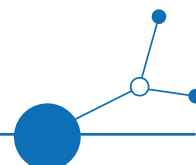


Joint Report on Thematic Expert Workshops



Final Version
05 2026





Table of Contents

1. Workshop nr 1 - Cross-border planning in Central Europe	2
1.1. Agenda of the workshop	2
1.2. Memo of the workshop.....	4
2. Workshop nr 2 - Cross-border participator governance in Central Europe	8
2.1. Agenda of the workshop	8
2.2. Memo of the workshop.....	10
3. Workshop nr 3 - Obstacle management in Central Europe	16
3.1. Agenda of the workshop	16
3.2. Memo of the workshop.....	18



INTRODUCTION

The present document gives an overview of the three thematic workshops organised within the framework of the BorderLabs CE. The three workshops addressed the three main topics of the project, namely cross-border strategic planning (held in Dresden, on 7 May 2025), cross-border participatory governance (held in Gorizia, on 22 October 2025), and obstacle management (held in Wrocław on 3 March 2026). To ensure smooth implementation, CESCO has drafted a concept summarising the conceptual frames of the three topics and the good practices of the project partners, and formulating proposals on the implementation of the workshops. The Lead Partner and CESCO have compiled the agenda of the workshop and invited the external speakers. It was the Lead Partner who coordinated the logistics and the internal communication related to the events.

Every workshop started with a keynote providing an overview of the topic in the context of reducing the barrier effects of the administrative borders in Central Europe, which was the main mission of the BorderLabs CE project. Subsequently, methodological questions were presented by external experts. Finally, the PILOT partners shared their experience, knowledge and lessons reflecting the workshop's topic.

The participants were recruited from the partner organisations and European think-tanks. In every case, further practitioners also attended the events. The lessons learned have been included in the Charter for cross-border cooperation governance in Central Europe.

1. Workshop nr 1 - Cross-border planning in Central Europe

1.1. Agenda of the workshop

Venue: Deutsches Hygiene-Museum, Lingnerplatz 1, 01069 Dresden

09:00 *Welcome coffee*

09:30 **Welcome and introduction**

Keynote: Towards a Central European Territorial Agenda - what might be the contribution of cross-border planning?

Gyula Ocskay, CESCO

10:00 **Hybrid session: What is the starting point for cross-border planning and governance in Central Europe?**

- *Roland Gaugitsch, ÖIR: Cross-border planning and governance in Central Europe - results and findings from the CROSSGOV project*
- *Claire Duvernet, BBSR: Cross-border data management and spatial monitoring - possibilities for the support of cross-border planning*

11:00 *Coffee break*

11:15 **Methodological input: Experiences and learnings from research on cross-border planning and governance in Central Europe**

- *Dr. Sabine Zillmer, Spatial Foresight: Cross-border public services and cross-border planning practices in Central Europe, and beyond*
- *Martin Reents, INFRASTRUKTUR & UMWELT: Cross-border strategic planning - the German-Polish case*



- Gyula Ocskay, CESCO: Learnings from the model of cohesion-based cross-border planning
- Dr. Peter Ulrich, University of Potsdam - Institute of Local Government Studies: Participatory components of cross-border planning

12:45 Lunch break

13:30 Reports from practice: Partner's experiences on cross-border planning

- EGTC GO: Planning and implementation of cross-border ITIs
- EGTC Ister-Granum: Integrated cross-border action plans (TAP) of the Slovak-Hungarian Interreg programme
- IRT: Cross-border aspects of regional planning in the Lower Silesia Voivodship
- Frankfurt (Oder): The future vision of the double-city

14:45 Coffee break

15:00 Concluding discussion: How can cross-border planning contribute to the further integration of the Central European space?

Outlook on upcoming workshops

16:00 End of the meeting

Participants of the workshop:

Name	Institution
Denisa Bláhová	Regional Development Agency of the Ústí Region
Giulia Bonn	EGTC GO
Martin Braun	Euroregion Pomoraví
Pavel Branda	Euroregion Nisa
Lukáš Chmel	Liberecký kraj
Claire Duvernet*	Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR)
Aneta Eibin	EGTC NOVUM
Roland Gaugitsch*	Austrian Institute for Spatial Planning (ÖIR)
Ondřej Havlíček	Euroregion Nisa
Peter Just	Saxon State Ministry for Infrastructure and Regional Development
Rüdiger Kubsch	Euroregion Elbe/Labe
Marcin Krzymuski*	City of Frankfurt (Oder)
Iva Linderová*	Regional Chamber of Commerce of the Liberec Region
Natalia Marysiok	Institute for Territorial Development
Małgorzata Mongiałło	Institute for Territorial Development
Peter Nagy	EGTC Ister-Granum
Darina Nagyova	EGTC Ister-Granum
Gyula Ocskay	Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives
Micaela Passon	EGTC GO
Milan Pátek	Saxon State Ministry for Infrastructure and Regional Development



Malgorzata Rojek	Institute for Territorial Development
Katja Rosner	Upper Austria
Martin Reents	INFRASTRUKTUR & UMWELT
Monika Simon	Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives
Tereza Tomíčková	Regional Development Agency of the Ústí Region
Peter Ulrich	Potsdam University, Institute of Local Government Studies
Maciej Zathey	Institute for Territorial Development
Elke Zepak*	Euroregion Erzgebirge
Sabine Zillmer	Spatial Foresight

* online



1.2. Memo of the workshop

Keynote: Towards a Central European Territorial Agenda - what might be the contribution of cross-border planning?

In his keynote, Gyula Ocskay (CESCI) presented the strategic background and approach of the BorderLabs CE project, outlining the particular challenges and the historic background of the Central European space against the background of the changing role of borders. With reference to



the heritage of the Vision Planet project, he outlined the (possible) role and benefit of cross-border strategic planning for the cohesion and well-being of Central Europe and explained the need for a dedicated Territorial Agenda for the Central European space. BorderLabs CE will contribute to this ambition through the realisation of pilot activities and the elaboration of a Charter for participatory cross-border cooperation governance in Central Europe, which shall be signed by political representatives during the closing event of the project in Brussels in 2026. He considered the document as a potential trigger for a new European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) reflecting to the most recent challenges of integration.

Hybrid session: What is the starting point for cross-border planning and governance in Central Europe?

In the first session of the workshop, Roland Gaugitsch (Austrian Institute for Spatial Planning, ÖIR) presented the ESPON project “Governance mechanisms for cross-border functional areas” (CROSSGOV). Through functional arguments and multi-layered definitions (i.e. functional, socio-economic, and geographic criteria) for cross-border functional areas, the project is expected to provide valuable insights and knowledge for cross-border planning, too.

Claire Duvernet (Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development, BBSR) provided an overview about activities supported by the BBSR in the field of cross-border planning and data management, highlighting the elaboration of the Spatial Concept Upper Rhine and the set-up of a spatial monitoring system for regions neighbouring Germany. Applying the results and findings of the related research, a dashboard with interactive maps on demographic and economic development in the German-Polish interaction area has been published. Additionally, she described current research activities focused on innovative approaches for cross-border accessibility analyses for public transport, and introduced the European Cross-Border Monitoring Network facilitating data exchange and harmonisation across state borders.

