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### Do EU cross-border cooperation programmes contribute to competitiveness and cohesion? The case of the Polish-Czech borderland

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# Do EU cross-border cooperation programmes contribute to competitiveness and cohesion? The case of the Polish-Czech borderland

**Abstract:** The competitive potential of individual regions varies, but frontier regions in each member state are in a significantly worse situation because their development is uneven, which stems in part from their diverse abilities to adapt to the changes that take place in their surroundings. The development of these cross-border territories is supported under cohesion policy. The objective of the paper is to discuss how to boost the competitiveness of cross-border areas and to present the role of cross-border cooperation programmes in supporting competitiveness and cohesion in 2004-2020 based on the example of programmes implemented on the Polish-Czech border and co-financed from EU funds. The analysis of the implementation of European cross-border programmes pertaining to the Polish-Czech borderland has indicated that the measurable outcomes of the support that was provided manifested themselves in many areas, particularly in education, the environment, transportation, and culture. In the analysed programming periods, the directions for support granted under the cross-border programmes have been slightly modified. In the 2014-2020 programming period, a stronger emphasis is placed on support of employment growth through the use of the cultural and natural potential of these areas, risk-related issues, entrepreneurship, education, and the development of a cooperation network.

**Keywords:** cross-border cooperation, Polish-Czech borderland, European Territorial Cooperation, Interreg

## Introduction

The process of the accession of new states to the European Union, in particular the ones that frequently display various levels of economic development, is inseparably connected with the need to ensure the cohesion of this grouping. The economic potential of the EU should be

strengthened and the competitive advantage of its regions increased. The competitive potential of individual regions varies while frontier regions in each of the member states are usually in a significantly worse situation because their development is uneven, which may also be derived from their diverse abilities to adapt to the changes that take place in their surroundings. When stimulating the competitiveness of near-border regions, this should be, therefore, combined with building resilience, i.e., the adaptability to new, emerging challenges and risks in a turbulent environment. It is also possible due to their cooperation with regions on the other side of the border, which leads to a better and more effective use of the socioeconomic potential of these cross-border regions to cope with emerging challenges while strengthening their respective positions. However, there are still multiple barriers that hinder cooperation with partners on the other side of the border, including a considerable number of shared problems to be solved. EU documents such as the *White paper on the future of Europe* also raise the issue of these cross-border regions.<sup>1</sup>

The importance of cross-border regions is reflected in the fact that they constitute 40% of EU territory, are inhabited by 30% of the EU's population, and generate 30% of the EU's GDP.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, these areas have become the focal point of EU cohesion policy, reflected in the financial aid transferred to the Interreg initiative since the 1990s. The objective of promoting cross-border cooperation is to support cohesion in relation to its dimensions – economic, social, and territorial – which complement each other.<sup>3</sup> As for cross-border cooperation, the provision of territorial cohesion is considered, defined as a “territorial dimension of sustainability”<sup>4</sup> and includes the following three components: territorial quality, with regard, e.g., to the quality of life

- 1 *White Paper on the Future of Europe. Reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2025*, European Commission, COM (2017) 2025 of 1 March 2017.
- 2 *Boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions*, Communication from the Commission to the Institutions, Brussels, 20.09.2017, COM(2017) 534 final, p. 2.
- 3 More on cohesion and its dimensions in: M. Dziembała, *Spójność ekonomiczno-społeczna i konkurencyjność regionów w polityce Unii Europejskiej* [Economic and social cohesion and competitiveness of the regions in the policy of the European Union], Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Katowicach, 2013.
- 4 R. Camagni, 'Territorial development policies in the European Model of Society', in: A. Faludi (ed.), *Territorial cohesion and European Model of Society*, Cambridge, Mass.: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2017, p. 135.

and working environment; territorial efficiency based on resource-efficiency, the competitiveness of the economy, the attractiveness of the territory, and its availability; and, territorial identity, which refers, among others, to the current social capital, potential in terms of contributing to a shared vision for the development of a given territory<sup>5</sup>.

Starting from the 2007-2013 EU financial perspective, these regions have been supported under a separate objective, European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), which has upheld the positive experience drawn from Interreg. ETC has served as a framework for several cross-border programmes supporting enterprises, the purpose of which is to raise the competitiveness of these territories and to improve their development dynamics, and, ultimately, cohesion of EU territory. Cross-border cooperation programmes have been implemented along all of Poland's borders, including its southern one with the Czech Republic.

The objective of the paper is to discuss how to boost the competitiveness of the cross-border area based on the example of the Polish-Czech border. Is the institutional system of cross-border cooperation effective in this borderland? Consequently, the role of cross-border cooperation programmes co-financed from EU funds in supporting competitiveness and cohesion is discussed by means of the analysis of support directions in 2004-2006 and 2007-2013. The directions of EU support on the Polish-Czech border in 2014-2020 are also presented.

It is assumed that the use of EU programmes, selected lines of action could contribute not only to cohesion but also to increasing the competitiveness of the cross-border area. However, special attention should be paid to the development of lasting and effective institutional structures that foster this kind of cooperation and, at the same time, to the elimination of administrative burdens to develop the competitiveness of this area in the long run. The paper consists of the following parts. In the first section, some considerations on cohesion and competitiveness are presented. Then, the implementation of the EU cross-border cooperation programmes on the Polish-Czech borderland is discussed. Finally, measures that could be applied in the cross-border area to eliminate barriers to cross-border cooperation recommended by the European Commission are presented.

5 Ibid.

## **1 Some considerations about cohesion, competitiveness, and economic resilience in the cross-border area**

Border areas have successfully increased in importance, becoming “transitions” between near-border cities connected through international economic networks. In this way, these areas have been inadvertently included in these networks, sharing key infrastructure that supports international economic trading and established by state authorities, and having a unique development path in the economic, institutional, and cultural sense. The intensification of globalisation processes entails the growth of the importance of border regions, their economic development, and their social transformation, affecting public authorities and agencies.<sup>6</sup> As a result, these territories become more important in social, economic, and political terms.

