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b-solutions 3.0 is an initiative of the European Commission, managed by the Association of European Border Regions under Grant Agreement CCI2023CE160AT234 signed with the Directorate General of Regional and Urban Policy. The action is financed by the European Union.

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 to submit border obstacles and the criteria underpinning the selection of cases resulting from this call, please refer to the [“Call for new b-solutions cases”](#) and the [“Frequently Asked Questions”](#).

1. Apply to the call for new *b-solutions* cases

To take part in the *b-solutions* 3.0’s call for new cases 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 regions or countries.

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 is glad to assist you anytime during the application process. Don’t hesitate to contact us at b-solutions@aebr.eu.

Finally, [here](#), you can find the full four compendiums of the 165 cases analysed in the course of the previous phases of the initiative, thematic analysis and two 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.

Applications can be submitted until resources are available.

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis and, under normal circumstances, 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 **mandate** (legal competence) to intervene in certain geographical areas in the field(s) of intervention of the application 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.

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. In case the automated translation is needed, the English version obtained with this tool will be considered as being the original, and will be the only one considered for the selection and awarding process.

Here you are asked to indicate the composition of your EGTC, Euroregion, Eurodistrict or Eurocity. Please list clearly the organisations/bodies/institutions that form your cross-border entity by adding their full name.

This field has been added to gather information about the other members that compose your cross-border structure that will also be involved in your *b-solutions 3.0* advice case.

— **NAME OF THE APPLICANT**

Write the full name of the entity responsible for the participation in *b-solutions 3.0*.

— **ADDRESS OF THE APPLICANT**

Write the full address of your entity as “applicant”, including address in the local language, postal code, municipality and country.

— **CONTACT PERSONS**

Please write the first name and last name of two contact persons who would be responsible for the advice case of the case is selected at your organisation. The contact person is the main contact point between the applicant and AEBR.

Two persons should be familiar with the specific subject of the application.

Please include their 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. Here you can indicate how many applicants you involve in the application.

There is no maximum number of co-applicants, though the feasibility of the submissions should be taken into account when defining the number of applicants. 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 new *b-solutions*’ cases (page 8), applicants must submit advice case applications in one of the following thematic areas, following the topics addressed by the European Commission’s report (2021) report EU Border Regions: Living labs of European integration (COM(2021) 393 final):

- 1) Institutional Cooperation across national borders
- 2) Cross-border public services
- 3) Cross-border labour markets and education
- 4) Border Regions for the European Green Deal

In the document of the [call for new *b-solutions*’ cases](#), we detailed the thematic areas to illustrate more precisely what they might include (page 8).

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 a 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**.

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.

Obstacles caused by a lack of infrastructures or investments in the border regions are not the target of the present call for new *b-solutions*' cases.



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?
- 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).

The following list is an illustrative example of obstacles identified in each thematic area that might help you evaluate if the obstacle(s) that you face in your border region can be part of the present call for new *b-solutions*' cases:

- 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 *b-solutions'* compendiums of the cases analysed in the course of the initiative so far, which are available here: <https://www.b-solutionsproject.com/library>.

— 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 legal 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

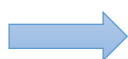
You can submit additional documents in support of your application if you wish to do so.

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.

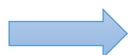
— BACKGROUND INFORMATION - FILE UPLOAD

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 relevant legislative framework (regional, national, or 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 and on the field(s) of intervention of the application.

4. 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.

5. Key dates

- Call opening: 24 February 2025
- Call closing: after exhaustion of resources available
- Selection of successful cases: on a rolling basis, under normal circumstances within 20 working days after submission
- Expected implementation period: within a maximum of three months after assignment of an expert