

WHAT FUTURE FOR THE CONCEPT OF BORDERLESS EUROPE?

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON THE PERSPECTIVES
OF BORDER POLICIES AND TERRITORIAL
COOPERATION IN AN AGE OF MULTIPLE CRISES

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LECTORI SALUTEM

Dear Reader,

The international conference *'What Future for the Concept of Borderless Europe?'* took place from 12 to 14 May 2025 at the Ludovika University of Public Service in Budapest. The event was supported by the Hungarian Ministry of Culture and Innovation via the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund and it was organised by the LUPS Research Group on Cross-border Cooperation and the Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives (CESCI), in collaboration with the Trans-European Institute Network (TEIN).

The LUPS-CESCO Research Group was established at the Ludovika University in 2021 and comprises representatives from two faculties and CESCO. The co-founders have been carrying out scientific activities in the field of border studies for a long time and by unifying the capacities, theory and practice are coupled, providing a foundation for applied science research with a significant impact on policymaking processes. TEIN is a network of research and training institutes focusing on cross-border cooperation from 20 European countries. The secretariat is run by the Euro-Institut of Kehl. The LUPS-CESCO Research Group is the Hungarian member of the network, which hosted the conference in Budapest.

The agenda reflected on the changing status of European borders. Speakers examined the results of the Schengen border regime and the application of the four freedoms, as well as cross-border cooperation within the changed security policy framework. They also attempted to outline future trends. After the welcoming address given by the Rector of the University, Gergely Deli, two internationally recognised plenary speakers, Ms Christine Bradley (Head of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism) and Prof Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly (Professor at the University of Victoria) interpreted the discourse on European border theory at a global horizon followed by six parallel thematic sessions.

On the second day of the conference, Prof Eduardo Medeiros of the University Institute of Lisbon, Portugal, delivered an open university lecture entitled *'Past, present and future perspectives of European Territorial Cooperation'*. This was followed by an international PhD seminar and the



strategic workshop of the TEIN network, in which participants discussed common objectives and developed an action plan to integrate border research results into training systems. This workshop can be seen as a continuation of the workshop held in Eupen, Belgium, in May 2024. This was the first time that TEIN co-organised such an event in Hungary since its foundation in 2010, where, in addition to the scientific conference, the participants contributed to the design of the network's strategic vision.

The conference played an important role in improving the policy framework for cross-border cooperation and European integration in two ways. Firstly, academic research can support policy-making processes at national and EU levels in the field of cross-border cooperation. Secondly, the everyday experiences of border citizens can inform research. This event marked a significant milestone in the history of the Research Group, which aims to promote the exchange of experiences and joint research projects to better understand the genealogy, significance and effects of borders. Such research activities may lead to new approaches, solutions and tools for improving cross-border governance while ensuring cooperation and security.

Internationalisation is an important strategic priority of Ludovika University, and this event was designed to host internationally recognised scholars from abroad at Ludovika as nearly 50 international speakers participated in the two-day event. Along with the moderators, the panels represented a total of 20 different nationalities, with four coming from outside the EU. I would like to thank all the participants and colleagues for accepting our invitation to take part in the conference.

What can we hope for in the future? At least as much success as we have had until now. Good superiors, colleagues and partners who will always cooperate as well as further conferences and platforms that create good opportunities for various approaches and scientific questions to be discussed.

Zsuzsanna Fejes

Head of the LUPS-CESCI Research Group on Cross-Border Cooperation



THE CONTEXT

After the Iron Curtain has fallen down and the democratisation process started in the former communist bloc at the age of the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty, the concepts of 'Borderless Europe' and an 'ever closer Union' seemed to be doable in the near future. The free movement within the Schengen zone has remarkably been contributing to the development of a rather optimistic view on the future of Europe where the administrative borders gradually lose their significance or even disappear.

Since 2015 we have been witnessing a process which is quite the opposite of the above expectations: the migration crisis and the terrorist attacks in 2015 and 2016, the Brexit in 2020, the COVID-19 crisis in 2020 and 2021, the Russian invasion against the independent Ukraine in 2022 and the socio-economic impacts of all these crises resulted in the re-discovery of borders. It means that each component of these crises strengthened the re-nationalising, de-globalising tendencies within the EU whose most salient result was the re-establishment of the state borders, the border control measures and a much stricter border management than before.

The young generation faced with closed borders for the first time in their lives during the pandemic. 2 million cross-border commuters (many of them employed in the social and health sectors impacted the most by the pandemic), tens of thousands of students (so-called 'Erasmus babies' included), and more than 150 million border people found themselves in a brand-new reality when the national governments sealed the borders overnight.

Furthermore, during the migrant crisis in 2015, not only some borders were closed but even new fences have been erected which seems to be continuing due to the war in Ukraine. These new tendencies also shook the Schengen system: some countries exploited the relevant derogations included in the Schengen Code to permanently prolong the controls re-established during one of the crises. Today, lively disputes can be seen among the Member States regarding the further alleviation of the strict rules of the Schengen Zone.



As a consequence, the European discourse fundamentally changed: instead of the elimination of borders and border obstacles, the issue of security has come to the fore; instead of further integration of borderlands through the new tool of ECBM (European Cross-Border Mechanism), the Member States have decided to tighten the Schengen rules; instead of further strengthening the Single Market, national autarchy has become again an option...

All the above phenomena challenge the optimistic concept of Borderless Europe. At the same time, it is obvious that without open internal borders, without the guarantee of the free movement of people, goods, services and capital, without the promotion of cross-border cooperation the European project loses its sense and energy. To put it simply: the future of the EU depends on the future of its borders.

The conference addressed the above emerging phenomena from various perspectives and across different disciplines, from political geography to migration studies, from pedagogy to legal science, from history to cultural studies, etc., illustrated by many practical examples.

THE VENUE

The Ludovika University of Public Service was established in 1872 to train military officers for the joint army of the Monarchy. It achieved Academy status in 1897 and was closed by the communist government after the Second World War. With the merger of the Zrínyi Miklós University of National Defence, the Police College and the Faculty of Public Administration of the Corvinus University, the LUPS was established in 2012. Today, it has five faculties: Faculty of Military Science and Officer Training, Faculty of Teacher Training, Faculty of Water Sciences, Faculty of Law Enforcement, and Faculty of Public Governance and International Studies, from which the last two organised the conference, in the premises of the Main Building of the University.

The Main Building of the Ludovika Campus gives home to the Faculty of Public Governance and International Studies and to the central administrative units of the University. The original



neo-classicist building was designed by the renowned architect Mihály Pollack who also directed the construction. In accordance with his heritage, the renovators showed great care throughout the renewal process of the building and the installation of the 21st century infrastructure and equipment. As a result of their huge efforts, the Ludovika main building received the Constructors' Niveau Prize, one of the greatest acknowledgments of the profession in Hungary.¹



Photo: <https://ludovika-campus.uni-nke.hu/campusaink/ludovika-campus/foepulet>

¹ Source: <https://en.uni-nke.hu/faculties/campuses>

THE PROGRAM

Protocol meetings

The three special guest speakers of the conference, Ms Christine Bradley (UNOCT), Ms Helga Kristín Hallgrímsdóttir and Mr Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly (University of Victoria) were welcomed by the leaders of the Ludovika University.



The delegation of the University of Victoria met Ms Réka Varga, Dean of the Faculty of Public Governance and International Studies on the day preceding the conference. In the morning of the first day of the conference, Rector of the Ludovika University, Mr Gergely Deli received the lecturers.

Both meetings addressed the similarities and differences between educational systems, the potential fields for educational cooperation and the present-day developments of geopolitics and border management.

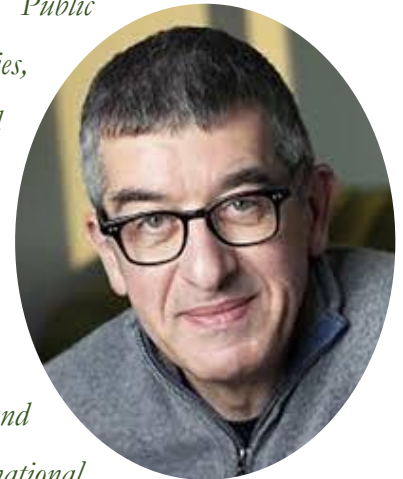


Christine Bradley is the Chief of Section for Countering Terrorist Travel at the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and Head of the UNOCT Programme Office in Budapest.



With extensive experience in international security and counter-terrorism, she leads global initiatives focused on enhancing member states' capacities to detect and prevent terrorist travel through advanced passenger information systems and international cooperation. Her work supports the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions related to border security, aviation security, and the use of biometrics, contributing to a more coordinated and effective global response to terrorism.

Dr. Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly is a Professor of Public Administration at the University of Victoria, specialising in border studies, European Union governance, and Canada–U.S. border policies. He has held multiple prestigious Jean Monnet Chairs and directed major international research initiatives such as the Borders in Globalization program. Since joining UVic in 2001, he has published extensively – over 100 articles and 12 books – and has given more than 150 lectures and keynotes globally. His research bridges complex governance issues across borders, migration, urban policy, and Indigenous governance. He actively supervises graduate students and fosters international academic collaboration, particularly in border studies.



Dr. Helga Kristín Hallgrímsdóttir is a Professor of Public Administration and Deputy Provost at the University of Victoria, where she brings a historical comparative lens to the study of governance, citizenship, and social justice. With a background in sociology, she explores topics such as participatory governance, labour movements, welfare states, gender, and social vulnerability. Dr. Hallgrímsdóttir has held various leadership roles at UVic, including President of the Faculty Association and Dean of Human and Social Development. She is widely published, with research spanning from the politics of austerity and protest in Europe to public health and gender in both Canadian and international contexts. Her work is deeply engaged with issues of social equity, and she frequently collaborates across disciplines and borders in both research and teaching.





Scientific sessions of the first day

Plenary session

The first day's program started with the welcoming address delivered by the Rector, Mr Gergely Deli, who presented the Ludovika University, the faculties, and the multidisciplinary approach they apply to the research on borders. He also expanded to the most recent challenges, the concept of the borderless world is facing, and wished a successful event to the participants.



The Plenary Session moderated by Helga Kristín Hallgrímsdóttir set the tone for the discussions to follow. Christine Bradley, the first speaker, addressed the challenges and opportunities associated with border security, emphasising the critical importance of international cooperation in counter-terrorism efforts.

Her presentation highlighted the evolving global security landscape and the need for coordinated responses to transnational threats. The second speaker of the Plenary Session, Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, offered a theoretical framework for understanding the dynamics of cooperation, coordination, collaboration and security in cross-border contexts. His analysis provided valuable insights into how institutional and policy frameworks can shape the effectiveness of border-related governance and security initiatives.





Parallel sessions

The 6 parallel sessions addressed the border-related topics from different points of view:

- the border as a symbol which contributes to the development of citizens' identity, or, even more, to cross-border citizenship in some parts of the World,
- the features and effects of functional areas stretching over the borders as a result of the European and economic integration,
- the impacts of climate change on law enforcement policies,
- the relationship between border policies and counterterrorism,
- and the good examples of cross-border cooperation and trust building.

The sessions were concluded by the wrap-up given by Professor Eduardo Medeiros in the evening.

Panel 1 – The border as a symbol and producer of identity

Moderator: Gyula Ocskay, CESCO

Ludovika University of Public Service, Ludovika Main Building, 2nd floor, Lőrincz Lajos Room 234

The aim of the panel was to discuss the role of administrative borders in creating identity and exclusive narratives; and the role of ethnic minorities and intercultural learning in overcoming the barriers generated by these narratives. The topic has been treated from historical, anthropological and sociological perspectives.

Birte Wassenberg (University of Strasbourg, France): European narratives and regional identity at the Franco-German border (Upper Rhine and Greater Region)

Birte Wassenberg is Professor in Contemporary History at Sciences Po at the University of Strasbourg. She holds a Jean Monnet Chair, is director of the Franco-German Jean-Monnet Center of Excellence and director of the Master in Border Studies, International Relations. From 1993 to 2006 she was responsible for cross-border cooperation at the Région Alsace. Her research fields are: border regions, EU territorial cooperation and the history of European Integration, especially of European Organizations (EU, Council of Europe).



This contribution presents the research results for the Franco-German border region of working package (3) on Euroscepticism which is conducted the framework of the Horizon Europe project B-Shapes on Border Shaping perceptions of European Societies. It analyses perceptions on Europe, European integration and cross-border cooperation in the two cross-border regions at the Franco-German border (with a main focus being placed on the Upper Rhine Region covering Alsace, Baden-Wurttemberg, the South of Palatinate and the Swiss region around Basel). Based on a regional media analysis preceding the European elections in 2024, on interviews with candidates and members of political parties standing for election in the border region and on two focus groups with stakeholders in the Pamina-Region, it assesses attitudes on European Integration and the attachment or not to a regional identity. The contribution evaluates if there is resilience of a common identification with the Franco-German border region, a push towards Euroscepticism in the border region or if the attitudes on the EU remains rather positive, taking into account the specific “in-between” situation of the borderland. It will also examine the main issues favoring pro cross- border, pro-European or Eurosceptic attitudes, for example: mobility, exchange on the one hand and fear of the other or resentment on the other. Specific attention will also be drawn to the pertinence of the so-called identity of a “Franco-German” model of European Integration in the border region. Finally, the contribution also inserts the research results of this project into the more historical perspective on regional identity in the border region.

Hynek Böhm (University of Opole, Poland, Technical University of Liberec, Czechia) and Artur Boháč (Technical University of Liberec, Czechia): Employing mental mapping in studying cross-border togetherness – examples from Czech-Polish borderlands

Dr. Hynek Böhm is affiliated with the University of Opole, Poland, and the Technical University of Liberec, Czechia. His research interests include political and cultural geography, with a focus on cross-border cooperation and regional development in Central Europe

Artur Boháč is an assistant professor at the Department of Geography, Technical University of Liberec. He researches cultural geography and political geography and is interested in the Central European and Middle Eastern regions, focusing on border areas and minorities. He has published several book chapters and journal



articles on these topics. He is a member of the Borders and Migration Research Group and the Czech Geographical Society.

Borders simultaneously divide and connect, shaping identities and territorial perceptions. In the Czech-Polish borderlands, the historical division of Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia has produced a complex socio-spatial landscape where national, regional, and ethnic identities intersect. Our research employs mental mapping to explore how upper-secondary school students in the divided town of Český Těšín/Cieszyn perceive and navigate cross-border spaces.

Using mental maps as a methodological tool, we examine whether young people experience the town as a cross-border lived space or remain confined to national narratives. The findings reveal significant differences in spatial practices between students from Polish minority schools in Czechia—who exhibit high levels of cross-border interaction—and those from majority-language schools, whose engagement with the "other side" remains limited. While official political and economic frameworks promote integration, symbolic and mental borders persist, often reinforced by educational systems and linguistic divides. This research highlights how mental maps expose underlying mechanisms of border construction and identity formation. It argues that beyond administrative realities, the everyday experiences of young people reflect the durability of mental borders and the selective permeability of cross-border spaces. Understanding these perceptions is key to fostering a more inclusive borderland identity and overcoming inherited divisions.