At the same time, it is emphasised that many risks exist that may affect these border areas, as the “federation of cross-border communities” is relatively fragile, while the approach to borders as a source of threat may be revived, particularly in “difficult” times when various regionalisms re-emerge. The development of critical infrastructure may pose a risk to the region on the other side of the border, which may manifest itself if the authorities of a given country prefer their own goals in the context of the development of the entire cross-border region. The growth of the position and strength of cross-border regions is related to the comprehensive management of these areas as their territorial and institutional reconfiguration is perfected.<sup>7</sup>

With that in mind, the development and intensification of diverse forms of cross-border cooperation and the development of lasting cooperation networks should provide support for the development of such regions, including permanent support, which is associated with the establishment of lasting cross-border structures. The development of cross-border cooperation is gradual and involves its institutionalisation, which is a process of a “transition from non-formalised social action methods to regulated and relatively permanent forms

6 A. Androt, F. Fiedrich, A. Lotter, T. Münzberg, E. Rigaud, M. Wiens, W. Raskog and F. Schultmann, ‘Challenges in establishing cross-border resilience’, in: A. Fekete and F. Fiedrich (eds), *Urban disaster resilience and security. Addressing risks in societies*, Springer International Publishing AG, 2018, pp. 432-433.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 433.

of action that are subject to social sanctions”<sup>8</sup> This combines institutionalisation with an “institution” considered a formalised form of cooperation through “institutionalised dialogue”<sup>9</sup> Permanent cross-border structures are gradually being established primarily to search for solutions to issues that arise, i.e., ones of a legal, administrative, and political nature. Cross-border structures are linked with different types of legal agreements (including conventions, treaties, protocols, etc.) and with formal and informal agreements. New legal entities may also be established as part of such structures but they do not have to have such a legal form; what is more, these entities may not only be permanent but also created to manage EU programmes and still vary in terms of competence and experience.<sup>10</sup> Factors that have a positive impact on cross-border cooperation include governance structures, institutional framework, administrative traditions, legal instruments, longevity/maturity (in the sense that they improve the quality of such cooperation by reducing cultural barriers)<sup>11</sup> and they also refer to cross-border structures.

However, there are factors that may limit the establishment of such cross-border structures such as public law restrictions, differences in structures and competences on each side of the border, or no political will to remove such restrictions.<sup>12</sup>

Cross-border cooperation is developed in three successive phases while the degree of cooperation maturity increases along with the transition to the next phase. The first phase involves the establishment of “new” cooperation, and cooperation actions are performed

8 D. Fic and M. Fic, ‘Instytucjonalizacja internacjonalizacji współpracy regionów’ [Institutionalisation of the regions’ cooperation internationalisation], *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego* [Scientific papers of the Szczecin University] no. 786, *Finanse, Rynki Finansowe, Ubezpieczenia* [Finance, Financial Markets, Insurance] no. 64/2, 2013, p. 41.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 42.

10 J. Gabbe, V. von Malchus and H. Martinos, ‘Praktyczny podręcznik współpracy transgranicznej’ [Practical guidebook on the cross-border cooperation], *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Euroäischer Grenzregionen (AGEG)*, 3. Auflage 2000, pp. B2 11-B2 18, [https://www.aebr.eu/files/publications/lace\\_guide.pl.pdf](https://www.aebr.eu/files/publications/lace_guide.pl.pdf) [2018-06-08].

11 TERCO, *European Territorial Cooperation as a factor of growth, jobs and quality of life – Final Report – Main Report*, version 31.12.2012; ESPON & EUROREG – *Centre for European Regional and Local Studies*, Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2012, pp. 46-47, <https://www.espon.eu/programme/projects/espon-2013/applied-research/terco-european-territorial-cooperation-factor-growth> [2018-06-08].

12 Gabbe, von Malchus and Martinos, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

on a small scale and are not coordinated. The second phase, on the other hand, is when “consolidated” cooperation is established but it is still dependent on external financing; still, the budget and the scale of projects increase while the coordination of such cooperation actions is improved. The third, sought-after, phase is when “embedded” cooperation is established. It focuses on a strategic approach to cross-border cooperation, which should also mean that a considerable impact is present, whereas all actions in terms of cross-border cooperation are coordinated with regional programmes and other documents.<sup>13</sup>

The emphasis should be placed on the issue that it is not only the institutionalisation of cooperation that is important but also the qualitative aspects of such cooperation. It may manifest itself in the shared development of cross-border concepts and strategies, the preparation and implementation of projects that not only address the issues faced by such areas but also act as a catalyst for their further development.

The policy on cross-border cooperation and cross-border cooperation itself should focus on systemic capacity-building and apply the principle of horizontal subsidiarity. Therefore, considerations should involve the strengthening of the evidence base of this cross-border cooperation, development of multi-level governance that leads to a closer and integrated cooperation, and to a more distinctive division with regard to various cooperation levels. Member states and their units should support this kind of cooperation on the borders. With that in mind, governance is based on the principle of subsidiarity; in this context, however, the notion of “horizontal principle” is accepted, which refers to the possibility of addressing issues by smaller cross-border units first. Another component of systemic cross-border capacity-building includes subsidiarity within the cross-border territory, which refers to the necessity to establish vertical and inter-sectoral subsidiarity in the cross-border area, meaning that stronger support should be provided for public actions in specific sectors of this cross-border system, with particular attention paid to the economy, science and research, or to civil society. The final component – joint interest-representation – refers to the need to make such cross-border

13 TERCO, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48.

der areas more visible when the European Commission undertakes initiatives and actions.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, making use of the potential of such territories, including their economic potential<sup>15</sup> and competitiveness should be considered when implementing actions of a more strategic character.

Particular attention is paid to the support of individual factors that determine competitiveness.<sup>16</sup> However, nowadays, not only promoting the factors which determine their competitiveness but also facilitating these regions in adapting to changes caused by globalisation, emerging technologies, or digital technologies is important in building competitiveness.<sup>17</sup> An economic recession or the emergence of competitors could pressure regions to implement structural transformation<sup>18</sup> and, thus, develop their resilience.

The notion of resilience is related to the potential of a region to overcome shocks.<sup>19</sup> This means therefore that regional and local economies need to develop a certain level of resistance to these shocks, treating it as their “adaptive ability”: “[...] it is the different ability of a region’s or locality’s firms to adapt to changes and shocks in competitive, market, technological, policy and related conditions that shape the evolutionary dynamics and trajectories of that regional or local economy over time”.<sup>20</sup> In a dynamic approach, it is treated long-term as the potential that regions have in their incessant transformation in

14 J. Beck, ‘Prospects of cross-border cooperation in Europe: capacity-building and the operating principle of “horizontal subsidiarity”’, *Mednarodna revija za javno upravo*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2013, pp. 16-20.

15 *Boosting growth and cohesion...*

16 *A study on the factors of regional competitiveness. A draft final report for the European Commission Directorate-General Regional Policy*, Cambridge Econometrics, ECORYS-NEI, University of Cambridge, [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/3cr/competitiveness.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/3cr/competitiveness.pdf) [2018-07006].

