



b-solutions is a 2-year initiative to tackle legal and administrative border obstacles along EU internal borders. It is promoted by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) as one of the actions proposed in the Communication "Boosting Growth and Cohesion in EU Border Regions", adopted by the Commission on 20 September 2017.

The initiative is managed by the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR).

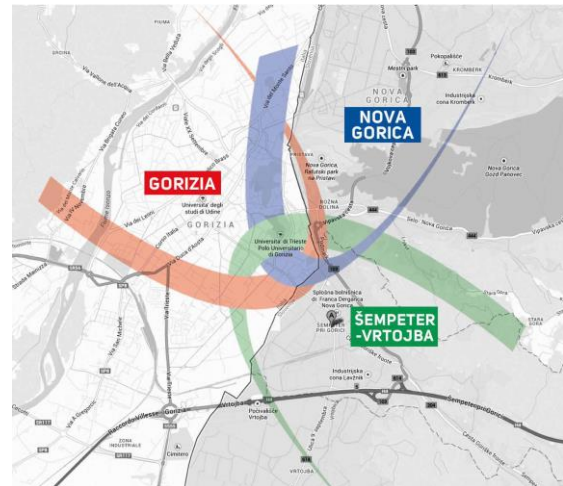


EGTC GO Cross-border Public Urban Mobility Plan

Partners: EGTC GO, comprising the municipalities of Gorizia (I), Nova Gorica (SLO) and Šempeter-Vrtojba (SLO)

The Territory

The municipalities of Gorizia (IT), Nova Gorica (SI) and Šempeter-Vrtojba (SI), contiguous to each other on the Italian-Slovenian border, cover an area of 46,7 km² and altogether they include a population of approximately 75.000 inhabitants. On August 8, 2011, they established the EGTC GO to identify and cope with common challenges as well as finding solutions for the integration of services reducing the public spending and improving the quality of life of the citizens.



The Identified Obstacle

Different obstacles hinder the integration of the urban transport networks operating in the EGTC GO area. The obstacles of administrative and legal nature are:

- Restrictions on cabotage operations at cross-border level;
- Different pricing systems in the two countries;
- Inadequate information on the service in the neighbouring country, emphasised by the use of different languages.

The Proposed Solution

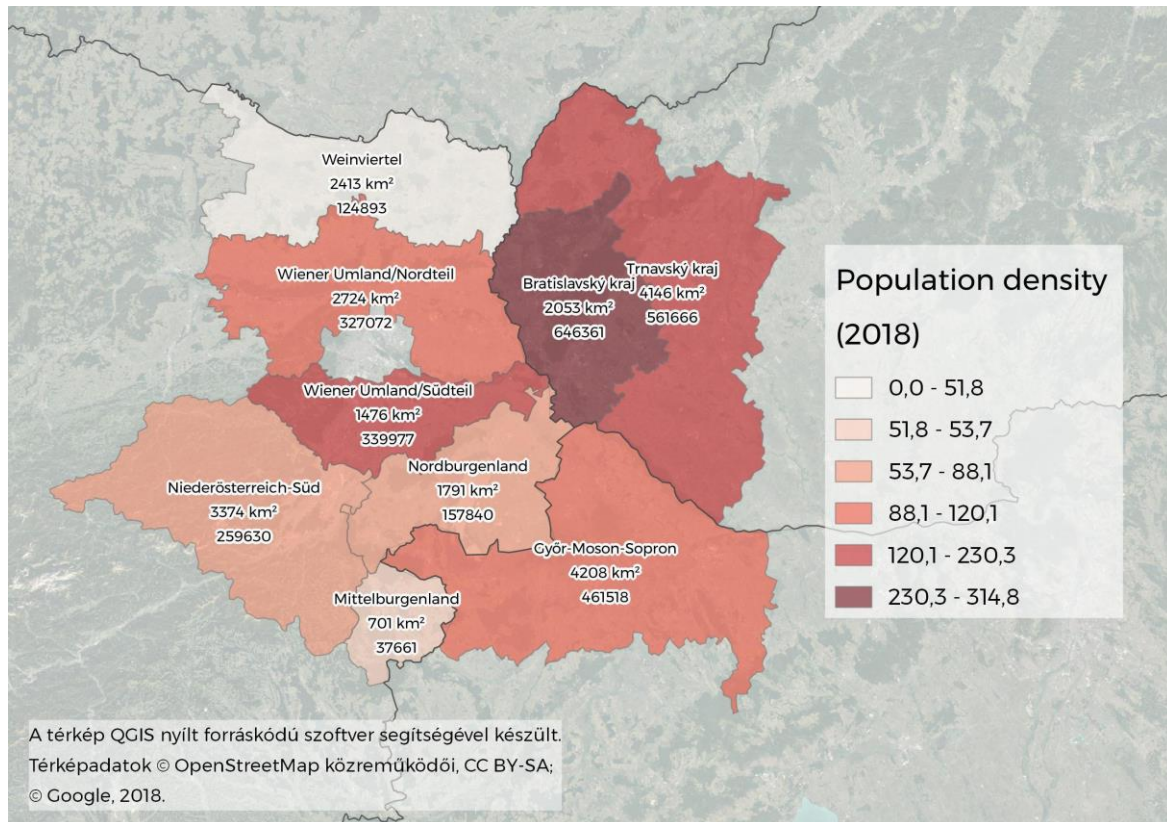
The proposal intends to mobilise relevant actors at local, regional and national level to conclude a cooperation agreement to develop a cross-border urban transport system. The initiative *b-solutions* will allow to carry out an analysis of the traffic flows in the cross-border area and the financial viability of an extended cross-border transport service. These studies will serve as base for the agreement. As such, the agreement shall enable the transport operators to set up new cross-border bus lines within the target area. Consequently, it will contribute to conceive the border area shared by the three cities as a single urban system.

