

Editorial

ABCD Journal is a joint publication of the Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives (CESCI) and the University of Eastern Finland (UEF). The journal is designed to create a platform between science and development, research and policy making, theory and praxis in Border Studies.

The first issue of the journal (following the zero edition of 2024) comprises a selection of lectures given by researchers and practitioners at the conference 'What Future for the Concept of Borderless Europe' held in Budapest, at the Ludovika University of Public Service (LUPS) on 13 and 14 May 2025. The conference was organised by the LUPS-CESCI Research Group on Cross-Border Cooperation and the Transfrontier Euro-Institute Network (TEIN). TEIN is a pan-European platform of universities, research institutes and training institutions focusing on cross-border cooperation. The network was established in 2010 with the aim of enhancing European integration through capacity building and knowledge exchange initiatives and actions. Today, it has 20 members from 13 countries, from Spain to Ukraine, from the UK to Hungary. The partners coordinate their scientific activities, implement joint projects, organise conferences and workshops, feed into the European policy-making processes, and endeavour to improve the conditions for cross-border capacity development.

LUPS-CESCI Research Group was established in 2021 by university professors and practitioners to facilitate adapting scientific achievements and methods in the everyday practice of cross-border cooperation and applying practical lessons and results in research in and around Hungary. The research group applies a multidisciplinary approach from political science to legal science, from security studies to governance studies, from geography to economics. Accordingly, the conference organised with the support of the Hungarian National Research, Development and Innovation Office within the framework of the so-called 'Mecenatúra' program (MEC_SZ 199044) included a diverse scope of lectures, which was mirrored by the topics of the six panels:

- The border as a symbol and producer of identity
- Functionality overwriting administrative division of space – a legal perspective
- Towards cross-border citizenship
- Environmental awareness and sustainability - Climate-neutral solutions for law enforcement, military and public administration in cross-border international practice
- Re-charging Borderless Europe: EU policies and local examples
- Counter-terrorism and borders.

The actuality of the event was given by the changing climate around borders and border regimes in Europe. After the Iron Curtain had fallen and the democratisation process started in the former communist bloc at the time of the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty, the concepts of 'Borderless Europe' and an 'ever closer Union' seemed to be achievable in the near future. 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 would gradually lose their significance or even disappear.

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

Younger generations 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, 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 were some borders closed, but even new fences were 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.

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 lectures of the conference revolved around the above-mentioned aspects of the new European discourse, targeting the borders from different points of view.

After the greetings delivered by Gergely Deli, rector of the university, the event started with a "Canadian" plenary session moderated by Helga Kristín Hallgrímsdóttir, Professor of Public Administration and Deputy Provost at the University of Victoria. The two speakers of the panel were Christine Bradley, 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 and Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, Professor of Public Administration at the University of

Victoria. The plenary was followed by the six panels whose lessons were wrapped up by Eduardo Medeiros, Professor and integrated researcher at ISCTE – University Institute of Lisbon, who gave a university lecture on the second day of the event on the challenges to European Cohesion Policy.

The second day ended with a PhD seminar and the workshop of the TEIN on a strategic approach to cross-border training.

The speakers were invited to submit their papers to be published in the first issue of the ABCD Journal. Ten of them decided to positively answer this invitation.

This issue of the journal offers several insightful perspectives on cross-border cooperation that span legal, institutional and symbolic aspect. In their contribution, **Pierrick Cuyas and Birte Wassenberg** analyze how narratives shape perceptions of European integration in the Franco-German border region. Using media analysis, political interviews, and citizen focus groups from the Horizon Europe project B-SHAPES, they identify three key narratives: Franco-German friendship as symbolic cooperation, a functional but politically distant EU, and a border that re-emerges in crises. These narratives form a complex "border narrative ecology," highlighting both the symbolic importance and structural fragility of border regions as sites of European integration. As a result, a complex 'border narrative ecology' is revealed, in which integration is experienced, contested, and reimagined. The findings underscore both the symbolic centrality and structural fragility of border regions as "*laboratories of European*

integration." **Michael Frey and Rahel Alia Müller** present a legal thought experiment on expanding cross-border cooperation beyond geographic boundaries. They argue that modern mobility—physical and digital—renders traditional border regions less relevant as legal justifications for cooperation. Using tools like cross-border impact assessments, they propose legal mechanisms (e.g., opening clauses) that do not rely on geographic criteria. The article considers whether evolving EU citizenship could support the broader, borderless application of EU law. **Myroslava Lendel** examines Transcarpathia as a case of cross-border cooperation amid Ukraine's EU integration. Analyzing the 2024 Law on International Territorial Cooperation and EU-funded programs (ENI, Interreg NEXT), the study maps institutional frameworks such as Euroregions and the European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) "Tisza." While EU policies promote formal partnerships, implementation is hampered by legal inconsistencies and weak local capacity. Participation is uneven due to resource disparities, though Ukraine has made legal strides in aligning with EU standards. In addressing the security issues related to the maintenance of the Schengen Area, **János Gyula Pulics** addresses the balance between open borders and security within the Schengen Area. Drawing on consultations with 11 EU member states, the article identifies key threats to border management and the shortcomings behind them. It questions whether current external border controls are adequate and examines the compromises made in areas like economy, customs, and public safety.