17 *Strengthening Innovation in Europe’s Regions: Strategies for resilient, inclusive and sustainable growth*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, COM (2017) 376 final, Brussels, 18.7.2017, p. 2.

18 J. Simmie and R. Martin, ‘The economic resilience of regions: towards an evolutionary approach’, *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, vol. 3, 2010, p. 27; DOI:10.1093/cjres/rsp029.

19 J. Crespo, R. Boschma and P.A. Balland, ‘Resilience, networks and competitiveness’, in: R. Huggins and P. Thompson (eds.), *Handbook of regions and competitiveness. Contemporary theories and perspectives on economic development*, Cheltenham and Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2017, p. 271.

20 Simmie and Martin, op. cit., p. 28.

terms of economic structure, adaptation, and growth maintenance, creating a new path for development, one that will help regions cope with emerging shocks of a varying nature.<sup>21</sup>

In this context, the dynamic competitiveness of regions should be perceived as “the ability of its firms to respond to and compete successfully in constantly shifting and changing markets”.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, competitiveness should be treated as the determinant of economic resilience, which is the key because this dynamic competitiveness depends on the structural characteristics of a region and defines its development path. In this respect, the focus is on factors that specify and describe this competitiveness.<sup>23</sup> Factors that affect regional resilience have been identified to include the industrial and technological composition of the region, the organisational structure of the knowledge exchange network, and the regional institutional setting.<sup>24</sup>

Directions for strengthening regional competitiveness indicate the need to implement an approach based on the intelligent specialisations included in cohesion policy for 2014-2020 in which scientific research and innovation were adopted as the priority. It was indicated that to improve innovative potential, a region needs to create a conducive business environment, invest in human capital and skills, and extend the scope of cooperation with other regions in innovation investment. The emphasis was placed on the fact that these strategies were aimed to stimulate cooperation in the creation of cross-border value chains, in which companies from the research and innovation industry would be involved along with other businesses and, thus, contribute to synergy.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, border regions must focus on creating factors concerning regional competitiveness that facilitate the further development of these regions and shape their resilience to various changes. Cross-border cooperation supported by EU funding is the catalyst for transformation that takes place in cross-border areas and is an instrument

21 Crespo, Boschma and Balland, op. cit., pp. 273, 281; R. Boschma, ‘Towards an Evolutionary perspective on Regional Resilience’, *Regional Studies*, vol. 49, no. 5, 2015.

22 Martin and Sunley, op. cit., p. 288.

23 Ibid., p. 288.

24 Crespo, Boschma and Balland, op. cit., pp. 272, 274-281.

25 *Strengthening Innovation in Europe's Regions...*, p. 3 et seq.

that facilitates the development of these areas. However, other noteworthy issues include directions of support taken by EU funds focused on these areas, whether they evolve or could aid in the transformation of these regions. The development of effective institutional structures of a cross-border character and the adoption of a more strategic approach to such territories while, at the same time, supporting their competitiveness is crucial in establishing resilient regions.

## **2** Implementation of cross-border cooperation programmes supported by EU cohesion policy in the Polish-Czech borderland

Within the framework of its cohesion policy, the EU has been financing the implementation of cooperation programmes in regions of various countries as part of the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) objective. This objective was introduced in cohesion policy as part of the 2007-2013 financial perspective and includes the following components: cross-border cooperation and interregional and transnational cooperation, which were implemented in Poland as well. The outcomes of European territorial cooperation programmes have manifested themselves both in the context of their quantitative and qualitative effects, and in the value-added that they provide. ETC programmes constitute a specific dimension of European integration (political symbolism). Their positive (qualitative) effect is expressed by additionality and innovation, learning and exchanging experience, intensification of contacts, or by internationalisation and de-centralisation, as a result of which local authorities and the society have gained more responsibility and power.<sup>26</sup>

Poland has been part of territorial cooperation programmes since 2004; however, in the pre-accession period, the Phare CBC programme was implemented not only in the Polish-German borderland but also in the southern borderland, i.e., on the borders between Poland and the Czech Republic and between Poland and Slovakia. In 2004-2006,

<sup>26</sup> I. McMaster, Chapter 1.4. 'European Territorial Cooperation: overview and evaluation', in: G. Gorzelak and K. Zawalińska (eds.), *European Territories: from cooperation to integration?*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2013, pp. 61-64.

Poland implemented the Interreg III initiative and the authorities focused on cross-border programmes in the successive financial perspective 2007-2013. The Interreg III initiative also included seven transnational programmes, such as the Baltic Region, Central Europe, or the Interreg IV C. Cross-border programmes under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument were also implemented in Lithuania-Poland-Russia and Poland-Belarus-Ukraine.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the implementation of cross-border programmes is one of the directions for support.

### **2.1. Implementation of the Interreg initiative in 2004-2006 in the Polish-Czech borderland**

Cross-border cooperation has been established on each Polish border; however, it is on the Polish-Czech border that this cooperation uses the most advanced forms and is increasingly institutionalised and innovative. The most advanced forms of cross-border cooperation – Euroregions and the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (the latter being the highest level of cooperation)

– were the first to be established in the Polish-Czech borderland.<sup>28</sup>

The Polish-Czech cooperation has been promoted since the 1990s, which was followed by the institutionalisation of this cooperation after close links were re-established; this institutionalisation was associated with the cooperation of society and various entities in the borderland.<sup>29</sup>

In the Polish-Czech borderland, cross-border cooperation has taken diverse form. Both countries' institutions have been cooperating actively as part of a Czech-Polish intergovernmental commission (at a domestic level). Furthermore, regional and local authorities have engaged in widespread cooperation, which involves many entities and companies in a wide spectrum of activities. Not all of them included EU financing. Cooperation may also be trilateral, e.g., as part of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) TRITIA, Ltd.,

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.ewt.2007-2013.gov.pl/WstepDoFunduszyEuropejskich/Strony/czymysafundusze.aspx> [2018-07-04].

<sup>28</sup> A. Skorupska, 'Współpraca samorządowa na pograniczu polsko-czeskim' [Cooperation of self-territorial government on the Polish-Czech borderland], *Policy Paper*, no. 17 (100), 2014, Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych [The Polish Institute of International Affairs], pp. 1-2, [https://www.pism.pl/files/?id\\_plik=18520](https://www.pism.pl/files/?id_plik=18520) [2018-07-04].

