

EU BORDER REGIONS

EU EXTERNAL BORDERS AND THE IMMEDIATE NEIGHBOURS.
ANALYSING REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS
THROUGH POLICIES & PRACTICES OF
CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

Project Funding



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EUBORDERREGIONS, now in its second year, is gearing up for fieldwork in our case study regions. Fieldwork will involve quantitative and qualitative mapping, surveys, an intensive series of interviews and focus group seminars in order to understand local perceptions of cross-border co-operation and its potential benefits. Since the start of the project in March 2011, our consortium has performed background work that includes a discussion on the fu- ture of European Cohesion and Neighborhood Policies, the compiling of social-economic, structural and geopolitical data for regions along the external boundaries of the EU and ini- tial visits to the case study areas. Much attention has also been devoted to methodological issues and creating a cohesive empirical framework.

The 3rd project workshop, organized by the Hungarian Social Research Institute (TÀRKI) in Budapest, in May, was the most intensive of all project meetings to date. The workshop not only involved an evaluation of progress and technical aspects but also two days of training for fieldwork. The training sessions were elaborated by TÀRKI and the Austrian partners (Institute of Advanced Studies) and developed a set of fieldwork tools that ranged from "mapping", participant observation to in-depth interviews. Research in the field aims to provide a holistic picture of regional development situations at the external border as well as to involve local organizations and actors in elaborating potential scenarios of future development in conjunction with cross-border interaction. The various items in this newsletter will give the reader a good idea about the content of EUBORDERREGIONS and the vari- ous activities our team members have been involved in.

Yours,
James Scott

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EUBORDERREGIONS conference in Budapest

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On 12 May 2012 the first EUBORDERREGIONS conference took place at Central European University in Budapest. The conference was able to take place thanks to the kind support of Dr. Irina Molodikova of CEU and the Migration Seminar Programme. The conference title, "Exploring Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European Cohesion" expressed its open and rather experimental nature. The conference aimed to open up EUBORDERREGIONS and the topics that inform its research agenda to a wider public and in doing so relate central issues of border studies to various aspects of European Cohesion Policy, Neighbourhood Policy and spatial planning. The subjects that were touched upon in the conference ranged from migration and visa regimes to cross-border governance mechanisms and border conflict.



Dr. Molodikova opened the conference with a fascinating review of the shifting borders of visa-free zones and migration systems in the Post-Soviet space and between the EU and post-Soviet countries. This was followed by explorations of EU policies, border management practices, cross-border co-operation and several border-related challenges.

The Hungarian team provided, furthermore, a nuanced and multi-layered profile of the Borderlands situation in Northeast Hungary based on research empirical research.

The conference programme itself featured the following topics and speakers:

European Cohesion, Territorial Cooperation and Borders

- Irina Moldikova: Two Decades of CIS Coexistence: The Transformation of the Free Visa Movement.
- James Scott: Relating European Cohesion to

the "Neighbourhood".

Border Studies: Research Insights

- Andrea Stocchiero: macro-regions as experimental governance mechanisms for sustaining CBC and Cohesion policies.
- Lefteris Topaloglou: Exploring linkages between territory and EU Policy-making: A critical review of territorial cooperation policies.
- Heikki Eskelinen/Matti Fritsch/Sarolta Németh: Territorial Cooperation across EU external borders. The Finnish-Russian case.

Borders as Sites of Conflict

- Xavier Ferrer-Gallardo: Migration and bordering issues.
- H-G. Heinrich and Alexandru Burian Border conflicts in the Post-Soviet Space.

The Border as a Complex System: Evidence from Hungarian-Slovak-Ukrainian border research Chair: Endre Sik (ELTE-TÁRKI)

- Gábor Szalkai: Accessibility.
- Antal Örkény and Mária Székelyi: Identity and border.
- Marton Gerő and István Micsinai: Crossborder policy networks.

One common element in discussions during the conference was the ambiguous role of the European Unions' "bordering" practices – both in terms of actual border management and policies supporting cross-border co-operation.

Xavier Ferrer's presentation highlighted the serious humanitarian situation at the EU's external borders, such as the Greek-Turkish and Spanish-Moroccan, where migrants have died trying to cross over. The border as such is only an "end of pipe" solution and there appear to be no sustainable co-operation or informational policies in place to prevent such tragedies from occurring.

