OPINION

of the Committee on Culture and Education

for the Committee on Regional Development

on boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions (2018/2054(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion: Theodoros Zagorakis
PA_NonLeg
SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Culture and Education calls on the Committee on Regional Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Recognises the challenges faced by border regions and stresses that socio-economic disparities, including cultural and language differences, between different border regions can hinder integration, restrict interaction and scale down opportunities for people and businesses on both sides of the border;

2. Emphasises that the EU has contributed positively to the development of border regions and that future funding programmes should continue in the most effective and efficient manner, focusing on areas of particular high European added value and ensuring that solving border difficulties is at the heart of cross-border cooperation programmes;

3. Stipulates that cohesion policy should continue to support vulnerable and marginalised people, addressing growing inequalities and building solidarity through investments in education, training and culture, by paying particular attention to cross-border cooperation programmes focused on the existing cultural, territorial and administrative obstacles and future challenges in those regions;

4. Emphasises that EU borders comprise both land and maritime borders that must be taken into account; encourages the Commission, therefore, to look at the challenges faced by maritime border regions in order to allow a holistic analysis of the obstacles faced by all border regions, as well as of potential cooperation and growth for all those regions;

5. Highlights the importance of cross-border cooperation programmes, including macro-regional and interregional programmes in funding educational, cultural, creative, sporting, artistic and other activities whose European added value brings citizens closer together, creates cross-border synergies, fosters mutual trust and understanding, and helps address different forms of prejudice and stereotypes in border regions; stresses, in this regard, the potential of the cultural and creative industries (CCIs), in line with the Smart Specialisation Strategies and the large number of INTERREG projects devoted to culture and heritage, which proves that there is a strong desire among border regions to invest in joint traditional cultural assets as well as in developing modern creative projects, creative industries and heritage projects; reiterates its view that EU financial support is crucial for these initiatives and should therefore be further strengthened in the next MFF, in particular through support from the ESIF funds; calls on the Commission to identify and foster synergies between local priorities and existing EU strategies and objectives, and to develop the full potential of border regions;

6. Points out the complexities of the current framework for cross-border cooperation programmes, as well as the structural difficulties and administrative burdens that potential beneficiaries encounter during the preparation of such projects; welcomes, in this regard, the simplification measures put forward for the post-2020 period, and considers them as an important step in terms of simplifying and improving the implementation and accessibility of cross-border cooperation programmes;

7. Recalls the importance of culture and cultural heritage in relation to the economic
prosperity of cities and regions and, therefore, calls on the Member States to adopt all necessary measures to effectively safeguard and promote their tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and to use in this regard all the available tools of cohesion policy;

8. Calls for a new information strategy on cross-border and regional cooperation in order to get closer to the inhabitants of border regions, increase their awareness of the opportunities that the EU cross-border programmes bring, and thus contribute to changing attitudes in the direction of greater open-mindedness on regional and cross-border matters;

9. Emphasises the importance of sport for the economic and social development of cross-border regions, as demonstrated by the numerous territorial cooperation projects that have used sport as a tool for social and cultural integration;

10. Encourages young people to act, participate and be involved in all aspects of developing regional and cross-border society; supports cross-border ideas and activities in the field of youth, such as creating platforms for the exchange of ideas and good practice, raising awareness and exchanging information on cross-border cooperation, and spreading information through social and other media in order to improve participation and opportunities for young people in cross-border projects;

11. Stresses the lack of information about EU-funded opportunities on cross-border cooperation programmes in the EU border regions; calls on the Member States to improve the dissemination of information on cross-border issues, e.g. by creating ‘one-stop shops’;

12. Stresses the need for a more substantial financial commitment to the promotion of cross-border sports activities and in particular for the construction of small-scale infrastructures for grassroots sports;

13. Calls on the Commission to consider culture and education as a horizontal priority for the next generation of programmes in the framework of cohesion policy;

14. Strongly supports the role of cross-border projects and programmes in improving youth education, employability, inclusion and participation of young people in society by tackling social problems that young people face in border regions, such as unemployment and radicalisation; calls for more systematic cooperation across border regions with a view to improving opportunities for young people in employment, education, training, culture, sport and other social policy areas;

15. Underlines the fact that language barriers are still an important obstacle to cross-border cooperation, especially in border areas without a long-standing tradition of cooperation; notes that language is an important factor enhancing trust and helping to mitigate socio-cultural difficulties; believes that a more targeted use of ESI funds, as well as increased funding for language technologies, can improve communication and thus support the systematic promotion of multilingualism and European language diversity in education and training in border regions, from early childhood education onwards, also through the organisation of sporting and cultural events;