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

NOVUM z o.o. Furthermore, six Euroregions have operated successfully, with the Nysa Euroregion established in 1991 being the oldest one. The Euroregion Beskidy was established in 2000. Local government units at the state, voivodeship, and municipality levels have been committed to international cooperation.<sup>30</sup> Documents concerning borderland development were prepared, which sparked and shaped the strategic approach to the development of the Polish-Czech borderland; these documents primarily include the Polish-Czech Borderland Development Plan (1996), which was the first strategic document concerning this area, Polish-Czech Borderland Development Study, Synthesis of National Documents (2006), and Strategy for Integrated Polish-Czech Borderland Cooperation (2014).<sup>31</sup> EU financing, which was already provided in the pre-accession period through the Phare CBC programme and then through the Interreg IIIA programme following accession, contributed to the development of cross-border cooperation and the intensity of its changes.

As mentioned above, cross-border cooperation is also supported by EU financing on the Polish-Czech border. Entities originating in specific sub-regions at the NUTS 3 level have been involved. The longest Polish border is the southern border, which at 796 km constitutes 22.7% of the total Polish border.<sup>32</sup> The emphasis should be placed on the development of territories in the Polish-Czech borderland in terms of GDP per capita in regions in which the cross-border cooperation programme under the EGTC objective was implemented. The support offered through the Polish-Czech cross-border cooperation programme in 2007-2013 was provided for five regions (kraje) on the Czech side of the border (units of the NUTS III level) and for six subregions of the NUTS III level on the Polish side, which included the Jeleniogórski, Wałbrzyski, Nyski, Opolski, Rybnicki, and Bielski subregions. In 2004-2006, the geographical scope of the Interreg IIIA Programme

30 INTERREG V-A – Czech Republic – Poland, version 5, October 2016, pp. 22-23.

31 F. Adamczuk, 'Przestrzenne i organizacyjne aspekty rozwoju pogranicza polsko-czeskiego', *Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu* [Scientific Papers of the Wrocław University] no. 407, 2015, p. 78, DOI: 10.15611/pn.2015.407.06. More on the form of cooperation in this borderland, *ibid.*, pp. 78-80.

32 Operational Programme of Cross-Border Cooperation Czech Republic – Republic of Poland 2007-2013, version 2, 15 March 2010, p. 5, [https://www.ewt.2007-2013.gov.pl/WstepDoFunduszyEuropejskich/Documents/POWT\\_PL\\_CZ\\_15\\_3\\_2010wersja\\_polska.pdf](https://www.ewt.2007-2013.gov.pl/WstepDoFunduszyEuropejskich/Documents/POWT_PL_CZ_15_3_2010wersja_polska.pdf) [2018-07-05].

Czech Republic–Poland did not include Pszczyna or Tychy Powiat as was also the case in the cross-border cooperation programme in the next financing period.<sup>33</sup> According to data presented in the following table, the regions on the border had a relatively low GDP per capita compared to the EU average: GDP per capita was higher than 75% of the 2015 EU average (PPS) in only one Czech region. Apart from the Bielski Subregion, GDP per capita of the Polish regions on the border was lower than the analysed Czech regions, however. Compared to 2004, the volume of GDP per capita was higher in 2015 (Table 1).

In 2004–2006, the Interreg IIIA programme was implemented on this border. The programme identified three priorities, one of which concerned the development and modernisation of infrastructure to improve the competitiveness of the border area and referred to the development of cross-border environmental, flood protection, near-business, and tourism-oriented infrastructure. The next priority concerned the development of the local community through the development of tourism, support of micro-projects and cross-border organisational structures, and network cooperation. The last priority included technical assistance.<sup>34</sup> It is worth noting that the objectives of cross-border cooperation programmes and their objectives were identified based on a SWOT analysis in 2004–2006 and 2007–2013 following the experiences gained from the implementation of the Phare CBC programme in that borderland, while the Polish–Czech borderline was considered as a whole. In this context, the evaluation of programme effectiveness in this paper was based on a quantitative evaluation of programme implementation and a qualitative evaluation of the results of studies conducted by other researchers.

The largest EU financing was granted to Priority 1, which consumed 68% of the EU resources, whereas Priority 2 received 27.6% of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) resources, and Priority 3, over 4%. The number of projects approved for implementation was 191, with 46 projects assigned under Priority 1 (with 3 re-

33 Operational Programme of Cross-Border Cooperation Czech Republic – Republic of Poland 2007–2013, version 3, 6 June 2013, pp. 5–7.

34 INTERREG IIIA Programme Czech Republic – Poland, Approved by the European Commission on 18 October 2004, <http://www.katowice.uw.gov.pl/wydzial/wydzial-rozwoju-i-wspolpracy-terytorialnej/interreg-iii-a-cz-pl> [2018-07-05].

Table 1. GDP per capita of the regions in the Polish-Czech borderland where cross-country cooperation programmes were implemented in 2004-2015

Region	Euro per inhabitant in percentage of the EU average					Purchasing power standard (PPS) per inhabitant in percentage of the EU average					Euro per inhabitant						
	2004	2006	2007	2013	2015	2004	2006	2007	2013	2014	2015	2004	2006	2007	2013	2014	2015
European Union (current members)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	22,500	24,700	26,100	26,800	27,600	29,000
Liberecký kraj	33	40	40	43	43	62	65	64	65	67	67	7,500	9,900	10,500	11,600	11,500	12,400
Královéhradecký kraj	37	41	44	48	48	69	67	70	72	75	76	8,300	10,200	11,400	12,900	13,000	13,900
Pardubický kraj	35	41	43	45	45	65	66	69	67	70	71	7,800	10,100	11,300	12,100	12,100	13,000
Olomoucký kraj	33	36	38	43	42	61	58	61	65	67	67	7,400	8,900	9,800	11,600	11,600	12,300
Moravskoslezský kraj	34	40	42	47	46	63	65	68	70	72	72	7,600	9,900	11,100	12,500	12,500	13,300
Bielski	25	29	31	38	41	53	51	52	67	69	72	5,700	7,300	8,100	10,200	10,900	11,800
Rybnicki	24	26	27	35	34	50	45	46	61	60	60	5,400	6,400	7,100	9,300	9,400	9,800
Jeleniogórski	19	23	24	32	31	40	40	41	56	57	55	4,300	5,700	6,400	8,600	9,100	9,000
Walbrzyski	19	23	25	28	28	40	40	42	48	50	50	4,300	5,700	6,500	7,400	7,900	8,200
Nyski	15	19	21	24	23	31	33	35	42	42	42	3,400	4,600	5,500	6,400	6,600	6,800
Opojski	24	27	30	35	36	50	47	50	61	63	64	5,400	6,600	7,800	9,400	9,900	10,400