Jaume Feliu (Universitat de Girona, Spain): The limits of cultural identity for the Cooperation of the Catalan Cross-border Space

Associate Professor in the Department of Geography of the University of Girona. He is currently director of the Department of Geography and director of the Chair of Geography and Territorial Thought of the University of Girona. He is part of the Territorial and Environmental Analysis and Planning (APTA) research group. He has developed postdoctoral research in the impact of the TAV in European intermediate cities, the analysis of cross-border cooperation, the analysis of social mobilization, local development and governance and low-carbon societies. Regarding cross-border cooperation, he has analysed and mapped the projects, actors and territorial impacts especially on the border between France and Spain, but also on other European borders such as



Portugal-Spain, Austria-Italy or Poland-Germany. Recently, he has been involved in research on cross-border relations and social mobilizations in mountain areas.

The Catalan Cross-border Space (ESCAT by its original acronym), more than a historically and administratively existing entity, is a project of territory conceived and promoted by several local and regional institutions in recent years. The ESCAT is formed by the French department of Pyrenees Orientales and the Spanish province of Girona, two territories of similar extension and geographical configuration. They are divided by the Pyrenees massif, where several rivers symmetrically arise and create valleys and alluvial plains to flow into the Mediterranean. In the past, practically all of these territories were part of the Principality of Catalonia, and were divided by the Treaty of the Pyrenees of 1659. For this reason, for many years, a culturally similar society was preserved on both sides of the border, with a common language and traditions. Over the years, also, the different national logics, including the standardization processes of the respective states, especially the French one and especially in the 20th century, created a social and economic divergence between the two territories. Currently, the analysis of the demographic, economic, labour, social and even cultural characteristics, show two markedly different territories, although with a common substratum. In economic and functional terms, these are two territories that are very poorly integrated, not very interdependent, that have created few dynamics of cooperation and that have rather been perceived as competitive. In other words, two territories that were initially very symmetrical, have ended up becoming very asymmetrical. Cross-border cooperation initiatives between the two territories, driven especially by Spain's entry into the EEC and by regional development programs such as Interreg, have tended to increase, especially since the 2000s due to a progressive improvement in the funding of the POCTEFA program or other programs such as the Cross-border Microprojects. Despite this growing dynamic, it is difficult to find cooperation actions on the initiative of the actors in the territory, that is, without the support of a subsidy behind it. Another characteristic observed is that, despite the participation of multiple institutions, it is the network of actors with a Catalan cultural matrix, already very reduced on the French side, who has maintained and promoted a good part of the cooperation actions. In this research we reflect on whether this cultural bias could be limiting cooperation



to too small areas and networks. We wonder if this dynamic is not facilitating the expansion of the range and number of cooperations, precisely because of the strong identification with the Catalan cultural (identity) fact, especially with the language or with the political options. If this were so, future strategies for greater cooperation between these territories should add to the identity reasons, economic, environmental, social, intercultural, multilingual reasons. They should seek new balances between the network of actors traditionally activated for cross-border cooperation and new actors who are not challenged by the Catalan identity but perhaps by reasons of an economic or functional nature. New narrative frameworks should be sought to explain the reasons for cooperation, based on aspects such as improving living conditions. The activation of ESCAT as a cross-border functional area to manage cooperation grants or the latest cooperation projects of the universities of Perpignan and Girona (ACROSS, Uniescat, ESTAC) seems to be heading in this direction and could represent a new stage of cross-border cooperation in this territory.

Karolina Radłowska (University of Białystok, Poland): Borderland Museums in Poland: Narratives of Heritage, Identity, and Memory

Dr. Karolina Radłowska is a cultural anthropologist, sociologist, and museum curator. She works as an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Sociology at the University of Białystok. She is a member of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and the Polish Open-Air Museum Association (PSMWP). Her research interests include the sociology of ethnicity, contemporary museology, and folk culture. She explores the role of museums in contemporary society, with a particular focus on how they represent ethnic minorities and engage with cultural diversity. Her work places special emphasis on the Polish Tatars as a case study in minority identity, heritage preservation, and museum representation.

Museums serve to protect and interpret the past for future generations; paradoxically, however, their approaches to preservation are shaped by the present. If museums are understood as cultural institutions shaped by their specific socio-historical context, then borderlands present a particular setting. As regions of historical, ethnic, and cultural intersections, borderlands challenge traditional museological approaches by demanding narratives that reflect their dynamic and contested histories. Museums located in such spaces



play a crucial role in negotiating cultural heritage, shaping collective memory, and influencing intercultural relations. Depending on their curatorial choices, they can foster either social integration or the reinforcement of historical divisions. This makes borderland museums an excellent laboratory for examining museum narratives, revealing the mechanisms of memory construction, their relationship with historical politics, and their impact on identity formation. This presentation will discuss findings from research conducted in Poland between 2024-2025, focusing on how borderland museums engage with cultural heritage, historical narratives, and community participation in the construction of collective memory. The main objective of this study was to analyse how museums construct narratives about borderlands. The study was based on an interpretative approach.

Andrea Ulhôa** (University of Aveiro, Portugal) and *Maria Helena Araújo e Sá* (University of Aveiro, Portugal): *The Border as Curriculum: A cartography of in-service teacher training in the Luso-Hispanic borderlands

Andrea Ulhôa is a teacher at the Secretariat of Education of the Federal District, Brazil, currently undertaking a PhD in Education, specialising in Didactics and Curriculum Development, at the University of Aveiro, Portugal. She is an integrated doctoral researcher at the Research Centre on Didactics and Technology in the Education of Trainers (CIDTFF) and a scholarship holder funded by the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT). Her research, part of the Border Bilingual and Intercultural Schools Programme (PEBIF), addresses the continuing education of teachers in border contexts, with particular emphasis on cultural and linguistic diversity.

Maria Helena Araújo e Sá is a Full Professor at the Department of Education and Psychology at the University of Aveiro (UA), Portugal. She specializes in language teacher education and supervises master's, doctoral, and postdoctoral research. She coordinates the Research Centre on Didactics and Technology in the Education of Trainers (CIDTFF) and the Doctoral Program in Education. She is one of the scientific coordinators of the Border Bilingual and Intercultural Schools Program (PEBIF). Her research areas include networked intercomprehension, plurilingual and intercultural communication, and language policies for language education.



This study is part of the Bilingual Intercultural Border Schools Project (PEBIF), a cooperation initiative between the governments of Portugal and Spain, with the strategic partnership of the Organisation of Ibero-American States and the scientific coordination of the Universities of Aveiro and Complutense University of Madrid. The project aims to promote cooperation between the two countries in the educational, social and economic development of borderlands, through the creation of a network of “mirror schools” that foster plurilingual and intercultural teaching practices, recognising the border as a space for training, learning and the construction of knowledge and identities. In-service teacher training is at the core of the PEBIF project. Structured according to an action-research methodology, the training encourages plurilingual and intercultural collaboration between teachers, students and the school community, as well as engagement with local institutions committed to strengthening the linguistic and cultural diversity of the territories. This contribution aims to map the formative journeys of PEBIF teachers, examining how they construct and transform their educational practice in cross-border educational contexts. In particular, it seeks to understand how the border is configured as a space for teacher professional development and curriculum construction through plurilingual and intercultural interactions between teachers from the two countries when planning and implementing joint learning projects. To this aim, three objectives were defined: (i) to explore how teachers perceive and experience the border as a space for learning and curriculum construction; (ii) to analyse the training process as a field of tensions and possibilities, based on the principles of Border Pedagogy (Giroux, 1992); and (iii) to discuss the potential and challenges of an emergent curriculum developed through in-service teacher training in borderlands, analysing its implications for the production of a transnational educational identity. The methodological approach combines the cartography of formative journeys (Passos et al., 2016, 2020) with thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), while also mobilising the rhizomatic perspective of Deleuze and Guattari (2011). Inspired by the metaphor of the rhizome, this approach conceives teacher education as a non-linear process, characterised by multiple connections, unpredictable movements and trajectories that expand in different directions, enabling the mapping of knowledge flows and teacher interactions in curriculum construction. The training experience analysed took place during



the first edition of PEBIF (October 2021 - May 2022), with participant observation of one of the pairs of “mirror schools”, located in Bragança (Portugal) and Zamora (Spain), involving eight teachers (four Portuguese and four Spanish). Data production included logbooks, recordings of synchronous sessions, written and photographic records, which were then validated by the participants and organised into a single document entitled ‘Multimodal and Polyphonic Narratives of a Border Investigation’. The results show that PEBIF teachers act not only as mediators of plurilingual and intercultural teaching practices but also as agents of cross-border cooperation, promoting educational networks that challenge territorial, linguistic and curricular boundaries. They also highlight that the PEBIF training experience underlines the importance of teaching in the creation and development of educational spaces for sharing and dialogue between nations, strengthening the construction of a transnational educational identity and contributing to the development of shared Iberian citizenship.

** Speaker presenting the paper*

Panel 2 – Functionality overwriting administrative division of space – a legal perspective

Moderator: Beate Caesar, RPTU Kaiserslautern-Landau, Germany

Ludovika University of Public Service, Ludovika Main Building, 2nd floor, Eged István Room 226

The panel aims to analyse cross-border functional and living areas and their role in dismantling border barriers and diminishing the separating effects of the borders. The speakers will focus on functionality, governance and the legal frames facilitating cross-border integration.

Loth Van der Auwermeulen (Universiteit Hasselt, Belgium) and Maarten Vidal (Flanders Chancellery and Foreign Affairs, Belgium): Creating a sustainable legal infrastructure to provide solutions for cross-border obstacles in today’s European Union: debordering against the current?

Loth Van der Auwermeulen is a postdoctoral in the field (European) administrative law at the Hasselt University. Her research focuses on cross-border cooperation and more in general cross-border interaction. She frequently advises on the establishment of cross-border legal entities and cross-border legal management in



general. Long-term projects she is involved in are EURECA-PRO, Einstein Telescope, and the two recent strategic Interreg projects aimed at lifting legal obstacles at the border with the Netherlands (Schakelpunt Grensbelemmeringen Vlaanderen-Nederland, 2024) and France (LIM-EX, 2025). Apart from participating in long-term cross-border projects, she frequently acts as a B-Solutions expert.

Maarten Vidal is currently coordinator for cross-border cooperation at the Flanders Chancellery and Foreign Affairs and involved in the two aforementioned strategic Interreg projects Schakelpunt Grensbelemmeringen Vlaanderen-Nederland and LIM-EX. In the past he was legal advisor at the same department, policy secretary at the Taalumie - Union for the Dutch Language (a Dutch-Flemish-Surinamese intergovernmental organization), and researcher at the KU Leuven Institute for International Law (focusing on cross-border cooperation and Benelux). The views contained in this paper are his own and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Government of Flanders.

Public authorities in Flanders (and more in general in Belgium) have a longstanding tradition of cross-border cooperation with their counterparts in France and the Netherlands: the facilitation of solutions to legal, administrative and practical hindrances in the border region has always been among the objectives of cross-border groupings (Euregios and EGTCs, but also border information points) and of intergovernmental cooperations at these two borders. Some specific cross-border projects including Flemish territory, such as the creation of North Sea Port – Europe’s first integrated cross-border port authority resulting from the merger of the Port of Ghent in Flanders and Zeeland Sea Ports in the Netherlands – and the preparation of the EMR candidacy for the Einstein Telescope, have only increased the sense of urgency to tackle so called ‘cross-border obstacles’ encountered in case of cross-border interactions. However, within the context of the European Union it becomes clear that recent and ongoing crises have made States more willing to maintain – or even regain – control over their borders. For example, it can be observed that the European legislator is acting rather reluctantly to further instrumentalise law in order to overcome them. The transformation of the mainly procedural approach of the ECBM proposal to a mainly interconnective approach of the BRIDGEforEU regulation, can indeed be perceived as a transformation towards a ‘soft law’ approach of solving cross-border obstacles. The aim of our paper is to provide an in-depth



analysis of both the theoretical and the practical impact of the current EU policy on cross-border obstacles on the potential of law to serve as an instrument enabling solutions for cross-border obstacles and by doing so, to assess more in general the impact of the rebordering effect on the debordering ambitions of different border regions. The central research question “How does the EU approach of cross-border obstacles impact the ambitions of creating a sustainable legal infrastructure applicable to cross-border obstacles at the border of Flanders / Belgium with the Netherlands and France?” aligns with this dual aim. The methodology that will be applied consists of 2 clearly distinguishable techniques, being theoretical desk research and an impact assessment based on practical examples.

- A theoretical assessment of the potential of law in providing solutions for cross-border obstacles, is the starting point of this paper. This theoretical analysis is interdisciplinary in nature. It is based on the principles of legal geography, a discipline at the intersection of law and geography, focusing on the exchange between law, space and time. The multi-dimensional approach of legal geography is of added value for research because it allows us to assess the impact of the rebordering effect on the debordering ambitions aimed at a specific border region which is characterised by a specific identity and tradition, shaped by space and time.
- Besides conducting a theoretical analysis, based on two recent cross-border projects aimed at providing solutions for cross-border obstacles in the Belgian-French and Flemish-Dutch border regions, the practical impact of the aforementioned EU approach of law as an instrument to solve cross-border obstacles will be assessed. The Flemish tradition in cross-border cooperation, which has resulted in several well established cross-border governances and the current ambition to further develop towards a sustainable legal infrastructure applicable to cross-border obstacles form the touchstone for this practical assessment since it will take into account the dynamics and interactions between the new ‘infrastructuring’ projects and the existing structures for functional cross-border areas.
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Michael Frey (University of Applied Sciences Kehl, Germany) and Rahel Alia Müller (University of Applied Sciences Kehl, Germany): *Towards a borderless Europe. Legal tools enabling a cross border cooperation without geographical borders*

Prof Dr Michael Frey is Professor of Public Law at the University of Applied Sciences Kehl and Head of its Institute for Applied Research. His research focuses on the area of cross-border cooperation, in which he has extensive expertise due to his previous work in the staff unit for cross-border cooperation and European affairs and as German Delegation Secretary of the German-Franco-Swiss Conference of the Upper Rhine, as well as in the field of renewable energies.

Rahel Alia Müller is a research assistant at the Kehl Institute for Applied Research and previously worked as a student assistant at the Chair of Prof Dr Michael Frey during her public management studies at the University of Applied Sciences Kehl.