16. Believes that cross-border cooperation between education and training institutions
should be reinforced by facilitating cross-border school visits and extracurricular activities for children from a very young age in order to provide children with a unique opportunity going beyond the classroom, to have direct contact with and first-hand experience of the diversity of cultures, languages and history of their neighbours;

17. Notes that some border areas share a common language that is not an official EU language; believes that increased levels of funding for teaching and promoting lesser-used cross-border languages would strengthen cooperation, increase mobility across borders and enrich the cultural diversity and heritage of those areas;

18. Reiterates that bringing together key players from the research community, business, higher education, public authorities and civil society is essential; calls on the Member States to facilitate cross-border partnerships between education and training institutions and between them and enterprises in border regions in order to promote the mobility of students, teachers, trainers and administrative staff, as well as of doctoral candidates and researchers, including Vocational Education and Training (VET); underlines that the use of multilingualism within such cross-border partnerships can help to prepare graduates to enter the employment market on both sides of the border; is of the opinion that importance should also be given to Regional Minority Languages (RMLs), which are always at risk of endangerment if strong linguistic policies are not put in place; believes that European-level funding should continue for the preservation and support of regional minority languages;

19. Calls on the Commission to facilitate cross-border initiatives and different types of exchanges and intercultural and educational activities aimed at increasing citizens’ awareness of legislative and administrative requirements in border regions, as well as improving cooperation between local administrations and cultural and educational institutions;

20. Urges the Member States to facilitate and encourage the mutual recognition and better understanding of certificates, diplomas and vocational and professional qualifications between neighbouring regions; encourages, therefore, the inclusion of specific skills in the curriculum with the objective of increasing cross-border employment opportunities, including validation and recognition of skills;

21. Encourages the pooling of joint public services and efforts in neighbouring border regions with a view to developing a series of targeted interventions to support low-skilled or low-qualified adults in border regions and to help them improve their literacy, numeracy and digital skills by acquiring a broader set of competences and higher qualifications;

22. Encourages cross-border cooperation and programmes for dual vocational training among different border regions; is of the opinion that better cross-border cooperation and investment in skills in border regions will help to close the existing skills gap, reduce poverty, unemployment and social exclusion, and tackle skill shortages and the brain drain in those peripheral areas;

23. Believes that multiculturalism is particularly relevant for border regions; strongly encourages cross-border cultural cooperation within and between border regions by enhancing collaboration between creative people and cultural actors, such as artists and
representatives of cultural organisations, administrations and networks in specific cross-border and trans-European projects;

24. Reiterates that the mobility of artists and culture professionals has become invaluable in the promotion of Europe’s cultural and social progress and the development of the regional, national and European cultural heritage; is of the opinion that a strong cross-border cooperation in the area of cultural and creative industries (CCIs), focusing especially on micro-enterprises and SMEs (also via clustering of enterprises), NGOs and small associations, can help create socio-economic value, sustainable jobs and growth, in particular for young people, as well as fostering cultural and linguistic diversity and innovation; is also of the opinion that this cooperation will help to build bridges between citizens, increase mutual understanding, address common challenges, reinforce cultural diplomacy and forge a European identity, through joint initiatives on projects related to tangible and intangible cultural heritage and heritage-related projects for instance by means of joint childcare facilities, accessible multilingual education, or partnerships between educational institutions; stresses the importance of CCIs in promoting and preserving cultural diversity, strengthening social cohesion, playing a key role in reindustrialising Europe, and triggering innovation spillovers in many other sectors;

25. Believes that the development of cross-border cultural cooperation makes an essential contribution to the sustainable development of cross-border territories, impacting the economy, social cohesion and the environment; calls on the Commission, together with Member States, to devise a common strategic approach for development and support of Cultural and Creative Industries, bridging CCIs with society and the economy in order to promote smart, sustainable growth in EU border regions;

26. Highlights the excessive barriers existing for cultural and creative industries as regards accessing financing, owing to their nature and size (CCIs are predominantly micro-businesses and SMEs), as well as the difficulties arising due to the often poorer economic performance of some border regions; reiterates its view that it is of utmost importance to develop cultural, creative and entrepreneurial skills in order to overcome these structural deficiencies;

27. Underlines that regions have a proven capacity to develop cross-border cooperation in the CCI sector, and notes the positive effects of smart specialisation; calls on the Commission and the Member States to maintain and strengthen the existing policies in this field, and to make effective use of the funding available under EU programmes and the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs);

28. Believes that cohesion policy can contribute positively to the creation of new ideas and possibilities for cooperation between museums, orchestras and cross-border radio and TV projects in border regions by addressing the legal and financial difficulties which artists have with their common cross-border projects;