\* Clarification: the classification of NUTS III territorial units valid from 1 January 2008, was considered because the territorial reform of 2007 led to a division of the territorial units at that time.  
Source: author's own elaboration based on Eurostat statistical data: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database> [2018-07-04].

serve projects), 64 projects assigned under Priority 2 (with 4 reserve projects), and 74 projects assigned under Priority 3. The objective of this study is to present the projects implemented on the Polish side of the borderland.<sup>35</sup> Of the EU financing, 15.5% was spent on micro-projects, which were carried out in the Euroregions Pradziad, Śląsk Cieszyński, Beskidy, Glacencis, and Nysa to support relations between local communities.<sup>36</sup> In terms of material outcomes, the following effects were produced on the Polish side: 9 projects concerned the modernisation/construction of cross-border connections, with a total length of 29.3 km; 1 project concerned a wastewater treatment plant; some projects concerned fire prevention; other projects concerned tourist infrastructure, namely a network of routes and bicycle paths; 11 projects concerned tourist buildings; consultancy centres provided assistance for 830 SMEs; and 20 new tourist products and 16 promotion projects were developed.<sup>37</sup>

However, the projects implemented as part of micro-projects (Measure 2.2) should also be considered. These included common cultural, sports, and educational events (1147 projects), shared measures in favour of environmental protection and spatial planning (18), fairs (17), conferences, seminars, and workshops (441), studies, strategies, and plans (53), which served as the outcomes of multiple projects.<sup>38</sup> The development of network cooperation (Measure 2.3) should also be mentioned because its results included 25 projects concerning education, studies, and science, 82 partnerships between organisations and institutions, and 12 partnerships formed between Czech and Polish media.<sup>39</sup>

35 Developed on the basis of: Final report on the implementation of the Interred IIIA Programme Czech Republic – Poland 2004-2006, co-financed under the European Regional Development Fund, pp. 7-8, [https://www.funduszeuropejskie.2007-2013.gov.pl/AnalizyRaportyPodsumowania/Sprawozdania/Documents/PIW\\_INTERREG\\_III\\_A\\_PL\\_CZ\\_Sprawozdanie\\_koncowe.pdf](https://www.funduszeuropejskie.2007-2013.gov.pl/AnalizyRaportyPodsumowania/Sprawozdania/Documents/PIW_INTERREG_III_A_PL_CZ_Sprawozdanie_koncowe.pdf) [2018-06-18].

36 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Table 2: Actual eligible expenses incurred after the launch of the Interreg IIIA Programme Czech Republic–Poland 2004-2006 on the Polish-Czech border, in euro, as of 25.02.2010

Priorities/measures	EU expenses under ERDF	Other public expenses	Total expenses	EU expenses, in % of total ERDF expenses in the programme
<b>Priority 1: Further development and modernisation of infrastructure to increase the competitiveness of the borderland</b>	<b>11,972,814.23</b>	<b>5,145,654.97</b>	<b>17,118,469.20</b>	<b>68.33</b>
Support of cross-border infrastructure	5,675,802.82	2,316,720.47	7,992,523.29	32.39
Environment and flood protection infrastructure	2,493,521.10	1,297,582.90	3,791,104.00	14.23
Development of business-related and tourist infrastructure	3,803,490	1,531,351.60	5,334,841.91	21.71
<b>Priority 2: Development of local borderland communities</b>	<b>4,827,514.37</b>	<b>1,640,438.52</b>	<b>6,467,952.89</b>	<b>27.55</b>
2.1. Development of tourism	1,228,595.11	411,472.69	1,640,067.80	7.01
2.2. Support of local initiatives (micro-projects)	2,714,620.35	933,965.94	3,648,586.29	15.49
2.3. Development and support of cross-border organisational structures and network cooperation	884,298.91	294,999.89	1,179,298.80	5.05
<b>Priority 3: Technical assistance</b>	<b>721,428.86</b>	<b>271,984.95</b>	<b>993,413.81</b>	<b>4.12</b>
Total	17,521,757.46	7,058,078.44	24,579,835.90	100.00

Source: Final report, op. cit., p. 38, and author's own elaboration.

Table 3 presents the target value for the impact indicators and their value achieved in 2004-2008.

Table 3: Impact indicators for the Interreg IIIA Programme Czech Republic–Poland 2004-2006 on the Polish-Czech border

Indicator name	Value of indicator defined in the Programme, in its Supplementary document for measures	Value of indicator achieved in				
		2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>Intensity of the cross-border cooperation</b>						
Number of projects planned/prepared in cooperation	At least 150	0	0	73	206	33
Number of projects that were jointly implemented	At least 27	0	0	6	9	1
<b>Intensity of the cross-border impact</b>						
Number of projects contributing to the development of cross-border networks	At least 8	0	0	7	14	8

Sources: Final report, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

## 2.2. Support of competitiveness in the Polish-Czech borderland as part of ETC in 2007-2013

In the next period, support for this cross-border area was provided under the Operational Programme of Cross-Border Cooperation Czech Republic–Republic of Poland 2007-2013 as part of the ETC scheme, which was a target of cohesion policy in its own right. The experience gained from the implementation of the previous programme was also helpful in the identification of the objectives and priorities of the 2007-2013 programme.

The budget was EUR 258 million while EUR 219,459,344 were assigned for this purpose under the ERDF. In this period, the central focus was on improving regions' accessibility, environmental protection, and risk prevention, which is why a separate priority was identified. Attention was paid to the improvement of conditions for the development of entrepreneurship and tourism and to the cooperation of local communities. Support was provided for five regions (kraje) on the Czech side and for six subregions and two powiats on the Polish side, which was mentioned. The support offered under the programme concerned regional and local projects of cross-border significance, which was demonstrated by the very choice of projects. Those projects with a cross-border impact on both sides of the border were prioritised. The objectives of this programme are aimed to improve the integration of the borderland, create conditions for growth in this area, support sustainable development of the natural environment, and to achieve social integration.<sup>40</sup> The contribution of ERDF funds towards these projects was 85%. The allocation of ERDF funds for individual priority axes and support areas are presented in Table 4.