The contribution answers the research question of which legal tools can be used to further develop cross-border cooperation away from cross-border cooperation in geographically or functionally defined border areas towards ubiquitous cross-border cooperation, i.e. applicable everywhere on the territory of the Member States. The contribution, which is based on jurisprudential methodology, discusses the possibility of non-territorial experimental and opening clauses and, by further developing the rights developed from EU citizenship, considers how the border can ultimately be overcome as an element of the offence, but at the same time also as an exclusionary element for the application of EU law. Cross-border mobility as a cause and justification for cross-border cooperation no longer only takes place in geographical or functional border regions. Today, for example, a citizen entitled to freedom of movement can not only be active across borders, for example on foot or by bicycle between Strasbourg (F) and Kehl (D), but also between Stuttgart and Strasbourg or between Kehl and Paris (by high speed trains such as TGV), but also between Paris and Berlin (by plane) or even digitally from any location within the EU to any other location, for example in a home office. As a result, geographical or functional border areas are becoming useless as a justification for cross-border cooperation and exemptions developed for this purpose. The contribution shows how such exceptional provisions (such as the opening or experimental clauses popular



at the political level) can be developed in the legislative process (by means of a cross-border impact assessment) in such a way that they do not require geographical differentiation criteria. With a view to overcoming the limits of the current legal system, the article considers whether a further development of EU citizenship might not also enable the ubiquitous application of EU law without a cross-border element, i.e. without the (internal) border as a point of reference, to create a legal system that is cross border friendly. A conclusion and an outlook resolve this contribution.

Yaroslav Lazur (Uzhhorod National University, Ukraine) and Yuliia Fetko (Uzhhorod National University, Ukraine): Adaptation of Ukrainian legislation to EU legislation regarding cross-border cooperation on the path of Ukraine's integration into the EU

Yaroslav Lazur, Dean of the Faculty of Law, Uzhhorod National University, Doctor of Sciences (Law), Professor. Has over 250 publications. Over the past five years 110 works have been published, including 7 monographs in co-authorship, 10 scientific articles in foreign publications indexed in the Web of Science Core Collection and/ or Scopus databases, 55 scientific articles in professional publications of Ukraine and foreign countries, co-author of 10 textbooks and manuals, including regarding legal regulation of European integration processes; legal regulation of relations between Ukraine and the EU, legal regulation of cross-border cooperation in Ukraine. Involved as an expert in the field of cross-border cooperation in more than 10 national and international projects.

Yuliia Fetko, Director of the Research Institute of European Territorial Cooperation, Associate Professor of the Department of International Law, Uzhhorod National University, Doctor of Philosophy in Law, Associate Professor. Over the past five years, more than 55 scientific works have been published, including 5 co-authored monographs, 35 scientific articles in professional publications of Ukraine and foreign countries regarding EU law; legal regulation of European integration processes; legal regulation of EU territorial cooperation (transnational cooperation, interregional cooperation and cross-border cooperation); Legal regulation of relations between Ukraine and the EU, legal regulation of cross-border cooperation in Ukraine. Involved as an expert in the field of cross-border cooperation in more than 15 national and international projects.



Strengthening good-neighborly relations and deepening cross-border cooperation are especially relevant for Ukraine in the context of current challenges and external threats, considering the European vector of Ukraine's development. Cross-border cooperation is one of the most effective tools for deepening the interaction of local and regional authorities for the joint implementation of tasks related to local and regional development, supporting economic growth, and stimulating and implementing innovations, which contributes to the acceleration of the processes of bringing the standard of living of the population of the regions of Ukraine closer to the average European level and the implementation of European integration measures at the regional level. Ukraine's desire for EU membership led to the conclusion of the Association Agreement in 2014 and the granting of EU candidate status to Ukraine on June 23, 2023. Today, the development of cross-border cooperation between European and Ukrainian local and regional authorities, and legal entities is an important step toward Ukraine's membership in the EU. Adaptation of Ukrainian legislation to EU legislation is one of the main components of the process of Ukraine's integration into the EU, which is a priority direction of Ukrainian foreign policy. This is the process of bringing Ukrainian laws and other regulatory legal acts into line with the *acquis communautaire*. Adaptation of Ukrainian legislation to EU legislation on cross-border cooperation in the context of Ukraine's integration into the EU is important for the development of sustainable and systematic cross-border cooperation. The prerequisites for the development and formation of Ukrainian legislation on cross-border cooperation, the adaptation of Ukrainian legislation to EU legislation on cross-border cooperation, the development of a new law and the factors that influenced the adoption of the Law of Ukraine “On International Territorial Cooperation of Ukraine” in the context of Ukraine’s integration into the EU are analyzed. Amendments to the Laws of Ukraine “On Local Self-Government in Ukraine” and “On Local State Administrations” on cross-border cooperation, as well as other legal and administrative obstacles are highlighted.



Hynek Böhm (University of Opole Poland, Technical University of Liberec, Czechia) and Marie Cviková (University of Ostrava, Czechia): Provision of Emergency Services in European Borderlands: On the Way Towards Cross-border Functional Areas? Example from Czech-German Borderlands

Dr. Hynek Böhm is affiliated with the University of Opole, Poland, and the Technical University of Liberec, Czechia. His research interests include political and cultural geography, with a focus on cross-border cooperation and regional development in Central Europe.

Marie Cviková is associated with the University of Ostrava, Czechia. Her work involves studying the provision of emergency services in cross-border regions, particularly between the Czech Republic and Germany.

Cross-border cooperation of emergency services (CBES) is a crucial aspect of potential functional cross-border regions. While political agreements and institutional frameworks aim to facilitate integration, practical implementation often encounters legal, administrative, and technical challenges that hinder the emergence of a fully functional cross-border emergency services region. Our research, focusing on the Czech-German borderlands, identifies legal discrepancies, divergent national regulations, and incompatible administrative structures as primary barriers to cross-border functionality. Differences in rules governing the deployment of emergency personnel, resource allocation, and financial compensation lead to delays and inefficiencies, restricting the operational flexibility of rescue teams. Additionally, technical incompatibilities, such as differing communication systems, further complicate coordination and response efforts. Despite these systemic challenges, our findings highlight that interpersonal trust and direct professional cooperation play a vital role in mitigating institutional and legal barriers. Through qualitative research, including interviews with emergency responders, regional actors, and cross-border coordination bodies, we demonstrate that informal networks, joint training exercises, and shared operational protocols significantly enhance practical collaboration. These bottom-up strategies contribute to the emergence of cross-border functional emergency services regions, where operational efficiency increasingly transcends national divisions. This study underscores the importance of fostering strong cross-border relationships at the operational level alongside efforts to harmonize legal frameworks. While legislative barriers persist, direct engagement and mutual trust among emergency



personnel enable the functionality of cross-border emergency services to evolve in practice. Our findings suggest that future policy efforts should not only focus on legal alignment but also actively support initiatives that enhance direct interaction between rescue services. Strengthening these functional cross-border networks can lead to more resilient and effective emergency response systems in European border regions.

Mitja Durnik (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia) and Maša Lemajić (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia): Cross-Border Cooperation in Crisis Management of Natural Disasters: The Case of Floods and the Wildfire in Kras, Slovenia

Dr. Mitja Durnik is an associate professor of Public Policy and Public Administration at the University of Ljubljana. His research interest shapes analyses of natural hazards from the perspective of public policy, EU public policy process, EU foreign policy issues, comparative politics.

Maša Lemajić is a PhD student at the Faculty of Public Administration, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. Her research centers on governance of natural disasters and public policy, with an emphasis on cross-border cooperation in crisis management.

Natural disasters, such as floods and wildfires, present significant challenges for crisis management, especially in cross-border regions. Slovenia faces various natural disasters, including frequent floods and wildfires, which have cross-border effects due to its borders with Austria, Italy, Hungary, and Croatia. This paper analyzes two significant cases: the floods of 2023 and the Kras fire of 2022, which affected both Slovenia. The Kras fire was one of the largest challenges for cross-border crisis management, as it threatened lives, infrastructure, and the environment on both sides of the border. Cooperation between Slovenian and Italian authorities, as well as international organizations, was crucial in coordinating efforts for firefighting, evacuations, and the protection of natural resources. This incident also highlighted the importance of focusing events in shaping cross-border crisis management strategies, where certain key incidents require tailored responses and often catalyze improvements in long-term disaster preparedness. On the other hand, floods that affected Slovenia and some neighboring countries required close coordination of efforts for managing floodwaters, evacuations of affected areas, and restoring infrastructure. Cross-border exchange of hydrological data and



coordinated measures to protect citizens enabled faster and more effective responses to the situation. In line with punctuated equilibrium theory, the situation of these floods can be viewed as a system where, after periods of stability, crisis events (such as natural disasters) lead to sudden and dramatic shifts in policies, cooperation mechanisms, and organizational structures. This theory suggests that crisis management systems may evolve in fits and starts, with periods of relative stability disrupted by periods of intense adaptation in response to focal events. In both cases, public policies played a central role in shaping the response and recovery efforts. The agenda-setting process was evident in how both national and cross-border actors prioritized these natural disasters in their policy frameworks. The focus on preparedness, risk mitigation, and improving response capacities was directly influenced by the political attention garnered by such focal events, which catalyzed a reevaluation of existing crisis management policies and mechanisms. This paper will examine how Slovenian and foreign authorities coordinated crisis measures, exchanged key information, and involved international organizations in disaster protection. We will focus on the importance of permanent cross-border cooperation mechanisms, applying punctuated equilibrium theory to understand the shifts in crisis management strategies, and analyzing how public policies and the agenda-setting process shape responses to cross-border natural disasters. Additionally, we will explore how focal events influence the design of disaster management strategies and the need for long-term collaboration to better manage these complex challenges.

Panel 3 – Towards cross-border citizenship

Moderator: Anthony Soares, Centre for Cross Border Studies, Northern-Ireland, UK

Ludovika University of Public Service, Ludovika Main Building, 2nd floor, Lőrincz Lajos Room 234

The panel aims to analyse social phenomena challenging the nation-state paradigm and national confines, namely cross-border mobility, multiple citizenships, cross-border social networks, and citizen engagement in cross-border developments.



Iban Larrandaburu (Euro-Institut Pyrene, France): Mobility and cross border citizenship in the Basque border space: a legal analysis

Iban Larrandaburu is a PhD student in Public Law, focusing on the institutionalization of cross-border actions by French local authorities, using the Western Pyrenees as a case study. Affiliated with the Euro-Institut Pyrene, a collaboration between the Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour (France), Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea/Universidad del País Vasco (Spain), and Universidad Pública de Navarra (Spain), his research examines mobility and cross-border citizenship in the Basque border space from a legal perspective.

Cross-border citizenship is a marker of a borderless Europe. It stands as a stated objective of the European Union, yet it lacks a clear legal framework. It is fundamentally based on the free movement of inhabitants across borders, enabling their attachment to their cross-border spaces. The COVID-19 crisis highlighted the interdependence between mobility and cross-border citizenship, as restrictions triggered mobilization among residents to defend their right to free movement. More importantly, it shed light on two aspects of cross-border citizenship within a dynamic space shaped by a strong cross-border territorial identity, such as in the Basque Country—an area where cross-border mobility remains extremely marginal and therefore does not align with the classical approach to European cross-border citizenship. The analysis of cross-border citizenship reveals two complementary dimensions: patrimonial and functional. I) Mobility as a Means of Asserting Cross-Border Patrimonial Citizenship. Cross-border citizenship is first rooted in a shared heritage, inherited from previous generations and passed on to the next. The concept of a borderless identity serves as a cornerstone of this citizenship. This heritage is both intangible (language, culture, shared history) and tangible (common natural spaces). Mobility is essential for citizens to reclaim and preserve these patrimonial elements. Crossing the border strengthens the sense of belonging to a shared territory and facilitates the transmission of common heritage. Specific public policies support this dynamic, such as mobility programs focused on preserving cross-border regional languages or organizing specific territorial governances in some cross-border mountain areas. II) Mobility as an Essential Condition for Functional Cross-Border Citizenship. The second dimension is functional: it relates to the daily lives of citizens who regularly cross the border to work, study, access healthcare, or engage in economic activities. Drawing on theories



developed by thinkers such as Denis De Rougemont, the European Union promotes this approach by integrating cross-border mobility into its territorial cohesion policies (INTERREG). Overcoming border effects relies on adapted governance structures and cross-border transport infrastructure that ensure smooth access to essential services. The development of functional areas within the INTERREG POCTEFA 2021-27 program is a revealing example of this approach. These two dimensions, which represent two sides of the same coin, demonstrate that cross-border citizenship cannot exist without mobility. It requires the opening of borders and the recognition of a true right to cross-border mobility, allowing citizens to fully exercise their rights and anchor themselves in their specific territory. The European Union, along with its Member States, plays a central role in further developing this new citizen status—one that lies between borderless and cross-border.

Mariya Mendzhul (Uzhhorod National University, Ukraine) and Yuliia Fetko (Uzhhorod National University, Ukraine): The impact of digitalization on cross-border cooperation and citizen engagement: on the example of cooperation within the framework of the “Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine” programs

Mariya Mendzhul, Doctor of Sciences (Law), Professor of the Department of Civil Law and Procedure, Faculty of Law, Uzhhorod National University. 287 scientific and educational and methodological works. Over the past five years 108 works have been published, including 1 solo monograph and 6 monographs in co-authorship, 13 scientific articles in foreign publications indexed in the Web of Science Core Collection and/or Scopus databases, 55 scientific articles in professional publications of Ukraine and foreign countries, is the author of the first textbook in Ukraine "Comparative Family Law", co-author of 7 textbooks and manuals. For the past five years, he has been engaged in researching cross-border cooperation and involving citizens in these processes. From 2023 Deputy Director of the Research Institute of European Territorial Cooperation, Uzhhorod National University.

Yuliia Fetko, Director of the Research Institute of European Territorial Cooperation, Associate Professor of the Department of International Law, Uzhhorod National University, Doctor of Philosophy in Law, Associate Professor. Over the past five years, more than 55 scientific works have been published, including 5 co-authored monographs, 35 scientific articles in professional publications of Ukraine and foreign countries regarding EU law; legal regulation of European integration processes; legal regulation of EU territorial



cooperation (transnational cooperation, interregional cooperation and cross-border cooperation); Legal regulation of relations between Ukraine and the EU, legal regulation of cross-border cooperation in Ukraine. Involved as an expert in the field of cross-border cooperation in more than 15 national and international projects. Over the past 5 years, has been a speaker at international and national conferences. Participated in various discussion panels on territorial cooperation EU (cross-border, interregional and transnational cooperation).