Bilingualism in the Functional Tri-Border Region AT-HU-SK

Partners: Office of the Lower Austrian Government, Department of Pre-Schools/Kindergartens and Schools, Lower Austria - Board of Education, Burgenland - Board of Education, Local Government of County Győr-Moson-Sopron, District of Bratislava-Nové Mesto

The Territory

The regions involved in this project are: the Austrian province of Lower Austria, the district of Bratislava-Nové Mesto in Slovakia, the Austrian province of Burgenland and the county Győr-Moson-Sopron in Hungary. The overall area covers 22,886 km² and has nearly 3 million inhabitants.



The Identified Obstacle

In the border regions among Austria, Hungary and Slovakia pupils cannot attend schools in the neighbouring country. Legal obstacles regarding the insurance, financing possibilities and the recognition of the school career do not allow for children to be accepted in schools in another country. However, this option is possible at the level of upper secondary education.

The Proposed Solution

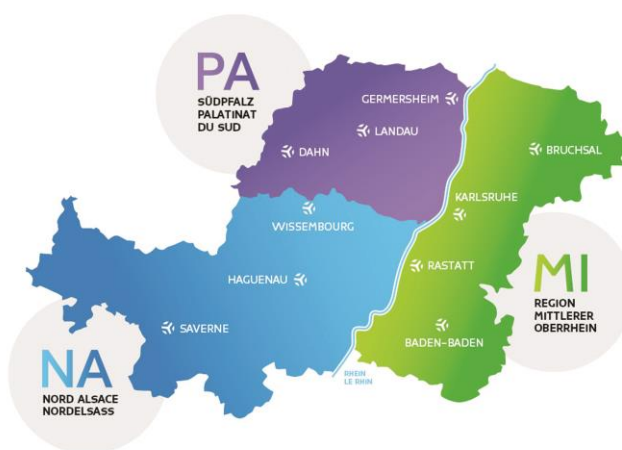
The project analyses the legal framework and identifies the legal and administrative obstacles in order to facilitate the possibility of cross-border kindergartens and school attendance in the Austrian border regions with Hungary and Slovakia. Within the *b-solutions* initiative, experts will compare the legal framework, provide reports and regularly meet with the stakeholders. Their aim is to find legal possibilities to change and improve the situation, promote multilingualism in the border region and raise awareness of the problem with the respective authorities.

