooperation in the following programmes: CB009 Germany-Czech Republic (67%), CB002 Austria-Czech Republic (63%), CB022 Greece-Bulgaria (62%), and CB035 Italy-Switzerland (61%). The highest proportions of respondents considering *cultural differences* as a problem can be observed in the following programmes: CB011 Germany-Poland (51%), CB009 Germany-Czech Republic and CB033 Italy-France (both 49%). At the other end of the scale, cultural differences are considered as a problem in the following programmes: CB016 Sweden-Norway (15%), CB021 Romania-Bulgaria and CB044 Belgium-France (both 16%), CB004 Austria-Germany (17%), CB030 Slovakia-Czech Republic (18%). The highest increases of the proportion of respondents who consider cultural differences as a problem for cross-border cooperation can be observed in the five following programmes: CB033 Italy-France (+13pp), CB042 Italy-Croatia and CB009 Germany-Czech Republic (both +11pp). More than 45% of respondents in the following programmes mention *accessibility* as a problem for cross border cooperation: CB033 Italy-France (54%), CB020 Greece-Italy (51%), CB035 Italy-Switzerland (49%), and CB034 France-Italy (46%). At the other end of the scale, respondents are less likely to mention accessibility as a problem in the following programmes: CB023 Germany-Netherlands (13%), CB004 Austria-Germany (15%), CB008 Hungary-Croatia and or CB053 Slovenia-Hungary.

Other studies and researchers are focused particularly on *legal and administrative obstacles* of cooperation. These obstacles are especially relevant in open borders, where cross-border commuting is higher, as is the case of border areas between EU “old Member States”. That does not mean these obstacles are not present in the remaining EU border areas. However, local border citizens perceive these obstacles to be much lower because cross-border commuting intensity levels are much lower. (Medeiros, 2018 p. 10). The European Commission’s study also showed that legal and/or administrative barriers still affect many aspects of life in border regions such as access to employment, healthcare, education and training, use of different technical standards, non-recognition of qualifications, lack of local cross-border public transport, even in sectors where there is a comprehensive European legal framework (European Commission, 2020b, p 11). Legal or administrative barrier to cooperation are frequently due to issues arising from incompatible national legal or administrative systems or procedures. However, these obstacles to cooperation are usually accompanied by other causes. These include lack of coordination among stakeholders across borders; higher complexity due to the number of stakeholders to be involved to devise a cross-border solution; and uncertainty among stakeholders about the specific nature of the challenges (European Commission, 2020b, p. 52, Durand, Decoville, 2019).

Legal and administrative obstacles of cooperation are also subject of the second action called *b-solutions* that is proposed in the DG REGIO Communication and managed/implemented by the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR). B-solutions consists of four calls for proposals addressing obstacles to cross-border cooperation: the first two were launched in 2018 and 2019, a third one was opened in summer 2020 and is under implementation. A fourth call was open until 11 March 2021. The aim is to enable public bodies and cross-border structures to address systematically legal and administrative border obstacles and access specialised technical support to find solutions. Public authorities of border administrations have the chance to submit information about obstacles they face when implementing projects in a border area under eight different thematic areas: public passenger transport, health and emergency services, multilingualism, employment, institutional cooperation, evidence and data, information services, and e-government. Successful candidates are assigned support from the EC to remove the difficulties which hinder cooperation with the neighbouring country. Until now, 66 hurdles have been identified across the EU, 43 of which have been analysed over the last two years. The first *compendium of b-solutions* was published 2020 and shows us concrete cases where the EC has contributed to solving bottleneck (European Commission, 2020b, European Commission, 2021b).

EC studies on the economic impact of border obstacles on GDP and employment levels in internal land border regions suggests that these regions could on average be potentially 8% richer if all current barriers were removed and a common language was used by all. This scenario is neither attainable nor desirable as Europe is built on diversity and subsidiarity. However, 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. Border barriers currently limit the use of productive assets or make it difficult to achieve economies of scale. They also generate costs for individuals and businesses. This negative economic impact varies between Member States,



but is clearly higher in countries where border regions generate a significant proportion of national GDP (European Commission, 2017).

