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Guidelines

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The present guidelines aims to provide information on the application and specifically on how to fill in the digital application form.

To know more about the objectives of the call for proposals and the criteria underpinning the selection of cases resulting from this call for proposals, please refer to the "[Call for Proposals](#)" and the "[Frequently Asked Questions](#)" documents.

1. Apply to *b-solutions* 2.0's call for proposals

To take part in the *b-solutions* 2.0's call for proposals you simply have to fill out an application form which is available [here](#).

Applicants are invited to address obstacles of a legal or administrative nature arising because of incompatible legislations¹, non-existing or different administrative procedures on the different sides of the border, or because the applicable legislation does not take into account the specificity of cross-border interactions.

By participating, you can inform us of the obstacle you face when cooperating with your neighbours. By doing so, you will contribute to increasing awareness on the context of your and other border regions that might experience the same issues.

From the previous phases of *b-solutions*, we have learned that the legal/administrative obstacles hindering or preventing cooperation across border regions are still various and, in many cases, they present similarities – even if they arise on different boundaries.

Analyses of the previous cases proved that there are no ready-made solutions usable for all of them, as the legal and administrative frameworks that are causing them are different. Similarly, the type of actors involved in the implementation of a possible solution or the cultural context influencing legal and administrative provisions are bound to the specific region or country.

However, processes leading to the removal of the obstacles are similar and can be applied the same way in different territories (i.e. through the introduction of an amendment to a specific provision or the execution of a bilateral agreement).

In case you have doubts concerning the type of information requested, please check the "FAQs" on *b-solutions'* [website](#).

In case you have further questions, the *b-solutions* team would be glad to assist you anytime during the application process. Don't hesitate to contact us: b-solutions@aebr.eu.

Finally, [here](#), you can find the full two compendiums of the 90 cases analysed in the course of the previous phases of the initiative, thematic analysis and a story-telling publications. These might be of inspiration but also helpful tools to understand which kind of obstacles are consulted in the framework of *b-solutions*.

We now guide you step by step through the online application process.

¹ Legislation in here seen in a broader context, including all regulatory framework, regardless of its source or level, applicable in the field addressed by a specific project on that territory.

2. The online application form

The link to the online application form is: <https://www.b-solutionsproject.com/call-for-proposals>.

The process is 100% paperless.

All fields with “*” are compulsory.

The application form should be compiled, preferably, in English². Applicants are invited to utilise the [eTranslation Tool](#) put at disposal of public administration to translate information into English if needed.

The final deadline for the submission of your application is: 10 November 2023.

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis and cases will be selected within 20 working days after submission.

2.1 Introduce yourself and your co-applicants

— YOUR ENTITY

The applicant is the entity that experiences the obstacle in cross-border cooperation. In case the application submitted is successful, the applicant will become the contact point for AEBC.

Applicants must:

- be **public bodies or bodies governed by public law** (national, regional or local) with the **mandate** (legal competence) to intervene in certain areas and territories or **cross-border entities with legal personality** (EGTCs, Euroregions and similar CB structures, also if ruled by private law);
- be **based in an EU or EFTA country or IPA country**;
- share at least one EU internal **land or maritime border with another EU Member State. If based in the EU, it can share a border also with an EFTA country or IPA country**;

Please note that, in the case of public bodies or bodies governed by public law, the territory is not limited to the one where the applying entity is located.



In this section, you need to tick the option that corresponds to your status.

For example, if you are a regional government then you should select the option “Public Body”; if you are an EGTC then you should tick “EGTC”; etc.

In case of cross-border entities, an extra field called “Members of the cross-border structure” will appear.

Here you are asked to “*clarify the composition of your EGTC, Euroregion, Eurodistrict or Eurocity by clearly listing the full name of the (public and/or private) organisations/bodies/institutions belonging to your cross-border entity*”. This field has been

² Applications can otherwise be filled in in all 24 official EU languages, Icelandic and Norwegian (Bokmål). If applications are received in a language other than English, these will be translated using the [eTranslation Tool](#), an online machine translation service provided by the European Commission.

added to gather information about the other members that compose your cross-border structure that will also be involved in your *b-solutions 2.0* advice case.

— **NAME OF THE APPLICANT**

Write the full name of the entity responsible for the participation in *b-solutions 2.0*.

— **ADDRESS OF THE APPLICANT**

Simply write the full address of your entity as “applicant”.

— **CONTACT PERSONS**

Simply write the first name and last name of the lead applicant’s contact persons. The contact person is the main contact point between the applicant and AEBR.

Please indicate another person who is familiar with the specific subject of the application.

Please include his/her email address and phone number in the corresponding fields (“**EMAIL**” and “**PHONE NUMBER**”).

— **NUMBER OF CO-APPLICANTS**

You may involve co-applicant(s) in the application.

There is no maximum number of co-applicants, though the feasibility of the proposals should be taken into account when defining the consortia. It is important that each co-applicant has a relevant role within the project partnership and its presence is pertinent for overcoming the cross-border obstacle identified.