Elaboration of a cooperation protocol aimed at simplifying administrative procedures for frontier workers in the field of health insurance

Partners: EGTC Eurodistrict PAMINA, INFOBEST Network

The Territory

The Eurodistrict PAMINA on the Franco-German border includes the Southern Palatinate (PA), the Middle Upper Rhine/Baden (MI) and the Northern Alsace (NA). It has an area of 6,500 km² and accommodates 1.7 million inhabitants; approximately 16,500 people are cross-border commuters.



The Identified Obstacle

The complexity of administrative procedures for frontier workers and other commuters between France and Germany in terms of health insurance is a real obstacle to mobility. A number of administrative difficulties contribute to making mobility a negative experience: slowness of health insurance registration procedures, round trips of identical documents, difficulties in obtaining reimbursements, insufficient and sometimes contradictory information, often not available in the language of the frontier worker and not adapted to cross-border situations, etc. This often has financial consequences for frontier workers or other persons being insured in one country and benefiting from health services in the other country and finally leads to less cross-border mobility.

The Proposed Solution

Thanks to the *b-solutions* initiative, INFOBEST will organise numerous direct consultations with citizens and collect feedback from employees of health insurance funds in each country. The solution is primarily aimed at improving administrative procedures in a cross-border context, e.g. by changing administrative provisions.

The solution consists of three steps:

- Lobbying administrations with the objective of simplifying procedures addressing citizens;
- Creating an inventory of administrative difficulties faced by border residents and their discussion with the competent administrative authorities;
- Drawing up an action protocol between French and German health insurance funds with the support of legal experts.

When EMS (emergency medical systems) erase borders

Partners: *Consorcio de la Comunidad de Trabajo de los Pirineos, EGTC Hopital de Cerdanya, Agence Régionale de la Santé Occitanie, Agence Régionale de la Santé Nouvelle Aquitaine, Emergentziak Osakidetza – Euskadi, Servicio de Protección Civil Navarra, Urgencias y Emergencias Sanitarias 061 Aragón*

The Territory

The Working Community of Pyrenees (CTP) brings together 7 members: 2 French regions, 4 Spanish regions and the Principality of Andorra. It consists of 24 million inhabitants (5% of the EU total population), 656 km of country border and 115.583 km² (50% of the territory covered by forests).



The Identified Obstacle

Without the validation of a diploma by the Order of Doctors and Nurses of the neighbouring country, healthcare professionals from the other side of the border are not authorised to intervene anywhere except on the territory where they obtained their diploma. As an example, this prevents a French doctor from helping an injured person in the Spanish territory, even if he is the closest doctor.

The Proposed Solution

The aim of this project is to achieve collaboration agreements among the French State, the Spanish Autonomous Communities and the Principality of Andorra that allows the signature of a convention that erases administrative problems and makes cross-border emergency health interventions possible. In this context, the *b-solutions* initiative facilitates organising meetings to prepare the agreement between the partners.

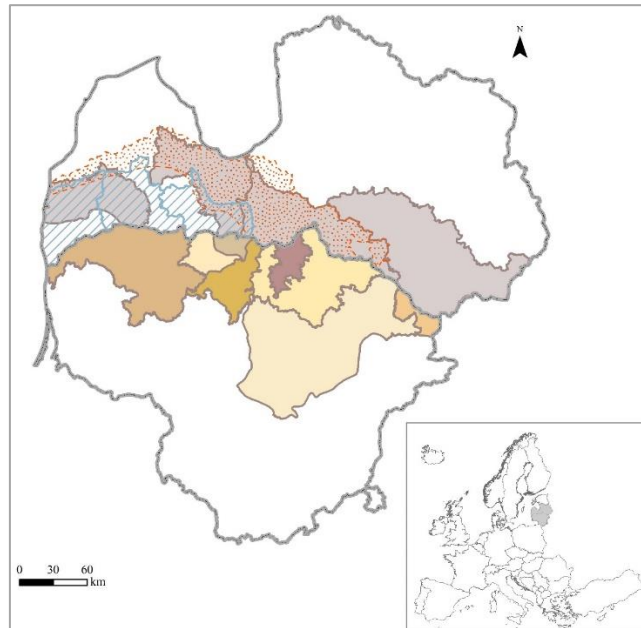
The last phase of the project will be dedicated to setting up a technical pilot between the emergency services of two hospitals (Perpignan in France and Puigcerdá in Spain) with a view to optimizing resources and providing care. With this new project, the CTP aims to improve the emergency healthcare for the 24 million inhabitants of the Pyrenees.