Methodological input: Experiences and learnings from research on cross-border planning and governance in Central Europe

The second session of the workshop focused on methodological inputs based on experiences and learnings from research on cross-border planning in Central Europe. Based on the results of the ESPON CPS project, Sabine Zillmer (Spatial Foresight) reflected on the relation between cross-border public services and cross-border planning practices, outlining particular challenges for the Central European space. She underlined that there are no particular obstacles to cross-border public services in Central Europe - obstacles observed here occur as well in other cross-border areas. What differs is the concrete specification of the obstacles, which needs to be analysed (and clarified) in the particular context.

Martin Reents (IU) contributed to the exchange with the results of readings in planning theory, based on works of Louis Albrechts, Patsy Healey, Hans Mastop and Andreas Faludi. In their considerations on strategic planning, these authors highlighted the differences between “traditional” land-use planning and strategic planning. Underlining the crucial role of “tough decisions” about what is most important to be tackled and addressed in planning processes, it was



pointed out that the performance of strategic plans should not only be measured in terms of conformance and compliance. Rather, the decisive factor is whether the stakeholders have included the plan in their considerations and deliberations - even if this means deviating from the original provisions of the plan.

Gyula Ocskay (CESCI) presented learnings from the model of cohesion-based cross-border planning, which had been developed and applied by CESCI in several border regions. He explained the role of different methods of cohesion analysis, leading to the identification of territorial, economic and social cohesion challenges and the definition of strategic responses, including integrated frames of implementation. Based on their material output and the level (intensity) of cooperation, the model provides as well a frame for the assessment of the cross-border relevance of CBC projects. Due to its broad approach, the model of cohesion-based cross-border planning contributes to the understanding of cross-border regions as multi-dimensional borderscapes, facilitating the better understanding of the interaction of flows, cooperation and people.

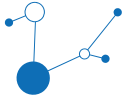
Peter Ulrich (University of Potsdam) reflected on participatory components of cross-border planning, presenting the theoretical argument, the analytical model and research design, the case studies and the results of his PhD thesis on participatory governance in cross-border regions. With this regard, he analysed four cases of (operational and non-operational) European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). Regarding the participatory dimension of cross-border planning, he suggested to investigate how to involve and to engage citizens and civil society actors to (a) participate and (b) to engage to achieve better results and a higher democratic legitimacy. With this regard, various options reaching from consultation to decision-making (e.g. through citizen councils) are available.

Reports from practice: Partner's experiences on cross-border planning

The third (and final) session of the workshop mirrored the previous inputs with the experiences of project partners in the field of cross-border planning. For this purpose, **Micaela Passon (EGTC GO)**, **Péter Nagy (EGTC Ister-Granum)** and **Marcin Krzymuski (City of Frankfurt [Oder])** provided in-depth inputs related to the following examples of advanced cross-border policies and tools:

EGTC GO: The unique experiences of Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) in the 2014-2020 programming period of the Interreg programme between Italy and Slovenia, creating the framework for the coordinated implementation of complex investments in health and tourism. Based on these experiences, in the 2021-2027 programming period the ITI tool was applied to revitalise the main square and adjacent areas of the twin-cities of Gorizia and Nova Gorica formerly divided by a border fence. The project creating a joint main square celebrating the European Capital of Culture (2025) used ERDF funding from Italy and Slovenia and national and local funding from Slovenia generating a real multi-fund cross-border ITI, the one and only in the EU.

EGTC Ister-Granum: Integrated cross-border actions plans (TAP) in the 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 programming periods of the Interreg programme between Hungary and Slovakia. The first TAP, which was managed and coordinated by EGTC Ister-Granum, served as a cross-border umbrella project for small-scale projects of local producers and service providers, integrating their activities into the joint network and facilitating their access to Interreg funds. During the present



programming period, the same scheme is applied for developing cross-border integrated tourist destinations.

City of Frankfurt (Oder): The Municipality of Stubice and the City of Frankfurt (Oder) have developed a joint vision and action plan for the period of 2020-2030, which defines the framework and the ambition and aims for cooperation in the fields of education, quality of life (including infrastructure & services), business & economy and communication & participation. The local public, citizens and civil society actors have been involved in the process of elaboration of the action plan through joint future conferences. The action plan is being realised through various projects and initiatives, and its implementation is being regularly monitored by the city councils from both municipalities.

Finally, **Maciej Zathey (IRT)** summarised the experiences of cross-border planning (and cross-border aspects of regional planning) from the perspective of the Lower Silesia region. Based on the example of existing planning studies and documents, he identified three stages of development: (1) approaching the border, staying within the limits of administrative boundaries (2) crossing the border, creating a synthesis of planning studies and documents (3) ignoring the border, creating joint visions for development.

Transferring these thoughts to the Three-Country Area, he formulated the demand for a multilateral approach to spatial and strategic planning, which includes a vision for implementation. In this model, a shared vision across the border can be created based on studies and concepts, which gradually might be translated into the legal and planning language required for each respective territory. This should be reflected as well on European level, creating a strategic vision grounded in spatial realities, which might advance the approach set out in the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP).

Concluding discussion: How can cross-border planning contribute to the further integration of the Central European space?

In the closing part of the workshop, the participants outlined potential theoretical and methodological frames for the concept of integrated cross-border spatial planning, including

- the main aim: to recover the disadvantaged situation of (border) areas left behind, and the discontent of people living there;
- the approach to be applied: to identify the joint challenges and complementary advantages the joint vision can be built on;
- the methods including bottom-up and participatory aspects;
- the need for a guarantee for long-term sustainability of the results and outcomes of the plans, i.e. cross-border governance; and
- the need for capacity building in border areas to enable cross-border planning.



2. Workshop nr 2 - Cross-border participator governance in Central Europe

2.1. Agenda of the workshop

Venue: Sala consiglio provinciale, Corso Italia 55, 34170 Gorizia
(in the building of the EGTC GO office)

- 10:00** *Welcome coffee*
- 10:30** **Welcome and introduction**
- Keynote: Towards a Central European Territorial Agenda - what might be the contribution of cross-border participatory governance?**
- Daniele Del Bianco, ISIG*
- 11:00** **Theoretical framework for cross-border participatory governance**
- *Dr. Krisztina Keresztely, Comparative Research Network (Berlin): Principles of participatory governance*
 - *Dr. Peter Ulrich, University of Potsdam - Institute of Local Government Studies: Participatory governance in border areas*
- 12:00** *Coffee break*
- 12:15** **Good practices of cross-border participatory approach**
- *Irene Covi, Programme Officer Interreg Italy-Austria Managing Authority: Introduction of the CLLD tool of the Interreg Italy-Austria Programme (online)*
 - *Friedrich Veider, Project Manager: Participatory factors of the HEurOpen Cross-Border CLLD*
 - *Nicole Zambanini, General Secretariat of the EGTC Euregio Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino: Citizens' Councils in the EGTC*
- 13:30** *Lunch break*
- 14:30** **Reports from the PILOT partners**
- *Frankfurt (Oder): First outcomes of the citizen dialogue forum*
 - *EGTC GO: Participatory aspects of the European Capital of Culture project*
 - *EGTC Ister-Granum: The role of civil society actors in the development of the cross-border local product network*
 - *Euroregion Nisa: The role of the civil society in the cross-border integration of the tri-border area - the small project fund*
 - *Provincial Government of Upper Austria: Whom to address for the elimination of cross-border obstacles?*
- 15:45** *Coffee break*
- 16:00** **Concluding discussion: How can cross-border participatory governance contribute to the further integration of the Central European space?**
- Outlook on upcoming workshops**
- 16:30** *End of the meeting*
- 18:30** *Departure of the bus for the joint dinner*