At another level, speakers such as Andrea Stocchiero, Heikki Eskelinen, Sarolta Németh and Matti Fritsch suggested that new territorial governance mechanisms (e.g. new macro regional arrangements such as the Danube Area and user-friendly micro regional funding facilities for Neighbourhood cooperation) are needed in order to improve prospects for effective cross-border co-operation in regions at the external borders.

Within the EUBORDERREGIONS project, discussion of European Cohesion Policy and the possibilities for what are called *place-based* development strategies have been a major focus. This idea of greater local involvement in the development of Community policies is in greater measure a response to a perceived lack of

success in improving the economic efficiency and competitiveness of “lagging regions”.

As was suggested by conference participants during closing discussions, new support structures developed in the next EU funding period (2014-2020) could promote collaborative forms of policy formulation and delivery based on partnerships involving the state, the private sector, foundations as well as civil society at large. This would seem particularly important in more peripheral regions with limited prospects for short-term ‘returns’ on social investment and where multiple support mechanisms are needed in order to nurture entrepreneurial activity. This is all the more important in the case of regions along the EU’s external borders, where cross-border co-operation has been marginalised within the overall EU regional policy logic.

The European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument’s CBC facility, which is not part of EU policy, offers some limited if cumbersome support. However, in order for genuine project-based cooperation to come to fruition, change in focus within ENPI (and ENP in general) is needed; civil society networks and local-regional co-operation should be prioritized and eligible for more generous and specifically targeted support.

In addition, co-operation partnerships, rather than mere projects, should be a target of multiannual support. One possible strategy would be to develop international networks between public, private and non-profit sector actors that provide assistance to emerging and future private and social entrepreneurs through a variety of means, including: support in project development, securing grants (including the provision of guarantees), assistance in acquisition and provision of loans and investment capital, as well as training, advisory, logistical and informational support. At the same time, such support would not only reduce one-sided grant dependency but establish greater rapport between CSOs and local governments.

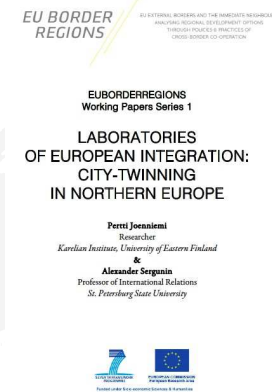
Conference presentations are available at <http://www.euborderregions.eu/dissemination/conference-presentations>.



EUBORDERREGIONS deliverables

In spring 2012 three EUBORDERREGIONS working papers were published, which are available at: <http://www.euborderregions.eu/dissemination/policy>

1. “Laboratories of European integration: city-twinning in Northern Europe” by Pertti Joenniemi, Karelian Institute University of Eastern Finland and Alexander Sergunin, St. Petersburg State University.



The working paper approaches the question of cohesion and cross-border co-operation in Europe through the lens of local actors – of communities; and offers a detailed discussion of local attempts to “reconstruct” local borders, including in

areas located at the external borders of Schengen-Europe. Twin cities as co-operation partners also reflect wider geopolitical contexts that impact on local and regional development in border areas.

2. Two new working papers by Filippo Celata and Raffaella Coletti from Department Memotef, University of Rome La Sapienza:

1) “Soft, mobile or networked? Cross-border cooperation and the topology of the European Union external frontier”

The aim of the paper is to evaluate the rationale of cross-border cooperation initiatives between EU member countries and their non-EU neighbouring countries, in light of recent research about the European Neighbourhood Policy and about the changing spatiality of contemporary borders. Along the EU’s external border, it is argued, the imaginary of cross-border cooperation participate in the construction of a peculiar kind of border that is simultaneously mobile, fragmented and networked.

2) “EUrope and its ‘other’: free trade and the geographical imaginaries of Euro-Mediterranean politics”

The creation of a Free Trade Area is the main pillar on which regionalization in the Mediterranean has been pursued since the establishment of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership in 1995. The aim of the paper is to reflect upon the relation between commercial integration and region-building in the Mediterranean from an interpretative perspective, in order to offer a critical evaluation of the aims, the impact and the evolution of Euro-Mediterranean policies.

EUBORDERREGIONS CASE STUDY AREAS PROFILES 2

In the Newsletter no 2 we started to introduce EUBORDERREGIONS case study areas. Previously the profiles of the Finnish-Russian, Estonian-Russian, Polish-Ukrainian and Italian-Tunisian border region were introduced. Four more areas will be introduced this time.

Profile of Norwegian-Russian Border Region

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Norway and Russia share a land border spanning 196 km from the Finnish border to the South to Grense Jakobselv in the Northern coast.