The analysis of four competitions held within the framework of the programs "Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine ENPI Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013" and "Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine ENI CBC Programme 2014-2020" showed positive dynamics, in the first program 2 projects with the participation of the university were supported, and under the second Program for three competitions - 15 projects (first competition - 0 projects, second competition - 9 projects, third competition - 6 projects). In percentage terms to the total number of supported projects, under the program "Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine ENPI Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013" with the participation of universities, 6.4% were supported, and under the program "Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine ENI CBC Programme 2014-2020" - 18.75% (first competition - 0%, second competition - 19.56% of projects, third competition - 20% of projects). When comparing the two programs, the growth of projects with the participation of higher education institutions is 12.35%, and with a thorough analysis of all three competitions within the framework of the second program, despite the decrease in the number of projects that won in the second competition (9 projects) and in the third competition (6 projects), in percentage terms to the total number of projects, positive dynamics and even a slight increase (by 0.44%) are observed. A substantive analysis of projects with the participation of universities revealed that digitalization is still creating conditions for their proper organizational and technical support, since first the COVID-19 pandemic, and then the full-scale war in Ukraine made adjustments to the free mobility of various project participants, both main performers, experts, and beneficiaries. The use of various digital tools, including platforms and services for online collective communication, seminars, and other events, allowed the successful implementation of these projects. We conclude that modern risks caused by possible pandemics, military actions, and other emergencies lead to the intensification of digitalization of cross-border



cooperation, there is a need to create a single expert online platform - interstate dialogue, exchange of experience at various sectoral levels. At the same time, it is necessary to improve existing legal acts and norms of international treaties in order to guarantee proper security protection for all participants in cross-border cooperation.

Hynek Böhm (University of Opole Poland, Technical University of Liberec, Czechia) and Karolina Czabanowska (University of Opole, Poland): Post-War Population Transfers and Their Legacy for Potential Cross-Border Citizenship: The Case of Czech-Polish Euroregions

Dr. Hynek Böhm is affiliated with the University of Opole, Poland, and the Technical University of Liberec, Czechia. His research interests include political and cultural geography, with a focus on cross-border cooperation and regional development in Central Europe.

Karolina Czabanowska is a PhD candidate at the University of Opole. Her research focuses on cross-border cooperation, with particular emphasis on the b-solutions initiative. She collaborates with Hynek Böhm on examining the historical and contemporary aspects of cross-border citizenship, particularly in the context of the Czech-Polish border.

Euroregions are key instruments of European cross-border cooperation (CBC), fostering regional development and integration beyond national confines. However, their effectiveness varies significantly depending on historical, demographic, and institutional factors. This contribution examines how post-World War II population transfers—particularly the expulsion of German speakers—have shaped contemporary CBC in the Czech-Polish borderland, with a focus on the Praděd Euroregion (ERP). Unlike other Czech-Polish Euroregions, where cross-border mobility and cooperation are dynamically evolving, the ERP has long been characterized by a relatively low level of integration. We argue that the forced displacement of pre-war populations and the resettlement of newcomers from distant regions weakened historically rooted cross-border social networks, disrupting pre-existing cross-border functional spaces. During the socialist era, strict border controls further hindered the renewal of natural socio-economic and cultural linkages. Today, the absence of a historically continuous cross-border citizenry manifests in weaker CBC structures, lower levels of



interpersonal trust, and institutional fragmentation. Applying the multidimensional framework of cross-border integration developed by Decoville et al. (2013), our research evaluates how these historical ruptures influence contemporary CBC across structural, institutional, functional, and ideational dimensions. Based on statistical data analysis, interviews with CBC actors, and analysis of Interreg-funded initiatives, we assess the extent to which disrupted settlement continuity still affects cross-border cooperation. Our findings contribute to understanding how historical population shifts continue to shape cross-border citizenship in the EU and offer possible advices for fostering stronger CBC in historically affected regions.

Thayse Figueira Guimarães* (Federal University of Grande Dourados, Brasil, University of Aveiro, Portugal) and ***Maria Helena Araújo e Sá*** (University of Aveiro, Portugal): ***The Bilingual and Intercultural Border Schools Project (PEBIF) as a Strategy for Linguistic Integration and Cross-Border Cooperation: An Example of an Educational Project Between Northern Portugal and Galicia***

Thayse Figueira Guimarães is a professor at the Federal University of Grande Dourados (UFGD), Brazil, and is currently conducting a postdoctoral research stay at the University of Aveiro, Portugal, with funding from the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq). Her research focuses on the Border Bilingual and Intercultural Schools Program (PEBIF) between Portugal and Spain, analysing bi/multilingualism in Ibero-American border contexts, with an emphasis on language education, cross-border cooperation, and language policies for diversity.

Maria Helena Araújo e Sá is a Full Professor at the Department of Education and Psychology at the University of Aveiro (UA), Portugal. She specializes in language teacher education and supervises master's, doctoral, and postdoctoral research. She coordinates the Research Centre on Didactics and Technology in the Education of Trainers (CIDTEFF) and the Doctoral Program in Education. She is one of the scientific coordinators of the Border Bilingual and Intercultural Schools Program (PEBIF). Her research areas include networked intercomprehension, plurilingual and intercultural communication, and language policies for language education.

The concept of a borderless Europe, reinforced by the Schengen Area's free movement regime, is facing increasing challenges in light of recent crises. The temporary reintroduction of border controls during the COVID-19 pandemic, successive migration crises, the war in



Ukraine, and the tightening of territorial policies within the European Union (EU) have significantly impacted cross-border cooperation dynamics. However, local initiatives such as the Bilingual and Intercultural Border Schools Project (PEBIF) emerge as spaces of resistance and innovation, reaffirming the commitment to regional integration, multilingualism, and interculturality in education, with the support of institutions that regulate school operations. Established during the 30th Luso-Spanish Summit in 2018, PEBIF is a joint initiative of the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science, and Culture (OEI), in collaboration with the governments of Portugal and Spain, as well as their Autonomous Communities, aiming to strengthen cross-border education along the frontier between the two countries (Matesanz, Ferreira, Araújo e Sá, 2023). The program seeks to promote bi/plurilingual and intercultural education, encourage student mobility, and reinforce cultural ties between border communities. By integrating Portuguese, Spanish, and other regional and local languages, PEBIF aims to move beyond a binary conception of bilingualism, adopting a dynamic and hybrid model of multilingualism management. This study is based on Spolsky's (2004) language policy model, which emphasizes the interconnection between language beliefs, practices, and management, as well as the concept of glottopolitics (Del Valle, 2014; Lagares, 2018), to analyze the political processes underlying language choices. The research investigates the pedagogical practices and discourses of teachers involved in PEBIF, using a case study of two mirror schools—one in Galicia and the other in Portugal. Employing a qualitative approach that combines participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, the study seeks to understand how cross-border pedagogical dynamics are implemented and what contributions these experiences offer to reflections on European language policies. The results indicate how teachers organize their practices, considering PEBIF's institutional guidelines, local cultural and linguistic repertoires, and their relationship with the environment, community, and territory, incorporating artistic expressions such as music and poetry, as well as elements of nature. The management of cross-border multilingualism is based on students' linguistic biographies, integrating Spanish, Galician, Portuguese varieties, and migrant languages such as Brazilian Portuguese. The study further suggests that PEBIF could expand its scope by incorporating new approaches to valuing



linguistic diversity. In this sense, the program not only challenges the hegemony of national languages but also proposes a new paradigm for multilingualism management at the border, anchored in diversity and the construction of a hybrid intercultural identity. This process transforms the school into a space for negotiating and (re)shaping language policies, both locally and globally. The PEBIF experience demonstrates that cross-border cooperation in education can be a driving force for integration, even amid the tightening of EU borders. However, persistent challenges include discrepancies between the curricular policies of Portugal and Spain, binational bureaucracy, and the instability of migration policies. Given the current scenario of redefining the EU's internal borders, PEBIF represents a laboratory for rethinking cross-border language education, showing that both the economic and humanistic aspects of this education deserve greater recognition for cross-border integration.

Irina M. Cavaion (Science and Research Center Koper, Slovenia): Co-Crossing Borders with/through Neighbouring Languages Teaching and Learning: Collaborative Pathways for People, Schools, and Language Policy Development between Italy and Slovenia

Dr Irina M. Cavaion is a researcher at the Science and Research Centre Koper, specialising in multilingual and intercultural education, particularly in border regions. Her work explores the implementation of innovative teaching methodologies in multilingual education, recognising that language learning is inherently linked to social and political dynamics. She emphasises that teaching and methodology are not merely pedagogical tools but also forms of political engagement - especially in historically multilingual border areas - where they play a crucial role in language acquisition planning. Dr Cavaion is also committed to promoting high-quality action research, strengthening collaboration between university researchers, school practitioners, and local and regional policymakers to enhance educational outcomes and policy development. She developed CoBLaLT (Contact-Based Neighbouring Language Teaching and Learning), a method addressing both the theoretical and practical aspects of neighbouring language teaching in border regions.

Italy and Slovenia are part of the Adriatic-Ionian Euroregion, established in 2006 with goals of promoting peace, stability, cooperation, and cultural heritage preservation. However, despite these aspirations, the region has yet to develop a specific policy to enhance the learning of Euroregion languages. This gap is considered a significant barrier to cross-border



cooperation by the European Association of Border Regions (AEBR), which has long argued that language differences hinder collaboration in border areas. Scholars stress the importance of language for fostering cross-border communication. Klemenčič (1987, in Bufon, 2002, p.459) identified “command of the neighbour’s language” and a “positive attitude towards the neighbouring population and cooperation” as crucial factors for effective cross-border communication. According to the EU's communication “Boosting Growth and Cohesion in EU Border Regions” (COM(2017) 534 final) border regions could on average be potentially 8% richer if all current barriers were removed and a common language was used by all, reporting instead of an inflexible use of different languages on both sides of a border. European policies have timidly highlighted the importance of teaching neighbouring languages—through recommendations like the Committee of Ministers’ Rec(2005)3 on teaching neighbouring languages in border regions, and the Council’s recommendation on comprehensive language learning (SWD(2018) 174 final). However, no concrete language policy exists that underscores its significance or urgency, as emphasized in the symposium's introduction. This paper will explore the contradictions arising from the lack of policies and attention to the teaching of neighbouring languages. It will also present the experiences of students and teachers involved in a three-year cross-border language-learning project in the Gorica-Nova Gorica area, which is now the European Capital of Culture in 2025 with little attention again on the teaching and learning of border languages. The project is part of CONTATTI!, a study involving seven schools across Italy, Slovenia, and Croatia, and five languages (Italian, Slovenian, Croatian, English, and Istrovenetian). Students collaborate virtually and in person to create a meaningful, relationship-focused approach to language learning. In this research, two twinned schools—one from Slovenia and one from Italy—participated, involving three classes and around 70 pupils aged 11-14. Teachers of neighbouring languages, history, geography, science, and art engaged in activities and discussions on local language policy. The research focused on these questions:

- How do children, teachers, heads in border areas perceive linguistic needs for young people living near borders?



- What do children think about reciprocal learning of neighbouring languages, based on their three-year-CONTATTI! experience?
- How did the socioconstructivist approach encourage them to see language learning as a matter of contact, collaboration, cooperation, and cultural exchange?
- How did it foster self-engagement and individual agency in language learning?

Conducted from April 2021 to June 2024 in a post-COVID border region, the research revealed limited, often unsuccessful initiatives from organisational viewpoint, certainly very tiresome and little awareness within school communities regarding the importance of local language policies. While students, teachers, and school leaders see learning neighbouring languages as valuable, they often perceive it as unattainable. Schools tend to operate without support from local administrations, reflecting a deep mistrust in political efforts to address the needs of border communities. The project and its many discussions have sparked a new process, fostering a sense of self-confidence around the valuable initiatives led by schools. Unfortunately, these efforts are ignored by local institutions and administrations, out of the "big politics" which on the contrary should provide the necessary support and a structured framework to help them flourish.

** Speaker presenting the paper*

Panel 4 – Environmental awareness and sustainability - Climate-neutral solutions for law enforcement, military and public administration in cross-border international practice

Moderator: Orsolya Czenczer, Ludovika University of Public Service, Hungary

Ludovika University of Public Service, Ludovika Main Building, 2nd floor, Eged István Room 226

The speakers of the panel will present and analyse solutions and instruments promoting law enforcement in an environmentally friendly manner.



Ioana Curt (Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania): Environmental awareness and sustainability in Romanian prisons

Ioana Curt is a legal scholar and practitioner with extensive expertise in criminal law, criminology, and prison law. She holds a Bachelor of Laws and a Master's in Criminal Sciences and Criminology from Babeş-Bolyai University, where she also earned her PhD in Law (2013–2020). Her academic training includes a fellowship at the Max Planck Institute (2015) and participation in the International Faculty of Comparative Law in Strasbourg (2012). Since 2012, Ioana Curt has taught at Babeş-Bolyai University's Faculty of Law and, since 2013, has practiced law as a member of the Cluj Bar Association. Ioana Curt has authored two books and contributed chapters to volumes published by Jovene Editore and Wolf Legal Publishers. She has published over 15 scholarly articles and has presented at eight academic conferences. She has also participated in seven national and international research projects.

The lecture explores the implementation of environmental awareness and sustainability programs within the Romanian prison system. We present a comprehensive analysis of several key initiatives designed to foster ecological responsibility and facilitate successful reintegration of incarcerated individuals. These include the "Gardening Workshop" (2022), providing foundational horticultural skills (soil preparation, basic tools, plant propagation, maintenance, and harvesting); the significantly larger "Gardening Occupational Activity" program (2024), engaging over 1700 participants since its launch, offering diverse horticultural training (decorative plants, interior and exterior landscaping, aromatic plants); and a specialized training program focused on plant cultivation. The programs aim to equip inmates with practical skills applicable to post-release life, promoting self-sufficiency and responsible environmental stewardship. Furthermore, a substantial project established a "Danube Delta eco-reintegration laboratory," involving the construction of five eco-houses serving as workshops for traditional ecological crafts and public awareness events. This initiative reached beyond the prison walls, influencing over 40 correctional facilities and raising public awareness about human ecology principles. Supplementary programs included ecological education courses and participation in large-scale national eco-restoration campaigns. The success of these programs underscores the transformative potential of integrating environmental sustainability within the correctional system, improving not only the well-being of inmates but



also contributing significantly to smoother reintegration and the cultivation of a pro-environmental ethic within society.

***Bryndís Jónsdóttir (Prison and Probation Administration of Iceland, Iceland):
Borders Behind Bars: Immigration, Incarceration, and Institutional Trust in
Iceland***

Bryndís Jónsdóttir is a criminologist and a representative at the Prison and Probation Administration of Iceland, working in the Community Service Division. She is also a guest lecturer at the University of Akureyri's Police Academy and the Criminology Department at the University of Iceland. She holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Akureyri and a master's in criminology from the University of Iceland. Her research focuses on immigrants, their trust in the police, and hate crimes. She has examined hate crime in Iceland, addressing legal frameworks, police reporting practices, and gaps in registration. She has also explored immigrants' interactions with law enforcement, identifying issues such as racial profiling, over-policing, and under-policing, which contribute to low trust in police. She is currently preparing a research project on immigrants and foreign-born individuals in the Icelandic prison system, focusing on representation, systemic challenges, and policy implications.