**Participants of the workshop:**

Name	Institution
Daniele Del Bianco	ISIG Istituto di Sociologia Internazionale di Gorizia
Sören Bollmann	City of Frankfurt (Oder)
Giulia Bonn	EGTC GO
Pavel Branda*	Euroregion Nisa
Arianna Casasola	EGTC GO
Irene Covi*	Interreg Italy-Austria Managing Authority
Elisa Cuzzit	EGTC GO
Lara Devetak	EGTC GO
Gábor Dorcsak	Pozitivo Digital
Aneta Eibin*	EGTC NOVUM
Peter Just	Saxon State Ministry for Infrastructure and Regional Development
Krisztina Keresztely	CRN Comparative Research Network
Romina Kocina	EGTC GO
Samo Kofol	Municipality of Ajdovščina
Tomaž Konrad	EGTC GO
Dmitrij Ljasuk	Pozitivo Digital
Natalia Marysiok*	Institute for Territorial Development
Peter Nagy	EGTC Ister-Granum
Darina Nagyova	EGTC Ister-Granum
Gyula Ocskay	Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives
Micaela Passon	EGTC GO
Milan Pátek	Saxon State Ministry for Infrastructure and Regional Development
Matic Pirih	WE GO d.o.o.
Éva Radványi	Pozitivo Digital
Malgorzata Rojek*	Institute for Territorial Development
Katja Rosner	Upper Austria
Martin Reents	INFRASTRUKTUR & UMWELT
Giulio Selvazzo	GO 2025
Monika Simon	Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives
Mojca Stubelj Ars	GO 2025
Peter Ulrich	Potsdam University, Institute of Local Government Studies
Friedrich Veider	LEADER and Regional Management Region Hermagor
Ramona Velea	ISIG Istituto di Sociologia Internazionale di Gorizia
Aleš Vodičar	Municipality of Sežana
Nicole Zambanini*	EGTC Euregio Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino

* online



2.2. Memo of the workshop

Keynote: Towards a Central European Territorial Agenda - what might be the contribution of cross-border participatory governance?

In his keynote, **Daniele Del Bianco (ISIG Istituto di Sociologia Internazionale di Gorizia)** outlined challenges and opportunities for good democratic governance across borders. In general, participation can be understood as the operating system of governance - beyond elections, it enables citizens and institutions to shape policies together. In this understanding, the vitality of democracy depends on how people participate, and not only on how they vote. At the same time, borders increase complexity - they bring together many levels (local, regional, national, European) and reveal how democracy performs when authority and identity cross boundaries. Accordingly, participatory and deliberative practices may turn boundaries into spaces of collaboration.

As well in the cross-border context, participatory practices may increase legitimacy and trust - decisions gain credibility and durability, and policies can be better aligned to the lived reality of functional border regions. With regard to multi-level governance, participation helps to connect the different levels of authority (EU ↔ local) and both sides of the border. The intensity of participation can be measured with the continuum from one-way transparency (information) to shared decision-making (co-creation):

Level	Typical form	Purpose
Information	Websites, reports	Transparency



Consultation	Surveys, hearings	Feedback
Dialogue / Deliberation	Citizen's panels, assemblies	Shared understanding
Co-decision / Co-creation	Participatory bodies, living labs	Shared responsibility

Source: ISIG/Del Bianco 2025

With this regard, the **participatory dimension** reflects the breadth, and the **deliberative dimension** reflects the depth and quality of citizen (and stakeholder) involvement. To describe different types of border-related governance practices, ISIG has developed a border-participation taxonomy:

Openness / Possibility to participate	High	Functional Border / Procedural Participation Formal cooperation; low engagement.	Relational Border / Active Co-Governance High openness + mobility; co-creation.
	Low	Closed Border / Democratic Void Rigid systems; weak identity.	Potential Border / Latent Participation High contact; institutions closed
		Low	High

Mobility / Interest to participate

Source: ISIG/Del Bianco 2025

Concluding his speech, Daniele Del Bianco formulated clear recommendations to activate participation as engine of legitimacy, paving the way towards more relational borders and capitalising participatory practices as drivers for integration:

- **Codify participation standards:** Adopt the Council of Europe 12 Principles & Code of Good Practice and the OECD Open Government guidelines
- **Institutionalise platforms:** Embed advisory councils or citizens' fora in EGTC statutes
- **Connect people-to-people projects with policy making:** Feed micro-project insights into strategic planning
- **Co-design cross-border public services:** Involve users in transport, health or environment
- **Build capacity on both sides:** Provide training for officials and civic actors and share resources

Theoretical framework for cross-border participatory governance

In her contribution, **Krisztina Keresztely (CRN Comparative Research Network)** focused on participatory processes and action research in bordering contexts. Initially, she underlined the relation between participatory governance and institutionalisation of participation. Whereas citizen participation refers to the practice of participation in terms of individual and collective engagement of citizens and stakeholders based on related methods and tools, participatory governance is built and integrated into (institutional and administrative) decision-making structures.

She then presented the Participatory Process Coaching (PPC) as method helping local actors to design their own participatory processes based on their needs, capacities and goals through a mix of consulting and capacity-building. Following this approach, different types and elements of participatory tools are being combined, helping to develop and to implement tailored solutions for place-based challenges. The participatory process itself is being structured through three sub-processes ("cycles"), which are closely



intertwined - the preparation cycle, the implementation cycle and the action research cycle. Each cycle consists of a comprehensive set of elements (e.g. for preparation, one can use stakeholder mapping, needs assessment, participatory observation, etc.; for implementation recruitment, disseminations etc.; while impact assessment, feedback interviews, risk monitoring and other methods contribute to the success of the action research phase), facilitating and supporting the successful implementation of the participatory process.

So far, elements of the method have been applied in urban areas characterised by strong social and urban boundaries linked to social diversity, gentrification, social exclusion and peripheral areas, e.g. in the context of climate change adaptation of vulnerable neighbourhoods. In her reflections, Krisztina Keresztely draw particular attention to bordering aspects, since each participatory process contributes to the removal of borders. At the same time, each process creates new borders through the inclusion and the exclusion of stakeholders (bordering re-designs public spaces). These aspects should be thoroughly considered and reflected during the design and implementation of participatory approaches.