The Norwegian town of Kirkenes and Nikel in Russia were divided by a hard political border for most of the 20th century. The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the subsequent creation of The Barents Euro-Arctic Region led the way to a re-negotiation of the border allowing for ease of border crossings, economic exchange, and people-to-people contact.

The creation of the Barents Region, as with other political regions in Europe set the foundation for the possibility of breaking down borders and more co-operation among the signatory countries. While open borders were and are not of great concern to the Nordic signatories of the Kirkenes Declaration, the border with Russia to the East remains a visa-controlled border within the Barents Region. For Norway, this has placed Kirkenes, which is 14 km from the Russian border in the High North, at the centre of bilateral relations between Russia and Norway.



Kirkenes has a population of 3400, within the Sør-Varanger Municipality, which has 9700 altogether. Since the early 1990s and coincident with the establishment of the Barents Region, Kirkenes has transformed itself from a town dependent on mining of iron ore to a border town (Viken, et al. 2008).

Faced with de-industrialization and economic decline, Kirkenes and the Sør Varanger Municipality set their sights on Russia and cross-border co-operation and exchange as a possible replacement for the mining industry that was closing down in the mid-1990s. (Favourable world market price for iron ore led to the re-opening of the mine in 2009.) The great ambitions



for robust cross-border economic development has not been fulfilled, but residents still the border region still see the border as a resource and an opportunity for economic development.

The other side of this Norwegian-Russian divide is the Pechenga Municipality, with Nikel being the closest town to Kirkenes. Nikel, with a population of 12,771 (2010 census), like Kirkenes, was established as a one-industry town. Nickel was first mined and processed here in the 1930s while under Finnish control.

The town of Nikel was industrialised intensively in the post-World War II Period under Stalin, and has been dependent on the processing of nickel ever since. Nikel town also lies in a military border zone, which has limited its choices and possibilities with regards to the town's engagement with its Norwegian neighbour and also with regards to travel to Norway. Also extant are asymmetries of social welfare and economies between the residents of this borderland.

This was particularly acute in the late 1990s when Norwegian neighbours were sending aid to Russians in the Murmansk Region. Up until recently, most cross-border visits and shopping by Russian residents to Kirkenes came all the way from Murmansk City, some 250kms away. On 29 May 2012, the long-negotiated 30 km resident border pass (grenseboerbevis) came into effect, which would allow residents living within 30kms of the borderland to cross without visas and stay within the 30 km zone for up to 15 days.

"Grenseboerbevis" <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/jd/aktuelt/nyheter/2012/grenseboerbevis.html?id=683831>

Viken, Arvid; Granås, Brynhild; Nyseth, Torill. "Kirkenes: An Industrial Site Reinvented as a Border Town." *Acta Borealia* 2008; Volum 25 (1): 22 - 44.

Profile of the Romanian-Moldovan Border Region

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Cooperation between the Republic of Moldova and Romania most depends on the nature of economic and political relations of the both states at international level, on the ratio of the contact and the barrier function of the borders. Since January 2007 the western border of Moldova is also EU external border, while the eastern one continues to be with its own particularities. The length of the Romania-Moldova state border is 684 km; including 610.1 km on the river Prut and 73.9 km on Costesti Rock Lake. There are 27 islands along Prut River that belong to the Republic of Moldova and 33 to Romania.

The Moldova – Romania border divides two independent countries and unites folks that have very deep historical relations. Moreover it is a fluvial boundary, following the course of the Prut and Danube. Furthermore the construction of 50 km of the railway Cahul-Giurgiulesti linked Moldova's port on the Danube with a network of national railways and provided a direct access to the EU through Galati (Romania), bypassing Ukraine. Moldova has 11 districts along the border with Romania. Under the consequent applying of good vicinity principle, the Border Guard Service of the Republic of Moldova holds a fruitful collaboration with Romania's Border Police of Ministry of Administration and Home Affairs. The intensity of the processes of cross-border cooperation varies in different districts of the Republic of Moldova, located in the same region. This situation is a consequence of significant differences in the level of economic development of municipalities themselves. Thereby, CBC is an important part of local community's municipal territorial units of Moldova, located near the border. Within the framework of the EUBORDERREGIONS study, the task of identifying the motivation of participation of Moldovan and Romanian stakeholders in the field of cross-border cooperation is set out.

The Leuşeni – Albița checkpoint is international by its character, large in size and on scale and dynamics of border crossing. *Ipso facto* it is one of the most frequently used custom and one of the oldest. The level of traffic at this checkpoint is very high. Only during one day this check point was crossed and checked by 2083 persons, 14 big trucks, 362 buses and mini-buses and 288 cars. The existence of a major checkpoint themselves leads to the activation of trade between the neighbouring regions.