This lecture explores the intersection of the Icelandic prison system, immigration policies, border control practices, and the trust immigrants and foreign-born individuals have in the police and justice system. Iceland has seen an increase in its foreign-born population, and this demographic shift has brought new challenges to its criminal justice system. Foreign-born individuals represent a growing portion of those in custody, and their experiences are shaped by legal complexities, language barriers, cultural differences, and limited access to legal support. A key focus is Hólmsheiði Prison, the newest correctional facility in Iceland, which serves as the main institution for individuals in custody and for female prisoners. Hólmsheiði houses a notable number of foreign-born women, many of whom are incarcerated for drug-related offenses. These women often face particular challenges, such as being involved in international drug trafficking networks. Their position in the justice system is often shaped by systemic disadvantages and limited prospects for rehabilitation due to linguistic, cultural, and legal obstacles. The lecture also addresses the role of the Directorate of Immigration, whose



policies around border control and immigration significantly impact how foreign nationals are processed within the criminal justice system. Recent years have seen stricter immigration enforcement, affecting those awaiting deportation, asylum seekers, and undocumented individuals. These policies often result in extended custody or prison sentences under uncertain legal circumstances, complicating inmates' reintegration and rehabilitation. In addition to institutional policies, the structure of the Icelandic prison system will be discussed, emphasizing its progressive model aimed at rehabilitation. Inmates typically begin their sentences in closed prisons, such as Litla-Hraun, where restrictions are higher. Depending on individual progress, they may move to open prisons like Kvíabryggja or Sogn, where autonomy is gradually increased. From there, individuals may transition to a halfway house, supporting reintegration into society, and eventually to electronic monitoring, allowing them to serve part of their sentence outside of prison while under supervision. While designed to promote rehabilitation, these stages can be unevenly accessible to foreign-born inmates due to administrative, legal, or social challenges. The lecture also addresses immigrants' trust in the police and justice system, which remains a critical issue. A qualitative study involving interviews with Albanian immigrants in Iceland revealed low levels of trust in the police, largely influenced by personal experiences and broader societal narratives. Participants described discriminatory police practices, including racial profiling, routine stop-and-search, and over-surveillance. These encounters were often perceived as unfair and rooted in prejudice, reinforcing a sense of marginalization. Simultaneously, the same communities often experience under-policing, where their concerns or victimization may be ignored or deprioritized by law enforcement. This imbalance creates a cycle of alienation: individuals feel over-scrutinized when suspected and unsupported when in need. As a result, many immigrants hesitate to report crimes or seek police assistance, feeling unlikely to receive fair or effective treatment. These dynamics erode trust and complicate the role of law enforcement in immigrant communities. By examining both the structure of the prison system and immigrants' interactions with policing, this lecture highlights the multiple ways in which immigration status intersects with justice in Iceland. It brings attention to systemic gaps in both policy and practice and calls for reforms that promote fairness, inclusivity, and culturally



informed rehabilitation. The goal is to better understand how to serve a changing population while upholding the principles of justice and human rights in Iceland's correctional and legal systems.

Adriana Oliwia Drózdź (University of Siedlce, Poland): Green Rehabilitation Behind Bars: How Polish Prisons Are Embracing Environmental Initiatives

Master of Criminology, a fourth-year doctoral student at the Doctoral School of Siedlce University in the discipline of Security Sciences. Employed at the Institute of Security Sciences at Siedlce University as a research and teaching assistant. Deputy Director for Organizational Affairs at the Information Security Research Center at the University of Siedlce, member of the Polish Society for Security Sciences, and editorial board member of the scientific journal De Securitate et Defensione. Security and Defense Journal of the University of Siedlce. Her scientific interests include penitentiary studies and rehabilitation, as well as interdisciplinary issues related to broadly understood security sciences, criminology, forensic science, suicidology, and victimology.

Polish penitentiary institutions are implementing a broad range of ecological programs that not only contribute to environmental protection but also support the rehabilitation process of inmates. These initiatives encompass various projects carried out in both custodies and prisons. Their goal is not only to educate inmates and develop their social competencies but also to improve the state of the natural environment and bring benefits to society as a whole. Among the most significant pro-ecological activities undertaken in penitentiary institutions is the participation of inmates in nationwide campaigns such as "Cleaning Up the World," which involves cleaning forests, parks, and green spaces. Another important element is cooperation with forestry authorities, where inmates plant trees and shrubs, as well as initiatives undertaken in collaboration with animal shelters, related to animal protection - such as building nesting boxes, bird feeders, and insect hotels (e.g., for bees). Another key initiative is the collection of plastic bottle caps and waste segregation, which help to develop pro-ecological habits. Educational programs are an integral part of these activities. Lectures, presentations, and nature excursions allow inmates to gain environmental knowledge, which they can then apply in practice. Another crucial aspect of ecological projects in correctional facilities is infrastructure modernization -this includes, among other things, the thermal modernization



of prison buildings and the installation of photovoltaic panels, contributing to reduced energy consumption and lower CO2 emissions. It is important to emphasize that some of these initiatives also serve as vocational activation for inmates, positively influencing their rehabilitation process. The combination of theory and practice fosters pro-ecological attitudes and the development of social and cognitive skills. Moreover, these activities instill a sense of empathy and responsibility for the environment in prisoners. As a result, inmates can spend their time in isolation constructively, which helps them better prepare for reintegration into society. One of the biggest challenges in implementing ecological programs in the prison environment is ensuring their sustainability and effectiveness. Barriers such as limited financial resources, the need to adapt infrastructure, or changing attitudes among both inmates and prison staff pose significant obstacles. Another crucial aspect is monitoring the effects of these programs and assessing their impact on inmates' attitudes and behaviors after their release. It is worth considering the introduction of new initiatives that could further support the development of pro-ecological habits among inmates. One example could be the creation of prison gardens or greenhouses, where prisoners would cultivate vegetables, fruits, and herbs. Such a solution would not only allow them to acquire knowledge about plants and their applications but also enable the use of the harvest in meal preparation within correctional facilities. Another proposal could be the implementation of an advanced waste segregation system combined with recycling workshops, where prisoners would learn how to process plastic, metal, and paper. Such initiatives could combine practical activities with educational elements, providing prisoners with valuable skills while fostering environmental awareness.

Francesca Torlone** (University of Florence, Italy) and *Stefania Basilio* (University of Macerata, Italy): *The induction process to prevent suicides and self-harm of inmates and related learning consequences

She is Associate Professor in General and Social Pedagogy at the University of Florence. She is a lawyer and has been leading and participating to international research on adult education in prison for more than 15 years. Her research interests are for the learning organisation features and the components supporting and hindering personal and professional growth of individuals, teams, organisation.



She is a legal-educational officer at the Department of Penitentiary Administration of the Ministry of Justice and a PhD student at the University of Macerata with a research on the re-educational treatment of adults in penal execution and how it can be improved through a more scientific approach. She has participated in national and international research-intervention projects with the University of Florence on the treatment of prisoners and respect for fundamental human rights (FREE, Fundamental Rights Education in Europe, and PEBBLE, Prison Education Basic Skills Blended Learning). Currently, the aim of her research is to enrich current treatment with Adult Education theories in a transformative perspective and with methodologies and devices that modify the models of educational intervention in the context.

Entering prison, with the deprivation of personal liberty, causes an existential upheaval to which individuals react with different strategies depending on their age, psycho-physical health, personal, emotional, and social resources, as well as so-called life events. All these factors play a decisive role in adapting to the prison context. In addition, there are the learning actions embedded in the professional practices of managers, professionals, and operators, as well as the way in which every single moment of entering prison is managed, which determine learning consequences for the new inmate or for someone transferred from another institution. The induction of the prisoner represents, as is well known, the most problematic period because it is crucial in facilitating integration into prison life and reducing self-harm behaviors. Studying this transition allows for an analysis of the educational relevance of actions taken by all the organisational actors involved (healthcare, security- and treatment areas). The suicide rate is higher for incarcerated individuals (WHO, 2007), and statistics on suicides in Italian penitentiary institutions over the last three years highlight the relevance of the issue: in 2024, 88 inmates took their own lives, in 2022 there were 70 suicides, and in 2023, 84 suicides (Antigone Reports 2022, 2023, 2024). 54% of the suicides occurred within the first six months of detention, with 8 taking place within the first 15 days, 6 of which occurred within the first 5 days of entry (National Guarantor for the Rights of Persons Deprived of Personal Liberty, 2024). The phenomenon exists and is dramatic. The Prison Administration has reviewed models of professional intervention in an attempt to define a multiprofessional process that addresses the need to manage the critical moment of entering prison with an integrated approach. The degree of adaptation and resistance to the experience of entering prison also



varies based on external variables related to the individual and the prison institution and context: the physical conditions of the facility, the level of overcrowding and available space, the efficiency of the prison services provided (i.e., allowed phone calls to family members, regulation of meetings with lawyers, transfers and transportation for hearings or external needs, guarantee of fundamental rights protection, efficient healthcare service, adequate staff presence for the inmate population, food control), the presence of "treatment" activities that involve the individual from the earliest stages of entering prison, which can help the person set short, medium, and long-term goals. Procedures, protocols, and circulars exist and are precise. In our view, one element is missing: the "rehabilitative", treatment process begins in the right moment when a person enters the lobby of an institution, from the very first minute (in fact, it starts even earlier, at the moment of the deprivation of liberty through arrest). The guiding hypothesis is that the reduction of the suicide risk also passes through the ability to manage the entry phase, to act professionally in an integrated way and that this whole process influences the construction of meaning and perspectives by the detained person.

***Joseph Giormaina (University of Malta, Correctional Services Agency, Malta):
Goals for Change: The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as a
Framework for Prison Reform and Persons' Well-being***

Professor Joseph Giormaina is an academic at the University of Malta, where he specialises in education and rehabilitation within correctional settings. With extensive experience in both academic and policy domains, his work focuses on the transformative potential of education in prisons, the reintegration of persons in prison, and the development of inclusive educational strategies for marginalised populations. Professor Giormaina teaches at Master's level, coordinating study units that address ethical, pedagogical, and rehabilitative frameworks in carceral environments. His research interests lie in prison education, social justice, and human rights in correctional systems, and he regularly collaborates with national and international bodies on projects related to criminal justice reform. Beyond his academic role, Professor Giormaina serves as a consultant to correctional agencies, contributing to institutional development, training programmes, and strategic planning—particularly in the areas of staff capacity-building and persons-in-prison wellbeing. He is also actively involved in public engagement and policy dialogue around restorative justice and penal reform.



This presentation explores how the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can serve as guiding principles for prison reform, management practices, and the enhancement of the well-being of persons in prison. Prisons, often overlooked in global sustainability dialogues, have significant potential as sites for achieving social, environmental, and economic sustainability outcomes. By systematically aligning correctional policies and operations with the SDGs, prison authorities can directly contribute to global sustainability targets while simultaneously promoting humane, rehabilitative environments. Through a structured analysis of each of the 17 SDGs, this presentation identifies concrete links and actionable insights specific to prison environments. It demonstrates how goals related to health, education, decent work, reduced inequalities, responsible consumption, and sustainable infrastructure, among others, can inform practical and impactful prison policies. The discussion highlights best practices and innovative examples of sustainability-oriented initiatives within correctional contexts. Ultimately, the presentation argues that adopting the SDGs as a comprehensive framework for reform not only advances global sustainability commitments but also fundamentally enhances the dignity, rehabilitation prospects, and overall well-being of persons in prison, contributing positively to broader societal goals.

Christopher Siegersma (Correctional Services Agency, Malta): Persons in Prison, Rights in Practice: Ensuring Health and Well-being within Malta's Prison System through Sustainable Development Goal 3

Christopher Siegersma is the Chief Executive Officer of the Correctional Services Agency. As the Head of the Agency he is responsible for the running of the Maltese prison services. Part of his role includes the design and implementation of initiatives aimed at reforming and improving correctional practices and rehabilitation programs. With over 20 years of experience in the mental health field, Mr Siegersma is dedicated to enhancing public safety and promoting successful reintegration of persons in prison into society. Mr Siegersma holds a masters degree from the University of Malta and is currently reading for a PhD at the Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh. In addition to his role at the Correctional Services Agency, Mr Siegersma is actively involved in several prominent international organisations, including the International Association for Correctional and Forensic Psychology (IACFP), the International Corrections and Prisons Association (ICPA), Partnership for Corrections – Community and Policy (PC-CP), Europris, and the Association for



Child and Adolescent Mental Health (ACAMH). Mr. Siegersma is also an active member of Council of Europe fora dealing with the wellbeing of persons in prison.

This paper critically examines how Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being) informs policies and practices aimed at promoting health within Malta's correctional environment. Central to this discussion is the necessity of person-centred care as a cornerstone of comprehensive health interventions, addressing both physical and psychological needs among persons in prison. The analysis highlights Malta's current strategies and programmes aimed at mental health support, substance misuse rehabilitation, and overall health promotion. The paper further discusses the challenges faced by correctional facilities in delivering consistent, high-quality healthcare services, examining initiatives that promote holistic well-being and effective rehabilitation. Examples of best practices within Malta's prison system are evaluated, identifying areas of strength and opportunities for further development. Ultimately, the paper underscores the imperative for Malta's prison system to fully integrate SDG 3 into operational frameworks, enhancing the dignity, safety, and long-term well-being of all persons in prison, thereby contributing positively to broader public health and social justice objectives.

** Speaker presenting the paper*

Panel 5 – Re-charging Borderless Europe: EU policies and local examples

Moderator: Fabienne Leloup, UCLouvain / IFD, Belgium

Ludovika University of Public Service, Ludovika Main Building, 2nd floor, Lőrincz Lajos Room 234

In this panel, the focus will be given to EU policies and local initiatives challenging re-bordering phenomena and facilitating cross-border integration in its physical, governance and legal aspects.



Anne Thevenet (Euro-Institut Kehl, Germany): Cross-border expert groups: an informal governance tool to facilitate cross-border integration?

Anne Thevenet has been working at the Euro-Institut since 2005, currently as Deputy Director. She holds a diploma in Political Sciences and a master's degree in European Studies and in Management. Her field of expertise are the coaching of stakeholders and cross-border groups / teams, the design and delivery of training courses as well as the design and moderation of workshops and conferences. Moreover, she works on several projects, which aim at combining practical and scientific approaches on cross-border issues. Since 2010, she has coordinated the Transfrontier Euro-Institut Network (TEIN), which brings together 20 members from 12 different European border regions as well as 2 associated members.

