



Analysis of Cross-border obstacles between EU Member States and Enlargement Countries

Final Report

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Written by
Sabine Zillmer, Maria Toptsidou, Sandra Spule, Spatial Foresight
Thomas Stumm, EureConsult
Dea Hrelja, Nicola Brignani, t33
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Contact: Gilles Kittel, Klaudia Feuerle

E-mail: REGIO-TRANSNATIONAL-AND-INTERREGIONAL-COOPERATION @ec.europa.eu

gilles.kittel@ec.europa.eu, klaudia.feuerle@ec.europa.eu

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List of acronyms

Abbreviation	Text
CBC	Cross-border cooperation
DG	Directorate-General
EC	European Commission
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
EU	European Union
EUSAIR	European Union Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession
ISO	Interreg Specific Objective
MRS	Macro-Regional Strategy
PO	Policy Objective
SEE	South-East Europe
SO	Specific Objective
TEN-T	Trans-European Transport Network
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
UN	United Nations
UNTACD	UN Conference on Trade and Development

Abstract

This report is part of the study 'Analysis of Cross-border obstacles between EU Member States and Enlargement Countries'. It is looking to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of Interreg IPA programmes and supporting border regions in overcoming challenges due to national borders. The study is a comprehensive review of existing external cross-border obstacles and identifies obstacles that can impact the five Policy Objectives and two Interreg Specific Objectives of the 2021-2027 programming period. The study also offers ideas on how Interreg IPA programmes can address these obstacles in the future. The geographic focus of the study is on the borders between EU Member States and candidate and potential candidate countries.

The study builds on an extensive literature analysis, a survey of stakeholders and case studies. This report is the result of a joint analysis of these sources and their triangulation. Annex I details the methodological approach of the study. The core data has been integrated in an inventory of obstacles for cross-border cooperation.

This report presents the main findings of the study.

Executive summary

The study 'Analysis of Cross-border obstacles between European Union (EU) Member States and Enlargement Countries' aims to **comprehensively review existing external cross-border obstacles** and identify obstacles that can impact the five Policy Objectives and two Interreg Specific Objectives of the 2021-2027 programming period. The study also provides **orientations on how 2021-2027 Interreg Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) programmes can address these obstacles**. The geographic focus of the study is on the borders between EU Member States and candidate and potential candidate countries.

The study builds on an extensive literature analysis, a survey of stakeholders and case studies. This report is the result of a joint analysis of these sources and their triangulation. The core data has been integrated in an inventory of obstacles for cross-border cooperation which is available upon request.

Types of obstacle

In this study, the characterisation of obstacles for cross-border cooperation and integration builds on the concept of a '**multi-dimensional border reality**'. This assumes that all land borders have simultaneously a political, a geographical and natural, an economic and a socio-cultural dimension. Each dimension creates specific border effects that can prevent or hinder cross-border relations (closure effects) and enables or further advances cross-border relations (opening effects). Border obstacles are therefore specific closure effects due to these four border dimensions, but the 'roots' and scope of border obstacles differ because these dimensions differ.

The inventory developed during the study establishes a basic taxonomy along these four dimensions, differentiating the obstacles by their roots. The inventory includes 222 obstacles but does not claim to be complete since it includes only obstacles that were either sufficiently well documented in literature or reported in the survey. The complementarity of those obstacles identified in literature and through the survey suggest that in terms of variety and relevance, the inventory mirrors the obstacles for cross-border cooperation in a balanced way.

In addition to the 222 obstacles in the inventory, literature analysis and the survey hint at further obstacles to cross-border cooperation. Typical cross-cutting or horizontal obstacles that may also affect solutions are:

- lack of financial resources;
- low GDP or high discontinuities;
- low innovation;
- lagging digitalisation;
- gender inequality.

About 90% of the obstacles in the inventory directly relate either to the political or geographical/natural dimension of state borders in South-East Europe (SEE).

Political obstacles

58% of the obstacles relate to the political dimension of SEE borders. **Legal and administrative barriers** hamper cross-border cooperation. The inventory differentiates seven causes. Two refer to the interpretation of borders and their official recognition in SEE, two describe legal obstacles resulting from national and EU law and the last three are due to administrative and governance conditions. The complementarity of obstacles found through the literature review and the survey led to a relatively equal representation of the seven roots in the inventory.

Geographic-natural obstacles

32% of inventory obstacles relate to the geographic-natural dimension of SEE borders due to:

- insufficient transport and border crossing **infrastructure**;
- **natural barriers** (e.g. mountain ranges, rivers, lakes) that affect accessibility and connectivity in border areas;
- **inadequate protection and management of natural resources** or other barriers negatively affecting cross-border ecological connectivity.

Most geographical-natural obstacles in SEE are due to a lack of cross-border (transport) infrastructure to overcome barriers. Many highlight the hampering effects of a lack of efficient infrastructure and equipment at road border crossing points in SEE between EU Member States and enlargement countries. About one third of geographical-natural obstacles in the inventory are due to a lack of coordination of natural resource management. In most cases this affects the management of protected areas, logging in forests or water resources. Root causes of these obstacles can, however, sometimes be linked to a lack of harmonisation in the legal framework.