Lithuanian Geological Survey and Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre institutional cooperation on cross-border groundwater management

Partners: State limited Liability Company 'Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre', Lithuanian Geological Survey under the Ministry of Environment

The Territory

The land border between Lithuania and Latvia is 588 km long and it is located in the centre of Baltic Artesian Basin. The area is characterised by active, passive and stagnant water exchange zones. Groundwater management mainly focuses on the active water exchange zone where valuable freshwater is stored. In the central part of the Lithuania-Latvia border zone karst process is widespread, affecting water quality in both Latvia and Lithuania.



The Identified Obstacle

As water is not limited to national borders, a common action and management is needed to improve and preserve the water quality and conservation across the borders. Before developing a joint action to improve or maintain the quality and quantity of groundwater, data is needed to determine the hydrogeological processes occurring on the site.

The Proposed Solution

In order to successfully interpret the obtained data, it is necessary to exchange data to create;

- Unified databases of accumulated data
- A joint aquifer prevalence map;
- A soluble rock formation prevalence map;
- An assessment of the need of cohesive groundwater objects including ideas for further strategies on groundwater management.

Within the *b-solutions* initiative, all necessary data will be used for the creation of a foundation to interpret hydrogeological conditions, assess existing risks, to prepare and implement a draft version of a long-term monitoring plan and a preliminary transboundary river management plan.

Partners: EGTC Secretariat of the Summit of the Greater Region - Administration du Cadastre et de la Topographie, IGN - Direction Interregionale Nord Est, Institut Geographique National, Landesamt für Vermessung, Geoinformation und Landentwicklung, Landesamt für Vermessung und Geobasisinformation Rheinland-Pfalz, Ministère du Développement durable et des Infrastructures

The Territory

The Greater Region lies at the crossroads of the rivers Rhine, Saar, Meuse and Moselle. It covers 65,401 km² with more than 11.6 million inhabitants from the territories Lorraine in the French region Grand Est, Wallonia, the Federation Wallonia-Brussels and Ostbelgien in Belgium, Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate in Germany as well as the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.



The Identified Obstacle

At the European level, EuroGeographics produces harmonised spatial data. However, the scale of the data on the hydrographic network produced by EuroGeographics is not sufficiently detailed and therefore not suitable for the fine-grained analyses required for environmental assessments. At the level of the Greater Region, the agencies responsible for producing cartographic data not only work independently, but also according to different legal, organisational and technical principles.

The Proposed Solution

b-solutions will help to evaluate, reprise and develop the geometric border harmonisation approaches that were applied for each border area. The objective is to geometrically harmonise the topogeographic reference datasets creating a comparable reference digital terrain model, DTM, of all the partners in order to eliminate all gaps and overlaps.