The presence of favourable conditions for business, the range of manufactured goods are complicated, the development of transport and border infrastructure leads to increased interaction between local businesses and the formation of uniform clusters for two states and to the convergence of living standards. The international nature of the crossing checkpoints, demonstrates not only their strict control by the services, but also the highest level

and frequency of violations (smuggled goods: ancient coins, cigarettes).

The Cahul-Oancea border crossing checkpoint is placed



in the „epicentre” of frequent custom frauds, illegal transportation of cigarettes, coins, undeclared, illegal goods. The most common intersection of crossing checkpoints proves not only a large number of crossing things (people, vehicles) but the dynamics of cooperation between border services of both countries. Moreover the reduction in the cost of goods increases the frequency of crossing checkpoints.

Ungheni, Iași – check point - Eiffel Bridge - has become an important part of life of local communities located near the boundary. From the historical point of view Ungheni „Bridge of Flowers” connects two sides of the Prut River. The bridge, linking the two banks of the Prut River, was put into operation in 1877. Eventually it became a symbol for the locals. The bridge was designed by renowned French engineer Alexander Gustave Eiffel, the author of the famous Eiffel Tower in Paris. In spring of 1990 as a sign of rapprochement of two states - Moldova and Romania, the bridge was covered with flowers and since then had become known „Bridge of Flowers”.



Photo: Wikipedia

www.border.gov.md Border Guard Service of Moldova;
www.politiadefrontiera.ro The Romanian Border Police;
www.statistica.md National Bureau of Statistics of Moldova;
www.customs.gov.md Customs Service of Moldova.

Profile of the Turkish-Bulgarian Border Region

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The whole Turkish-Bulgarian Border region covers the area of 29032.9 km² and includes three NUTS3 districts on Bulgarian side (Burgas, Yambol, and Haskovo) and two NUTS3 equivalents on the Turkish side of the border (Edirne and Kırklareli provinces).



Photo: Wikipedia

The total length of the border is 288 km, and it includes three international border crossing check points: Malko Tärnovovo-Dereköy (between Burgas and Kırklareli), Svilengrad-Kapıkule (between Haskovo and Edirne) and Lesovo-Hamzabeyli (between Yambol and Kırklareli). Plans to increase the number of checkpoints have been announced but not yet implemented.

The history of the region is complex, as the border has shifted several times since 1878, and several population movements had taken place. Thus, historically the border region has experienced periods of both integration and separation.

On the one hand, the large cities of Edirne and Kırklareli had traditionally served as regional centres of gravitations for surrounding rural areas which are now located on two different sides of the border.

On the other hand, between 1955 and 1991 the Turkish-Bulgarian border was hardened as it was also a border between NATO and Warsaw Pact countries. As a result of this separation the infrastructure and especially the road network between Bulgaria and Turkey have remained underdeveloped, and this creates a constraint for the growing cross-border cooperation.

There are only three larger roads connecting Turkey and Bulgaria; most smaller communities have no direct communications with each other and need to commute through larger cities.

In terms of population dynamics and economic struc-

ture the regions on two sides of the border show significant differences. The total population size in the region on both sides of the border is 1533410, of which 810191 are in Bulgaria and 723219 in Turkey.

However, the dynamics of population on different sides of the border are quite different. In Bulgaria, depopulation, especially in the rural areas, is a significant problem. The natural growth is negative and varies between -2.5% for Burgas district and -7.4% for Yambol district. The population is also ageing. In Turkey, the demographic situation is more stable, despite considerable outmigration and the lower rate of natural growth compared to the national average. The population growth is -0.5 in Edirne Province, 5.9% in Kırklareli province. Population is also much younger.

In terms of economic development the regions also differ. Bulgarian side of the region is more urbanized and industrialized, but at the same time the GDP per capita is significantly lower. The biggest sector in terms of employment is service, especially in Burgas district due to tourism. Industry comes second, and only between 3 and 8% of population is employed in agriculture. On the Turkish side the situation is almost opposite: while nearly half of population is employed in agriculture. Service sector comes second, and only between 9 (Edirne) and 17 % (Kırklareli) is employed in industry.