Economic and socio-cultural obstacles

The economic dimension may be influenced by socio-economic conditions in neighbouring border regions. Significant socio-economic discontinuities along borders simultaneously represent 'push' and 'pull' factors, which may generate both opportunities for cooperation and impediments.

The socio-cultural dimension considers perceptions of inhabitants in neighbouring border regions and how they relate to other groups by using specific concepts of collective identification. In view of the many significant socio-cultural dividing lines in SEE, this dimension is particularly important to understand cross-border cooperation in the area.

10% of the obstacles relate to the economic or socio-cultural dimensions of SEE borders. These obstacles stem from pronounced socio-economic **discontinuities**, **mental** or **language barriers**. Mental barriers can be further differentiated as:

- those hampering effective integration of environmental considerations into **economic and sector policies**;
- different **sense of belonging** by people in neighbouring border regions;
- different perception, interpretation and collective or group-specific articulation of the **historical legacy and cultural traditions**.

Geographical relevance of obstacles

The geography of obstacles is diverse. Cross-border obstacles may concern the **entire length** of a border, a **smaller segment**, or even **all border areas** and be between EU and non-EU members, or among candidate countries. More specifically, about 40% of the cross-border obstacles concern the entire length of a border between an EU Member State and an IPA country, while 23% concern smaller border segments between an EU Member State and an IPA country. 18% of obstacles are between two candidate countries. Their share is likely to be underestimated, since borders between candidate countries were not in the focus of the study.

Most obstacles at smaller border segments between EU and IPA countries are rooted in the geographical and natural dimension. They most often relate to nature conservation and transport links.

Effects of obstacles

Negative direct effects

A border obstacle usually causes a negative direct effect with adverse consequences for all kinds of organisations, groups or individuals crossing the border. These consequences may be financial and/or non-financial. Around half the obstacles lead to both.

The following can be observed for the most frequently affected policy areas:

- Cross-border obstacles affect economic development with direct effects in terms of **loss of time, additional costs** and inconvenient cross-border travelling, while the labour market and employment obstacles lead to restrictions in accessing services as well as individual income losses.
- Insufficient cross-border cooperation in health care leads to **restrictions to accessing services**, loss of time and additional costs.
- **Higher transaction costs** for business activities, **inconvenient cross-border travel** and loss of time are frequent effects of transport and mobility obstacles.
- Obstacles affecting environmental protection and natural resources lead to the **ineffective provision or use of public infrastructure**, additional costs and individual income losses.

Adverse secondary effects

These can emerge if a negative direct effect is aggravated by other factors or obstacles ('reinforcement effects') and/or if the obstacle *itself* induces other undesirable developments within the cross-border region ('**knock-on effects**'). In the inventory, 65% of cases result in knock-on effects with **further negative developments**.

Wider impact

The combination of negative direct effects and adverse secondary effects results in a 'wider negative impact' in the cross-border region. Wider impacts differ in nature and thematic orientation. They can hinder socio-economic development in a cross-border region, prevent more functional integration, weaken socio-cultural ties, strengthen existing tensions, harm the environment and lower the quality of life for citizens in this region. The wider negative impact can differ in magnitude and may concern one or more of the above-mentioned themes. Half the obstacles have **strong negative impacts**.

Policy areas and solutions

The analysis shows both the potential for Interreg IPA programmes to mitigate cross-border cooperation obstacles and the limits of these programmes to overcome them. Some obstacles need to be solved through national legislation, or programmes, or large-scale investment beyond the capacity of Interreg IPA programmes. These programmes can, however, address negative situations in cross-border areas through 'softer' measures and by involving national representatives may encourage further actions that can resolve obstacles permanently.

Relevant policy areas

Adequate policy responses can be a stepping stone towards mitigating obstacles and finding solutions across borders. Each obstacle in the inventory is connected with a policy area. More than half the obstacles relate to transport and sustainable mobility, natural resources and environmental protection, or civil protection and public security.

Within transport and sustainable mobility, a common issue concerns border crossing points and customs clearance processes, which mostly focus on obstacles at a specific border crossing or segment. About half the natural resources and environmental protection obstacles can be addressed through joint nature management measures and are usually relevant for several border areas.

In addition, labour market and education policy areas with their indirect effects are among the most important policy areas for cross-border cooperation obstacles. Labour and employment policy differs greatly between SEE countries, which strengthens the need for cross-border cooperation in this field.

There are obstacles for cross-border cooperation in SEE in all policy areas, implying that comprehensive measures are needed to overcome these in the medium- to long-term. Interreg IPA programmes can contribute through all Policy Objectives to this process.