#### 4.2 Future perspectives of cross-border regions development

At the beginning of 2020, the Covid-19 crisis first provoked uncoordinated border closures, as well as several uncooperative actions by both public and private actors. While some Member States decided to close entirely their borders, others drastically reduced the number of border-crossing points in order to slow down the spread of Covid-19 (European Commission, 2021c). This Covid-19 crisis widespread concerns and needs for sharing social-health equipment and services as shows the example of health care system and some social services in certain German or Austrian regions that depend on workforce coming from eastern European countries such as the Czech Republic and Poland. In the end, covidfencing will inevitably provoke economic setbacks in all European CB areas, as it affects all cross-border flows, directly or indirectly. It is with no surprise that several measures have already been put in place to mitigate economic problems in European border areas. (Medeiros, Guillermo, Ocskay, Peyrony, 2020) As a reaction, in September 2020, EC submitted the proposal on coordination among member states regarding the restrictions to free movement across the EU in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. (“Proposal for a Council recommendation on a coordinated approach to the restriction of free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic”).

In many cases cross-border barriers (especially in relation to health services, labour regulation, local public transport and business development) stem from differences in administrative practices and national legal frameworks. These administrative obstacles are difficult for programmes to address alone, requiring decisions beyond programme structures. As a reaction, in 2018 the EC submitted the *Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on a mechanism to resolve legal and administrative obstacles in a cross-border context* (European Commission, 2018). It means, that Commission proposes to facilitate solutions with an “off-the-shelf” legal instrument called *European Cross-Border Mechanism (ECBM)* to allow the use of one Member State's rules in a neighbouring Member State. (European Commission, 2018) This action is voluntary and optional, being used (or not) at the initiative of Member States concerned, it respects subsidiarity and proportionality. It also has no cost incidence for the EU budget. The instrument offers two options: a *European Cross-Border Commitment (ECBC)* (which itself enables derogation from normal rules) or a *European Cross-Border Statement (ECBS)* (signatories undertake formally to legislate to amend normal rules). The mechanism will cover joint projects for any item of infrastructure with impact in a cross-border region or any service of general economic interest provided in a cross-border region. Where a Member State opts for the Mechanism, it shall establish one or more *Cross-border Coordination Point*. It would be a body which, if it is necessary to deal with legislative problems at the border, will first check whether there is no longer an instrument that could be applied to the case. If this is not the case, the cross-border mechanism will be used. Although, the Committee of Regions (CoR) or European Parliament further supports the adoption of ECBM as a voluntary bottom-up legal instrument that for the better anchoring of cross-border public services could help, especially in crisis years such as the coronavirus ones, when states closed borders in an uncoordinated manner before the spread of the disease some Member States do not agree with the mechanism. They criticize excessive interference with state sovereignty, non-compliance with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, thematic and territorial anchoring and, in particular, the voluntary nature of the instrument. (Hosnedlová, 2021)