The presentation will demonstrate how a group of experts from both sides of the border, as an implementation of the horizontal integration theory, can help to facilitate and improve cross-border cooperation. The topic will be approached from a practitioner's perspective, namely the Euro-Institut, an organisation working in the field of cross-border cooperation based at the Franco-German border in the Upper Rhine region. The Euro-Institut supports and coordinates several non- formal thematic groups of experts composed of administrative staff from various local authorities in France and Germany (sometimes also Switzerland), allowing them to exchange on different policies and their implementation, cross-border cases, current topics as well as obstacles. These expert groups are to be differentiated from the “institutionalised” expert groups existing for example in the Upper Rhine Conference., Our analysis will focus on two of these groups: “Health and safety at work across borders” as well as “Childhood protection”. These groups have been coordinated by the Euro-Institut for respectively 30 and 10 years at the request of French and German stakeholders. After a short presentation of these two expert groups and their objectives, the presentation will explore four main strands by answering the following questions:

- a. What is the added value for the experts themselves (taking a step back while learning about different practices and approaches; facilitating their day-to-day professional lives; deepening their knowledge and developing their competences) as well as for their institutions/administrations (visibility; finding answers to cb questions; best practice)?



- b. How do the groups contribute to the prevention and resolution of cross-border obstacles (by creating a network of competences; by introducing a “cb reflex”)?
- c. What is the role of the Euro-Institut as an intercultural coordinator, moderator and mediator (taking into account the different cultures and languages; responsibility for the organization, reporting and logistics)?
- d. What are the challenges while building successful expert groups (asymmetry of competences; intercultural and linguistic dimension; distance / time; political and financial support; turnover)?

The presentation will then discuss perspectives:

- e. What are the benefits for other stakeholders / citizens outside the expert groups?
- f. Can those local examples serve as a model for re-charging borderless Europe? And if so, under which conditions? Could it be a concrete and easy way to implement horizontal integration on the ground?

Thereby, the presentation seeks to inspire other border regions /other institutions working with the aim of facilitating cross-border processes and cooperation.

Joanna Kurowska-Pysz (WSB University, Poland): The EGTC Polish-Lithuanian Cross-Border Functional Area as a driver of cross-border relations in the shadow of military tensions surrounding the Suwalki Gap

Joanna Kurowska-Pysz is an associate professor at WSB University in Dąbrowa Górnicza, Poland, and serves as the Director of the Research Institute on Territorial and Inter-Organizational Cooperation. She is a doctor of economic sciences with a habilitation. Key research topics: public governance, inter-organizational cooperation and cross-border cooperation. She balances her academic pursuits with a professional career in consulting. She specialises in cross-border research methodologies, designing cross-border policies and strategies, evaluating the INTERREG programmes, and managing cross-border projects under the INTERREG Programme. She has been working for the European Commission (DG REGIO) as a Senior AMI Expert. She primarily focused on studies of borders in Central and Eastern Europe.

The Lithuanian-Polish borderland is one of the least populated peripheral areas of the European Union. The region faces numerous socio-economic challenges, which cross-border



cooperation should help address more quickly. The border itself runs from the Lithuania–Poland–Russia tripoint southeast to the Belarus–Lithuania–Poland tripoint. It is known as the Suwalki Gap, and it plays a crucial geopolitical role, as it is the only land connection between the Baltic countries and other European Union and NATO countries. After the Russian aggression on Ukraine, this area has become a strategic venue and hot spot, straggling numerous political and socio-economic consequences of this event. There are, among others, military tensions around both tripoints of the border, migrant attacks from the Belarusian side, intensive refugee flows from the Ukrainian side, as well as a decline in investments, cross-border commerce, and services, along with an outflow of tourists, mainly foreign tourists. Considering these challenges, Lithuanian and Polish stakeholders operating in the border region have decided to strengthen cross-border integration and cooperation by utilising all available tools and resources on both sides of the border. They initiated vibrant cross-border activities that integrated most of the actors on the ground, which can be considered good practice for other borderlands struggling with crises. This study presents the development process of the EGTC, called "The Polish-Lithuanian Cross-Border Functional Area", which was established to address the crisis mentioned above and to govern the Touristic Cross-Border Functional Area, designed in the borderland in 2020 and intended to catalyse tourism development in the future. Based on cross-border flows and linkages among actors cooperating within this functional area, other cross-border grassroots initiatives have emerged, aiming to counteract the deterioration of the socio-economic situation in the region and mitigate the impact of the geopolitical crisis. One such initiative is the introduction of a CLLD-driven approach to the further development of cross-border cooperation, which is currently being implemented as part of the European pilot programme "Resilient Borders" (February–September 2025). This study presents ongoing findings and preliminary conclusions based on qualitative and quantitative research, including interviews and surveys conducted by the author in the Lithuanian-Polish borderland between 2020 and 2025. They demonstrate how cross-border local communities, adopting a participatory approach, can enhance cross-border relations and foster their resilience by utilising the available tools and resources.



Martin Unfried* (ITEM Maastricht University, The Netherlands) and **Pim Mertens** (ITEM Maastricht University, The Netherlands): *Horizontal instruments for EU cross-border regions: a critical review*

Martin Unfried is senior researcher at the Institute for Transnational and Euregional cross-border cooperation and Mobility (ITEM) of Maastricht University. He is the project leader of the annual ITEM cross-border impact assessment study and has developed the “ITEM methodology” together with his ITEM colleagues. In 2021, the obligation for a border impact assessment was integrated into the assessment framework of the Dutch national government based on ITEM’s work. Martin has been participating in many EU funded projects as ESPON, Interreg and assignments from DG Regio of the European Commission on Territorial Impact assessment and cross-border labour markets. He has been involved in the realisation of cross border information points and the establishment of Cross border employment-services at the German-Dutch and Dutch-Belgian border. In 2024, together with his ITEM colleague Pim Mertens he conducts comparative research on the situation of various cross-border labour markets in the EU.

Pim Mertens is scientific coordinator at the Institute for Transnational and Euregional cross-border cooperation and Mobility (ITEM) of Maastricht University. In this respect he has been working on cross-border cooperation and mobility from a legal and governance point of view. He is one of the coordinators of the annual ITEM Cross-Border Impact Assessment and has published several cross-border impact assessments himself as well as contributions on the methodology itself. Currently, he is working in the Cross-Border Coordination Point between Flanders and the Netherlands, as well as in other (Interreg) projects.

The paper will focus on the analysis of different instruments for enhancing cross-border cooperation within the European Union. We refer to the notion of Joachim Beck who speaks about “horizontal integration” as a specific form of European integration (Beck, 2022). In this respect, the purpose is to get a better grip on cross-border cooperation in the context of the internal market, the four freedoms and the multi-level governance system of the EU. Meaning, that the situation at the internal borders of the EU is very particular and border studies in this context belong to the field of European integration research. In this paper, we will further develop on a concept introduced by former DG Regio official Dirk Peters who described cross-border cooperation as a multi-stage rocket. In his view, the first established stage is funding and joint strategies for cross-border regions, secondly territorial cohesion policies



developed cross-border legal forms to facilitate cross-border cooperation. Finally, there is the idea to come to an instrument that allows cross-border activities to enjoy more room for legal flexibility. We would like to expand this scheme and discuss the role and usefulness of additional instruments, as experimentation clauses, (deminimis) derogations, or regulatory sandboxes. In this respect we also refer to the dossier of last years' ITEM Cross-Border Impact Assessment (Mertens & Unfried, 2024). The assumption is that next to funding (INTERREG) and the existing legal instruments for cross-border organisations (EGTC), there is also a pressing need to come to better frameworks and legal instruments to overcome persisting cross-border obstacles (Fejes & Ocskay, 2023). To make Peters' multistage rocket complete, we argue to also add a first fundamental layer, that is sound ex-ante cross-border impact assessment and ex-post policy evaluations. Meaning the legislators, at the EU, national and regional level should better integrate potential effects for cross-border territories in their law-making. So in our view, the multistage rocket moves from general instruments supporting the functioning cross-border territories (do no harm), to specific instruments addressing the needs in cross-border territories and different levels of cross-border integration. Regulatory impact assessment in this respect, should allow governments to better include the specific characteristics of the cross-border territory (including aspects as mobility, cooperation etc.) in policymaking. Secondly, financing of projects stimulates the cross-border interaction and can also contribute to stable cross-border networks, where, thirdly, governance instruments as the EGTC can foster capacity building and the strengthening of cross-border entities with a real cross-border view. Finally, we will discuss the need of legal instrument that allow Member States and regions to accept legislation from the other side of the border in very specific cases (as it was proposed in the European Cross-border Mechanism). We will also refer to the new EU facilitation tool and analyse whether the new regulation could be a first step into this direction. In sum, we would like to discuss today's mix of horizontal instruments, on both EU and multilateral or national level, and elaborate for the future what innovative elements could be promising to overcome persistent cross-border obstacles. The underlying assumption is that vertical EU integration measures (as EU legislation) is not sufficient for tackle specific problems at internal borders.

** Speaker presenting the paper*



Panel 6 – Counter-terrorism and borders

Moderator: Dániel Rémai, Ludovika University of Public Service, Hungary

Ludovika University of Public Service, Ludovika Main Building, 2nd floor, Egedy István Room 226

The panel's topic is the most recent phenomena of international terrorism, its contemporary formats, the role of international cooperation in combatting terrorism and the impact on border regimes and the Schengen area.

Anželika Banevičienė (Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania): Secret Detention and Rendition of Terrorist Suspects in ECHR Case Practice

Legal Expert in EU Law, Migration, and Human Rights. Dr. Anželika Banevičienė is a Lithuanian legal scholar and expert in human rights, public security, and international law, with over two decades of experience across academia, public administration, and international legal reform initiatives. She has a rich academic and professional background shaped by continuous involvement in national and international legal systems, human rights protections, and public security matters. Her research and publications address legal and human rights challenges in irregular migration, readmission agreements, state responses to hybrid threats and terrorism prevention. Her combined academic and policy experience provides valuable insight into how European legal systems navigate the tension between open borders, internal security, and fundamental rights.

The secret detention and extraordinary rendition of terrorist suspects have been deeply controversial aspects of post-9/11 counterterrorism strategies, particularly in Europe. These clandestine practices—chiefly orchestrated through the CIA's "High-Value Detainee" (HVD) programme—involve the extrajudicial transfer of individuals suspected of terrorism to undisclosed facilities, frequently without legal safeguards or due process. In these so-called "black sites," detainees were often subjected to incommunicado detention, torture, and inhumane treatment. Several European countries, notably Poland, Romania, Lithuania, and others, have been implicated in facilitating these operations, either by hosting secret detention centers, permitting rendition flights through their airspace, or otherwise cooperating with the CIA. Investigations by the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, and human rights organizations uncovered significant evidence of European complicity. These revelations



prompted legal challenges that culminated in a series of landmark judgments by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). The Court held multiple states accountable for violations of the European Convention on Human Rights, particularly Articles 3 (prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment), 5 (right to liberty and security), 6 (right to a fair trial), 8 (right to respect for private life), and 13 (right to an effective remedy). Notable cases include *Abu Zubaydah v. Lithuania* and *Husayn (Abu Zubaydah) v. Poland*, where both countries were found complicit in the detention and torture of the applicant within CIA facilities on their territories. The Court emphasized that state cooperation in such illegal acts—knowing the risk of torture—amounted to serious breaches of their human rights obligations. In *Al Nashiri v. Poland* and *Al Nashiri v. Romania*, similar findings underscored the states' failures to prevent the risk of ill-treatment. These cases highlighted the systemic nature of abuse within the HVD programme and the extent of European states' involvement. In *El-Masri v. North Macedonia*, a German national was subjected to abduction and extraordinary rendition due to mistaken identity, illustrating the grave consequences of intelligence errors and lack of oversight. His treatment, including torture and rendition to Afghanistan, was found to constitute multiple violations of the Convention. Similarly, *Nasr and Ghali v. Italy* revealed how national secrecy laws were used to obstruct accountability for CIA operatives involved in the rendition of an Egyptian cleric, thereby violating the right to an effective remedy. The principle of non-refoulement was reinforced in *Saadi v. Italy*, where the Court ruled that deportation to a country where there is a real risk of torture is impermissible, even when national security is at stake. This judgment affirmed the absolute and non-derogable nature of Article 3, regardless of the suspected individual's profile or the perceived threat they pose. The ECHR has played a crucial role in affirming that counterterrorism measures must respect human rights standards. Its jurisprudence emphasizes that no state can justify torture, secret detention, or denial of due process under the guise of national security.



Dorota Niewiarowska (Police Academy in Szczytno, Poland): Special solutions in criminal law and criminal procedural law to combat terrorist crimes

Lieutenant Dorota Niewiarowska is an experienced police officer. She worked at the police unit for about 10 years. She was an investigator for most of the time, including the team for combating economic crime, where she handled, among other things, cases involving fraud committed by criminal groups through Internet portals. She also used to be a police negotiator, and as a result, participated in many training sessions related to responding to terrorist situations. Currently she has been a lecturer at the Police Academy in Szczytno, at the Institute of Legal Sciences for nine years. She teaches academy students and police officers in professional trainings and conduct classes in the field of criminal law and criminal procedural law, including a special focus on combating human trafficking and fighting terrorism. She is the author of numerous publications published in Poland and abroad.

The Polish ‘Law on Anti-Terrorist Activities’ provides specific solutions for the conduct of investigations in the event that preparation for the commission of a terrorist offence, an attempt to commit such an offence or the commission of such an offence is revealed. In particular, it provides for significant simplifications in the arrest of persons suspected of committing such an offence, in their pre-trial detention and in the carrying out of searches of premises and persons. Any person may be apprehended on the grounds that he or she is suspected of having committed a terrorist offence and there is a reasonable suspicion that he or she was at the place where the act occurred. There does not need to be an additional suspicion that the person is going to escape, hide or destroy traces of the offence, as is required in the ordinary procedure. Subsequently, law enforcement authorities may bring charges against a person suspected of committing a crime and the court, at the request of the prosecutor, may apply pre-trial detention for a period not exceeding 30 days (may be extended under the terms of the Criminal Procedure Code) based solely on information obtained as a result of operational and recognition activities, without evidence collected and secured in a procedural method according to the rules of the Criminal Procedure Code. The key to the application of these special solutions is to establish that the event is a terrorist crime. The legal definition of this is contained in the Polish Criminal Code and it follows that a terrorist crime



is a prohibited act that is subject to the penalty of deprivation of liberty with an upper limit of at least 5 years which is committed with the purpose of:

- seriously terrorizing a large number of people,
- compelling/forcing a public authority of the Republic of Poland, another state or an international organization to perform or to omit to perform certain actions,
- causing of the Republic of Poland, of another state or an international organization, as well as a threat to commit such an act.