Pulics highlights the ongoing challenges of securing a borderless Europe of over 449 million people.

The second half of this issue of *ABCD* is devoted to a special section that focuses on the role of education in cross-border cooperation, particularly through language and intercultural pedagogy. **Guimarães, Araújo, and Sá** begin this section with an examination of the Bilingual and Intercultural Border Schools Programme (PEBIF) on the Portugal–Galicia border, highlighting how language policy, identity, and regional governance impact cross-border integration and plurilingual education. Their analysis suggests a need for plurilingual education that is sensitive to local border realities and citizens’ needs. **Cavaion** shifts the focus to the Italy–Slovenia border, analyzing territorial cooperation policies and the Gorizia–Nova Gorica Capital of Culture event in 2020–21. In doing this the author introduces the CoBLaLT method for language education. Her research stresses the importance of coherent language policies and the need to integrate humanistic, educational approaches into regional policymaking. The author concludes her section by emphasizing the significance of humanistic research for generating evidence-based knowledge that can complement and enrich more traditional sectoral border region policies. **Ulhôa and Araújo e Sá** then return to the PEBIF context to explore schools as spaces for “curricular invention,” where teachers act as agents of intercultural dialogue and social justice. They reconceptualize the border as a *borderscape*—a dynamic, ethical space for building shared identities and pluralistic

education. Together, these contributions advocate for a shift from traditional, state-centric views of borders to more inclusive, educational, and humanistic perspectives.

The issue closes with two extensive book reviews authored by **Teodor Gyelnik**. The first of these dives into the edited volume of Bosworth and Zedner (2022). *Privatising Border Control. Law at the Limits of the Sovereign State* (Oxford University Press). The collection examines the growing role of private actors in border enforcement—raising critical concerns about accountability, transparency, and state sovereignty. As border control functions shift to profit-driven entities, traditional state authority is increasingly challenged. The Peace of Westphalia (1648) established the modern state system, based on sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-interference. While foundational to international relations, this model has been increasingly undermined by globalization, transnationalism, and supranational bodies. Recent decades have witnessed the decline of the welfare state and the rise of neoliberal capitalism, emphasizing free markets, deregulation, and privatization. Governance has become more decentralized, with political power often shaped by economic interests. As Ana Aliverti (2022) notes, this blurs the lines between public and private authority. Moreover, this trend raises questions about the legitimacy and accountability of non-state actors managing critical state functions. Zedner and Bosworth (2022) highlight the diverse forms of border control privatization: from private security firms performing official duties to NGOs and citizens monitoring immigration.

Examples include companies like G4S in the UK, Blackwater and vigilante groups in the US, and organizations like the Red Cross in Italy. The volume is divided into four parts: the limits of state sovereignty; legitimacy and rule of law at the border; the outsourcing of state authority; and the practices of privatization in border control.

The second review focuses on a joint study that targets a *Proposal for an EU Regulation Facilitating Cross-Border Solutions*. The European Union's integration process promotes a unified internal market, aiming for the free movement of goods, services, people, and capital. Border regions, as key testing grounds for this integration, often face significant legal and administrative barriers due to differing national laws. These obstacles hinder cross-border cooperation and risk undermining long-term integration goals. Despite increasing cross-border interaction, the EU lacks effective tools to eliminate these barriers. As cooperation grows, so do the number and visibility of legal challenges. As noted in recent research, "the more cooperation and mobility occur... the more (legal) cross-border obstacles arise" (ITEM, 2024, p. 17). These barriers affect daily life—access to healthcare, education, public transport, and local products—disadvantaging border residents compared to those in central regions. For example, ambulances may not cross borders, diplomas may not be recognized, and local food cannot be sold across boundaries. Nearly 30% of the EU population lives in border regions. Removing just 20% of current barriers could boost regional GDP by 2%, potentially generating €123 billion

annually for the EU. To address this, the TEIN network and its partners—including universities and regional organizations—produced a dossier analyzing cross-border cooperation and legislative solutions. It features four case studies (Benelux-Germany, France-Germany, Czech-Polish Euroregion Nisa, and Austria-Hungary near Bratislava) examining integration levels, obstacles, and the potential impact of the proposed EU Regulation on Facilitating Cross-border Solutions.

References

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