



Position paper on post-2020 cross-border cooperation

After the proposals of the European Commission for the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the European Straits Initiative expresses its strong concerns regarding the future of cross-border cooperation on maritime borders. Cross-border cooperation has always been at the heart of the European project, in its ideal for peace and prosperity. In a time where citizens across Europe increasingly question its core values, it is essential that the European Union sticks to its more important principles:

- **Unity**, because the upcoming challenges (climate change, migrations, energy transition...) can only be coped with united forces of all territories in Europe;
- **Cohesion**, as it is every day clearer that competition between territories of Europe tends to accentuate tensions and animosities;
- **Subsidiarity**, to make sure the European policies are implemented closer than ever to its inhabitants and answer to the realities of each specific European territory.

Because of their geography, maritime border regions have to face many specific challenges requiring the full consideration of the European Commission. The most important of these challenges is **the absence of territorial continuity**, which does not put the citizens of maritime border regions on equal foot with other EU citizens. When most of EU inhabitants are completely free to cross borders to study, work or visit a friend, inhabitants from maritime border regions still face a strong obstacle: crossing the border mainly relies on private operators (ferry companies or fixed-links operators), is subject to availability of the market (such as seasonality between Corsica and Italy) and is never free of charge. The support to cross-border cooperation in these maritime border regions is a core question when it comes to support territorial continuity in Europe.

Considering this, the proposed decrease of budget dedicated to the Cohesion policy must not lead to less support for cross-border cooperation in maritime border regions.

Therefore, we crave the European Commission to take into account the following recommendations in the future regulations:

1. **Ensure that cooperation at cross-border level remains possible on maritime borders with constant financial support**, whether as part of dedicated cross-border cooperation programmes or as part of broader support schemes. Sea basin is a relevant scale for many issues faced by maritime border regions, but does not enable to answer all the challenges with a smaller geographical scope. As such, challenges like connectivity, integration of the job markets or continuity of public services across the border are and remain challenges to be coped with at cross-border level.
2. **Ensure that cooperation on maritime borders is not limited to maritime topics only** but can cover all the priorities of the Cohesion policy according to the specific needs of each maritime border region.



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3. **Enable cross-border cooperation with third countries sharing a maritime border with a EU Member State.** Any dedicated EU funding to cooperation should include the possibility for stakeholders from these countries to take part to cooperation. Third countries imply non-EU countries such as Russia, Morocco or Tunisia, official candidate countries such as Albania and former EU Member States such as the United Kingdom.
4. **Make sure that NUTS 3 authorities can be involved, in one way or another, in the management of the programmes supporting cross-border cooperation on maritime borders.** Because many issues remain locally driven and because local authorities have essential competencies to answer these challenges, subsidiarity must be the driving principle in the design and management of the future support schemes.

What is the European Straits Initiative?

The European Straits Initiative was launched in 2010 under the impulsion of Pas-de-Calais County Council (France) and Kent County Council (United Kingdom), on Dover Strait. It gathers 24 local authorities from 14 countries, bordering 11 European straits, with two main objectives:

- Exchange experiences and good practices for an improved management of straits' areas
- Act towards the recognition of the peculiarities of straits' areas around Europe.

More information on: www.europeanstraits.eu

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