A natural person cannot be, in any case, considered as a co-applicant.



In this field, you simply need to indicate the total number of your co-applicants.

For example: if you only have one co-applicant, click on "1"; if you have 2 co-applicants, click on "2"; etc.

If you apply alone, please select “0”.

— **NAME AND ADDRESS OF THE CO-APPLICANT(S)**

According to the number of co-applicants you have indicated in the previous field, you will be asked to list the full name and address (street, city, postal code, country) of each of your co-applicants.

2.2 Your advice case

— **TITLE OF THE PROPOSED ADVICE CASE**

Please try to find a catchy, pertinent, and “easy-to-read” title.

Please note that there is a maximum of 60 characters’ length on the title.

— **THEMATIC AREA OF THE ADVICE CASE**

In this section of the application form, please choose the thematic area of your obstacle.

As specified in the call for proposals (page 5), applicants must submit advice case proposals in one of the following thematic areas, following the topics addressed by the European Commission's report (2021):

- Institutional cooperation
- Public services
- Labour markets and education
- European Green Deal

In the document of the [call for proposals](#), we detailed the thematic areas to illustrate more precisely what they might include (page 6).

Each advice case will have the objective of exploring a legal/administrative obstacle in one specific border and under one of these topics.

If an obstacle that you have identified touches on more than one thematic area, please select the one you consider the most relevant.

Applicants can submit more than one advice case but need to submit an application for each obstacle. The same entity (applicant or co-applicant) can apply more than once in the same thematic area, as long as the case is different.

— DESCRIPTION OF THE OBSTACLE

Please explain in detail what kind of obstacle of an legal and/or administrative nature you have encountered.

The obstacle may arise because of the following reasons:

- **lack of coherence** of legislation³ applicable on the different sides of the border;
- **inconsistencies, inexistence**, and overlapping of the different **administrative procedures**;
- applicable European, national or regional legislation or administrative procedure do not take into account the **specificity of cross-border interactions**.

Obstacles caused by a lack of infrastructures or investments in the border regions are not the target of the present call for proposals.



When filling out this section, try to be as precise as possible in documenting the obstacle you have identified in your border region.

The following questions can guide you through the description of your obstacle:

- What is the general context in which the obstacle arises?
- From which legal or administrative provisions do you think the obstacle is caused?

³ Legislation in here seen in a broader context, including all regulatory framework, regardless of its source or level, applicable in the field addressed by a specific project on that territory.

- How is the cooperation with your neighbour(s) affected by the obstacle?
- What kind of actions or services are prevented or limited by the obstacle? (i.e. it obstructs cross-border mobility of citizens and/or workers; it poses limits to the accessibility to healthcare services to citizens residing on the other side of the border, etc)

You can also add more information on the obstacle if you have any (previous studies, documentations, general data and others).

Following is an illustrative list of obstacles identified in each thematic area that might help you to evaluate if the obstacle(s) that you face in your border region can be part of the present call for proposals:

- Institutional cooperation: the EGTC Via Carpatia between Slovakia and Hungary faces certain challenges to cross-border cooperation, mostly due to a lack of financial support for EGTCs, a lack of recognition or awareness of EGTCs as legal entities in the Member States and differences in national EGTC laws. [Here](#), you can take a look at the other obstacles selected within this thematic area under the fourth call for proposals.
- Public services: while conducting research involving blood samples to study the prevalence of COVID-19 antibodies, Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands faced difficulties in aligning national GDPR legislation in the context of cross-border cooperation. More information on the obstacles selected under this category is at your disposal at this [link](#).
- Labour markets and education: the regional governments along the border between France and Spain intended to implement a cross-border information exchange system to follow up labour and social information of cross-border workers but difficulties arose because of the lack of a common regulatory framework for minimum income benefits and a lack of legal authorisation for the transfer of personal data between the Member State. Get inspired by the [cases](#) submitted in this thematic area during the fourth call for proposals!
- European Green Deal: in the Alpine region between Italy and Austria, a lack of strategic cross-border management for rapid disaster response and a lack of awareness and doubts for rescue make cross-border cooperation in the area of disaster management more challenging for disaster workers. More examples are available [here](#).

To gain a broader understanding of the type of obstacles selected and consulted in each category, we invite you to read the full second compendium of the cases analysed in the course of the second phase of the initiative available on <https://www.b-solutionsproject.com/>.

— **POTENTIAL INCREASE IN CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION**

Here you should outline the consequences you expect to see in cross-border cooperation if the obstacle you present with this application is solved.

For example:

- with the removal of the obstacle, hiring doctors from a neighbouring country would be quicker, resulting in better functioning of a cross-border hospital. This has a clear impact on the lives and health condition of the citizens residing in the border area;
- starting to cooperate in the field of emergency services would be easier for stakeholders from both sides of the border once the obstacle is removed. This will provide quick and more effective help to the citizens residing in the region;
- coordinating between all the relevant actors dealing with youth welfare in the border area would be easier if the obstacles were overcome. In turn, this would guarantee more protection and help to local families and kids.

