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A Federalism of European Integration Through the Continuous and Constant Work of the Euroregions

- **ABSTRACT:** *This study aims to analyse the economic, financial, and territorial cohesion policies of the cross-border regions of the European Union's Member States. The European Union as an organisation, which includes targeted and well-manageable regulations, constitutes an important step in the integration of a federal model for the regions, which needs further attention and development to strengthen European borders. The ongoing process of reclassifying regions, which have a border nature in the Member States of the Union, into Euroregions, is a reality that has been continuing for many years. The organisations that are formed particularly in national borders defining the features that characterise and underline an important role in the process of European integration from the nineties to the present day. Moreover, this is an evolving topic particularly for the history of European integration. This study uses a method based on comparative, doctrinal, and jurisprudential material, that attempts to provide new ideas in the sector of evolution of the law of the Union.*
- **KEYWORDS:** *Euroregions, European federalism, economic cohesion, cohesion policy, cross-border cooperation*

1. Introduction

According to Article 3 paragraph 2 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU):

the Union shall offer its citizens an area of freedom, security and justice without internal frontiers, in which the free movement of persons is ensured in conjunction with appropriate measures with

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respect to external border controls, asylum, immigration and the prevention and combating of crime.

The Union's aim is to promote its values and the well-being of its citizens.¹ Moreover, the Union shall integrate, increase, and strengthen territorial, social, and economic cohesion within its internal frontiers.²

Additionally, Article 174, paragraph 1 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), deals with the harmonious development of the Union regions. More specifically, Article 174 of the TFEU mentions the following: 'the Union shall develop and pursue its actions leading to the strengthening of its economic, social and territorial cohesion'. Such regions are formed by rural areas and present demographic, economic, and natural disadvantages. Therefore, the Union shall aim at reducing disparities between the development levels of the various regions and the underdevelopment of the least favoured regions. According to Article 174, paragraph 3 of the TFEU, particular attention shall be paid to areas affected by industrial transition, as well as to regions '(...) which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps such as the northernmost regions with very low population density and island, cross-border and mountain regions'. The cohesion policy helps to ensure that there are no gaps between EU countries, as well as between different areas and regions of the same country. Thus, the cohesion policy through Structural Funds, that is, funding instruments of the European Union (EU), grants financial assistance to specific sectors, regions, or combinations of both, thus, offering advantages for all the territories of the Union, such as economic growth to create jobs, sustainable development and general protection for the environment, and smart cities, to resolve structural economic and social problems.³

Territorial cohesion represents a policy for the Union, particularly after the Treaty of Lisbon; the term territorial cohesion has been included for the first time in the Lisbon Treaty. Article 174 of the TFEU defines the Union's objective for strengthening its economic, social, and territorial cohesion, for an overall harmonious development.

A further step towards territorial cohesion was achieved through the 2014-2020 Interreg programming period. This programme played an important role in influencing many national or regional Structural Funds programmes with good practices shared by partners in their projects. Moreover, it adopted a regulation for

1 Blanke and Mangiamelli, 2021, pp. 1–41.

2 Piattoni and Polverari, 2016, pp. 8–22; Bachtler et al., 2017, pp. 38–49.

3 See also in argument for the new cohesion policy [Online]. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/2021-2027_en (Accessed: 11 August 2025).

European territorial cooperation actions,⁴ to attribute in the field of economic, as well as social cohesion. Thus, Interreg is a key instrument of the Union supporting cooperation across borders through project funding. As its objective, cooperation includes finding shared solutions in fields such as energy, environment, research, as well as developing the potential of cross-border territories as a form of enlargement towards the Eastern countries.⁵ Thus, forms of cross-border cooperation are placed within the Union with the scope of strengthening and integrating projects between territories of the Member States of the Union. The Regulation 2022/613⁶ continued the above cooperation in the field of health care after the pandemic outbreak. It aims to invest money and collect resources through the REACT-EU project, helping in an exceptional way, the Member States that are in a state of economic transition primarily after the pandemic and the war outbreak in Ukraine.