Considering the material and non-material outcomes obtained, cross-border cooperation programmes are “direct” programmes that serve the inhabitants of the areas of focus. The following effects are identified: institutional, infrastructural, marketing and promotional for cooperation, and the development of human resources.<sup>41</sup>

40 Annual report on the implementation of the Operational Programme of Cross-Border Cooperation Czech Republic – Republic of Poland 2007-2013 for 2014, approved by the Monitoring Committee on 24 June 2015, p. 5.

41 *Wpływ polityki spójności na rozwój przygranicznej i ponadnarodowej współpracy terytorialnej polskich regionów w perspektywie 2007-2013* [Impact of the cohesion policy on the development of

Table 4: ERDF financing in the Operational Programme of Cross-Border Cooperation Czech Republic – Republic of Poland 2007-2013, in euro

Priorities/measures	EU allocation under ERDF	% of total EU allocation under ERDF
<b>Priority axis 1: Improvement of regions' accessibility, environmental protection, risk prevention</b>	<b>81,626,990</b>	<b>37.2</b>
Improvement of regions' accessibility	51,097,276	23.3%
Environmental protection	17,556,747	8%
Risk prevention	12,972,967	5.9%
<b>Priority axis 2: Improvement of entrepreneurship and tourism conditions</b>	<b>74,262,787</b>	<b>33.8%</b>
2.1. Development of entrepreneurship	5,572,968	2.5%
2.2. Support of tourism development	63,911,446	29.1
2.3. Support of cooperation in education	4,778,373	2.2
<b>Priority axis 3: Support of cooperation among local communities</b>	<b>55,059,430</b>	<b>25.1</b>
3.1. Territorial cooperation of institutions providing public services	3,583,780	1.6
3.2. Support of cultural, recreational and educational enterprises and social initiatives	7,583,781	3.5
3.3. Micro-project fund	43,891,869	20
<b>Priority axis 4: Technical assistance</b>	<b>8,510,137</b>	<b>3.9</b>

Source: Annual report..., p. 6 and author's own elaboration.

According to the distribution of funds, the majority of resources was allocated to Priority axis 2, improvement of conditions for the development of entrepreneurship and tourism, amounting to over 33% of ERDF funds, while 37% of the ERDF funds were allocated to Priority axis 1. Therefore, a gradual decrease in the significance of components concerning so-called hard infrastructure may be observed. This programme contributes to the achievement of priorities related to smart growth and, especially, of Measure 2.1, the development of entrepreneurship to benefit projects devoted to innovation, the flow of know-how, and cooperation in R&D. A switch to cooperation in education may also be witnessed – Measure 2.3 as part of Measure 1.1, improvement of a regions' accessibility and development of ICT technologies, which are factors that contribute to overall competitiveness. As a re-

the cross-border and transnational territorial cooperation of the Polish regions in the perspective 200-2013], Final report on the study, Warszawa: WYG PSDB sp. z o.o., GEOPROFIT Wojciech Dziemianowicz, 2016, p. 6.

sult, projects implemented under Measure 2.1 in terms of inclusive growth, are predominantly in cooperation with labour market institutions to counteract and eliminate social exclusion, as well as under Measure 2.3, lifelong learning. In turn, sustainable growth is achieved by the sustainable development of transportation (Measure 1.1), environmental protection (Measure 1.2), while cooperation in particular is supported under axis 3.<sup>42</sup> Contracts for 345 projects totalling EUR 250,783,584 were concluded by the end of 2014.<sup>43</sup>

Therefore, positive quantitative outcomes in relation to the programmes implemented, including in the 2007-2013 programming period, may be indicated. Among these positive outcomes are the development of road infrastructure and improved border crossing throughput, construction of sewage systems, implementation of projects devoted to the protection of the natural environment, development of cooperation, rescue, and safety systems, and support of educational measures, as reflected in shared education programmes. Apart from these projects, other initiatives, such as those that support cooperation between institutions, regional and local communities, and those that embrace a wide range of projects, should also be mentioned. The aforementioned initiatives were the subjects of micro-projects managed by Euroregions, the purpose of which was to stimulate cooperation, understanding, and the development of common solutions.<sup>44</sup>

However, there is no doubt that the supported actions as part of cross-border cooperation programmes in the Polish-Czech borderland and related to the impact on factors that determine competitiveness, e.g., factors concerning the improved development of infrastructure, contribute to the development of favourable conditions for enterprises and inhabitants. As a result, short-term effects produced by such programmes are noticeable. The quality of life of borderland inhabitants improves. Yet, there is an issue concerning the development of competitive potential in the long term, which is undoubtedly related to the structural transformation in this territory, taking challenges posed by

42 Annual report..., pp. 8-9.

43 Ibid., p. 11.

44 Developed based on the Annual Report..., pp. 22-23.

the surroundings into account. Given the relatively low volume of financial resources provided under such programmes, it is difficult to expect remarkable effects; instead, these resources are and should be considered a catalyst for transformations in the borderland. Simultaneously, the necessity to provide support under national and regional policies and in cooperation with partners, including political ones, while respecting the principle of horizontal subsidiarity, mentioned earlier, should be considered. When this is true, it is without doubt that the resources provided under such programmes will contribute to improving the competitiveness of such border areas.

On the other hand, qualitative effects are as important as quantitative ones – even though they materialise after a longer period and are much more difficult to measure – because they have an impact on the cohesion of border areas.

Tourism is an important direction for cooperation along the Polish-Czech border and was considered a priority. Still, specific projects, such as those associated with the energy sector in the Bielsko-Biała area, are developed at the local level.<sup>45</sup> However the dominance in the cooperation of projects related to tourism could be a barrier to the development of cooperation in other fields. Therefore, the development of the cross-border area should be based not only on tourism but on other selected fields that reflect the existing specific developmental conditions of the area.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, the central authorities regard issues faced by the individual components of this border area as local, which results in these issues being neglected. It is, however, important to find a sphere that would accelerate the development of the borderland and be established in a bottom-up manner, which would also result in independence from EU funds.<sup>47</sup> Implemented under Interreg/EGTC, infrastructure projects related to tourism and communications infrastructure contribute to improvements in attractiveness and, thus, competitiveness. Still, it is necessary to improve accessibility

45 Skorupska, op. cit., pp. 5-7.

46 S. Dotzblasz, 'Sieci współpracy transgranicznej na pograniczu polsko-czeskim' [Transborder cooperation network in the Polish-Czech borderland], *Studia Regionalne i Lokalne* [Regional and Local Studies], issue 4 (66), 2016, pp. 76, DOI:10.7366/15094995466040p.