Thus, the Turkish-Bulgarian border region somewhat challenges the common perception that border regions are peripheral. In this case, while Bulgarian border region is clearly economically peripheral, the economic indicators for Turkish side of the border are often better than the national average. The disparities between regions on different sides of the border are thus even more significant than between centre and the border. Our case study will therefore focus on one particular area in the border region which is closest to each other in terms of population dynamics and GDP levels - Burgas and Kırklareli, particularly the border crossing area of Malko-Tarnovo – Dereköy.

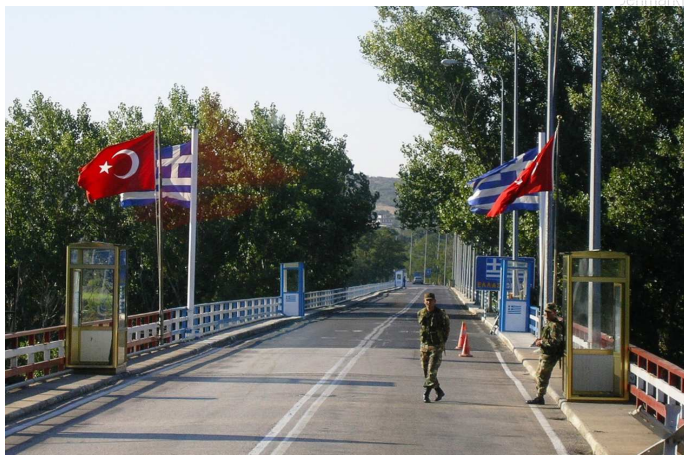


Photo: Wikipedia

Profile of the East Macedonia and Thrace (Greece) - Edirne (Turkey) Border Region

Lefteris Topaloglou, ltopaloglou@lga.gr

The Greece-Turkey case study comprises an area that occurs a long common history. The Greek region of East Macedonia and Thrace (GR11, NUTS2) is located in the north-east part of the country, bordering to the east with the Turkish region of Tekirdağ (TR21, NUTS2) and to the north with the Bulgarian regions of Yuzhen Tsentralen (BG42, NUTS2) and Yugozapaden (BG41, NUTS2). The Turkish part of the case study (CS) area is located in the north-west part of the country, representing a big part of European Turkey, bordering with both the Greek region East Macedonia and Thrace and the Bulgarian region of Yuzhen Tsentralen. The actual area has a population of 2,108,980 inhabitants (2009), made up by 28.7% (606,622) of Greeks, and 71.3% (1,505,358) of Turks.



The borderline between Greece and Turkey is 192,5 km long of which 12,5 km are land-borders and 180 km are marked by the river Evros. As Frontex has repeatedly stated, this border in 2010 covered up for 90% of the undocumented migration to Europe. The border in the Evros region remains the main entry point into the EU for migrants from Asia. In January 2012, the largest group of migrants who crossed into Greece came from Afghanistan, followed by the nationals of Pakistan and Bangladesh. In January 2012, over 2 800 migrants were detected at the Greek-Turkish land border in the Evros region. This is a significant decrease in comparison with the summer months, when detections stood at over 6 000 migrants. In the past couple of years crossings at this border seem to reflect a seasonal pattern with a decreasing trend beginning in November and continuing throughout the winter.

Today, there are 3 border crossings: Kipi-Ipsala (Motorway, Major Gate), Ormenio and Pythio-Uzunkoprou (railway).



The Kipoi border crossing is the eastern starting/ending point of European route E90, which is also the Greek Motorway A2, known as Egnatia Odos. The motorway connects to Turkish Highway D110. The Ormenio checkpoint, on the border with Bulgaria, towards the border with Turkey, is partially open. The motor vehicles stationed there are allowed to cross over provided they are properly equipped for winter and have wheel chains. Weather conditions are making traffic extremely difficult. The CS area has also 2 international airports in Greece and 1 domestic airport in Turkey. There are also 4 maritime ports (3 in Greece and 1 in Turkey).

Mobility across the Turkish exit/entrance gates (checkpoints) exhibited a remarkable increase during the '00s and even the last decade. The checkpoint of Ipsala in particular, seems, to, diachronically, increase its importance. The drastic improvement of the road infrastructure in the CS area diminished considerably the traditional remoteness and poor accessibility of this zone, long being one of the most salient characteristics of the spatial infrastructure. Hence, this infrastructure affected considerably the trans-border connectivity, as it shortened by far the time distances between the border countries and regions. Moreover, of special interest is the fact that a large share of the cross-border mobility concern trans-border regions and cities, mostly taking place within distances of up to 50 km where some kind of networks can be traced.