The majority of internal borders and by extension Euroregions are concentrated in Central Europe.⁷ The Euroregions, analysed in the following paragraphs, have been formed and are moving in opposing directions, which are managed by the political processes of the various Member States at a European level. Euroregions are administratively decentralised⁸ which presents multilevel contradictions that generate and transmit crises. Such crises, as discussed in the following paragraphs, cause high levels of unemployment, social exclusion, and poverty, and therefore, require new forms of intervention at economic, institutional, educational, cultural, and cross-border levels.⁹

The models of territorial organisation at the domestic level are forms oriented towards a disadvantaged constitution of the territories and to the ethnic minorities that compose them. Thus, the communities that live on the border improve the economic, and social conditions of cross-border cooperation as a strategic objective that affects an area with different paths that constitute the Euroregions by restoring common socio-economic elements that promote the

4 Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the European Regional Development Fund and on specific provisions concerning the investment for growth and jobs goal and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006, OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, pp. 289–302.

5 Radaelli, 2002, pp. 105–136; Wassenberg, 2010, pp. 45–98.

6 Regulation (EU) 2022/613 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 April 2022 amending Regulations (EU) No 1303/2013 and (EU) No 223/2014 as regards increased pre-financing from REACT-EU resources and the establishment of a unit cost, OJ L 115, 13.4.2022, pp. 38–41.

7 Similarly, an area that was established through the cooperation of Member States of the Union was called La Grande Région, which brought together German (Saarland, Rhineland-Palatinate), Belgian (Wallonia), and French (Lorraine) territories, as well as the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, France, Germany, and Switzerland; Wassenberg, 2007, pp. 98–100.

8 Telle, 2017, pp. 93–110, affirmed the 'Euroregions as soft spaces'. Territorial construction depends on the ability to promote 'coalitions with national and supranational hard spaces'.

9 Hermand, 2016b, pp. 77–86; Sonnicksen, 2022, pp. 114–133.

development of areas after creating relationships based on resources and projects in common, as in the case of Galicia and Northern Portugal.

Challenges are always open for the Euroregions, particularly in the political-administrative sector of the various Member States of the Union. Border regimes emerge as a practical and theoretical way to govern new, cross-border territories, as part of a regional question where topics of democracy, and citizenship are revalued. Realising a goal that creates a cultural identity that respects differences is the basis of the continuous challenges for the Union.

The above situation needs to be further explored, and therefore, the following paragraphs focus on the various forms of cross-border cooperation, structure of Euroregions, their importance at the European level, as well as the new strategic interventions proposed by the European Commission, on the subject under investigation.

2. Forms of cross-border cooperation in the European space

The first Euroregions were formed through a cooperation agreement between Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands (in 1949), and the EuRegio (in 1958) in the Rhine area on the German-Dutch border.¹⁰ In the continental context, the Euroregions have begun and developed European regionalism as a spontaneous path of cross-border cooperation that evolves a legal framework that plays an important role at the level of the Union. It is a functional regionalism of a subnational cross-border association provided by the municipalities on the sides of the border. The Euroregions under the legal form provided for by the regulations have concluded cross-border agreements to establish cooperation.¹¹

Accordingly, the European Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation was signed in Madrid in 1980¹² with the additional protocol to further enhance cross-border cooperation at a European Level.¹³ The States concluded agreements between territorial entities and assumed competencies based on precise actions between European countries, thus, achieving and involving local, and

10 Vovenda and Plotnikov, 2011, pp. 49–55.

11 Perkmann, 2003, pp. 153–171.

12 European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities Madrid, 21.V.1980 [Online]. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680078b0c> (Accessed: 11 August 2025).