47 Skorupska, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

further, which requires more support to be provided by the government and self-government (local) administration.<sup>48</sup>

The development of network links that are relevant in terms of cooperation and its effectiveness is an important aspect of cross-border cooperation, including the one supported by EU funds. According to the study by S. Dołzbłasz, in which she analysed 250 projects and 350 institutions of the Polish-Czech cross-border cooperation programme in 2007-2013 (not only the Polish entities but also the Czech ones), the links that were established during the Interreg IIIA programme are relatively permanent and were used in 2007-2013. Even though this is a beneficial phenomenon by definition, it may result in ossification and low innovation of the developed projects. Bilateral projects dominated all implemented project areas. Projects submitted by local/regional authorities prevailed. It is worth noting that a significant share of all projects were those related to tourism, partly due to the specificity of this cross-border area. The network relations in 2007-2013 were quite low, but the strengthening of the existing cross-border relations have been observed.<sup>49</sup>

The Polish-Czech borderland is diverse; however, it is perceived as a unified area in programming documents, including those that concern support of cross-border cooperation under EU funds. Yet, its individual components tackle different issues. Not only are social and economic differences and the particular geographic and historic characteristics of individual borderland components considered but also differences in terms of the administrative structure of both sides of the borderland. As a result, differences in competences arise, which leads to restrictions on cooperation in large projects. Restrictions on cooperation are also raised by an inadequate number of leaders in charge of shared projects, in particular in relation to self-governments and organisations that establish Euroregions. What is more, there are differences in the approach to cross-border cooperation and providing support for local authorities between Polish voivodships located

48 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

49 Dołzbłasz, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-78.

in the Polish-Czech borderland.<sup>50</sup> It should be emphasised that local conditions have an effect on cross-border relations.<sup>51</sup>

Cross-border cooperation programmes are part of ETC programmes implemented in Poland, which have their own impact on local communities, i.e., they overcome stereotypes, improve accessibility, change regions' institutional potentials – in terms of institutions implementing the projects – and impact the activity of inhabitants themselves. The fact that Polish institutions have become internationalised as they became involved in international cooperation is also significant. As a result, Small Project Funds involve non-government organisations to a larger extent and they support the transfer of knowledge, extending the scope of interventions.<sup>52</sup>

Insofar as it is difficult to assess the direct impact of the financing granted under cross-border programmes devoted to the development of this borderland, it is possible to make certain general assumptions based on the results of the ETC programme evaluation for Poland. It was indicated that the implementation of ETC boosted the development of subsidised subregions and powiats compared to those without financing. These positive effects manifested themselves in education, innovation, transportation, culture, and the environment. However, some investments in transport, tourism, or environmental protection were not pro-development, which requires additional research in the context of the development of border areas.<sup>53</sup> Kurowska-Pysz, Szczepańska-Woszczyzna in their research indicate that the possibility of obtaining EU funds is considered a key factor that could stimulate sustainable Polish-Czech cross-border cooperation (according to the opinion of the Polish local governments and public institutions), then “the quality of human relationships, mutual desire to know each other better”, and “historical affinity and geographical proximity”. The Polish organisations, local governments, and public institutions also underline that the possibility of obtaining EU funds is important for cross-border cooperation, as well as “the quality of human relationships, mutual desire to know each other better”, and “the system of

50 Skorupska, op. cit., pp. 5-76.

51 Dołzbłasz, op. cit., p. 66.

52 *Wpływ polityki spójności...*, p. 7.

53 *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15, 17, 23.

support at the regional and local level". For all the entities on the Polish side, economic interests prevail in the cooperation.<sup>54</sup>

It is worth mentioning that entities located in Polish border areas could have applied for EU funds from other programmes within the European Territorial Cooperation objective and from other regional operational programmes and horizontal programmes implemented within the analysed period. This makes an assessment of the impact of the EU cooperation programmes more difficult.

As a result, EUR 226,221,710 was allocated to the ETC Interreg VA programme implemented in 2014-2020 on the Polish-Czech border, which served as a continuation of previous programmes.<sup>55</sup> The following five priorities of the programme have been distinguished:

Common risk management (EUR 12.22 M, 5.4% of the budget).

Development of natural and cultural potential to support employment (EUR 135.7 M, 60% of the budget).

Education and qualifications (EUR 10.2 M, 4.5% of the budget).

Cooperation of institutions and communities (EUR 54.5 M, 24.1% of the budget).

Technical assistance (EUR 13.6 M).<sup>56</sup>

According to the aforementioned priorities and the allocation of financing, the largest amount of money will be spent on the development of the natural and cultural potential of these border areas, as well as on its full use, which is to facilitate employment. Such a large allocation stemmed from the relatively low absorptive properties in terms of support in these areas, as well as from the overwhelming interest of applicants in the previous programming period.

Financing then will be devoted to the improvement of the institutional capacity of public institutions and other entities, and to supporting legal and administrative cooperation. Investments in education, skills and lifelong learning are also an important part of the programme. This high allocation is the result of the sectional character of operations concerning various spheres and by an additional need

54 J. Kurowska-Pysz and K. Szczepańska-Woszczyna, 'The analysis of the determinants of sustainable cross-border cooperation and recommendations on its harmonisation', *Sustainability*, 9 (12), 2226, 2017, pp. 14-15, DOI: 103390/su9122226.

55 INTERREG V-A – Czech Republic – Poland, version 5, October 2016, pp. 89-90.

56 *Ibid.*, pp. 35-37, 89-90.

to exchange know-how to ensure innovative cooperation among regions is emphasised. High absorptive capacity in this sphere is crucial in this case. Relatively few resources allocated to the education and qualifications priority results from the relatively low interest in projects of this type.<sup>57</sup> However, the most significant issues that hinder the development of cooperation on this border include the different concepts adopted by cooperating entities, problems with finding partners, sometimes insufficient interest in cooperation, and language barriers.<sup>58</sup>

### **3 Support of economic development in borderlands through the removal of various barriers**

Territorial cooperation has encountered certain barriers and difficulties in assessing cooperation. There are problems in determining the correct strategic and thematic directions for cooperation, which are caused by the complexity of the projects, high costs and administrative barriers, as well as by the complexity of financing, administrative, and regulatory systems, which differ from one another on both sides of the border.<sup>59</sup> The issue of cohesion in border regions was discussed in the European Commission Communication titled *Boosting Growth and Cohesion in EU Border Regions*,<sup>60</sup> which identified the areas that require particular attention – improvement – to increase cross-border interactions. Measures to be taken to use the potential of these regions more effectively and, thus, to strengthen their cohesion and competitiveness were also indicated. The measures suggested concern enterprises that focus on the reduction of legal and administrative barriers that hinder cross-border cooperation or the use of regions' potential.