There is also a need to improve e-services across borders, to give more support to SME cooperation in providing cross-border public services or to consult more widely on the further development of cross-border cooperation with local citizens, municipalities and regions, not only within the EU but also in its neighborhood. One of the communication tools for consultation is platform called *RegHub* that aims to involve key local and regional actors through effective consultations in order to collect their experiences on EU policy implementation. The ideal result would then be more meaningful legislation, greater interconnection of all levels and “bringing” the EU closer to the people. The pilot phase of the project began in 2018 and in the year 2021 started the Platform *RegHub 2.0*. “Better regulation” and “evidence-based policymaking” should not just be phrases, but should be in EU rules and tak into account the experience of cities and regions. The number of regional hubs increased by about a third in the RegHub 2.0. Currently, RegHub has 46 members, 10 observers and one “associated”. Unlike the Italian, Bulgarian, Finnish, French, Hungarian, Slovak and Polish regions, Czech regions, cities, municipalities or other “units” do not join this network. (European Committee of Regions, 2021b, Plevák, 2021) The CoR has also joined the *European Cross-Border Citizens' Alliance* launched by the AEBR, the Mission Operationelle Transfrontalière (MOT) and the Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives (CESCI) in June 2020, following the experiences of the Covid-19 crisis. The Alliance invites all interested citizens living in border regions, as well as any citizen interested in the topic, to join the Alliance. (Evropský výbor regionů, 2020) To exchange and share of concrete experiences in the fight against the virus, communities, regions and cities can use “Covid-19 Exchange Platform” (Czech Republic do not join to using the platform yet).

To support border regions, besides using the current funds (ERDF, ESF), the new REACT-EU crisis fund should be implemented. In addition, the cross-border dimension should be supported in the longer term by national and regional resources or public-private partnerships. (Hosnedlová, 2021, European Committee of Regions, 2021a).

Besides the Interreg A funding it is also the moment to go beyond funding and to use existing mechanisms in order to anchor cooperation in a more sustainable policy environment, such as the *Border Focal Point (BFP)* or Macro Regional Strategies (European Commission, 2020c). The creation of a Border Focal Point within the Commission will facilitate the functions as: (1) ensure that key future actions by the Commission take due account of cross-border regional dimensions, (2) provide Member States and other key players with support to address legal and administrative border regional issues, notably relating to the transposition of EU directives or coordination requirements, (3) make sure that practical arrangements are in place for new actions stemming from this Communication, (4) share experiences and good practices effectively and widely with relevant stakeholders (European Commission, 2017).

## 5. Conclusion

Cross-border cooperation has gained an increasing role within EU Cohesion Policy since it was first supported by the Interreg programmes, but the financial allocation is not still sufficient and represent only small part of total EU Cohesion Policy budget. People living in border regions are often facing specific challenges, whether it is finding a job, accessing healthcare and other public services, as well as everyday commuting and overcoming administrative problems. The coronavirus pandemic with the sudden closure of EU internal borders was a stark reminder that European territorial cooperation cannot be taken for granted.

Based on EC 2020 survey results, we can state, that main identified barriers of European cross-border cooperation have persisted on the borders of the Czech Republic with Germany and Austria. Contrary, lowest limitation of cooperation shows Czech-Slovak cooperation due to similar cultural conditions. Our literature review reveals that obstacles have the potential to limit economic and social wellbeing of borders regions therefore that of whole states and EU. All citizens and territories should be able to enjoy the same possibilities and opportunities for fulfilling their needs, potential and expectations. In the current context of border restriction related to coronavirus, rise of nationalism, Euroscepticism, it seems crucial to adapt strategies and measure to compensate the failures of integration and distress of populations facing the negative impact of CBC barriers. The appropriate form of solutions can only be developed on the basis of sound knowledge of the complexity of the challenges and the real obstacles preventing or hindering cross-border cooperation are. To do so, a thorough research and an evidence-based analysis of the obstacle should be performed. (European Commission, 2020b) Moreover, measures that go beyond European funding are needed, as these ongoing difficulties cannot be addressed through financing and investments alone. To fight with the impact of the restrictions of free movement in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Member States should pay particular attention to the specificities of cross-border regions and the need to cooperate at local and regional level, including bottom-up approach. As a future solution adoption ECBM can be seen as a suitable tool to overcome legal and administrative obstacles within which cross-border cooperation projects are operating.

This paper establishes the theoretical framework for our further primary research in the field of cross-border cooperation funded by European funds, especially in the field of qualitative evaluation of CBC activities by Euroregions in the Czech Republic and their role in territorial development, specific obstacles and development challenges.

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