13 Additional Protocol of 9 November 1995 had as its objective the cross-border nature between European states and the right of territorial communities which conclude cross-border cooperation agreements under certain conditions; The Additional Protocol of 5 May 1998 was based on cooperation between territorial communities that were not directly bordering each other. In order to do so, the Additional Protocol of 16 November 2009 established the rules for the creation of Euroregional groups of cooperation that have legal personality (GEC).

regional realities for the borders, within framework programmes to integrate and strengthen regional, rural, urban development, environmental protection, and natural disasters' aid.

Agreements of regional character and appropriate state legislations have offered to local administrations the ground for further development of the cross-border cooperation. Consequently, European states have limited, and in some cases eliminated, obstacles concerning cross-border cooperation through a better distribution of competencies, instruments, and rules provided by such agreements and national legislation.

Many cross-border agreements have been reached for the stipulation of multilateral and/or inter-state treaties, thus creating the basis for financial support essential for cross-border cooperation. From 1990 onwards we have the Interreg programme, which has promoted European territorial cooperation¹⁴ financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF),¹⁵ thus, realising actions not only between national and local actors, but also in overseas territories, as a regional and cohesion policy.¹⁶

This means that we have a manageable organisation on transnational, interregional, and ultraperipheral levels, which is affirmed through one or more of the following actions: (a) strengthening the institutional capacity of public authorities, in particular those in charge of managing a specific territory and stakeholders; (b) strengthening efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors, and institutions, particularly aiming to remove legal and other obstacles in border regions; (c) increasing mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to-people actions; (d) strengthening the institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement macro-regional strategies and sea basin strategies, as well as other territorial strategies; (e) strengthening sustainable development.¹⁷ Additionally, such territorial cooperation projects form the structure of border

¹⁴ Wassenberg, Reitel and Peyrony, 2015, p. 32.

¹⁵ This body was established by Regulation (EEC) No 724/75 of the Council of 18 March 1975 establishing a European Regional Development Fund, OJ L 73, 21.3.1975, pp. 1–7, which is no longer in force, despite several amendments.

¹⁶ Lytvyn and Tyushka, 2020, pp. 146–183; Wesley, 2013, pp. 75–92; Studzieniecki, Jakubowski and Meyer, 2021, pp. 718–740.

¹⁷ Medeiros, 2011, pp. 141–158; See and compare Recitals 6–10 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1059; Recital 14 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund, and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund, and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy, OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, pp. 159–706.

areas governed by committees involving local actors at a higher level.¹⁸ Overall, such programmes were based on a design involving a European territorial policy, which strengthens common development strategies, the liberalisation of trade, and the economy of peripheral areas¹⁹ particularly in East Europe.²⁰

Regulation No 1082²¹ of 2006 places the existence of the Euroregions as a growth mat of a formalised structure for cross-border cooperation projects and as an instrument of the European Grouping of Territorial Cohesion (EGTC) with legal personality according to Article 1, paragraph 3, thus, allowing the funding of numerous cross-border projects and reducing the difficulties to cross-border cooperation between sub-state entities, differences between administrative systems, and businesses essential for integration projects. With the new Resolution of 15 September 2022²² the European Parliament has continued the work of the EGTC, supporting the industrial disadvantages of cross-border regions through a precise regional aid regime and a budget of approximately 0.26% for the cohesion policy of the European Union. Thus, they highlighted the challenges for cross-border

18 For the period of 2021–2027, see the Regulation (EU) 2021/1059; See Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal, OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, pp. 259–280; and also other information in the next site of Interreg [Online]. Available at: https://www.interregeurope.eu/sites/default/files/2024-07/Interreg_Europe_2021-2027_CP%20v3.1.pdf (Accessed: 11 August 2025).