Boats 4 people against the human fatalities in the Mediterranean¹

Xavier Ferrer-Gallardo (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona & Nijmegen Centre for Border Research, Radboud University Nijmegen)

Henk van Houtum (Nijmegen Centre for Border Research, Radboud University Nijmegen & University of Bergamo)

Over the last two decades, the accumulation of migrant fatalities at the borders of the European Union has become a most shameful reality. The European Union is not providing official data about the amount of migrants who have lost their lives while trying to cross its borders, often by overcrowded small boats. Nevertheless, some civil society organizations, like *United Against Racism*, fortunately are. According to them, since 1993, more than 16.000 people have died while trying to access the EU. And this figure, this body count, only indicates the deaths that were actually found. The Mediterranean has increasingly become a death trap for many. Seen on a world level, the EU external border is now officially the deadliest border on the planet.

Last year, as the Union's rhetoric of proximity and support vis-à-vis a southern Mediterranean shore in geopolitical turmoil grew³, the number of dead migrants at the shores of the EU even reached a dramatic all-time peak. According to a recent report of the *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*⁴, more than 1.500 immigrants died in the Mediterranean in 2011.

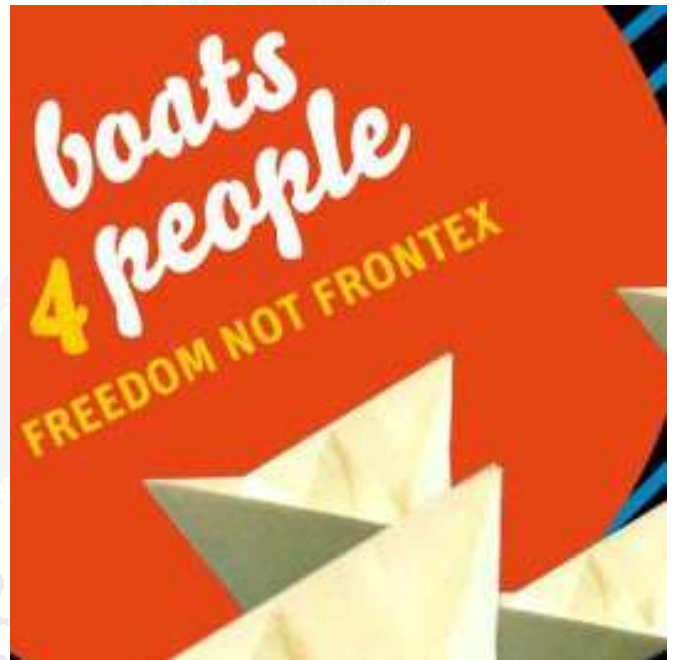
This appalling figure of 1500 people dying must be read, of course, in the light of the impact that the Arab Spring had on human mobility flows from and within the north of Africa. This was translated in a general increase and an important fluctuation of (im)mobilities and detections of illegal crossing in the three main Mediterranean migration routes towards the EU.

The most notable raise took place in the so-called Central Mediterranean Route, mainly towards the island of Lampedusa⁵.

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, the EU has continued adding new layers to its geopolitics with regard to the southern shore of the Mediterranean:

"*New and ambitious European Neighbourhood Policy*", "*Partnership for Democracy and Prosperity Shared with the southern Mediterranean*." Moreover, the twenty-seven have also reshaped their *Global Approach to Migration*⁶, emphasizing the need to encourage certain forms of mobility through its external borders. However this is combined with a harsh and discriminatory realpolitik of border reinforcement, which entails the obstruction of free mobility to the vast majority of citizens of neighbouring countries. Obviously,

this acts as a crucial barrier to the upgrading of cross-border social cohesion between the EU and its neighbourhood.



In this light, outside mainstream national politics-as-usual, the foundations of the current EU border regime are increasingly being contested by a rapidly growing network of protestors.

Various social movements in Africa and Europe, often consisting of a mix of critical academics, journalists, and activists, are increasingly finding each other on the Internet and in protest actions against this appalling external border politics⁷. One of the most recent products of this encounter is the remarkable project *Boats 4 People*⁸, an action that is bringing together civil society organizations from both sides of the external EU border. This July 2012, coinciding with the International preparatory meeting of the World Social Forum Tunisia 2013, a flotilla of small boats will cross the Mediterranean and "occupy" the sea. During the trajectory of the boat rally -Palermo, Tunis, Monastir, Lampedusa- the travellers will cry out against the deathly consequences of the EU border regime.