Geographical relevance

All policy areas are relevant for obstacles at the full length or a segment of the border. Some policy areas refer to broader or very local obstacles. This combination of local and wider geographic relevance indicates a need for targeted IPA programmes. Obstacles affecting all or most borders in SEE are linked especially to transport and mobility, natural resources and environmental protection, civil protection and public security as well as climate change action. These policy areas may thus require not only cross-border but also transnational coordination.

Stakeholders and solution approaches

Stakeholders are affected by obstacles for cross-border cooperation in two ways.

Firstly, obstacles affect the well-being of citizens in border areas or the efficient delivery of services, business competitiveness, effective administration, the quality of transboundary eco-systems, etc. In other words, this is about the direct and secondary effects and impacts on living conditions in border areas. Some obstacles affect all citizens, while others have direct effects only for certain groups. Similarly, businesses and administrations in the border regions are affected. Effects for them are even more multi-dimensional since they are often also needed to implement solutions in overcoming obstacles to cross-border cooperation.

Any solution aiming to at least mitigate or possibly resolve obstacles needs to involve **stakeholders with adequate responsibilities and capacity**. Thus, the more approaches that are needed to mitigate an obstacle, the more stakeholders may become involved, though not necessarily during the whole process. The analysis differentiates levels of governance from EU to local level as well as other public and private sector stakeholders, resulting in 14 stakeholder groups. On average, about five to six types of stakeholders per obstacle are relevant or required to implement solutions. National governments are by far the most important and may, indeed, be needed if obstacles are to be completely removed e.g. through legislative action or interstate agreements. Other levels of government are often required for mitigation measures but also to implement national action locally or even induce national authorities to act. In this context, local and regional authorities and cross-border cooperation structures are crucial. These findings illustrate the limitations faced by Interreg IPA programmes to solve obstacles. While they can contribute and may provide essential support to mitigating or solving cross-border obstacles, often national measures are also required.

Secondly, various stakeholders are needed to mitigating or solving obstacles. Most actions require multilevel-governance approaches, implying new cooperation as well as **capacity and readiness for new methods and tools and often a combination of approaches**. A quarter of all solutions require legislation or agreements. More than half need governance ('soft') approaches. New cross-border cooperation structures and cross-border public services account for about 15% of approaches. For about 90% of obstacles, regional/local governance approaches may be enough to solve an obstacle or can mitigate them and/or facilitate more sustainable solutions, e.g. through interstate agreements or new cooperation structures. Nearly 80% of obstacles require more than one approach.

Findings for future IPA programmes

In some cases, action under different Policy Objectives (POs) may be necessary to address the obstacles in the inventory. **Interreg Strategic Objective (ISO) 1 'A better cooperation governance' is by far the most relevant** and may be useful to address nearly half the obstacles. Also important are PO 2 'A greener, low-carbon Europe' and PO 3 'A more connected Europe'. ISO 1 is highly relevant as it can be frequently combined with other POs to contribute to solving obstacles for cross-border cooperation. The case studies highlight that ISO 1 may provide different and very targeted support to border areas in SEE. In most cases it is about **capacity building** and establishing cooperation routines.

These findings raise the question, as to how far Interreg IPA programmes 2021-2027 plan a priority axis on ISO 1. It seems four of the ten Interreg IPA programmes plan to implement an ISO 1 priority, which would not mirror the need for ISO 1 related measures to mitigate obstacles to cross-border cooperation. The number of insufficiently working cross-border cooperation structures and the relevance of ISO 1 for obstacles across policy areas further support this finding.

Conclusions and policy pointers

The EC Communication on boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions has listed ten measures to address the challenges and particularities of border regions. These challenges and particularities are also relevant for border regions between EU Member States and IPA countries. Cross-border cooperation and integration may be even more challenged and varied on these borders.

This calls for another type of measure. There is a need for **capacity building in border areas and cross-border cooperation**. For Interreg IPA programmes the challenges differ, however, from those addressed by Interreg programmes, especially the development of cross-border cooperation structures. SEE border regions need stronger cross-border cooperation structures to facilitate many processes and measures to tackle challenges in border regions. In this context, increasing the **engagement of key actors in candidate and potential candidate countries** in Interreg IPA programmes is central.

In addition, many potential beneficiaries also face a **lack of financial resources to pre- and co-finance Interreg IPA actions**. This is a cross-cutting obstacle to cooperation on all borders between EU and IPA countries often hampering local stakeholder participation in these programmes. This impacts the intensity of cooperation and the range of initiatives that could alleviate or solve obstacles across borders. National interventions, such as schemes that ensure co-financing and/or interim funding to a ceiling of Interreg IPA participation could also help to mitigate a lack of resources in Member States and neighbouring candidate and potential candidate countries.

The EU can and must play a role through the enlargement process and cross-border cooperation programmes in the region (Interreg IPA), since it is a powerful stimulus for action at local and regional level. These and other EU support in SEE should be seen in the wider policy context of the region. A lack of trust and mental barriers may not always be visible at first glance as the main root cause for border obstacles. However, these are often an additional and reinforcing reason hampering cross-border cooperation. Other **external influences in the region** matter as well. A watchful eye should be kept on these influences to avoid developments that **could hamper the EU accession prospects** of SEE countries.