It results that any crime can be classified as a terrorist crime, as long as it meets the conditions stated above. This definition clearly includes events that anyone would classify intuitively as a terrorist act, such as bomb attacks or holding hostages. And then everyone understands these special arrangements for collecting and recording evidence for criminal proceedings. Human rights organizations, on the other hand, point out that a definition interpreted broadly could lead to certain abuses by the state and law enforcement agencies, especially in interpreting what is a serious disruption of the political system or economy.

Krunoslav Antoliš (University of Applied Sciences in Criminal Investigation, Public Security Police Academy “First Croatian Police Officer” Ministry of Internal Affairs Zagreb, Republic of Croatia): Current and Future Challenges of Terrorism

Professor at the Police College of the Ministry of the Interior, Republic of Croatia, and Associate Professor in the fields of Information and Communication Sciences and Security and Defense Studies. He holds a PhD in Social Sciences (Information Science), an MSc in Law and Business Informatics, and BSc and MSc degrees in Mathematics. His research and teaching focus on information systems in security and defence, counterterrorism, critical infrastructure protection, and civil oversight of intelligence services. Prof. Antoliš has extensive professional experience in both the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of the Interior, where he holds the personal ranks of Major and Chief Police Advisor, respectively. He has led or contributed to numerous national and international research projects and was chair of the government commission drafting Croatia’s national counterterrorism strategy. He has published widely, presented at over a hundred international conferences, and served on program committees for major international scientific events. Prof. Antoliš is currently



a member of the Steering Committee of the Police Academy “First Croatian Police Officer” and serves as Croatia’s CEPOL Research and Science Correspondent.

Counterterrorism is a dynamic field focused on adapting to the evolving nature of terrorism and developing effective strategies to prevent and address these threats. As terrorism becomes more decentralized, utilizing technologies like social media, cyber tools, and lone-wolf attacks, it becomes increasingly difficult to track and combat. To counter this, strategies involve intelligence gathering, military operations, law enforcement coordination, and efforts to counter radicalization, with new technologies such as surveillance and data analysis playing a significant role. Current challenges include the rise of online extremism, difficulties in distinguishing between legitimate political actions and terrorism, and the instability in fragile or failed states. Looking ahead, the future of terrorism may see emerging threats such as cyberterrorism, the use of artificial intelligence in attacks, and the exploitation of global crises like pandemics or economic collapses by terrorist groups. Ethical and legal concerns also complicate counterterrorism efforts, raising questions about privacy, potential discrimination, and the legality of actions like surveillance and drone strikes. Furthermore, terrorism increasingly intersects with global challenges such as climate change and migration, making it harder to address. A successful counterterrorism approach requires a comprehensive strategy that blends military, law enforcement, diplomatic, and ideological efforts, along with strong international cooperation. Ultimately, counterterrorism must remain flexible in the face of evolving threats while balancing security concerns with respect for human rights.

Violeta Vasiliauskienė (Public Security Academy, Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania): Foreign Fighters: Dual Nature and Response

Violeta Vasiliauskienė is a Professor at Mykolas Romeris University’s Public Security Academy. She holds a PhD in Law from Vilnius University, where she defended her dissertation on terrorism in international humanitarian law. Her teaching and research focus on EU law, international law, border security, counterterrorism, and human rights. Prof. Vasiliauskienė actively contributes to international projects and joint master’s programs coordinated with Frontex and CEPOL, and frequently presents at conferences on hybrid



threats, EU security, and public order. She is also a member of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency's FRANET network and serves on several editorial boards in the field of security studies.

The Foreign Fighter Phenomenon in Europe: The rise of “foreign fighters” has become a key security challenge for Europe’s Schengen Area of free movement. Thousands of European citizens traveled to conflict zones in the last decade to join jihadist groups in Syria and Iraq, exploiting free movement to leave and sometimes return with ease. At least two perpetrators of the November 2015 Paris attacks were French nationals who had trained with ISIS in Syria, exemplifying the direct threat posed by such returnees. Dual Identities: Citizens and Security Threats: Foreign fighters embody a dual, conflicting status. On one hand, they are citizens of European states – entitled to rights and free movement across borders. On the other, by fighting for extremist causes abroad, they become security threats upon return. Many come from marginalized backgrounds, and social alienation often played a role in their radicalization. This dual status complicates policy responses: authorities must grapple with individuals who are both insiders (with community ties and legal rights) and outsiders (aligned with transnational terror networks and armed with combat skills). Challenges for Counterterrorism and Borders: The foreign fighter phenomenon tests the limits of a borderless Europe. Security and Legal Challenges: Returning fighters can exploit free movement, slipping across internal EU borders with minimal checks. Intelligence gaps allow suspects to evade detection, underscoring the need for better information sharing. Prosecuting returnees is also difficult – evidence from war zones is hard to obtain, and states cannot deny their own citizens re-entry under international law. Human Rights Dilemmas: Some governments revoke fighters’ citizenship or passports, raising legal and ethical concerns. Overbroad measures risk stigmatizing communities and alienating law-abiding citizens. National and EU Responses European states and institutions have adopted a mix of countermeasures: Surveillance & Intelligence: Security services monitor suspects and share data via EU systems (e.g. Europol databases and the Schengen Information System). Closer cooperation between intelligence agencies has been urged given the cross-border nature of the threat. Border Controls: The EU has tightened border policy. Since 2017, all travelers – including EU citizens – are systematically checked against security databases at external Schengen borders. Some



Schengen states have temporarily reintroduced internal border checks citing terrorist threats. Legal Measures: The EU's 2017 Counter-Terrorism Directive requires member states to criminalize and prosecute travel for terrorist purposes, and many returnees now face terrorism charges or administrative measures such as travel bans and compulsory deradicalization. Rehabilitation & Reintegration: Several countries offer programs to de-radicalize and reintegrate returnees (and their families), aiming to prevent recidivism and rebuild ties to society. Borderless Europe vs. Security: Finding a Balance The foreign fighter issue highlights the tension between Europe's commitment to free movement and the imperative of security. EU leaders acknowledge Schengen has occasionally been exploited by terrorists, yet stress that its benefits remain fundamental. The key question is how to bolster security measures without dismantling openness. Ongoing reforms seek to strengthen counterterrorism tools (from watchlists to passenger data systems) while preserving free movement. This presentation examines how Europe can navigate these dual priorities – protecting against the foreign fighter threat while upholding its open-border ideals.

Paulo Vaz (CEPOL CT Training Officer, Portugal): Building Resilience Through Training, Cooperation and Global Partnerships

LE professional with 25 years of experience as a Detective-Inspector - National Counter-Terrorism Unit - Judiciary Police - Portugal. He holds a degree in Social Sciences and a postgraduate qualification in Security Management. He has a Work experience as SNE at Europol. For the past five years, he has been The CT Portfolio Manager at CEPOL, where he develops and delivers specialized training programs to enhance EU MS' capabilities in preventing and combating terrorism.

In a Europe without internal borders, the challenges posed by terrorism require collective, coordinated, and future-oriented responses. Representing the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL), this presentation explores the agency's crucial role in enhancing counterterrorism capabilities across the EU through specialised training and multi-agency cooperation. A central focus will be on the CEPOL Knowledge Centre on Counterterrorism (CKC CT), which integrates expertise from EU Member States, Europol, Frontex, the European Commission, and the Council to develop agile and relevant training



responses to evolving threats. The presentation also highlights CEPOL’s strategic projects that strengthen the EU’s external dimension—such as EMISA, CT INFLOW, Western Balkans project, EU4SEC Moldova—designed to build trust and capacity with partner countries beyond the EU’s borders. Looking ahead, CEPOL is preparing new projects, including a dedicated capacity-building initiative for law enforcement in Ukraine, and a global project with a wide geographical scope addressing Organised Crime and Terrorism. These initiatives reaffirm CEPOL’s commitment to supporting stability, security, and shared resilience both within and beyond the EU.



Eduardo Medeiros' lecture



Dr. Eduardo Medeiros is a Professor and integrated researcher at ISCTE – University Institute of Lisbon, specializing in spatial planning, territorial development, and cross-border cooperation. A leading voice in European territorial cohesion studies, he has served as an expert and evaluator for the European Commission and numerous international organizations. Dr. Medeiros has authored extensive research on border regions, spatial justice, and European Union policies, with a strong focus on how planning and governance can reduce regional disparities. His work bridges academic insight and policy relevance, shaping strategies for more integrated and sustainable territorial development across Europe.

Professor Eduardo José Rocha Medeiros of the University Institute of Lisbon delivered an insightful and forward-looking lecture on the past, present, and future of European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), highlighting its vital role in fostering European integration and overcoming the persistent barrier effects of state borders.

Reflecting on the origins of ETC, Professor Medeiros traced its roots back 35 years to the launch of the Interreg initiative, which began modestly with a budget of ECU 1 million. At its inception, cross-border cooperation in Europe was nearly absent – few projects involved true bilateral collaboration, with basic infrastructure such as bridges being among the rare exceptions. Medeiros demonstrated how Interreg gradually shifted from experimental efforts to long-term strategic cooperation, eventually facilitating the creation of cross-border legal entities and a culture of collaboration.

In the present context, Professor Medeiros emphasised the importance of understanding the structural causes behind existing cross-border challenges. The rise of European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs), euroregions, and cross-border working communities exemplifies a growing commitment to regional integration. These entities now play a critical

role in mitigating administrative, legal, and institutional obstacles and in building trust and shared strategies between regions.

Looking to the future, Medeiros argued that Interreg must continue to be used as a strategic tool – not just financially but in terms of vision and implementation – to address various types of border barriers, from linguistic to environmental. He advocated for strengthening the b-solutions initiative to identify and implement practical measures to overcome these barriers.



Professor Medeiros also presented several proposals to reinforce cross-border cohesion. Among these were the creation of a European Transnational Public Transport Mechanism to align Interreg with other EU mobility initiatives; a European Transnational Language Mechanism to adopt English for official public use in cross-border matters; and a broader European Transnational Mechanism aimed at eliminating all forms of transnational obstacles.

Furthermore, he underscored the importance of promoting green development and implementing integrated cross-border planning strategies. He proposed a more functional allocation of Interreg funds based on development indicators rather than demographic size, and advocated for limiting the scope of cooperation to border-adjacent NUTS 3 regions to improve program effectiveness.

In summary, Professor Medeiros delivered a richly detailed lecture that reaffirmed the unique value of European Territorial Cooperation as a peacebuilding, integration-driving instrument of the EU. His presentation served not only as a reflection on decades of progress but as a visionary call to sustain and enhance cooperation across European borders in the face of emerging challenges.

The TEIN Strategic Workshop

Parallel with the PhD session, the representatives of 13 TEIN members convened in another room to discuss the strategic aims in the field of training. The workshop was a continuation of the first such event held on 3 May in Eupen (Belgium). The former workshop focused on the strategic perspectives of border research; the workshop in Budapest concentrated on training in border regions.



The participants were invited by the moderator Anne Thevenet (Director of the Euro-Institut, Kehl) to present their experiences in training from timely, thematic, and methodological points of view. Furthermore, they identified the target groups, the important topics and the feasible formats of capacity building in the border areas. Each participant member collected their ideas and presented them to the partners, followed by a lively discussion.

Finally, the participants identified the formats of knowledge exchange within the network. The results of the workshop will be evaluated at the annual meeting of TEIN to be held in October in Girona (Spain).





PhD Session

Ludovika University of Public Service, Ludovika Main Building, 2nd floor, Lőrincz Lajos Room 234

Moderator: Edit Soós, LUPS-CESCI Research Group on CBC, University of Szeged, Hungary

Running in parallel with the TEIN strategic workshop, an international PhD section was also organised, providing a platform for doctoral candidates from Ludovika University of Public Service (NKE) as well as other Hungarian and international institutions to present their research related to border studies.

The highlight of the session was a keynote address by Susanna Sivonen, representing ITEM at Maastricht University, who participated as an invited guest speaker.

The presentations were followed by a structured professional discussion moderated by the section's academic facilitator, during which the presenters and the moderator jointly analysed the national and international relevance of the research topics in relation to border studies. The session not only deepened the academic exchange around cross-border issues but also significantly contributed to the professional networking and development of the participating PhD students.





Keynote presentation:

Susanne Sivonen (ITEM, Maastricht University, The Netherlands): Inhabitants of border regions: bridging legal gaps on geographical proximity on reimbursement of cross-border healthcare costs

This paper examines legal framework on the reimbursement of healthcare costs from the perspective of inhabitants in border regions, focusing on the role of the EU legislator and, on the other hand, the role of Member States in ensuring quality healthcare access in border regions, specifically within the different healthcare systems in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine. The analysis is based on doctrinal and comparative research, alongside empirical findings derived from case studies.

Border regions in Europe, as well as inhabitants of these regions, have distinctive characteristics and needs that may differ from those of national centres of Member States. Due to their peripheral location and distinct demographics, these regions may face challenges in provision of adequate healthcare services, emphasizing the need for citizens to seek healthcare services just across the border. Citizens of border regions as healthcare users also distinguish themselves from other types of patients, ‘medical tourists’, domestic patients or even frontier workers, in that they may have a structural need for healthcare services across the border. It is notable however, that in comparison to other mobile citizens such as pensioners or frontier workers, the EU framework does not grant explicit rules for inhabitants of border regions, whose lives do not necessarily contain any cross-border elements (such as cross-border work) other than living in the proximity of a national border.

The EU legal framework for cross-border healthcare, Regulation 883/2004 on the coordination of social security systems and Directive 2011/24 on patients' rights establish the rules on obtaining reimbursement for healthcare received in another Member State. This paper argues however, that despite its name and aim, the Directive on patients' rights only provides for a limited right to cross-border healthcare, particularly fragmented for citizens residing in border regions. An example is the prior authorisation system. In some situations, a patient must request a prior authorisation from their health insurer. Under these rules, the insurer may



argue that similar treatment was available in the competent Member State in a timely manner, thereby justifying their refusal to grant authorisation. Thus, assessment must only be made to determine whether timely treatment is available within the national borders. This assessment fails to consider the geographical proximity and the perspective of the inhabitant of the cross-border region: for whom treatment could be had more timely and closer to home just across the border. Therefore, within this framework, it is possible that the inhabitants of cross-border regions are in a disadvantageous position compared to those residing in the central areas - the decision, including whether to consider other grounds such as geographical proximity, ultimately rests with the insurer, resulting in legal uncertainty and inconsistency in access to cross-border healthcare.

Although the EU legal framework does promote patient mobility in general, it does not sufficiently address the special characteristics and needs of cross-border regions and their citizens. From a legal perspective, proper realisation of this “cross-border regional dimension” in the European framework, however, seems difficult to achieve as long as healthcare remains a national competence. It is also questionable to what extent these issues can or should be resolved at the EU level, given the uniqueness of each EU border region, the differences between health systems, and the willingness of the Member States. This underscores the need and the role of the Member States in bridging this gap left from the EU legal framework: the absence of geographical proximity considerations as a legitimate ground to access cross-border healthcare in border regions. It is up to the Member States to decide whether to implement administrative or legal practices beyond the EU legal framework. This approach leaves the access to healthcare of these citizens at the mercy of health insurers, and national or regional agreements, potentially resulting in inconsistent or inadequate rights to cross-border healthcare across EU border regions.