Peter Ulrich (University of Potsdam - Institute of Local Government Studies) provided the participants of the workshop with insights from the TEIN4citizens project, which has been realised between 2019 and 2021 in five European cross-border regions. In this project, five dialogue forums with citizens, politicians and experts have been realised in five border regions, discussing topics of European interest. The forums included different discussion formats (forums, conferences, workshops, panel discussions) and gathered 680 participants from 24 countries. Each forum was supported through a thematic online survey.

The following topics were discussed:

- **Ireland-Northern Ireland border / Belfast / 11 March 2019:** Human Rights, Civic Rights, Entitlements and Obligations: What does it mean to be an EU citizen?
- **Austrian-Slovenian border / Klagenfurt & Ljubljana / 3 October 2019:** Old and New Minorities - The Relevance of Identities for Border Regions in Today's EU
- **Polish-Czech border / Cieszyn & Český Těšín / 5 March 2020:** Cross-border Identity and Engagement of Civil Society in Twin Cities
- **Spanish-French border / Girona (online) / 9-18 March 2021:** Multilingualism and Identity in the 21st Century Europe
- **German-French border / Strasbourg-Kehl (online) / 13-22 April 2021:** Mobility, Environment, Culture, Identity & Multilingualism - Borderless in Europe?

The events demonstrated that citizens are not “idiots” and can discuss many different topics. However, it is much easier and better to engage citizens' when the topic is concrete and has something to do with their daily lives, and when they can really make proposals and contribute to decisions.

Subsequently, Peter Ulrich summarised the main findings and experiences from the exercise, which might serve as conclusions and recommendations for the realisation of similar activities. These concern the organiser and his legitimacy to represent each side of the border, the invitation and communication with participants (target groups, selection criteria for recruiting, intercultural aspects of engagement), the involvement of politicians and experts, the need for different communication channels, the motivation of participants, the choice and timing of adequate discussion formats, funding and financial aspects and “lessons learnt” for the moderation, evaluation and documentation of events.

In particular, the importance of clear rules was highlighted to ensure that citizens do not get frustrated and that they feel considered. With this regard, citizens

- should not be overwhelmed with dialogue proposals,
- have to understand their role (get information, make proposals, prepare co-decisions?) and the possibilities how they can contribute during and after the discussion,
- have to be informed about the context of discussion (documents, input of experts or organisers),



- have to understand how cross-border cooperation works (at least regarding the topic they will discuss) in order to understand how their proposals will be analysed and might be implemented.

Good practices of cross-border participatory approaches

Irene Covi (Interreg Italy-Austria Managing Authority) introduced the participants of the workshop to the application of the CLLD (Community-led local development) tool in the Interreg Italy-Austria Cooperation Programme. In the funding period, the programme has five thematic priorities:

- Priority 1: Innovation and entrepreneurship (28,2 %, 25,8 mln EUR)
- Priority 2: Climate change and biodiversity (28,2 %, 25,8 mln EUR)
- Priority 3: Sustainable tourism and culture (13,2 %, 12,1 mln EUR)
- Priority 4: Local development - CLLD (21,2 %, 19,4 mln EUR)
- Priority 5: Reducing cross-border obstacles (9,2 %, 8,4 mln EUR)

The funds in priority 4 are being allocated to four cross-border CLLD areas with a population between 35.000 and 196.000 inhabitants, which cover the closer border areas of the Interreg programme. In the understanding of the programme, the CLLD areas are part of the bottom-up approach of the multi-level governance system, which is shaped as well by macro-regional strategies and large-scale EGTC's (Euregio Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino, Euregio Senza Confini), creating a cross-border identity.

The practical work in the CLLD areas is founded on consensus, trust, friendship and good relationships, based on principles of partnership and stakeholder participation. The programme actors share a strong belief in local empowerment by involving active local actors, and they recognize the added-value of the participatory approach in institutional, political, socio-economic and socio-cultural terms.

Friedrich Veider (LEADER and Regional Management Region Hermagor) explained the bottom-up method of local development for the HEurOpen cross-border CLLD as cooperation between the LEADER regions of Hermagor (Austria, 15 municipalities with ~35.000 inhabitants), Euroleader and Open Leader (Italy, 43 municipalities with ~67.000 inhabitants). Four strategic targets have been defined:

- Vibrant, innovative communities
- Communities in harmony with the environment and resources
- Communities, with attractive nature and culture
- Integrated cross-border communities that benefit from cooperation

Regional actors (municipalities, associations, schools/educational institutions, small businesses, working groups, tourism organisations, ...) may apply for small projects (up to 50.000 EUR) and medium-scale projects (up to 200.000 EUR). Medium-scale projects may include as well partners from the larger functional area of the HEurOpen CLLD area.

Projects cover a wide range of thematic topics - however, the key success factor for each project is the cross-border added-value and the active involvement of various stakeholders, including local authorities, civil society organizations and citizens. To support project development, workshops and thematic expert meetings are being organized to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices, and pilot initiatives serving as testing ground for innovative ideas and solutions receive particular support.

As part of the participatory approach (and using the advantages of the small scale of the cooperation area), the regional management team actively approaches potential stakeholders, provides targeted information adapted to respective target groups, realises thematic focus groups and provides broad support ("guidance from A to Z") to new actors and players. With this regard, the success of the CLLD approach depends to a large extent on personal contacts, networking and the in-depth knowledge of needs, capacities and strengths of local actors.



Nicole Zambanini (EGTC Euregio Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino, General Secretariat) presented the approach and the outcomes of the first Euregio citizen's council, which took place in autumn 2022. The task of the council was to develop answers and proposals for the following question:

How can the Euregio Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino become more visible and more tangible within the municipalities and in the entire Euregio area?

The council involved 30 citizens from the municipalities of Arco (Trentino), Bressanone/Brixen (South Tyrol) and Hall in Tirol (Tyrol), which submitted expressions of interest in 04/2022 and were selected for participation in 06/2022 according to rules guaranteeing representativeness. The citizen's council took place on 1-2 October 2022 in Arco, and results were presented to regional governors and local mayors on 5 December 2022.

The participants of the council developed various proposals on municipal and Euregio level:

- Informing and communicating about the Euregio through different municipal channels (website, social media, newsletters, events)
- Sharing of information about events from other municipalities/territories (event calendar)
- More targeted communication on Euregio level (e.g. shared newsletter, nomination of local ambassadors, itinerant meetings of the Euregio decision-making bodies)
- Introduction of a single mobility pass for all citizens and all territories of the Euregio (so far, only daily group tickets and mobility passes for students have been introduced)
- Development of a digital platform (app) informing about events and activities

So far, the citizen's proposals have been implemented only partly. Based on the agreement reached at the Board of the Europaregion, since 15 December 2025, the Euregio-Ticket enables the use of public transport in the Euregio for a price of 750 EUR/year.

A major lesson learnt from the first Council project is that this method is especially relevant at local level where special, unique local issues can be addressed raising attention among the citizens. At regional level, it is much harder to reach.