Past enlargement experience may be useful to illustrate how important it is to implement the requirements of the '*acquis communautaire*' prior to EU accession. At the same time, lengthy processes – especially in view of other external influences – may negatively affect the motivation of SEE governments to focus on the '*acquis communautaire*'. **Preferential conditions for candidate countries where these pre-requisites are**

fulfilled as well as more financial support may counter-balance external influences and help overcome cross-border cooperation obstacles. Additional financial support could also avoid an increasing gap of resources for regional and territorial development between EU Member States and enlargement countries.

Notwithstanding the focus of specific Interreg IPA programmes, future interventions should be more about **actions on mitigating obstacles for cross-border cooperation** rather than encouraging cooperation more generally. One way forward may be to focus on related Specific Objectives (SOs) across POs that could support one obstacle mitigation measure with another (e.g. ISO 1 together with an SO of a thematic PO).

To achieve visible effects, several steps may be needed before overcoming the obstacle. These steps are important to tailor cooperation to find solutions. Interreg IPA programmes can contribute throughout these processes.

Synthèse

L'étude intitulée « Analyse des obstacles transfrontaliers entre les États membres de l'Union européenne (UE) et les pays visés par l'élargissement » vise à examiner de manière exhaustive les **obstacles transfrontaliers extérieurs existants** et à identifier les obstacles susceptibles d'avoir une incidence sur les cinq objectifs stratégiques et les deux objectifs spécifiques Interreg de la période de programmation 2021-2027. L'étude fournit également des **orientations sur la manière dont les programmes Interreg de l'instrument d'aide à la préadhésion (IAP) 2021-2027 peuvent contribuer à lever ces obstacles**. L'étude se concentre sur les frontières entre les États membres de l'UE et les pays candidats et candidats potentiels.

L'étude s'appuie sur une analyse approfondie de la littérature, une enquête auprès des parties prenantes et des études de cas. Le présent rapport est le résultat d'une analyse conjointe de ces sources et de leur triangulation. Les données de base ont été intégrées dans un inventaire des obstacles à la coopération transfrontalière qui est disponible sur demande.

Typologie d'obstacles

Dans cette étude, la caractérisation des obstacles à la coopération et à l'intégration transfrontalières s'appuie sur le concept d'une « **réalité frontalière multidimensionnelle** ». Cela suppose que toutes les frontières terrestres ont à la fois une dimension politique, géographique et naturelle, économique, et socioculturelle. Chaque dimension crée des effets frontaliers spécifiques qui peuvent empêcher ou entraver les relations transfrontalières (effets de fermeture) et permettre ou faire progresser davantage les relations transfrontalières (effets d'ouverture). Les obstacles frontaliers sont donc des effets de fermeture spécifiques dus à ces quatre dimensions frontaliers, mais les origines et la portée des obstacles frontaliers diffèrent parce que ces dimensions diffèrent.

L'inventaire développé au cours de l'étude établit une taxonomie de base le long de ces quatre dimensions, différenciant les obstacles par leurs racines. L'inventaire comprend 222 obstacles, mais ne prétend pas être complet puisqu'il ne comprend que des obstacles qui ont été suffisamment bien documentés dans la littérature ou rapportés dans l'enquête. La complémentarité des obstacles identifiés dans la littérature et à travers l'enquête suggère qu'en termes de variété et de pertinence, l'inventaire reflète de manière équilibrée les obstacles à la coopération transfrontalière.

Outre les 222 obstacles de l'inventaire, l'analyse de la littérature et l'enquête font état d'autres obstacles à la coopération transfrontalière. Les obstacles transversaux typiques sont les suivants:

- le manque de ressources financières;
- un faible PIB ou des discontinuités élevées entre régions;
- une faible innovation;
- le retard de la numérisation;
- l'inégalité entre les sexes.

Environ 90 % des obstacles de l'inventaire sont directement liés à la dimension politique ou géographique/naturelle des frontières étatiques de l'Europe du Sud-Est (ESE).

Obstacles politiques

58 % des obstacles sont liés à la dimension politique des frontières de l'ESE. **Les obstacles juridiques et administratifs** entravent la coopération transfrontalière. L'inventaire différencie sept causes. Deux de ces causes se réfèrent au statut politique des frontières et à leur reconnaissance officielle en ESE, deux décrivent les obstacles juridiques résultant du droit national et/ou du droit de l'UE et les trois derniers sont dus

aux conditions administratives et de gouvernance. Ces sept causes sont représentées de manière équivalente dans l'inventaire.