This critical interrogation of this sea occupy movement, if it could be called this way, is a good reminder, for both academics and policy makers, that the current EU border regime is seriously flawed and incompatible with EU's own goal of bridge building politics. It is high time that academia at large and EU external politics no longer accepts these fatalities at its borders as collateral damage but rapidly think about ways to deal with this humanitarian crisis.

¹ This is a short and adapted version of an essay that will be published in July's volume of the Spanish edition of *Le Monde Diplomatique*. (<http://www.monde-diplomatique.es>)

² <http://www.unitedagainstracism.org/> (accessed 01/06/2012)

³ Shown in EC communications like the one on "Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean" on March 8th 2011. See: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/11/268>

Or in the SPRING Programme, lunched on September 27th 2011. See: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/11/636&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en> (accessed 01/06/2012)

⁴ <http://www.unhcr.org/4f27e01f9.html> (accessed 01/06/2012)

⁵ According to Frontex Annual Risk Analysis 2012 the number of detections of illegal crossings increased from 4.450 in 2010 to 64.261 in 2011.

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/news/intro/docs/1_EN_ACT_part1_v9.pdf (accessed 01/06/2012)

⁷ See: www.migreurop.org and www.tribunal12.org

⁸ <http://www.boats4people.org/index.php/en/> (accessed 01/06/2012)

Bordering and de-bordering at the frontiers of the Schengen: the "border resident ID card" (*grenseboerbevis*) between Norway and Russia

By Aileen A Espiritu with Nora Skaansar, The Barents Institute at the University of Tromsø

On 29 May 2012, the long-awaited agreement on the *grenseboerbevis* or the "border resident ID card" between Norway and Russia was finally ratified. It was celebrated, with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway, Jonas Gahr Støre, coming to the border the following day declaring that "Today, Norway and Russia are the first [Schengen and non-Schengen] countries in Europe to open their borders for visa-free traffic. Other countries will follow our experience." Already under negotiation between Norway and Russia since 2008, the ratification of the 30-kilometre border zone ID pass in the Norwegian High North and Northwest Russia was but the most recent of many border agreements between the two countries over the last two decades. The most significant of these happened last year in 2011 with the ratification, after 40 years of protracted negotiations, of the delimitation agreement that demarcated a border in the Barents Sea. It effectively opened up the Arctic to as yet only imagined economic and industrial activities for both countries. We may argue that the border agreements between Norway and Russia over the last 20 years may be described within the frame of bordering and de-bordering their shared borders –on land and at sea.

The border resident travel certificate, valid for three years, allows borderland residents within 30 kilometers of the Norwegian border, and 30 to 50 kilometers of the Russian border visa-free travel to the other country for up to 15 days each visit. Potentially nearly

50,000 border residents, 9000 on the Norwegian side and 40,000 on the Russian, are eligible to take advantage of obtaining a personal border resident certificate.

While it is now fully operational, there are still practical matters that have yet to be resolved. Even as the agreement itself was just being signed in the Autumn of 2010, there were already worries that the current infrastructure would not be able to handle the increased traffic, regardless of the border permit. Indeed there are plans on the Norwegian side to expand the border and customs facilities on the Norwegian side with no such plans so far revealed on the Russian side. In practical terms, Norway plans to issue border certificates as an electronic identity card so that passports will not be necessary to cross the border. Russia on the other hand plans to use a visa-like document attached to the passports, but at a community gathering to discuss the *grenseboerbevis* in February of this year, the then Russian Consul Igor Bulai, indicated that they might also issue electronic identity cards in the future. The Murmansk based Norwegian Consul Øyvind Nordsletten highlighted at that same meeting that what is important is that people feel the new arrangement is a real improvement from the existing visa-system.

Another concern on both sides of the border is the demarcation of the 30 and 50 km limits on each side of the border. The Norwegian regional district police had been trying to create a solution to bordering the 30 km zone, but admit that it will rely mostly on trusting Russians holding only the border resident travel permit to stay within the permitted area. On the Russian side, a new checkpoint has been built just outside of Nikel, Russia 35 kms from Kirkenes on the Norwegian side. And with one more military check points on the road towards Murmansk in Russia, thus making it one of the most controlled border areas in Europe.