The document includes 10 directions for improving administrative procedures, developing and creating services in this borderland, including the promotion of new ones. It points to the need to extend effective cooperation mechanisms that would reflect the multi-level dimension of shaping policies. In this context, member states should engage in a dialogue concerning the existing issues, which would, in

57 *Ibid.*, pp. 35-37.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

59 McMaster, Chapter 1.4. *European Territorial Cooperation...*, p. 65.

60 *Boosting growth and cohesion...*

particular, focus on the adaptation of regulations. To effectively support this process, the Commission suggested the creation of an on-line network of experts for local companies and entities so that they could present their legal or administrative problems or put forward proposals for their solutions. Another solution suggested in the document is to submit applications for pilot projects focusing on solutions to specific problems.

The document emphasises the need to improve the legislative process, since the existing problems stem from differing regulations in individual countries of these border regions. The necessity to provide correct information, support cross-border employment, and to promote multilingualism in these territories was considered important.

Furthermore, the document paid attention to the need to improve cross-border accessibility by promoting public transportation services and the possibility of using healthcare services in borderlands to take full advantage of the potential of these border regions, as presented in Table 5 in detail.

## Conclusions

In the era of challenges, including those related to globalisation, one may agree that “today, more than ever, local issues have gone global and global issues have become local”.<sup>61</sup> Contemporary border regions must develop their competitiveness and also their resilience in this context, perceived through the prism of creating a path of long-term growth, considering their socioeconomic transformation. One of the instruments for promoting the economic development of these areas includes cross-border cooperation programmes implemented under cohesion policy.

The analysis of the implementation of European cross-border programmes pertaining to the Polish-Czech borderland in the years 2004-2006 and 2007-2013 has indicated that the measurable outcomes of the support that was provided manifested themselves in many areas, particularly in education, transportation, culture, and the environment. In the analysed programming periods, the directions for sup-

61 *Strengthening Innovation in Europe's Regions...*, p. 2.

**Table 5: Measures proposed by the European Commission to eliminate barriers to cross-border cooperation**

Directions	Scope	Measures
Deepening cooperation and exchanges	Extension of effective mechanisms for cross-border cooperation, reflecting multi-level EU management.	holding a regular dialogue regarding existing problems concerning the borders, more attention paid to mutual recognition, adaptation of regulations, proposal for the creation of an online network of experts used to present legal and administrative problems related to the borders, possibility of submitting pilot projects by public authorities, devoted to legal or administrative problems identified in border areas.
Improving the legislative process	Existing problems stem from the occurrence of different regulations in the legal and administrative systems of both countries.	proposal for the implementation of assessments of the effects of regulations, including local ones, measures will be taken by the Commission to assess cross-border effects and the emphasis placed on increasing the involvement of entities from cross-border regions.
Enabling cross-border public administration	When they clash, the occurrence of different cultures and administrative systems in individual countries may be an obstacle. There is a need for a common approach and shared discussion of documents because difficulties in cross-border interactions occur.	plan for public administration measures for 2016-2020 includes the means and tools concerning borderlands, such as the principle of disposability, meeting the challenges posed to electronic administration by promoting electronic solutions.
Providing reliable and understandable information and assistance	Need to provide access to information and services to solve residential and labour problems in the borderland.	proposal in favour of a "uniform digital portal" used by individuals and companies to access information, online administrative services, or support services, obligation of the European Commission to strengthen the SOLVIT system in favour of cross-border problem-solving.
Supporting cross-border employment	It was indicated that the border serves as a barrier to mobility.	presence of tools, EU mechanisms devoted to the promotion of cross-border employment, which are still not used to their full potential in border areas, the need to improve processes, which include, for example, the full recognition of skills and competences, encouraging the strengthening of cooperation in public employment services.
Promoting border multilingualism	The ability to speak multiple languages is important in the context of mobility and competitiveness, and, therefore, there is a need to speak different languages.	intensified measures in favour of promoting bilingualism in these borderlands using Erasmus+ and Interreg programmes are recommended.
Facilitating cross-border accessibility	Prevalent problems found in border areas are related to public transportation services: the number of infrastructure connections, the services provided and their quality.	among EU priorities—higher unification and coordination of technical standards, interoperability, a study of the missing railway connections concerning internal borders will be published, need for member states to intensify their activities towards ensuring more integrated, higher-quality public transportation services.
Promoting greater pooling of healthcare facilities	Hindered access to healthcare facilities on the other side of the border, e.g., different reimbursement principles, healthcare standards, or difficulties in rescue team intervention.	a map of cross-border cooperation in healthcare will be developed.

Directions	Scope	Measures
Considering the legal and financial framework for cross-border cooperation	Legal tools exist to facilitate cross-border cooperation, e.g., the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation.	possibility of creating an instrument for adapting the regulations of another country in their own legal makeup, member states' involvement in a dialogue to assess how financing programmes may prevent the creation of barriers in these borderlands.
Building evidence of cross-border interaction to inform decision-making	Accumulation of data and evidence is important for the elimination of barriers.	the Commission plans to finance a pilot project with the participation of statistical offices, aiming to use data sourced from available studies, studies of border areas will be carried out as part of the "European Territorial Development and Territorial Cohesion Observation Network".

Source: Author's own elaboration based on: Boosting growth and cohesion, op. cit. Directions for recommended measures are directly quoted from the document.

port granted under the cross-border programmes have been slightly modified, i.e., a stronger emphasis was placed on the support of issues related to risk, entrepreneurship, education, or the cooperation network. It is also important to mitigate the peripheral character of these areas and to ensure the ongoing transformation of their socioeconomic structures. The effects of initiated cooperation are already visible.

It is difficult to say how durable the impact of these European cooperation programmes is and how cross-border cooperation would have been conducted without EU support. Nonetheless, member states should support any measures that aim to remove administrative and legal barriers.

Further research should focus on a thorough analysis of the beneficiaries and effects of ongoing cooperation in border areas, carried out as part of cross-border cooperation programmes devoted to supporting entrepreneurship, innovativeness, and the human capital as well as to strengthening the cooperation structures that have been formed. European funds should become a catalyst for transformations to occur on the border to enhance the competitiveness of the borderland area, including in the context of developing its resilience.

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