Obstacles géographiques et naturels

32% des obstacles identifiés dans l'inventaire sont liés à la dimension géographique et naturelle des frontières de l'ESE en raison de:

- l'insuffisance des infrastructures de transport et de passage des **frontières**;
- **les obstacles naturels** (p. ex. chaînes de montagnes, rivières, lacs) qui nuisent à l'accessibilité et à la connectivité dans les zones frontalières;
- **une protection et une gestion défailante des ressources naturelles** ou d'autres facteurs ayant une incidence négative sur la connectivité écologique transfrontalière.

La plupart des obstacles géographiques et naturels en ESE sont dus à un manque d'infrastructures transfrontalières (de transport) pour surmonter les obstacles. Beaucoup de ces obstacles soulignent les effets néfastes d'un manque d'infrastructures et d'équipements efficaces aux points de passage frontaliers routiers en ESE entre les États membres de l'UE et les pays visés par l'élargissement. Environ un tiers des obstacles géographiques et naturels de l'inventaire sont dus à un manque de coordination dans la gestion de ressources naturelles transfrontalières. Dans la plupart des cas, cela concerne la gestion des aires protégées, l'exploitation forestière ou les ressources en eau. Toutefois, les causes profondes de ces obstacles peuvent parfois être liées à un manque d'harmonisation du cadre juridique.

Obstacles économiques et socioculturels

La dimension économique de la frontière peut être influencée par les conditions socio-économiques dans les régions frontalières. Les discontinuités socio-économiques importantes le long des frontières représentent simultanément des facteurs d'attraction et de répulsion, qui peuvent générer à la fois des opportunités et des obstacles à la coopération.

La dimension socioculturelle considère les représentations que se font les habitants des régions frontalières de leurs voisins au travers de processus d'identification collective. Compte tenu des nombreuses lignes de séparation socioculturelle qui traversent l'ESE, cette dimension est particulièrement importante pour comprendre la coopération transfrontalière dans la région.

10% des obstacles sont liés aux dimensions économiques ou socioculturels des frontières de l'ESE. Ces obstacles découlent de **discontinuités** socio-économiques prononcées, et de **barrières mentales** ou **linguistiques**. Différentes barrières mentales peuvent être identifiées:

- celles qui empêchent l'intégration de considérations environnementales dans les **politiques** économiques et **sectorielles**;
- des **sentiments d'appartenance** divergents entre habitants des régions frontalières voisines;
- des représentations différentes **de l'histoire et des traditions culturelles**.

Caractérisation géographique des obstacles

La géographie des obstacles est diverse. Les obstacles transfrontaliers peuvent concerner toute la **longueur d'une** frontière, un segment plus **petit**, voire **toutes les zones frontalières** et se situer entre des membres de l'UE et des pays tiers, ou entre pays candidats. Plus précisément, environ 40 % des obstacles transfrontaliers concernent la longueur totale d'une frontière entre un État membre de l'UE et un pays de l'IAP, tandis que 23 % concernent des segments frontaliers réduit entre un État membre de l'UE et un pays de l'IAP. 18 % des obstacles se situent entre deux pays candidats. Leur part est sans doute sous-estimée, étant donné que les frontières entre pays candidats ne sont pas au centre de l'étude.

La plupart des obstacles sur les segments frontaliers plus petits entre les pays de l'UE et les pays de l'IAP sont liés dans la dimension géographique et naturelle. Ils concernent le plus souvent la conservation de la nature et les liaisons de transport.

Effets des obstacles

Effets directs négatifs

Un obstacle frontalier provoque généralement un effet direct négatif avec des conséquences négatives pour toutes sortes d'organisations, de groupes ou d'individus qui traversent la frontière. Ces conséquences peuvent être financières et/ou non financières. Elles sont à la fois financières et non-financières dans la moitié des cas.

Les observations suivantes peuvent être formulées pour les domaines d'action les plus fréquemment touchés:

- Les obstacles transfrontaliers affectent le développement économique avec des effets directs en termes **de perte de temps, de coûts supplémentaires** et de déplacements transfrontaliers incommode, tandis que les obstacles sur le marché du travail mènent à des restrictions dans l'accès aux services ainsi qu'à des pertes de revenus individuels.
- Une coopération transfrontalière insuffisante dans le domaine des soins de santé entraîne des **restrictions à l'accès aux services**, des pertes de temps et d'autres coûts supplémentaires.
- **Des coûts de transaction plus élevés** pour les activités commerciales, **des déplacements transfrontaliers peu pratiques** et des pertes de temps sont des effets fréquents des obstacles au transport et à la mobilité.
- Les obstacles affectant la protection de l'environnement et des ressources naturelles entraînent la **fourniture ou l'utilisation inefficace des infrastructures** publiques, des coûts supplémentaires et des pertes de revenus individuels.

Effets secondaires indésirables

Ceux-ci peuvent apparaître si un effet direct négatif est aggravé par d'autres facteurs ou obstacles (« effets de renforcement ») et/ou si l'obstacle *lui-même* induit d'autres développements indésirables dans la région transfrontalière (« effets d'entraînement »). Dans l'inventaire, 65% des cas créent des effets d'entraînement avec **d'autres développements négatifs**.