Part 1 – Research on the future perspectives of a borderless Europe - EU Cohesion and border security

Kristóf Nagy (University of Public Service, Hungary): Reimagining Borders: The Future of EU Cohesion Policy and Cross-Border Cooperation in the Context of Hungary's 2024 Presidency

This paper explores the relationship between the European Union's cohesion policy and the development of border regions in the context of Hungary's 2024 Presidency of the Council of the EU. It pays particular attention to the future of cohesion policy and the inherent tension between state borders and cross-border cooperation. The study aims to demonstrate how border-related issues are reflected in both Hungarian and EU policy discourses, and how recent crises - such as migration waves, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the war in Ukraine - have reshaped the interpretation of borders in terms of security and cohesion.

The first hypothesis of the study posits that EU cohesion policy has played a key role over the past decades in reducing territorial disparities and mitigating the divisive effects of borders, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. However, the growing dominance of renationalisation and security-driven narratives - exacerbated by successive crises - has shaken the Schengen system: increasing mistrust between Member States and the reintroduction of internal border controls undermine both the idea and the practice of cohesion.

The second hypothesis contends that cohesion policy remains the most effective tool for preserving the core values of European integration, particularly in border regions. These areas, often characterised by geographic and economic peripherality, require special attention not only for reasons of national interest but also for the EU's territorial balance. Although Hungary's presidency programme emphasises the future of cohesion policy, this topic was largely sidelined during the 2024 European Parliament election campaign in Hungary, which was dominated instead by issues of migration and national sovereignty.

The study presents in detail the significance of cross-border cooperation, highlighting the legal, administrative, and institutional barriers that limit regional integration. It also reviews recent legislative proposals by the European Commission that aim to simplify the legal framework for cross-border governance. The paper underscores that such cooperation is not only an



economic necessity but also a means of restoring historical and social ties between communities once divided by borders.

The main conclusion of the study is that the future of the European Union is intrinsically linked to the future of its border policies. If integration is replaced by a purely security-oriented approach, the role and relevance of cohesion policy may decline. In contrast, both European and national levels must foster an institutional and political environment conducive to sustainable and institutionalised forms of cross-border cooperation, thereby deepening territorial cohesion across the EU.

Barnabás Cseh (University of Public Service, Hungary): The concept of “cross-border region” in the amended SBC and cohesion policy

The focus of the presentation is the 2024 amendment to the Schengen Borders Code and the situation of EGTCs (European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation) with Hungarian participation. The recent legislative change—which expands the possibilities for reintroducing internal border controls—has a serious impact on the so-called European project. The amendment negatively affects the everyday lives of people living along the borders, as well as the cooperation between Member States based on the four freedoms. The territorial dimension of cohesion policy is particularly sensitive to border permeability, so the consequences of the amendment are also evident in this area.

My hypothesis is that the term "border region" as used in the Schengen Code could, in principle, be applied to the functioning of EGTCs. However, the Code's geographical interpretation does not align with the legal and economic approach of cohesion policy. This contradiction can lead to significant challenges in terms of legal interpretation and implementation.

In the presentation, I will explore how the term "border region" can be interpreted based on the amended text, which leaves its definition to agreements between the Member States. In the case of EGTCs, this uncertainty may hinder their operation and the achievement of their long-term goals. In the second half of the presentation, I will address the practical challenges faced by EGTCs, with a particular focus on those involving Hungarian participation. Using



empirical examples, I will demonstrate how the amendment to the Code affects both the current and future functioning of EGTCs.

My aim is to present this complex yet timely topic in a clear and accessible manner, while maintaining professional and academic rigor. I also intend to emphasize the importance of territorial cooperation in today's Europe. At the end of the presentation, I will offer recommendations on how to bridge the gap between these two different EU policy languages and practices.

János Gyula Pulics (Ludovika University of Public Service, Hungary): Issues related to the security of the external borders of the European Union (Schengen)

What do we mean about safe and security? A calm, peaceful life for people in a defined territory? A family, a tribe, a nation, a country and a growing society secured by contracts. In a supranational organization like the European Union how do we understand the public order and the internal security on this continent without borders.

In 1957 four fundamental rights of free movements were established in Rome in order to guarantee accessibility of the borders without any systematic checks. The free movement of persons, goods, services and the capital were fundamental objective to ensure the strengthening of the internal market and the development of the economy. However, these rights were only effectively available only from 1985, when five countries signed the Schengen Agreement and decided to abolish internal border controls. These five countries had to make many compromises in order to achieve borderless zone. Tough negotiations led to a desire to break the agreement, but in the end forty years ago an agreement was reached that changed the way we think about borders.

What was the reason of the compromises? The economy, money, taxes, customs and security. This last factor or element is again one of the most questioned today and has been questioned ever since. A Europe without borders is constantly expanding, currently with 449,2 million inhabitants. The main question is: how can we guarantee the security of this population? Are the border controls at the external borders adequate, appropriate and sufficient or do we need



to change and improve it. The author of this research is an expert in Schengen evaluation. The European Commission has evaluated different Schengen member states since 2012 and the author was one of the experts who participated in the evaluation. He has evaluated Greece, Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Italy, Spain, Denmark, France and Croatia. The central element of each assessment was the identification and detection of areas of threats to border management. How member states are coping with these threats and what measures they are implementing to guarantee the security of their external borders. In this presentation the author will describe the main threats and the different border-related crimes that can create dangerous situation in a borderless Europe. He gives a brief overview of the typical shortcomings that led to the security deficiencies.

Cemre Erdal-Vigh (University of Szeged, Hungary): Migration Policy of Hungary in the Context of EU Migration Policies Through the Eyes of Small State Theory

One of the most significant and contentious global concerns of the 21st century is migration, which has an impact on international cooperation frameworks, political debate, and demographic trends. Utilizing Small State Theory as an analytical tool, this paper examines Hungary's migration policy within the larger framework of EU migration governance, evaluating the country's position in this context. Hungary has taken a more securitized and sovereignty-driven approach to migration since the 2015 crisis, opposing EU-level initiatives and primarily framing migration as a threat to national security. The Hungarian government's political narrative has continuously placed a strong emphasis on border security, Christian history, and cultural identity, which has resulted in institutional and legal conflicts with EU institutions. These factors make Hungary an important case study for understanding how small states establish themselves in multilevel governance frameworks.

The main theories investigate how much domestic political narratives take priority over EU commitments, and what Hungary's policy trajectory indicates for the future of EU cooperation on migration governance. The results underline the need for a deeper comprehension of the function of internal differentiation in European integration and the shortcomings of top-down policy harmonization within the EU. By providing a broader perspective on how states like



Hungary balance domestic needs and supranational commitments, this research aims to developments the fields of migration studies, EU governance, and small state behavior. It argues for more cooperative, adaptable, and inclusive migration policies that maintain common European ideals while recognizing the diversity of national contexts.

Part 2 – Research on the perspectives of securitisation and CBC in an age of multiple crises

Balázs Szilágyi (Ludovika University of Public Service, Hungary): Constraints of a Three Seas Electricity Region

This paper examines if the countries of the Three Seas Initiative are heading towards a borderless region in terms of the trade of electricity. Is there a general tendency of increasing electricity trade among the Central European countries? Did Covid and the war in Ukraine influence the trends? Are there still physical barriers, bottlenecks for electricity to stream over the borders? Do double network system usage fees matter? How will the increasing investments in renewables influence the need and opportunities for cross-border trade of electricity? Will the market be increasingly balanced by cross-border trade or other forms of balancing (like battery energy storage systems) will take the leading role? How will legislative acts (like the new electricity market design), EU and national policies influence the future of cross-border electricity flows in the region? What impact does the development of e-mobility have on the regional market? Are there any interest conflicts between market actors? All in all, will there be an even more integrated electricity market where borders do not matter?

Ali Kılıçarslan Topuz (Ludovika University of Public Service, Hungary): Energy Cooperation Between Hungary and the Organization of Turkic States

Since Hungary is lacking energy supplies, the country is mainly dependent on Russia for fossil fuel. According to the agreement made between Russia and Hungary in 2021, Hungary receives 4,5 billion cubic meters (cbm) of natural gas from Russia through Bulgaria and Serbia. In fact, the energy dependency of Hungary is above 60% and the country receives more than 80% of gas and oil from Russia. Hungary, after the outbreak of the Russia - Ukraine war, succeeded in exempting itself from the EU sanctions. Hungarian authorities claimed that they



do not have any alternative routes like the other EU countries. In fact, the EU countries, in light of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine crisis, are trying to diversify their energy routes and Hungary is playing a key role in this regard. The fact that Hungary now is part of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) it is taking part in all the cooperation areas in the OTS including energy. Hungary, not only increases its policy options with its observer status in the OTS but also provides new energy links with the Turkic countries. The Azerbaijan-Hungary energy partnership is exemplary in this regard. A Azerbaijan and Hungary signed a gas deal on 2 June 2023. Hungary's state-owned energy group MVM agreed to purchase 100 million cubic meters of natural gas from Azerbaijan's state energy firm SOCAR, with the gas planned to be transported by the end of the year. Further to that, Hungarian oil firm MOL Group became a shareholder in Azerbaijan's Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli (ACG) offshore oil field. On 17 December 2022, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Romania and Hungary signed the "Agreement on Strategic Partnership on Green Energy" that supports effective long-term green energy cooperation. In addition to these, Hungary already signed new energy agreement with Kazakhstan buying shares in the Caspian field. Further to that, an energy deal with Turkmenistan is also a possible alternative for Hungary.

Peter Igesha (Ludovika University of Public Service, Hungary): Assessing the Role of Interagency Collaboration in Enhancing Border Security and Reducing Illicit Trade at Kenya's One-Stop Border Posts (OSBPs)

The emergence of one stop Border (OSBP) in the East African trade corridors was established to support growth in cross border trade in the region. This study aimed to assess interagency collaboration's role in enhancing border security and reducing illicit trade at Kenya's One Stop Border Posts (OSBPs). The study's specific objectives were to evaluate if OSBP improved interagency coordination among enforcement agencies would reduce illicit trade and to ascertain whether OSBPs enhanced cross border interagency information sharing mitigated the vice. A descriptive research design was used to collect both primary and secondary data. The target population comprised community members living along the border, law enforcement officers, and relevant government officials whose information was valuable for the research. Primary data was collected through open-ended and closed ended questionnaires



emailed to the respondents whereas secondary data was gathered from records such as books, reports, and online data on three one stop border posts. Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS version 24.0) was used to analyze the data collected. Differences and similarities were summarized to establish trends, patterns, and information from the data collected to answer the research objectives. Hypotheses were tested using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (r) at $\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance. The results obtained from Kenya's one stop border posts established that there has been significant improvement in inter-agency coordination such as improved information sharing among government agencies within the East African Community as well as coordinated operation. Corruption and weak enforcement mechanisms are also the primary factors driving illicit trade along the Kenya-Uganda border, accounting for 27% and 21% of respondent feedback, respectively. Smuggling routes (19%) also play a significant role, facilitating the illegal movement of goods. Additional contributors include cross-border demand (11%), political instability (9%), inadequate infrastructure (8%), and poverty (5%), each exacerbating the problem to varying degrees. Statistical analysis shows the critical role of technological adoption, inter-agency collaboration, and stringent border control measures in mitigating illicit trade. Pearson's Correlation Coefficients demonstrate strong negative correlations between these variables and illicit trade prevalence, indicating that increased adoption of technology, enhanced inter-agency cooperation, and stricter border inspections significantly reduce illicit trade. Recommendations include implementing robust anti-corruption measures, equipping and training border officials, investing in advanced surveillance technologies, and fostering inter-agency coordination with integrated policies to ensure a comprehensive and unified approach to combating illicit trade.

Omuria J. Nyandoro (Ludovika University of Public Service, Hungary): Exploring the Impact of Kenya's Peace and Diplomacy Policy on Its Border Security and Control Measures

One of the four pillars of Kenya's foreign policy is peace and diplomacy. It is founded on the understanding that stability and peace are essential prerequisites for growth and success. Kenya is likewise convinced that the stability of the continent of Africa, the rest of the world, and the sub-region are all necessary for its own stability and economic prosperity. The Kenya



Citizenship and Immigration Act of 2011 and the Kenya Citizenship and Immigration Act Regulations of 2012 govern Kenya's border control policy. The goal of the strategy is to control the flow of people in and out of Kenya as well as to stop the movement of unauthorized products and people across the border. The Directorate of Immigration Services, which is in charge of handling immigration, implements the policy. Underlying Kenya's peace and security diplomacy is the recognition of peace and stability as necessary pre-conditions for development and prosperity. Linked to this, is Kenya's conviction that its own stability and economic wellbeing are dependent on the stability of the sub-region, Africa and the rest of the world. With international terrorism now elevated into a foremost threat to global security, combating this scourge has become a crucial agendum of Kenya's external relations and a subject of its strategic partnerships. The study adopted qualitative research design. The target population of the study was border control officials in four major entry points in Kenya, which are, Mombasa, Namanga, Busia and Moyale. Purposive sampling was used. Data was collected using interview schedules. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings of the study include; majority of the participants felt border control has been improved than previously. Improvements such as screening, use of cameras, sniffing dogs and property declaration forms have decreased incidences of terrorism, smuggling of goods and drugs as well as illegal immigration.

Side events

Campus tour

As part of the conference's side events, participants who arrived the earliest (12 May) enjoyed a guided tour of the Ludovika Campus, showcasing the university's rich history and its modern educational environment.



The tour was guided by a student of the university, and it ended with a reception in the new educational building of the campus.

Gala dinner

In the evening of the first day, the hosts offered a gala dinner held in an elegant setting. The dinner was coupled with a cultural performance featuring Hungarian folk songs, beautifully interpreted by the university's own Show Choir, composed of students from the Ludovika University of Public Service.





ABCD Journal

Following the successful launch of the ABCD Journal pilot edition in 2024, we are pleased to announce that the first full issue of the journal is now in preparation. This issue will feature selected, peer-reviewed articles presented at the “What Future for the Concept of Borderless Europe?” conference, held at the Ludovika University of Public Service in Budapest in May 2025.

This special issue brings together contributions from researchers, practitioners, and policymakers working on cross-border cooperation, governance innovation, and regional integration across Europe. It will reflect the journal’s commitment to bridging theory and practice and offer new perspectives on the challenges and opportunities shaping Europe’s evolving borderlands.

More information on the conference, photos, videos and downloadable presentations can be found on the website of the Research Group on Cross-Border Cooperation: <https://research.cesci-net.eu/en/ups-cesci-tein-conference-2025/>