While even members of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs consider this *grenseboerbevis* agreement as more symbolic than substantive, there are great expectations from the visa-fee regime in this border region. Already, cross-border traffic was counted at 200,000 in 2011, and predicted to be 300,000 by the end of 2012. The border crossings, mostly for shopping and some tourism, have had an impact on the local economy on the Norwegian side in the Sør-Varanger Municipality. Estimated revenues of about 100 million NOK are spent in the municipality by Russian border crossers/shoppers. One of the drawbacks to the border resident travel permit is that it does not give the right to work in the other country. Nevertheless, some see it as a potential conduit for more economic exchange and devel-

opment between these bordering municipalities, especially in Pechenga on the Russian side where recovery from the economic crisis of 2008 has been remarkably slow. Others also see this potentially as a gas region servicing Europe, with the Shtokman¹ gas fields development binding this cross-border region together industrially, economically, socially, and politically.

However, more than cross-border shopping, tourism, gas reserves, and trade, the Norwegian Consul General Øyvind Nordsletten argues that it will be a crucial part of the bridge-building between Norwegians and Russians. Thus, beyond people-to-people contact, beyond economic development,

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"Grenseseminar (09 February 2012)" at the 2012 Barents Spektakel. A community roundtable discussion on the border resident travel permit was organized with the local Sør-Varanger Municipality, Finnmark University College, and The Barents Institute.

the border certificate is a symbol of the good geopolitical relations between these two countries. There is also a belief on the Norwegian side that this is but a stepping

stone to visa-free travel for all Russians into the Schengen zone, and indeed with an agreement between Moscow and Brussels on a common road map, we may not have long to wait before all borders between Europe and Russia are de-bordered.

¹The Shtokman gas field lies 600km from both Murmansk and Kirkenes in the Russian part of the Barents Sea, and purported to be one of the largest gas reserves in this part of the Arctic.

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Project partner organization news:

- The EUBORDERREGIONS Russian partner Centre for Independent Social Research (CISR) celebrated its 20th anniversary with the international conference "Complex Gaze at a Complex World: Challenges of comparison in social research" on May 25-27, 2012 in St. Petersburg.
- EUBORDERREGIONS Hungarian partner TARKI Social Research Institute has published its newsletter. The first newsletter introduces projects in progress, new reports, publications etc.

Download: <http://us5.campaign-archive2.com/?u=4fccb0a0ba727e422fc3f09dc&id=a758d0f7a4&e=a559de33aa>.

- Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation will organize summer school on cross border cooperation on August 13-17, 2012 In Estonia.

Peipsi CTC has been organising cross border cooperation summer schools since 2004, this year's topic is related to local cross border economic cooperation and its impact to the regional development. Read more: www.ctc.ee

Upcoming cross border cooperation and -research events:

- **Borderscapes III conference** takes place in Trieste, Italy on June 28-30, 2012. The special focus of the conference is on border towns and divided cities, the event will be held in the city of Trieste, straddling the long contested boundary between Italy and the former Yugoslavia. Conference website: <http://www2.units.it/borderscapes3/index.html>.
- **The IV AEBR Youth Forum 2012** will take place in Trieste/ Region Friuli Venezia Giulia, Italy on July 23-27, 2012. Conference website: http://www.aebr.eu/en/events/events_detail.php?event_id=129.
- **Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) annual conference** on "Cross-border labour market mobility - experiences, problems, challenges" will be held on November 8-9, 2012 in Berlin. Conference website: http://www.aebr.eu/en/events/events_detail.php?event_id=123.
- **BRIT (Border Regions in Transition) XII conference** takes this year place in Fukuoka (Japan)/ Busan (Korea) on November 13-16, 2012.

BRIT XII title is "Borderland Voices: Shaping a New World Order " and will examine how those living in borderlands have been affected by the "bordering" processes of the state and central authority; how the voices of borderland communities can challenge the prevailing nation-state order; and the strategies and initiatives that people in the borderlands have devised in order to seize opportunities and overcome the difficulties associated with life on the border. Several EUBORDERREGION partner organisations' scholars will participate at BRIT XIII, to present their research on project case study regions. Conference website: <http://www.borderstudies.jp/brit2012/about.html>.

- **European Cooperation Day**, takes place on September 21, 2012 for the first time to celebrate the success of European territorial cooperation.

European Cooperation Day is an initiative by Interact and a number of territorial cooperation programmes around Europe and in neighbouring countries for promoting the idea and benefits of territorial cooperation to people in the European Union and partner countries. Almost 40 countries will come together to celebrate cooperation and bridge-building between local communities across borders. Public events will take place during the week of 17-23 September all over Europe. Besides the fun, this will also be an opportunity to discover all the improvements local initiatives have brought to all aspects of your daily life from creating jobs to improving health care services, protection of environment, transport or energy. Read more: <http://www.ecday.eu/>.

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