Un impact plus large

La combinaison d'effets directs négatifs et d'effets secondaires négatifs se traduit par un « impact négatif plus large » dans la région transfrontalière. Les impacts plus larges diffèrent par leur nature et leur orientation thématique. Ils peuvent entraver le développement socio-économique dans une région transfrontalière, empêcher une intégration fonctionnelle, affaiblir les liens socioculturels, renforcer les tensions existantes, nuire à l'environnement et réduire la qualité de vie des citoyens de cette région. Pour un obstacle donné, les impacts négatifs peuvent varier en ampleur et se combiner. La moitié des obstacles ont de **forts impacts négatifs**.

Domaines d'action et solutions

L'analyse montre à la fois le potentiel des programmes IAP Interreg pour atténuer les obstacles à la coopération transfrontalière et les limites de ces programmes pour les surmonter. Certains obstacles doivent être résolus par le biais d'une législation ou de programmes nationaux ou d'investissements à grande échelle au-delà de la capacité des programmes Interreg IAP. Ces programmes peuvent toutefois remédier aux situations négatives dans les zones transfrontalières par des mesures « douces » et, en impliquant des représentants nationaux, encourager de nouvelles actions susceptibles de résoudre les obstacles de manière permanente.

Domaines d'action pertinents

Des réponses politiques adéquates peuvent être un tremplin vers l'atténuation des obstacles et la recherche de solutions au-delà des frontières. Chaque obstacle de l'inventaire est lié à un domaine politique. Plus de la moitié des obstacles concernent les transports et la mobilité durable, les ressources naturelles et la protection de l'environnement, ou la protection civile et la sécurité publique.

Dans le domaine des transports et de la mobilité durable, un problème commun concerne les points de passage frontaliers et les processus de dédouanement, qui se concentrent principalement sur les obstacles à un passage ou à un segment frontalier spécifique. Environ la moitié des obstacles en matière de ressources naturelles et de protection de l'environnement peuvent être surmontés par des mesures conjointes de gestion de la nature et sont généralement pertinents pour plusieurs zones frontalières.

En outre, les domaines d'action du marché du travail et de l'éducation, avec leurs effets indirects, sont parmi les domaines d'action les plus importants pour les obstacles à la coopération transfrontalière. Les politiques du travail et de l'emploi diffèrent considérablement d'un pays de l'Europe du Sud-Est à l'autre, ce qui renforce la nécessité d'une coopération transfrontalière dans ce domaine.

Il existe des obstacles à la coopération transfrontalière au sein de l'Europe du Sud-Est dans tous les domaines d'action, ce qui implique que des mesures globales sont nécessaires pour les surmonter à moyen et à long terme. Les programmes Interreg IAP peuvent contribuer, au travers de tous les objectifs stratégiques, à ce processus.

Pertinence géographique

Tous les domaines d'action sont pertinents quel que soit le caractère géographique de l'obstacle (obstacle sur toute la longueur d'une frontière ou sur un segment de la frontière). Certains domaines d'action sont plus spécifiques aux obstacles plus larges ou très locaux. Cette combinaison d'intérêt local et géographique plus large invite à mettre en place des programmes IAP ciblés. Les obstacles qui affectent toutes les frontières de l'Europe du Est ou la plupart d'entre elles sont liés en particulier aux transports et à la mobilité, aux ressources naturelles et à la protection de l'environnement, à la protection civile et à la sécurité publique, ainsi qu'à l'action contre le changement climatique. Ces domaines d'action peuvent donc nécessiter non seulement une coordination transfrontalière, mais aussi transnationale.

Parties prenantes impliquées et diversité des approches

Les parties prenantes sont affectées par les obstacles à la coopération transfrontalière de deux manières.

Premièrement, les obstacles affectent le bien-être des citoyens dans les zones frontalières, la fourniture efficace de services, la compétitivité des entreprises, l'efficacité de l'administration, ou encore la qualité des écosystèmes transfrontaliers, etc. En d'autres termes, il s'agit des effets et impacts directs et secondaires sur les conditions de vie dans les zones frontalières. Certains obstacles touchent tous les citoyens, tandis que d'autres n'ont d'effets directs que pour certains groupes. De même, les entreprises et les administrations des régions frontalières sont touchées. Les effets pour eux sont d'autant plus multifacettes qu'ils affectent aussi les conditions nécessaires à la mise en œuvre des solutions permettant de surmonter les obstacles à la coopération transfrontalière.