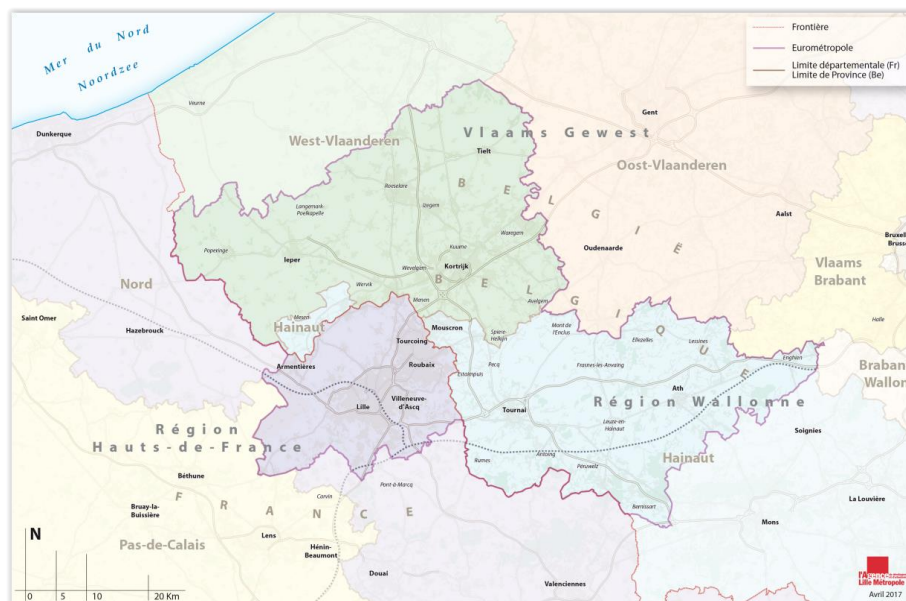
Subsequently, the working group will create an integrated dataset based on harmonised geometry and content for a pilot theme (e.g. hydrography) and make it available in an interoperable format. This could include a free publication with uniform terms of usage (Open Data) in a centralised platform. The dataset compiled in this way could then serve as a model for further other themes.

Facilitating cross-border mobility within the scope of dual education in the Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai

Partners: EGTC Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai, The Hauts-de-France Region, The Walloon Region, The Flemish Region / the Flemish Community

The Territory

The Eurometropolis covers an area of 3,550 km² and consists of 152 Flemish, Walloon and French municipalities, with a total of 2,1 million French or Dutch-speaking inhabitants. The Eurometropolis is also a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), bringing together 14 French, Walloon and Flemish partners: 2 countries, 3 regions, 2 provinces and 1 department as well as 5 inter-municipal associations.



The Identified Obstacle

In general, the lack of harmonisation at European level makes it difficult to develop the concept of cross-border apprenticeships. Many obstacles were found in terms of cross-border mobility of French and Belgian apprentices, as for example a linguistic barrier, different age limits, different financial arrangements and a weak mobilisation of stakeholders due to a lack of information for the apprentices and companies. Furthermore, there are different dual education contract systems and labour agreements linked to different legal statutes of the apprentice (dual education contract, trainee, apprentice, etc.) and different legal arrangements regarding the labour law and social law applicable to the apprentice (remuneration, social security, financial support).

The Proposed Solution

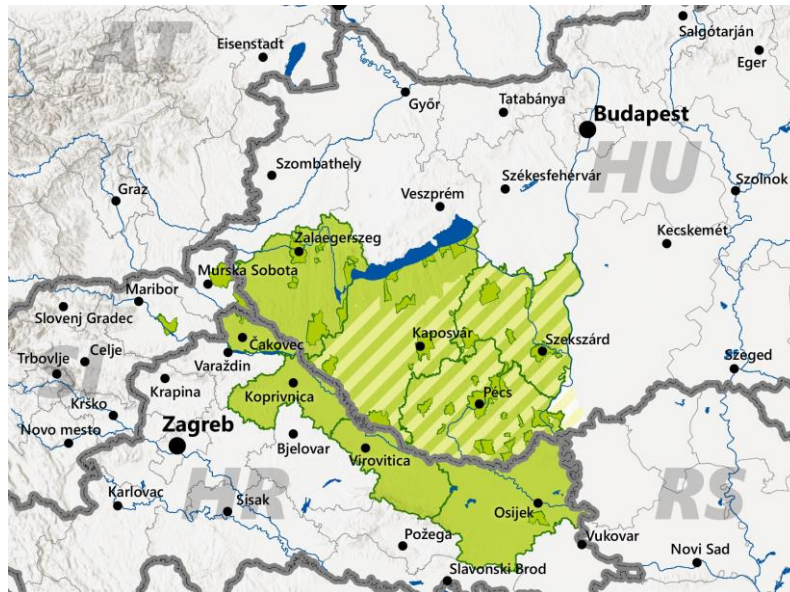
In the light of the obstacles mentioned, it is necessary to systematically carry out an in-depth analysis of the practices stemming from the different laws applicable in the territory of the Eurometropolis. Within the framework of *b-solutions*, a detailed diagnosis of the cross-border obstacles will be carried out in order to find an appropriate solution by means of a derogation or a system of equivalence. This should lead to a framework agreement feasible for all competent authorities of the territory. Secondly, in order to test the cooperation formula resulting from the diagnosis, the Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai will implement a field experiment to test the cross-border apprenticeship contract, allowing some apprentices to perform their apprenticeship on both sides of the border.