Reports from the PILOT partners

The final session of the workshop mirrored the previous inputs with the experiences of project and pilot partners in the field of participatory governance. For this purpose, **Giulio Selvazzo and Mojca Stubelj Ars (GO! 2025 / EGTC GO)**, **Sören Bollmann (City of Frankfurt [Oder])**, **Pavel Branda (Euroregion Nisa)**, **Péter Nagy (EGTC Ister-Granum)** and **Katja Rosner (Provincial Government of Upper Austria)** provided in-depth inputs related to the following examples and activities in the field of participatory governance:

- **EGTC GO:** Through the "Borderless Wireless" project the platform www.go2025.eu has been established, which serves as the official platform of the European Capital of Culture and the digital point of access of GO!2025. The platform allows to discover the GO!2025 programme and events, to plan the visit and explore the Borderless Area and to take part in the GO!2025 project as artist, volunteer, partner and event organiser. The platform was designed in collaborative procedure, and involved stakeholders during set-up and implementation. Additionally, as part of the GO!2025 programme, many participative projects have been realised, involving young people, local artists and citizens through workshops, summer schools, labs and happenings. As long-term effect of the GO!2025 project, the EPICenter is being established in the vicinity of the railway station, as participatory space and place of documentation (and creation) of local history.
- **City of Frankfurt (Oder):** For the cooperation between the City of Frankfurt (Oder) and the Municipality of Stubice, participatory approaches have become more and more relevant. Starting with German-Polish future conferences (2009) for the elaboration and consultation of the joint action program, step-by-step



the involvement of citizens and civil society stakeholders has been extended to further fields of action. In 2020, the double-cities designed a new joint vision with the involvement of everyday citizens selected through a competition. Through the so-called “citizens’ picnic” the municipality managers have collected good ideas from the citizens in diverse formats. Recently, particular attention is being paid to cross-border urban development, with a focus on the revitalization and development of public spaces and the establishment of a local development council with civil society stakeholders. Additionally, the participation of younger people shall be strengthened.

- **Euroregion Nisa:** The presentation of the Euroregion Neisse-Nisa-Nysa reflected on the role of the civil society and people-to-people projects in the cross-border integration of the tri-border area through the Small Project Fund (SPF). More than 1.000 of these projects, covering a broad range of topics, have been realised in the funding period 2014-2020, involving more than 4.000 institutions. Through these projects, more than 160.000 inhabitants (20% of the total population) of the tri-border area could be reached. This achievement is highly relevant for the promotion of cross-border cooperation in the framework of Interreg, and it contributes considerably to the quality of life in the region. It is crucial that people-to-people projects will be supported as well in future funding periods, and the management requirements for the SPF should be as pragmatic as possible.
- **EGTC Ister-Granum:** Civil society actors contribute actively to the establishment of the cross-border local product network, which is being developed in the pilot realised by the EGTC Ister-Granum. Within the pilot, NGOs, communities, producers and local governments are building bridges for cross-border trade, and the community-based approach helps to strengthen the regional identity. In particular, the engagement of civil society actors helps to overcome legislative and administrative barriers as well as different national rules and uneven institutional support. With this regard, the flexibility of civil society actors and their mutual support through personal connections are crucial success factors, contributing to a resilient, inclusive and sustainable local economy.
- **Provincial Government of Upper Austria:** Stakeholders representing the direct border area (NGOs, interest groups, authorities) have been involved in all steps of implementation of the pilot on the elimination of cross-border obstacles through surveys, interviews, events and workshops. To involve larger groups of stakeholders and to keep them informed about current proceedings, paddlets have been used as online tools. Interviews with key experts were quite time-consuming, but enabled detailed discussions of obstacle-related issues (based on previous research). A particular challenge turned out to find the right balance between local perceptions and insights and priorities of competent authorities on identified obstacles, taking into account administrative expertise, the possible lack of resources and the relevance of the national and regional mission. With this regard, facilitating the removal of cross-border obstacles requires the capability to listen, to translate, to communicate, to build networks and to inspire and enable solutions.

Concluding discussion: How can cross-border participatory governance contribute to the further integration of the Central European space?

In the closing part of the workshop, the participants confirmed the value of cross-border participatory governance for the further integration of Central Europe and its border regions, acknowledging at the same time that there is still lot of space for improvements. In particular, the involvement of citizens remains challenging, considering the complexity of cross-border cooperation - and considering the fact that even the involvement of “informed citizens” such as politicians, experts or journalists remains demanding. The cross-border context generates further challenges as the cultural differences result in different interpretation of civic participation, engagement and democratic governance.



However, if adequate (place-based) issues are being identified which provide possibilities for successful involvement and support of decision-making, participatory approaches might provide new opportunities and perspectives for cross-border integration and cohesion.

3. Workshop nr 3 - Obstacle management in Central Europe

3.1. Agenda of the workshop

Venue: Instytut Rozwoju Terytorialnego (IRT), ul. Dawida 1a, 50-527 Wrocław

09:30 *Welcome coffee*

10:00 **Welcome and introduction**

Keynote: Towards a Central European Territorial Agenda - what might be the contribution of the management of legal and administrative obstacles?

Dirk Peters, Senior Expert in European Cross-Border Cooperation (AEBR)

10:30 **Theoretical framework and research on obstacle management**

- *Martin Unfried, Institute for Transnational and Euregional cross border cooperation and Mobility (ITEM): Learnings and experiences from the Schakelpunt at the Flemish-Dutch border*

11:30 *Coffee break*

11:45 **Good practices and promising approaches of obstacle management**

- *Dirk Gebhardt, Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR): Learnings and experiences from German-Polish “Demonstration Projects of Spatial Planning” (MORO)*
- *Carsten Jacob & Joanna Czasnojc, Euroregion Spree-Neiße-Bober: Towards a system of Border Information Points (BIP) along the German-Polish border*
- *Martin Hanf & Przemysław Jackowski, Kommunalgemeinschaft Europaregion Pomerania e.V.: Information and consulting offers for business and citizens in the POMERANIA Euroregion*
- *Gyula Ocskay (CESCI): The #ACCESS project - Promoting legal accessibility across the Slovak-Hungarian border*

13:00 *Lunch break*

14:00 **Reports from the PILOT partners**

- *Katja Rosner, Provincial Government of Upper Austria: Dealing with border obstacles in Upper Austria*
- *Ondřej Havlíček, Association of Euroregions of the Czech Republic (AEČR): Identifying and resolving cross-border obstacles in the Czech border regions and BRIDGEforEU implementation: The AEČR perspective*
- *Marcin Krzymuski, City of Frankfurt (Oder)*
- *Micaela Passon, EGTC GO: Dealing with border obstacles in the EGTC GO area*
- *Peter Nagy, EGTC Ister-Granum: When a border becomes a barrier - cross-border legal challenges for local producers in the HU-SK border region*

15:15 *Coffee break*

15:30 **Concluding discussion: How can successful management of obstacles contribute to the further integration of the Central European space?**



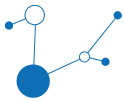
Outlook on the final conference

16:00 *End of the meeting*

19:00 *Joint dinner*

Participants of the workshop:

Name	Institution
Katarzyna Acedońska	Institute for Territorial Development
Giulia Bonn	EGTC GO
Martin Braun	Euroregion Pomoraví
Joanna Czasnojc*	Euroregion Spree-Neisse-Bober
Aneta Eibin	EGTC NOVUM
Dirk Gebhardt	Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR)
Martin Hanf	Kommunalgemeinschaft Europaregion Pomerania e.V.
Ondřej Havlíček	Euroregion Nisa / Association of Euroregions of the Czech Republic (AEČR)
Przemysław Jackowski	Kommunalgemeinschaft Europaregion Pomerania e.V.
Carsten Jacob*	Euroregion Spree-Neisse-Bober
Peter Just	Saxon State Ministry for Infrastructure and Regional Development
Marcin Krzymuski	City of Frankfurt (Oder)
Weronika Kumorek-Kazimierska	Institute for Territorial Development
Natalia Marysiok	Institute for Territorial Development
Oliwia Mizak	Institute for Territorial Development
Peter Nagy	EGTC Ister-Granum
Darina Nagyova	EGTC Ister-Granum
Gyula Ocskay	Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives
Micaela Passon	EGTC GO
Milan Pátek	Saxon State Ministry for Infrastructure and Regional Development
Dirk Peters	Senior Expert in European Cross-Border Cooperation (AEBR)
Malgorzata Rojek	Institute for Territorial Development
Katja Rosner	Upper Austria
Martin Reents	INFRASTRUKTUR & UMWELT
Martin Unfried	ITEM Institute for Transnational and Euregional cross-border cooperation and Mobility
Katharina Voss	Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building (BMWSB)
Joanna Wyrwa	Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences
Maciej Zathey	Institute for Territorial Development



3.2. Memo of the workshop

Keynote: Towards a Central European Territorial Agenda - what might be the contribution of the management of legal and administrative obstacles

In his keynote, Dirk Peters (Senior Expert in European Cross-Border Cooperation [AEBC]) outlined the evolution of EU policies on cooperation. In the first step, in the context of the Schengen Agreement and the development of the Single Market, Interreg and the support of cross-border cooperation emerged as support programme to compensate for job losses in border regions. This economic perspective is valid until today, since in 2017 it has been estimated that if only 20% of border obstacles were removed, border regions would gain 2% in GDP and ~1 million new jobs. At the same time, 44% of the EU territory with 31% of the EU and EFTA population is being considered as part of border regions, with partly huge flows of cross-border commuters and workers. (Border regions together would compose the largest EU country with more than 140 million inhabitants.)

However, the financial contribution of Interreg in the field of cross-border cooperation remains at the level of less than 1 billion EUR p.a. (annual budget of the City of Aachen in 2026: 1.4 billion EUR). These funds address only partly the improvement of cooperation governance, and to a very limited extent the removal of border obstacles. At the same time, there is need to address two major paradoxes of cooperation:

- The more you cooperate, the more it becomes complex.
- What really annoys people living and working in border regions, is not or hardly a EU competence.¹

Therefore, in 2006 with the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) the framework for a cross-border legal personality has been introduced, creating the foundations for more integrated cross-border cooperation structures and institutionalised processes of trust-building.

To complete the institutional framework, in 2018 the European Commission proposed a “mechanism to resolve legal and administrative obstacles in a cross-border context” (European Cross-Border Mechanism, ECBM). The ECBM proposal was developed parallel with the EC Communication “Boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions” (2017) also stipulating “a new instrument which would make it possible, on a voluntary basis and agreed by the competent authorities in charge, for the rules of one Member State to apply in the neighbouring Member State for a specific project or action limited in time”. At the same time, pilot projects to solve border obstacles were launched, within the framework of the b-solutions initiative.

¹ Taxes on salaries, social security, labour law, education system, health care, public transport, recognition of diploma and qualifications etc.



However, the proposal on the ECBM has failed in the Council. In 2023, the European Parliament called the European Commission to prepare a revised proposal, leading to the BRIDGEforEU regulation finally approved in 2025. With this regulation, a procedural cascade for the management of legal obstacles has been introduced, defining rules for deadlines and decisions on so-called “cross-border files” (i.e. cases of border obstacles created on the basis of the regulation). The application of the Regulation is voluntary.

A major innovation of the regulation is the definition of “addresses” (cross-border coordination points and/or relevant authorities) for the handling of legal obstacles. How this obligation (and success factor) of the regulation will be implemented is not clear yet and needs to be observed. However, to facilitate the process a call for pilot projects has been launched, and first institutions have been identified as a “testbed” for future cross-border coordination points (CBCP).

In the meantime, external threats for the future of cross-border cooperation need to be observed, too. These include in particular the effects of border closures during the Covid-19 pandemic and the effects of border controls, which have been reintroduced as “answer” to migration challenges. To avoid future sealings, the amended Schengen Borders Code obliges the Member States to identify cross-border regions where derogations will be adopted during a future pandemic. Nevertheless, the high number (487) of notifications on temporary border checks since 2006 is thought-provoking.

Additionally, the future of Interreg during the programming period 2028-2034 has been put to a large extent into the hands of Member States. So, it depends on (national) decisions of Member States, if cross-border cooperation will contribute to the joint European project in future as it did in the past.

Theoretical framework and research on obstacle management

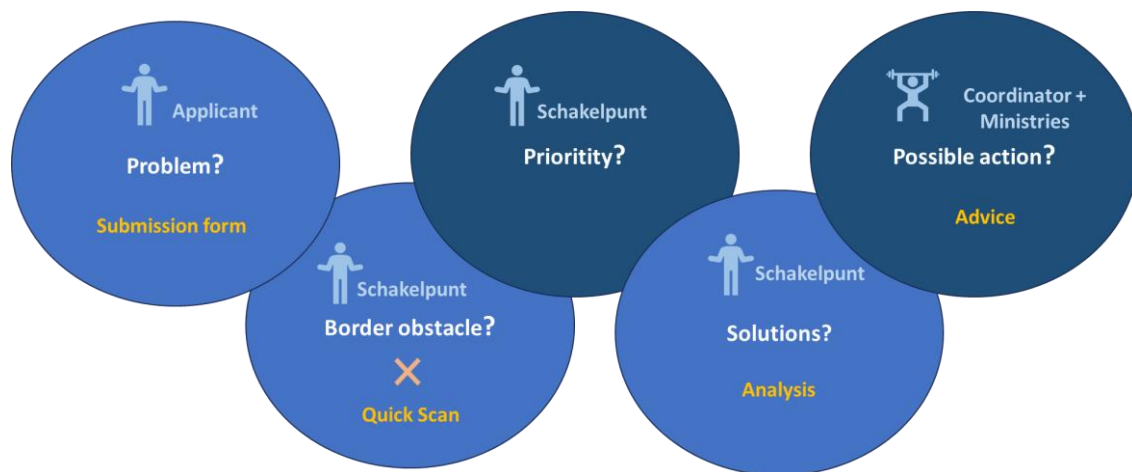
Martin Unfried (ITEM Institute for Transnational and Euregional cross-border cooperation and Mobility) shared learnings and experiences from the Schakelpunt at the Flemish-Dutch border with the audience.