29. Strongly supports cross-border cultural projects and cooperation between European Capitals of Culture and border regions throughout Europe, in order to establish a chain of cultural ‘welding points’ and generate a new dimension of European cultural networks where new practices of cultural diversity are being developed and integrated in the realisation of concrete European projects;
30. Regrets that cultural and leisure activities often fail to attract people from different border regions in neighbouring countries, despite the fact that people living in those areas share similar interests and are in close proximity to one another; supports the EU regional portals created in several border regions to provide people with access to information about cultural and leisure activities, and encourages the promotion of similar portals across all border regions;

31. Strongly believes that border regions, thanks to the existence of long-established contacts between cultural institutions, CCIs and stakeholders across borders, can create favourable conditions for artistic and cultural mobility, and can therefore be vital for thematic tourism and help promote Europe as a competitive and sustainable destination, increasing Europe’s attractiveness internationally, and can also actively revitalise the process of European integration by promoting contacts between Europe’s citizens and stimulating a common sense of belonging; calls on the Commission to integrate a cultural dimension into the cross-border development initiatives, for both historic heritage assets and contemporary creativity; calls, therefore, on the Member States to increase their efforts and investments in order to develop a sustainable long-term cultural tourism policy;

32. Recalls that education and cultural exchanges across borders promote intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding, conflict resolution and peacbuilding, particularly in post-conflict border regions; highlights in this context the risks posed by Brexit for people-to-people exchanges and mobility of students, learners, artists and cultural operators between the border regions of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland;

33. Encourages various measures aimed at combating all forms of discrimination in border regions and at breaking down barriers for vulnerable people in finding employment and becoming integrated into society; supports, in this regard, the promotion and development of social enterprises in border regions as a source of job creation, in particular for vulnerable groups such as young unemployed people and people with disabilities;

34. Strongly believes that media and communications have the potential to strengthen EU border regions through the creative sector and that digital platforms have the ability to promote inclusion and protect the cultural diversity of these border regions; also believes that cinema and television, and also creative documentaries and other forms of digital content, are platforms which can be used to support the heritage and unique traits of EU border regions;

35. Strongly encourages Member States and regional authorities to improve the dissemination of information on cross-border cultural and educational activities and issues, and to strengthen the exchange of best practices in those areas through the creation of a designated portal and website;

36. Underlines the need to address the specific challenges related to artistic and cultural mobility, in areas such as social security, taxation (avoiding double taxation of artists and cultural professionals), provision of information on mobility opportunities (mobility grants, residency programmes, etc);

37. Underlines that sports tourism is an increasingly important sector of the European
economy; calls, therefore, for the allocation of financial resources to the construction of sports infrastructures with a view to promoting tourism through sport;

38. Notes that cross-border cooperation, as a major EU policy objective, has helped mitigate the adverse effects of internal borders and can lead to improvements in cross-border achievements in education and culture;

39. Supports apprenticeships measures and multi-stakeholder platforms in border regions aimed at improving the quality, supply and image of apprenticeships and promoting border mobility among young apprentices; is of the opinion that bringing together relevant stakeholders to create cross-border opportunities for apprenticeships, traineeships or internships will enhance competition, education, skills and the labour markets in those regions, and in particular encourages creating internship opportunities in regional and local institutions involved in cross-border and international cooperation;

40. Notes the serious migration challenges that some border regions face; to that end, encourages the effective use of the funding available for EU cross-border programmes, as well as the exchange of good practices between local and regional authorities in border areas, within the framework of the integration of refugees under international protection; underlines the need for national governments to support local and regional authorities in addressing these challenges;

41. Calls on Member States and regional authorities to collaborate in the identification and removal of any legal or administrative barriers that inhibit cross-border educational or cultural activities, inter alia through the harmonisation of the relevant regulatory frameworks.
INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

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| Result of final vote | +: 24  
| | -: 0  
| | 0: 1 |
| Members present for the final vote | Dominique Bilde, Andrea Bocskor, Silvia Costa, Angel Dzhambazki, Jill Evans, María Teresa Giménez Barbat, Petra Kammerervert, Svetoslav Hristov Malinov, Curzio Maltese, Rupert Matthews, Stefano Maullu, Luigi Morgano, Momchil Nekov, Michaela Šojdrová, Yana Toom, Julie Ward, Bogdan Brunon Wenta, Bogdan Andrzej Zdrojewski, Milan Zver, Krystyna Łybacka |
| Substitutes present for the final vote | Marlene Mizzi, Liliana Rodrigues, Algirdas Saudargas, Remo Sernagiotto, Francis Zammit Dimech |
### FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

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ENF Dominique Bilde