Toute solution visant au moins à atténuer ou éventuellement à résoudre les obstacles doit impliquer **les parties prenantes ayant des responsabilités et des moyens d'action adéquates**. Ainsi, plus un obstacle est complexe, plus les parties prenantes à impliquer sont nombreuses, mais pas nécessairement pendant tout le processus. L'analyse différencie les niveaux de gouvernance (du niveau communautaire européen au niveau local) ainsi que d'autres parties prenantes des secteurs public et privé, soit au total 14 groupes de parties prenantes. En moyenne, environ cinq à six types de parties prenantes par obstacle sont pertinents ou nécessaires pour mettre en œuvre des solutions. Les gouvernements nationaux sont de loin les plus importants et peuvent, en

effet, être nécessaires si l'on veut éliminer complètement les obstacles, par exemple par des mesures législatives ou des accords interétatiques. D'autres niveaux de gouvernement sont souvent nécessaires pour des mesures d'atténuation, mais aussi pour mettre en œuvre une action nationale au niveau local ou même pour inciter les autorités nationales à agir. Dans ce contexte, les autorités locales et régionales et les structures de coopération transfrontalière sont cruciales. Ces résultats illustrent les limites rencontrées par les programmes Interreg IAP pour résoudre les obstacles. Bien qu'ils puissent contribuer et fournir un soutien essentiel à l'atténuation ou à la résolution des obstacles transfrontaliers, des mesures nationales sont souvent également nécessaires.

Deuxièmement, diverses parties prenantes sont nécessaires pour atténuer ou à résoudre les obstacles. La plupart des actions nécessitent des approches de gouvernance à plusieurs niveaux, qui impliquent une nouvelle coopération ainsi que l'utilisation de **nouvelles méthodes et de nouveaux outils et souvent une combinaison d'approches**. Un quart de toutes les solutions nécessitent une législation ou des accords. Plus de la moitié implique de repenser la gouvernance. Les nouvelles structures de coopération transfrontalière et les services publics transfrontaliers représentent environ 15 % des approches. Pour environ 90 % des obstacles, les approches de gouvernance régionale/locale peuvent suffire à résoudre un obstacle, à l'atténuer et/ou à faciliter des solutions plus durables, par exemple par le biais d'accords interétatiques ou de nouvelles structures de coopération. Près de 80 % des obstacles nécessitent plus d'une approche.

Conclusions pour les futurs programmes IAP

Dans certains cas, des actions au titre de différents objectifs stratégiques (OS) peuvent être nécessaires pour éliminer les obstacles de l'inventaire. **L'objectif stratégique Interreg (OSI) 1 « Une meilleure gouvernance de la coopération » est de loin le plus pertinent** et peut être utile pour combler près de la moitié des obstacles. L'OS 2 « Une Europe plus verte et à faible intensité de carbone » et l'OS 3 « Une Europe plus connectée » sont également importants. L'OSI 1 est très pertinent car il peut souvent être combinée avec d'autres OS pour contribuer à résoudre les obstacles à la coopération transfrontalière. Les études de cas soulignent que l'OSI 1 peut fournir un soutien très ciblé aux zones frontalières de l'Europe du Sud-Est. Dans la plupart des cas, il s'agit de développer **les compétences** et d'établir des routines de coopération.

Ces résultats soulèvent la question de savoir si les programmes IAP Interreg 2021-2027 prévoient ou non un axe prioritaire sur l'OSI 1. Il semble que quatre des dix programmes Interreg IAP prévoient de mettre en œuvre un axe prioritaire mobilisant l'OSI 1, ce qui ne reflète mal la nécessité de mesures liées à l'OSI 1 pour atténuer les obstacles à la coopération transfrontalière. Le nombre de structures de coopération transfrontalière qui sont peu actives, et la pertinence de l'OSI 1 pour régler des obstacles au carrefour de plusieurs domaines d'action renforcent encore ce constat.

Conclusions et orientations politiques

La communication de la Commission européenne sur la stimulation de la croissance et de la cohésion dans les régions frontalières de l'UE a listé dix mesures visant à relever les défis et les particularités des régions frontalières. Ces défis et particularités sont également pertinents pour les régions frontalières entre les États membres de l'UE et les pays de l'IAP. La coopération et l'intégration transfrontalières peuvent être encore plus difficiles et variées à ces frontières.

Cela nécessite un autre type de mesures : le renforcement des **capacités dans les zones frontalières et la coopération transfrontalière**. En ce qui concerne les programmes Interreg IAP, les défis diffèrent toutefois de ceux relevés par les programmes Interreg, en particulier le développement de structures de coopération transfrontalière. Les régions frontalières de l'ESE ont besoin de structures de

coopération transfrontalière plus solides pour faciliter de nombreux processus et mesures visant à relever les défis des régions transfrontalières. Dans ce contexte, il est essentiel d'accroître **l'engagement des acteurs clés des pays candidats et candidats potentiels** dans les programmes Interreg IAP.

En outre, de nombreux bénéficiaires potentiels sont également confrontés à un **manque de ressources financières pour préfinancer et cofinancer les actions Interreg IAP**. Il s'agit d'un obstacle transversal à la coopération à toutes les frontières entre l'UE et les pays de l'IAP, qui entrave souvent la participation des parties prenantes locales à ces programmes. Cela a une incidence sur l'intensité de la coopération et sur l'éventail des initiatives prises pour atténuer ou résoudre les obstacles transfrontaliers. Les interventions nationales, telles que les programmes qui garantissent le cofinancement et/ou le financement intermédiaire jusqu'à un plafond de participation à l'IAP Interreg, pourraient également contribuer à atténuer le manque de ressources dans les États membres et les pays candidats et candidats potentiels voisins.