CrossMarkets – Institutional cooperation to enhance cross-border selling at local farmers' markets

Partners: Pannon European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation Ltd.

The Territory

The cross-border territory of the Pannon European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation includes more than 60 local and county-level municipalities along the Croatian-Hungarian border line. This rural area is characterised mostly by small villages where the role of agriculture is significantly higher than the national or EU averages both in terms of economic performance and employment. Small agricultural holdings and family farms dominate the structure of the agrarian sector; these units with only family workers compose the majority of farming activity.



The Identified Obstacle

The border between Hungary and Croatia poses an obstacle to national legislations favouring small, family lead farms strengthening the population retention force of rural settlements. Hungarian and Croatian regulations are different, several barriers arise restraining family farmers from entering markets on the other side of the border. Border crossing difficulties, lack of information, language knowledge gaps, administrative difficulties, permits, tax differences, lack of cross-border cooperation among the farmers, and market players hinder trade across the border.

The Proposed Solution

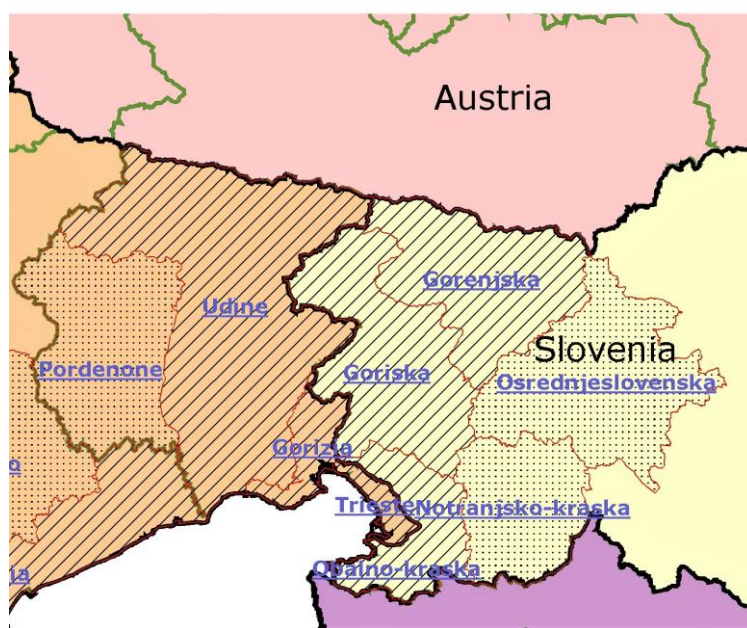
The 'Crossmarkets' project intends to overcome the above mentioned obstacles in order to improve the farmers' competitiveness, to enlarge supply and diversification of products in the geographically close area of the border region. With analysing the needs and expectations of local farmers as well as their difficulties in relation to the cross-border selling of their goods, and comparing these findings with the actual regulatory and administrative framework, the main legislative and administrative areas that need to be addressed can be selected and a number of focused intervention areas can be identified to support cross-border selling of local products. Based on these results, targeted policy recommendations and solutions will be elaborated as part of the *b-solutions* initiative.

XBORDER – WORK: tackling administrative issues that hinder free movement of workers

Partners: Regione autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia, Zavod Republike Slovenije za zaposlovanje

The Territory

The Italy – Slovenia border area goes from the border with Austria to the North until the Adriatic Sea in the South, with the border extending for 232km. Conventionally, the area encompasses the provinces of Trieste, Gorizia, Udine and Pordenone in Italy and the entire Western part of Slovenia, counting approximately 2 million inhabitants in total. The area belongs to the wealthiest regions of both countries, with a combined GDP per capita of €27.000.