19 Tkachenko, 2014, pp. 58–63.

20 Within the system of cross-border cooperation within Central and Eastern Europe (see in particular with the next states: PECO: Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Romania, and Bulgaria) where, since 1989, they have created the Phare CBC Programme which represented an instrument for the application of a pre-accession strategy in the European Union for the states of this block. We also have the Tacis CBC Programme created for independent states (the NIS: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Mongolia, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan). In 2007, this project was changed by the ENPI (European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument); in 2014, it was revised to an ENI-European Neighbourhood Instrument; and in 2021, it was converted to a Global Europe programme according to the relevant Regulation (EU) 2021/947 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 June 2021 establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument-Global Europe, amending and repealing Decision No 466/2014/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Regulation (EU) 2017/1601 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 480/2009 (Text with EEA relevance), OJ L 209, 14.6.2021, pp. 1–78. Additionally, in this spirit, there exists the Peace Plus Programme for Northern Ireland and the border region of Ireland which includes the counties of Louth, Monaghan, Cavan, Leitrim, Sligo, and Donegal; and a programme managed by the United Kingdom to support immigrants, small and medium-sized enterprises, for stability in the region. Despite the withdrawal of Great Britain from the European Union, the project has supported itself through the programme which will continue up to 2027.

21 Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC), OJ L 210, 31.7.2006, pp. 19–24.

22 European Parliament resolution of 15 September 2022 on EU border regions: living labs of European integration (2021/2202(INI)), OJ C 125, 5.4.2023, pp. 114–123.

regions. Finally, the programme will be activated for the programming period of 2028-2034 and will be managed by EGTC for cross-border regions.

3. What was the structure of Euroregions?

Euroregions are the cross-border regions established at a level of the Union.²³ A Euroregion is formed by two subnational territorial entities, that is, from at least two different states.²⁴ Cooperation is an intended compromise that is used for the sides of the border and to a certain degree is institutionalised.²⁵

The objectives, constituting the cross-border cooperation initiatives, are considered marginal in territorial projects.²⁶ The Commission has referred to cross-border regions as parts of European integration.²⁷ The geographical profiles, forms of institutionalisation, and cross-border governance of such regions are variable and based on the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR). It is a cross-border cooperation that is regulated with the help of local and regional associations of border territories. Such associations participate in representative assemblies and are entities that have legal personality, such as the permanent secretariat, administrative, and resources;²⁸ or are private law entities with cross-border objectives, such as non-profit associations, which manage the territorial entities at the borders with the help of national provisions and interstate agreements.²⁹

23 Pereira Carneiro Filho, 2017, p. 7; See Recital F, paragraph 4 of the REPORT on the role of 'Euroregions' in the development of regional policy, 19.10.2005-(2004/2257(INI)).

24 Perkmann, 2003, p. 157; Medeiros, 2011, p. 143.

25 Rougier, 1999, pp. 394–396; Svensson and Nordlund, 2015, pp. 371–389.

26 Kramsch and Hooper, 2004, p. 3.

27 Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: Boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions, COM/2017/0534 final [Online]. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52017DC0534> (Accessed: 11 August 2025); Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions EU Border Regions: Living labs of European integration, COM/2021/393 final [Online]. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2021%3A393%3AFIN> (Accessed: 11 August 2025).

28 We speak about the Euroregion of the Spree, Neisse, Bober rivers; Frątczak-Müller and Mielczarek-Żejmo, 2019, pp. 8–34.

29 The Association Of European Border Regions (AEBR) in cooperation with the European Commission, Practical Guide to Cross-Border Cooperation, Third Edition, 2000 [Online]. Available at: <https://paperzz.com/doc/9042502/cross-border-cooperation---association-of-european-border> (Accessed: 11 August 2025) p. 62; Normally, some steps are required to be followed to create a Euroregional structure. Beginning from the time after cross-border cooperation relationships are established through citizens and private entities, thus, creating the conditions for related activities; after the regional institutions play a role in the process of creating the established network; and finally the constitution of the Euroregion for cross-border cooperation.