First, he added a few comments on the BRIDGEforEU Regulation, highlighting that the administrative conditions for a CBCP will vary per border region. He also mentioned that the CBCPs will have no mandate to tackle taxation and social security issues, however, the most frequented cases they meet address these two topics. Finally, obstacles are a moving target: once you resolve one, a new one emerges, which requires permanent management and flexibility. Accordingly, ITEM puts emphasis on the training of public servants to enable them to tackle recurrent obstacles.

As well in the Meuse-Rhine region, border obstacles are of high economic relevance due to large numbers of cross-border workers and the resulting (negative) impact on the regional GDP. Therefore, since 2014 ITEM is active in interdisciplinary research on practical solutions in the context of cross-border mobility and cooperation issues. Particular expertise has been developed in the field of (ex-ante) cross-border territorial impact assessments (TIA), evaluating national policies with regard to their cross-border dimension (more than 50 analyses so far). They managed to achieve the inclusion of the ex-ante TIA practice in the Dutch legislative procedures (even if it is not a common practice yet).

Due to the strong integration and the long-lasting cooperation in the Flemish-Dutch border area, in 2018 a process was launched to structurally address border obstacles. In the first step, an administrative working group has been formed, giving advice to the Flemish and Dutch governments. The working group recommended both governments to follow the principle of deviation (instead of adjustments), and in 2023 it was decided to set-up the “[Schakelpunt](#)” (*Switching Point*) to facilitate the management of border obstacles.

In the first phase of implementation, the Schakelpunt has been set-up as an Interreg project, integrating administrative and scientific partners and involving all relevant administrative levels. The process of work is organised according to a clear and transparent procedure, starting with the submission and the quick scan of a problem:



Source: ITEM/Unfried 2026

The analysis begins with the verification of the data included in the quick scan. The data is verified for completeness and, if necessary, embedded in the broader legal/administrative context. Additionally, the analysis document contains a description of the methodology to be used (e.g. literature research, analysis of legislation, interviews, focus groups).

Based on the results of the analysis drafted by the legal experts of the universities of Maastricht and Hasselt, recommendations for the political level are being formulated. Solutions aimed at deviation are preferred. Where deviation is not possible or feasible, the possibility of resolving the identified obstacle through adjustments is being investigated. The involvement of the Dutch-German Cross-Border Meetings and the summit into the process (channelling) is a key component of the system.

Since October 2024, 35 cases have been accepted for in-depth investigation. Thematically, a broad range of issues is being addressed, ranging from cross-border waste transport and special water tariffs for border residents to cross-border ambulances, parental leave benefits for cross-border workers and housing of labour migrants. Private bodies cannot submit a request. The cross-border info points are important actors of providing visibility to the Switching Point.

Considering the first phase of implementation of the Schakelpunt approach, the experiences might be summarised as follows:

- Success for regional/municipal level: access to decision-making
- Successful combination of government and knowledge institutions
- Relevance of the Benelux Union: principle (and possibility) of deviation
- Government mandate: ministries have to respond and cooperate - ministers have to reply on advices
- 'Missing link' for border obstacles: b-solutions, but institutionalised and with a 'next step'

However, there still remains an added value of exchange with further initiatives in the field of obstacle management, to identify possible approaches for the solution of similar problems.

Good practices and promising approaches of obstacle management

Dirk Gebhardt (BBSR Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development) presented learnings and experiences from the initiative for "Demonstration Projects of Spatial Planning" (MORO), which are funded through the German federal government. In general, MORO projects address selected challenges in the field of spatial planning and development, which are tackled on regional level. Since 2009, the funding scheme has been extended to the cross-border dimension, highlighting and supporting innovative cooperation projects in the German-Polish border area.



In the first phase, the activities were focused on thematic studies for cross-border railway connections and project competitions for Interreg projects, drawing attention to outstanding projects in cross-border cooperation. After the elaboration of the Joint Future Vision 2030 for the German-Polish Interaction Area in 2016, the MORO approach was step-by-step extended to the support of strategic bottom-up initiatives, increasing the amount available funds and extending the timeframe for financial support.

Currently, since 2024 three German-Polish model projects are being supported, addressing challenges related to water management and preventive flood protection along the Oder River. Additionally, the Joint Future Vision for the German-Polish Interaction Area is being updated, extending its strategic horizon to the year 2050. In both cases, results shall be delivered until 2027, laying the ground for possible future initiatives.

More information on German-Polish MORO projects is available at the web platform of the German-Polish Spatial Planning Committee: <https://kooperation-ohne-grenzen.de> (in German and Polish language).

Carsten Jacob and Joanna Czasnojc (Spree-Neiße-Bober Euroregion) provided a comprehensive over-view about the current status of implementation of the project initiative aiming at the establishment of a system of [Border Information Points \(BIP\)](#) along the German-Polish border. Initially, they presented the activity profile of the Euroregion, which is involved in many activities and cooperation formats (e.g. the Monitoring Committee of the Interreg Germany/Brandenburg-Poland Programme and the German-Polish Joint Committee), including the promotion of participatory governance and citizen involvement.

With this regard, the establishment of BIP shall improve the attractiveness of the border region through the reduction of barriers and obstacles for (cross-border) LIVING, LEARNING and WORKING. For this purpose, within an Interreg project a network of strategic partners has been formed, including all German-Polish Euroregions and the Viadrina Center B/ORDERS IN MOTION at the European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder). The aims of the project are (1) to establish permanent and operating network for the BIPs, offering information, personal advice and referral services connected to cross-border activities, (2) to develop and operate a digital bilingual German-Polish information portal and (3) to develop the front and back office system for the topic-based integration of relevant authorities and organisations.

Besides the collaborative elaboration of the service specification for the planned BIP online platform and the realisation of promotional and research activities, a particular highlight has been the successful implementation of a “German-Polish Info Day” on 14 June 2024 in Guben with 30 German and Polish institutions as exhibitors. This format served as “test balloon” for the practical integration of the “back-offices” of the broad network of cooperating institutions, and has been repeated with equal success in June and October 2025. Additionally, 9 workshops of network partners have been realised to discuss the strategic development of BIPs and to collect the expectations and wishes of participating institutions. Since the kick-off of the system (18 June 2025), nearly 800 personal consultations took place with a strong focus on the subjects of health, social security, and employment. 22 partner institutions assist in resolving the individual cases in the two countries. The BIP partners offer language courses, interpretation services, training addressing the civil servants, information materials, etc., everything for free.

Next steps are the evaluation of the BIP pilot phase and the launch of the BIP online platform, as well as the organisation of the next edition of info days in March and October 2026. Based on the results of the evaluation and subsequent recommendations, the application for a follow-up Interreg project shall be submitted, preparing the establishment of BIPs as permanent German-Polish advisory services. For this purpose, in particular financing options and (long-term) financing sources need to be clarified.

Martin Hanf and Przemysław Jackowski (Kommunalgemeinschaft Europaregion Pomerania e.V.) shared their experiences with the information and consultancy network in the Pomerania Euroregion, which, since 2009, has been operated (and transformed) during several implementation periods of the Interreg programme Mecklenburg-Vorpommern/Brandenburg/Poland (<https://ibn-sid.eu>).