The Identified Obstacle

The area sees an increasing amount of cross border workers who are residents in one country but live in another. This phenomenon has increased since Slovenia's accession in the EU on the 1st of May 2004, and even more after Slovenia's access into the Schengen Area on the 21st of December 2007. Although the legislation concerning double taxation, residency etc. is straightforward, its practical implementation is far from optimal. This sometimes leads to over taxation of individuals, limitations to the access of social security benefits by cross-border workers, and implies cumbersome bureaucratic procedures to avoid double taxation.

The Proposed Solution

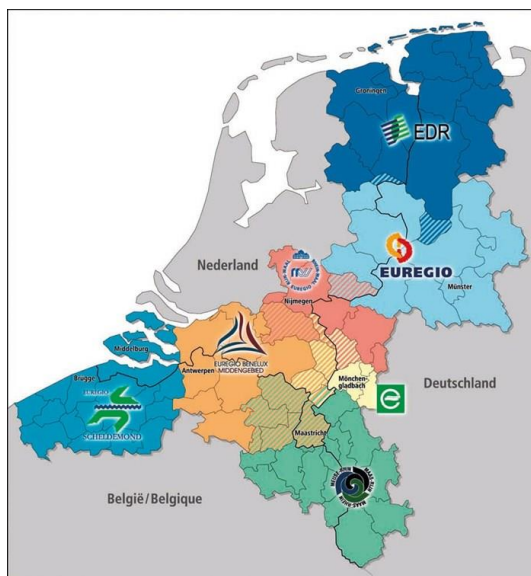
The *b-solutions* project XBORDER WORK aims at creating a bilingual form through which the cross-border worker can share data concerning his/her income in one country and report it to the tax authorities and social security services in the other. The form shall be agreed upon by the relevant authorities in both countries. This solution will be relatively easy to implement in the area, with a low cost for its introduction. The introduction of a paper form will avoid difficulties related to amending governments' IT systems, requires minimum training and by being completely bilingual it eliminates the language barriers.

Roadmap & factsheet for the recognition of qualifications for highly demanded professions: two practical documents for first line support and citizens

Partners: Province Limburg, Ministerium für Arbeit, Gesundheit und Soziales des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (NL), EUREGIO, Euregio Rhein-Waal, Euregio Rhine-Meuse-North, Eems Dollard Region (EDR), Euregio Meuse-Rhine, Provincie Oost-Vlaanderen & Euregio Scheldemond

The Territory

The pilot project spans over the border region of the Netherlands with Belgium and Germany. The Dutch border region with its neighbouring countries covers 1.053 km of border, 478 km with Belgium and 575 alongside Germany. In light of the competences on education, the project comprises the Netherlands, Belgium with its Flemish, French and German-speaking Communities, and the German *Bundesländer* North Rhine-Westphalia and Lower Saxony.



The Identified Obstacle

Procedures concerning recognition of qualifications are often accused of being non-transparent, complex, time-consuming and sometimes even discourage mobility. Citizens as well as first line supporters are often faced with a lack of clarity as regards the recognition of qualifications for regulated professions. Well-running recognition procedures are important to facilitate cross-border employment. If a recognition decision does not come through in time, this may result in the loss of a job opportunity or a decision to abandon cross-border work.

The Proposed Solution

This project strives to develop two practical guidance documents for first line supporters and citizens: a roadmap and a factsheet for the recognition of qualifications concerning highly demanded professions. The pilot strives to go beyond the information that is readily available online or via first line support services. The documents will reveal how competent authorities evaluate qualifications on both sides of the border: the aim is to boost cross-border mobility and employability by improving recognition. The creation of the roadmap for the recognition of qualifications and the factsheet recognition consists of a three-step process. First, the identification and selection of highly demanded professions. Secondly, the creation of the roadmap and factsheet documents. Finally, replicability of the project will be applied. Upon conclusion of the *b-solutions* initiative, the roadmap and factsheet method will continue to be fine-tuned, as the partners involved in this application seek to continue cooperation on this project.