The agreements allow the transfer of responsibilities to a cross-border entity without overlapping the territorial entities from the management of projects within Interreg. If the agreement is of a private nature, it allows the participation of competent national authorities through Interreg. The governance structure, developed between the cross-border European states, requires the application of political agreements at different Eurolevels. Agreements of this type are signed between Member States, such as the Bayonne Treaty of 1995 between France and Spain, and the Karlsruhe Agreement of 1997 between Switzerland, Luxembourg, and Germany. These agreements contain stable and precise but difficult objectives to achieve, to better manage the Interreg programmes through the administrations involved.³⁰ Such programmes also include the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)³¹ and the Euroregional Cooperation Group (ECG) together with the Third Protocol of the Madrid Convention as an act that established a cross-border legal entity.

The EGTC is independent of EU Member States, has legal capacity recognised at the regional level from Article 1, paragraph 4 of the Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006, and is based on the European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG), a transnational cooperation body that was created in 1985.³² In EEIG they participate in at least two different Member States. According to Article 1, paragraph 2 of the Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006, its primary objective is to: ‘... facilitate and promote, in particular, territorial cooperation, including one or more of the cross-border, transnational and interregional strands of cooperation..., with the aim of strengthening Union economic, social and territorial cohesion’.³³

Article 3 of the Regulation allows an EU Member State to become a member of the EGTC.³⁴ Particularly, the EGTC must contain, within the limits of their com-

30 De Sousa, 2013, pp. 670–687.

31 See Opinion of the committee of the Regions on the proposal for a European Parliament and Council Decision on Community guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network, OJ C 210, 14.8.1995, pp. 34–37.

32 Council Regulation (EEC) No 2137/85 of 25 July 1985 on the European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG), OJ L 199, 31.7.1985, pp. 1–9.

33 See also in argument of territorial and Fund cohesion in: European Parliament resolution of 6 April 2022 on the start of the implementation of the 2021–2027 cohesion policy (2022/2527(RSP)), OJ C 434, 15.11.2022, pp. 28–30.

34 According to the Article 3bis of the Regulation, paragraph 1: ‘... an EGTC may be made up of members located on the territory of at least two Member States and of one or more third countries neighbouring at least one of those Member States, including its outermost regions, where those Member States and third countries jointly carry out territorial cooperation actions or implement programmes supported by the Union. For the purposes of this Regulation, a third country or an OCT shall be considered to be neighbouring a Member State, including its outermost regions, where the third country or the OCT and that Member State share a common land border or where both the third country or OCT and the Member State are eligible under a joint maritime cross-border or transnational programme under the European territorial cooperation goal, or are eligible under another cross-border, sea-crossing or sea-basin cooperation programme, including where they are separated by international waters’.

petencies under national law, EU Member States, local and regional authorities, bodies governed by public law according to the second subparagraph of Article 1(9) of Directive 2004/18/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 31 March 2004,³⁵ and associations. The EGTC also involves two management bodies: the assembly of representatives; and the director, who represents the group acting on behalf of it.³⁶

Another typology is connected with territorial cooperation projects. For example, the EU and Council of Europe promote cross-border projects based on a model that involves the experiences of cross-border cooperation through forms of structured cooperation.³⁷

The regime of the ECG was established in the Union. It also results from the protocol of 2013 that is ratified by some states.³⁸ It is a model that is presented by different forms of association, simplified structures, and legal personality regulated by private law. It functions as an organisation, however, does not replace the cross-border cooperation which is the object of the agreement for the territorial authorities and participants. Certainly, the use of the principle of flexibility makes precise cross-border initiatives more suitable, thus, promoting ad hoc projects and strategy initiatives.