In its current edition, the information and consultancy network includes advisory, matchmaking and promotional services for enterprises and institutions with local cooperation partners located throughout the area of the Euroregion (work package 1) and consultation and information services for citizens with two front offices located in Szczecin and Löcknitz and a mobile information offer in Küstrin-Kietz (work package 2). Further 7 offices, specialised in different subjects, assist in the work. The services are provided by experienced experts having excellent and well-established relationship with the relevant authorities. The objectives of the network are to address communication, administrative, intercultural, and legal challenges in the programme area, supporting residents, institutions, and businesses in dealing with different legal systems on both sides of the border. In the result, the regional economy shall be strengthened through intensified economic cooperation, the development of the growth potential and the creation of innovative ideas.

To support these aims, different information and networking formats are being realised, ranging from German-Polish start-up consultations, study tours for different target (and age) groups, the cooperation with health insurance companies and the organisation of thematic business forums to the participation in regional fairs. As well in the case of the information and consultancy network, the clarification of (long-term) financing sources for continuous activities turns out to be a crucial challenge.

Reports from the PILOT partners

The final session of the workshop mirrored the previous inputs with the experiences of project and pilot partners in the field of obstacle management. For this purpose, **Katja Rosner (Provincial Government of Upper Austria)**, **Ondřej Havlíček (Association of Euroregions of the Czech Republic [AEČR])**, **Marcin Krzymuski (City of Frankfurt [Oder])**, **Micaela Passon (EGTC GO)** and **Peter Nagy (EGTC Ister-Granum)** provided in-depth inputs related to the following examples and activities in the field of obstacle management:

- **Provincial Government of Upper Austria:** Already in 2021, a study on border obstacles between Austria and Bavaria has been compiled. Within the BorderLabs CE project, a more specific study has been realised, focusing on Upper Austria, Southern Bohemia and Lower Bavaria. In the result of the study, more than 20 (not-only legal) obstacles have been identified, including recommendations for further steps (<https://www.data.gv.at/katalog/datasets/5577bb67-1a12-4f5d-ae24-b66bbca19680>). Especially the forums addressing cross-border labour mobility were extremely successful (e.g. 90 health workers took part in the relevant event from one hospital).

During the process of work several lessons learned could be identified, including the following:

- Start implementing without solving everything at once - go for small-scale solutions, and roll them out at later stage. Take an interactive approach, and try to involve all relevant stakeholders!
- To get reports on obstacles from the citizens is a challenge.
- Make obstacles and their relevance visible, interconnect locally active organisations and follow-up the topics!
- The willingness of the relevant authorities is a key (capacity shortages might prevent obstacle management).
- Visualise complex facts and use examples - and keep in mind that intercultural and multi-level communication is demanding!
- Ask for help, and look for examples - the b-solutions initiative supports and provides rich information!

In the result of pilot implementation, the Provincial Government of Upper Austria applied for financial support to set-up a “Cross-Border Coordination Point” (CBCP), testing the implementation of the BRIDGEforEU Regulation. Thus, the regional efforts to establish a sustainable approach for the efficient management of border obstacles will be continued.

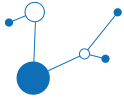


- **Association of Euroregions of the Czech Republic (AEČR):** In the Czech Republic, a large part (40%) of the population is living in border regions covered by 13 Euroregions. The Association of Euroregions of the Czech Republic (AEČR) represents these Euroregions and participates in national working groups in the fields of Cohesion Policy and regional development. The AEČR regularly participates in calls of the Czech Ministry for Regional Development (MMR) supporting the removal of obstacles to cross-border cooperation, e.g. in the fields of transport and rescue services, environment and healthcare. Within this framework, the AEČR has already established a national contact point for cross-border cooperation - and would be ready to take over the function of a CBCP in the understanding of the BRIDGEforEU regulation, too. To make this happen, several legislative amendments have to be made to establish the CBCP, ensuring its integration into bilateral and intergovernmental coordination structures, long-term financing and efficient cooperation with neighbouring states. Mr Havlíček also highlighted the importance of the political will at the domestic level.
- **City of Frankfurt (Oder):** Marcin Krzymuski explained the long history of citizens' engagement in the future planning processes of the double-city. The partners signing the cooperation agreement 50 years ago, have been applying different formats, such as joint vision making, dialogue forums, participation projects supported by the MORO program and the Robert Bosch Foundation (Common Ground) through which they faced many obstacles. The double-city has no permanent mechanism to tackle these obstacles. In 2026, a new instrument, the Joint Citizens' Council will take over the coordinating role.
- **EGTC GO:** As cross-border institution, the EGTC GO has a long record of experiences with legal and administrative obstacles. These concern e.g. the application and handling of procurement rules and procedures and obstacles identified during the implementation of the ITI projects Isonzo-Soča and Salute-Zdravstvo (incompatible data entry in the two countries, different procurement thresholds, lack of compensation for cross-border healthcare services, different rules for the management of construction sites, VAT payment in cross-border infrastructural investments). To facilitate cross-border procurement, the EGTC has developed an online platform compatible with both domestic systems. More recently, issues related to the cross-border cycle bridge, the bike sharing system and the use of the GO! Borderless Square Piazza Transalpina/Trg Evrope for joint events have been in the focus of attention, taking advantage of the b-solutions initiative. To be enabled to manage the cross-border bike sharing system, the EGTC needs to establish an undertaking, or to change its legal status. During the construction of the cycle bridge, the (stricter) Slovenian rule on the registration of a site management has been applied for Italian bidders, too. The binational square was used as central venue of the European Capital of Culture program. However, the rules for cultural events are different in the two countries. Consequently, the grouping published a vademecum including the two relevant national provisions.

Considering the broad institutional experience, EGTC GO joined the EGTC-NET project, aiming at reducing and eliminating border obstacles between Italy and Austria. Additionally, the EGTC Euregio Senza Confini and EGTC GO successfully applied as CBCP for the borders between Italy, Slovenia and Austria. Both partners aim to act as a single, stable contact point for public authorities, businesses, and citizens, streamlining communication with national institutions and ensuring consistent, efficient handling of cross-border cases while strengthening multilevel governance.

- **EGTC Ister-Granum:** In his presentation based on the PILOT's results, **Peter Nagy** demonstrated that the Single Market is not a reality yet: while multinational companies easily sell their products beyond the state border, it is a real challenge for the small producers: the domestic rules on small production are different, the small producers must respect the international commercial rules when crossing the border; their certificates are not acknowledged in the neighbouring country; they need to register themselves in the neighbouring country's tax system; and further administrative burdens prevent them to sell their local products beyond the border.

Considering the results of discussions within the partnership, the findings of the pilot tackling legal challenges for local producers in the HU-SK border region have been translated to "visual narratives",



explaining the identified obstacles and possible solutions in the format of self-explaining images. Applying these images, the situation of local producers can be easily understood, and it is possible to promote and discuss feasible approaches supporting local supply chains.

Concluding discussion: How can cross-border participatory governance contribute to the further integration of the Central European space?

In the closing part of the workshop, **Gyula Ocskay (CESCI)** reflected on the relevance of obstacle management for spatial justice and the balanced development of all parts of the Central European territory.