— **APPLICANT'S OR CO-APPLICANT'S MANDATE TO IMPLEMENT SOLUTIONS**

Please provide information on the authority you or your co-applicant(s) have to act on the territory to implement potential solutions to the obstacle identified or to propose policies. The mandate can derive from the legal constitution of the applicant (or co-applicant) or its statutes.

For example:

- You are a regional body and have the legislative power to change the legal provisions underlying the obstacle;
- you are a regional public body and you are one of the signers of a cross-border convention or agreement regulating the provision of healthcare emergency services on both sides of a certain border;
- you are a border municipality or EGTC providing a certain service to the local population (i.e. supply of drinkable water) and you are entitled by the law to sign agreements to manage such service.

— **REPLICABILITY**

Here, you need to explain how the case you present could serve as an example for other instances and, as such, if the solution could inspire, or benefit, stakeholders in other border regions to find solutions to similar obstacles.

The following questions could guide you in assessing the replicability:

- Does the obstacle(s) that I have identified exist at other borders (according to your knowledge)?
- Do the group of people or the type of institutions affected by the obstacle exist on other borders?

For example:

- Solving the fiscal problems limiting the hiring of personnel from the other side of the border than from where an EGTC has its registered office can potentially be replicated to many other borders where similar structures operate;
- Solving the obstacle(s) that prevent the creation of an interoperable digital public procurement platform to be used by economic actors located on both

sides of the border can be replicated on all the boundaries where there are cross-border structures entitled to launch a call for tenders on both sides.

— **BORDER**

Please, clearly define here which border you are addressing.

You can also provide additional general information on geographical data on the region.

— **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

You can submit additional documents in support of your application if you wish to do so.

For example:

- a map presenting the area of intervention;
- a graph, an infographic, etc.;
- previous data or studies documenting the obstacle;
- possible solutions already identified or other information considered relevant to contextualise the application.

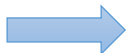
— **BACKGROUND INFORMATION - FILE UPLOAD**

Here is where you can attach additional documents. Please notice that you can upload a maximum of 3 files for 5 MB in total. Documents should not be longer than 10 pages each.



You can upload the files in the following formats: .doc .docx .pdf .jpeg .jpg .xls .xlsx .ppt .pptx .zip

— **AGREEMENT**



Please tick one box here.

It is a compulsory declaration that the obstacle you propose to receive advice for will not be subject to similar actions at the same time, which are also financed by EU-sources.

— **DECLARATION OF VALIDITY**

With this compulsory consent box you declare that all the information you have included in this application form corresponds to reality, is valid and true.

— **PERMISSION TO USE THE INFORMATION PROVIDED**

By ticking this box you permit AEBR and the European Commission to utilise and publish the information you have included in the application form even if the case is not selected as an “advise case” for purposes linked to research.

3. Tips and recommendations

Here you have a list of tips and recommendations that might be useful to bear in mind when filling out the application form:

- Make sure to fill out **all the sections** included in the form;
- When describing the obstacle(s), clearly state the **legal or administrative nature of the obstacle**. Obstacles may not be technical difficulties in implementing single projects or simply depend on the political will to act in a certain way. Instead, they must originate in the legislative framework (regional, national, European);
- Make sure to highlight **the impact on cross-border cooperation**. In case the obstacle is solved, the results should be beneficial to both sides of the border: statistics, facts and figures to prove this are very welcome!
- Make sure that the border you are addressing is an **EU internal land or maritime border, or it involves an EFTA country, or an IPA country**. Obstacles identified on (other) external borders will not be taken into consideration;
- Make sure the applicant or a co-applicant has the mandate on the territory.

4. Special note on the current context

The present call for proposals opens at a time still strongly marked by the effects of the COVID-19-pandemic. AEBR and DG REGIO acknowledge that the closure of national borders and other exceptional measures taken by the Member States in their fight against the pandemic has created new obstacles to cross-border cooperation. However, these obstacles are generally not covered by the scope of *b-solutions 2.0*. This call for proposals aims to collect cases of structural obstacles of a legal or administrative nature that exist beyond temporary measures taken in response to the COVID-19-pandemic. If you want to apply with issues related to the current situation, please make sure these address structural deficiencies of cross-border cooperation. Temporary obstacles that do not exist in the normal legal and administrative context (including Schengen) cannot be taken into account under the present call for proposals.

5. How to receive assistance

AEBR staff is ready to assist applicants with any technical and procedural questions that may arise during the application process.

You can contact us anytime at the *b-solutions* functional mailbox: b-solutions@aebr.eu or calling at +49 1764 20 90 666. You can also book a slot for an individual Zoom meeting with a team member here: <https://calendly.com/b-solutionsaebr/30min>

A set of FAQs is available [online](#).

The present document is being constantly updated with practical questions posed by the applicants.

6. Key dates

- Call opening: 15 November 2022

- Call closing: 10 November 2023
- Expected advice period: within a maximum of three months after assignment of an expert, from November 2022 to April 2024.

A more precise timeline will be communicated to the participants in due course.