Small local councils up to state partnerships are included in the Euroregion associations. The intraterritorial structures of a diversified type are divided between Euroregions, macroregions, and mesoregions where only Euroregions have an extension that reaches 200,000 square kilometres.³⁹ Macroregions are closely connected areas with common need and challenges in the European context. They include the Baltic Sea, Danube, Adriatic-Ionian, Alpine and the Mediterranean.⁴⁰ Macroregions are distinguished from Euroregions, which usually

35 That is, '... any body: a) established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character, b) having legal personality, and c) financed, for the most part, by the State, regional or local authorities, or other bodies governed by public law; or is subject to management supervision by those bodies; or having an administrative, managerial or supervisory board, more than half of whose members are appointed by the State, regional or local authorities or other bodies governed by public law.'

36 European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), European Commission, The European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation [Online]. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/european-grouping-territorial-cooperation_en (Accessed: 11 August 2025).

37 See also the Limited Liability European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation Karst-Bodva, which involved partners from Slovakia and Hungary.

38 We speak about Cyprus, Russian Federation, France, Germany, Slovenia, Switzerland and Ukraine.

39 Medeiros, 2013, pp. 1249–1266.

40 European Parliament resolution of 9 May 2023 on the role of cohesion policy in addressing multidimensional environmental challenges in the Mediterranean basin (2022/2059(INI)), where a investment in new infrastructures and technologies has been proposed with a precise way to recover the related material for waste and also promote the circular economy as management and limitation of plastic pollution and national waste.

refer to a transnational co-operation structure between two (or more) contiguous territories located in different European countries. Moreover, Euroregions are composed of Member States' strategies that do not establish cross-border structures. However, Eurocities, is the largest network of European cities, as they count over 200 large cities among their membership, having a precise character for the border territories. Finally, other further classifications are formed, such as urban areas, natural spaces involved in a sub-state, supra-regional type, thus, creating multilevel Euroregions such as Saarland-Moselle and Adriatic-Ionian.⁴¹

4. What is the role of Euroregions for the European Union?

Geographical disadvantages, as well as legal, social, economic, and cultural limitations, have resulted in different types of cooperation agreements. Euroregions related at a cross-border level are attempting to remove economic and social inequalities, resolve peripheral areas, and respond to social challenges, such as environment, health, and culture.⁴² The agreements, on a specific matter, represent a cooperation of a political commitment based on regular contacts between cities, which promote cultural links in an emblematic way and a coordination mechanism capable of managing crises and natural disasters.

The agreements involve local and regional authorities that provide for stable cooperation on a large-scale, such as in Germany we have Bavaria; for Italy the area of Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Lombardy; for Austria the Burgenland and Styria; for Hungary the Somogy, Vas and Zala.

The Interreg programme has solved problems and created cultural exchanges at a commercial level, thus, reducing barriers to mobilise work,⁴³ realising initiatives that favour institutional capacities to adapt administrative structures and train officials of cross-border policy to financing programmes through Structural Funds of the Union, rationalising public policies, and engaging the needs of subjects who live at borders and cross borders.⁴⁴ The lack of financial autonomy is certainly an obstacle considering that the projects depend on the government budget and the subjects are often based on political logic in harmony with various projects under consideration.

Moreover, Euroregions aim to offer specific services for territorial areas that are involved under the definition of cross-border structures such as airports,

41 Wassenberg, Reitel and Peyrony, 2015, p. 18; Camonita, Durà Guimerà and Noferini, 2020, pp. 513–540.

42 Engl and Wisthaler, 2020, pp. 467–485; Morawiec et al., 2001, pp. 56 ss.

43 Cismaş and Sabău, 2012, pp. 91–99.

44 Roche, Connan and Moulin, 2018, pp. 10–32.

hospitals, and/or transboundary parks.⁴⁵ Euroregions implement investment commitment projects, where cross-border cooperation develops relationships between suppliers and recipients, thus, improving entrepreneurship, the use of assistance programmes, business conditions, and regional economic development, which is located on the border.⁴⁶

Cross-border cooperation as a network of connections at the regional level in the economic, environmental, and social fields eliminates internal and external barriers that hinder local communities including cooperation strategies to integrate administrative procedures, religious, cultural, political, and social differences.

5. European tools strengthening Euroregions

The development of the European space through the objectives of an integration process for sustainable development is a factor of balance and competition at the European level. The outermost regions include borders where their role overcomes imbalances within the Union. The principle of subsidiarity distributes power between the central government and territorial authorities. Thus, through cross-border agreements it creates a possibility to fulfil the needs of the populations in both borders that are located.

The European legal system concerned with the Euroregions began in 1949 with the development of the community territory and continued in 1994 with

45 Wassenberg, Reitel and Peyrony, 2015, p. 71; Durà et al., 2018, p. 48. It is also worth mentioning the catalogues of 158 Euroregions that are active, whereas over 45 are not yet active, and adding cross-border structures such as the English Channel, airport of Basel, Fribourg, Mulhouse, Danube bridge, Helsinki-Tallinn tunnel, cross-border parks for the cross-border biosphere that are located in the Monviso area; Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions EU Border Regions: Living labs of European integration, COM/2021/393 final; European Parliament resolution of 14 September 2023 with recommendations to the Commission on amending the proposed mechanism to resolve legal and administrative obstacles in a cross-border context (2022/2194(INL)) [Online]. Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0327_EN.html (Accessed: 11 August 2025); Amended proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on a mechanism to resolve legal and administrative obstacles in a cross-border context, COM/2023/790 final [Online]. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52023PC0790> (Accessed: 11 August 2025); The amendment proposal was based on making the workflow easier according to the rules set by the European Parliament and relevant resolution of 2023, considering the obstacles for a bilateral, international cooperation agreement between Member States that facilitate cross-border cooperation to dispose of administrative, legal issues of cross-border regions. The elimination remains with the domestic authorities and a cross-border coordination network as the exchange of practices of knowledge makes a continuous point of work for the coming years between the European Commission and the European Parliament.

46 Kurowska-Pysz et al., 2018, p. 182.

the communication Europe 2000+. The cooperation for the development of the European territory is based on a functional type of regulation that achieves the objectives of economic and social cohesion.

Euroregions present themselves as forms of territorial integration. Territorial integration in the European Union must be supported by suitable policy. The EU's Cohesion Policy fulfils this requirement. It helps each region reach its full potential, that is, improve its living standards and overall prosperity.

Euroregions contribute to borders and strengthen citizenship that transcends national borders.⁴⁷ The symbolic and political practice of territorial constructions represents a factor for Euroregions and challenges for actors who are involved at the domestic and European level, thus, building an institutional legitimacy for organisations through communication channels.

The European Commission has pursued objectives through the Euroregional experience as an expression of border regions' strengthening. Models of a multilevel governance are presented as an integrated approach of financial instruments and policies that are implemented in a flexible manner by the Member States.⁴⁸

The White Paper on the Future of Europe⁴⁹ has dealt with territorial cooperation, as did the 2017 Commission Communication on Growth and Cohesion in EU Border Regions,⁵⁰ thus, promoting cross-border projects to an action plan that coordinates borders and engaging initiatives, when they intervene in areas of competence of the Union through proposals and financing mechanisms.⁵¹

Cross-border cooperation in all sectors aims to overcome the obstacles of the regulated sectors of the Union, thus, coordinating and reducing the negative effects of the discontinuity of a territory from the administrative and legal perspective connected with border regions.

The different socio-economic levels of Euroregions play an important role in European integration for citizens, businesses, public authorities, and political ideas that find application in the 2017 communication, and implementing funding through the Interreg programme to a cross-border level of interoperability between electronic systems of public administrations and beyond, access to

47 Frątczak-Müller and Mielczarek-Żejmo, 2015, pp. 77–97.

48 Hermand, 2016a, pp. 97–109.

49 White Paper on the Future of Europe – Reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2025, COM/2017/2025 final [Online]. Available at: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2775/66626> (Accessed: 11 August 2025).

50 Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament – Boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions, COM/2017/0534 final [Online]. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52017DC0534> (Accessed: 11 August 2025).

51 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Better regulation for better results – An EU agenda, COM/2015/0215 final; Golberg, 2018, pp. 1–107; Simonelli and Nadina, 2021, pp. 849–860.

information, healthcare, employment for the vulnerable, social security, promotion of multilingualism, as a basis for the regions at the borders of the Union.⁵²

An open public consultation that began in 2020 has noted the first developments for border populations, as well as the negative effects that emerged from the report of 2021 owing to the pandemic. Moreover, the mechanism of public consultation has contributed to the improvement of the difficulties for inhabitants in border regions and cross-border initiatives.

The European Commission has already adopted the European Cross-Border Mechanism (ECBM)⁵³ in 2018 to carry out a legal instrument to identify practices to overcome administrative and cross-border legal obstacles.⁵⁴ Accordingly, the European Commission has followed initiatives such as solutions, which were introduced in 2019 to overcome obstacles concerning legal assistance before public authorities in border regions and beyond.⁵⁵

The European Commission as a screening method for the intensity of cross-border cooperation has contributed to the harmonisation and integration of the Euroregions.

Member States measure economic support through Structural Funds and existing agreements for the cooperation of a common legal framework. Moreover, they act effectively to administrative and legal constraints linked at the national level to control border tests as a processing act that incorporates binding acts. Finally, bilateral contacts are considered to facilitate the provisions of a national type at the cross-border level.

52 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: EU eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020 Accelerating the digital transformation of government, COM/2016/0179 final [Online]. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52016DC0179> (Accessed:11 August 2025); Commission moves towards an effective public administration that includes, and provides end-to-end digital public services of a personalised and borderless nature. Thus, the general nature has aimed to propose effective tools and measures for border regions for citizens providing information to public authorities irrespective of their country of origin as an automatic tool of public authorities.

53 See European Parliament: Proposal for a Regulation on a Mechanism to resolve legal and administrative obstacles in a cross-border context [Online]. Available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/spotlight-MFF/file-mff-mechanism-to-resolve-cross-border-obstacles> (Accessed:11 August 2025).

54 Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on a mechanism to resolve legal and administrative obstacles in a cross-border context, COM/2018/373 final – 2018/0198 (COD); Sielker, 2018, pp. 219–239; Chilla, 2023, pp. 140–153.

55 Similar are 2019 project to overcome the administrative obstacles of automatic mutual recognition for the qualification of doctors that hindered the operation of a hospital located in Cerdanya, that is, a Spanish-French cross-border structure in the form of the EGTC and European Parliament resolution of 11 September 2018 on boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions (2018/2054(INI)), OJ C 433, 23.12.2019, pp. 24–30; See also b-solutions [Online]. Available at: <https://www.b-solutionsproject.com> (Accessed:11 August 2025).

6. Conclusion

As discussed in previous paragraphs, a cooperative legal presence, as well as the principle of subsidiarity, are necessary tools for further collaboration and integration of the EU Member States at a regional level and particularly in border and cross-border Euroareas.

More precisely, we noted in Article 174 that the border regions, considering their rural and geographical disparities, are places that have a different level of economic growth. Moreover, they present linguistic diversities, as well as advanced competition in several fields.

Clearly, bilateral and multilateral agreements, as well as the principle of subsidiarity, offer an opportunity for the cultivation of European border areas through pyramid-type structures at the regional level to reduce distances, economic, cultural, and political diversities and guide legal choices towards a cross-border exchange for neighbouring countries, beginning with cooperation and joint actions.

In summary, the Euroregions are recognised as a symbol of a common life. They can linearise the diversities, by adopting the legal and policy tools, as aforementioned, to succeed in a full advantageous journey of continuous nourishment through new experiences. Supranational actions likely represent the only possibility in the future European federalism, that is, a terrain of continuous European integration that carries out the principles and values of the European Union.

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