L'UE peut et doit jouer un rôle à travers le processus d'élargissement et les programmes de coopération transfrontalière dans la région (Interreg IAP) qui sont de puissants facteurs d'activation de la coopération aux niveaux local et régional. Les soutiens de l'UE - quels qu'ils soient - aux pays d'ESE doivent être considérés dans le contexte politique plus large de la région. Le manque de confiance et les barrières mentales ne sont pas toujours identifiés à première vue comme principale cause des obstacles frontaliers. Cependant, il s'agit souvent d'une entrave supplémentaire à la coopération transfrontalière. D'autres **influences extérieures à la région** sont également déterminantes. Il convient de garder un œil vigilant sur ces influences afin d'éviter des développements qui **pourraient entraver les perspectives d'adhésion à l'UE** des pays de l'Europe du Sud-Est.

Les expériences passées en matière d'élargissement illustrent l'importance de mettre en œuvre les exigences de l'*acquis communautaire* avant l'adhésion à l'UE. Dans le même temps, l'allongement des processus d'adhésion – en particulier compte tenu d'autres influences extérieures – peuvent affecter négativement la motivation des gouvernements de l'ESE à se concentrer sur l'*acquis communautaire*. **Des conditions préférentielles pour les pays candidats où ces conditions préalables sont remplies ainsi qu'un soutien financier plus important** peuvent contrebalancer les influences extérieures et aider à surmonter les obstacles à la coopération transfrontalière. Un soutien financier supplémentaire pourrait également éviter un écart croissant de ressources pour le développement régional et territorial entre les États membres de l'UE et les pays visés par l'élargissement.

Nonobstant l'orientation des programmes Interreg IPA, les interventions futures devraient davantage inclure sur des **actions visant à atténuer les obstacles à la coopération** solution pourrait être de se concentrer sur des objectifs spécifiques d'OS thématique en vue de soutenir une mesure d'atténuation des obstacles. Ceci impliquerait de mobiliser l'OSI 1 conjointement à un Objectif Spécifique d'un OS thématique).

Pour obtenir des effets visibles, plusieurs actions successives peuvent être nécessaires avant de surmonter un obstacle. Ces actions sont importantes pour adapter la coopération et ainsi trouver des solutions. Les programmes Interreg IAP peuvent contribuer tout au long de ces processus.

1. Introduction

The need for particular attention to border and cross-border regions is widely acknowledged in the European Union (EU). While the focus is most often on internal borders, where about 30% of the EU population lives (European Commission, 2017, p. 2), the need for action is acknowledged at EU external borders. For instance the Territorial Agenda of the EU 2030 (TA2030) points out that “especially EU external borders have disparities and differences in legal, social and political systems that affect local and regional development” (Territorial Agenda, 2020, p. 9). In turn, a lack of integration contributes to exacerbating peripherality and social exclusion.

Article 212 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) stipulates that “the Union shall carry out economic, financial and technical cooperation measures, including assistance, in particular financial assistance, with third countries other than developing countries”. This provides the legal basis for the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) with the ability to address cross-border cooperation challenges through programmes dedicated to this cooperation, i.e. Interreg IPA CBC programmes. The objective is to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of these programmes and to support border regions in overcoming challenges based on the existence of national borders. **This study encourages border areas to work on these obstacles.**

Contributing to this objective the present study aims *to make a comprehensive review of existing external cross-border obstacles and identify the obstacles that can have an impact on the five Policy Objectives (POs) and two Interreg Specific Objectives (ISOs)*, as laid down in the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Interreg regulations for the programming period 2021-2027 (European Parliament and European Council, 2021a, Art. 14, 2021b Art. 3). The recent EC Communication on ‘EU Border Regions: Living labs of European integration’ highlights the need for actions to support cross-border interaction at internal and external borders, which may address obstacles to cross-border cooperation (European Commission, 2021). In view of the new 2021-2027 programming period, this study also provides orientations on how these obstacles could be addressed by Interreg IPA programmes. This defines the geographic focus of the study on the borders between EU Member States and candidate and potential candidate countries.^{1, 2}

This report presents the main findings of the study. Results and findings differentiate the dimensions of the analysis starting with identification of types of obstacles in South-East Europe (SEE) and their root-causes (Chapter 2). Based on this, obstacles are further detailed by geography (Chapter 3), effects (Chapter 4) as well as approaches and solutions to reduce obstacles (Chapter 5). The latter includes findings on policy areas, governance implications and proposals for Interreg IPA programmes 2021-2027. The report closes with conclusions and policy pointers offering further food for thought.

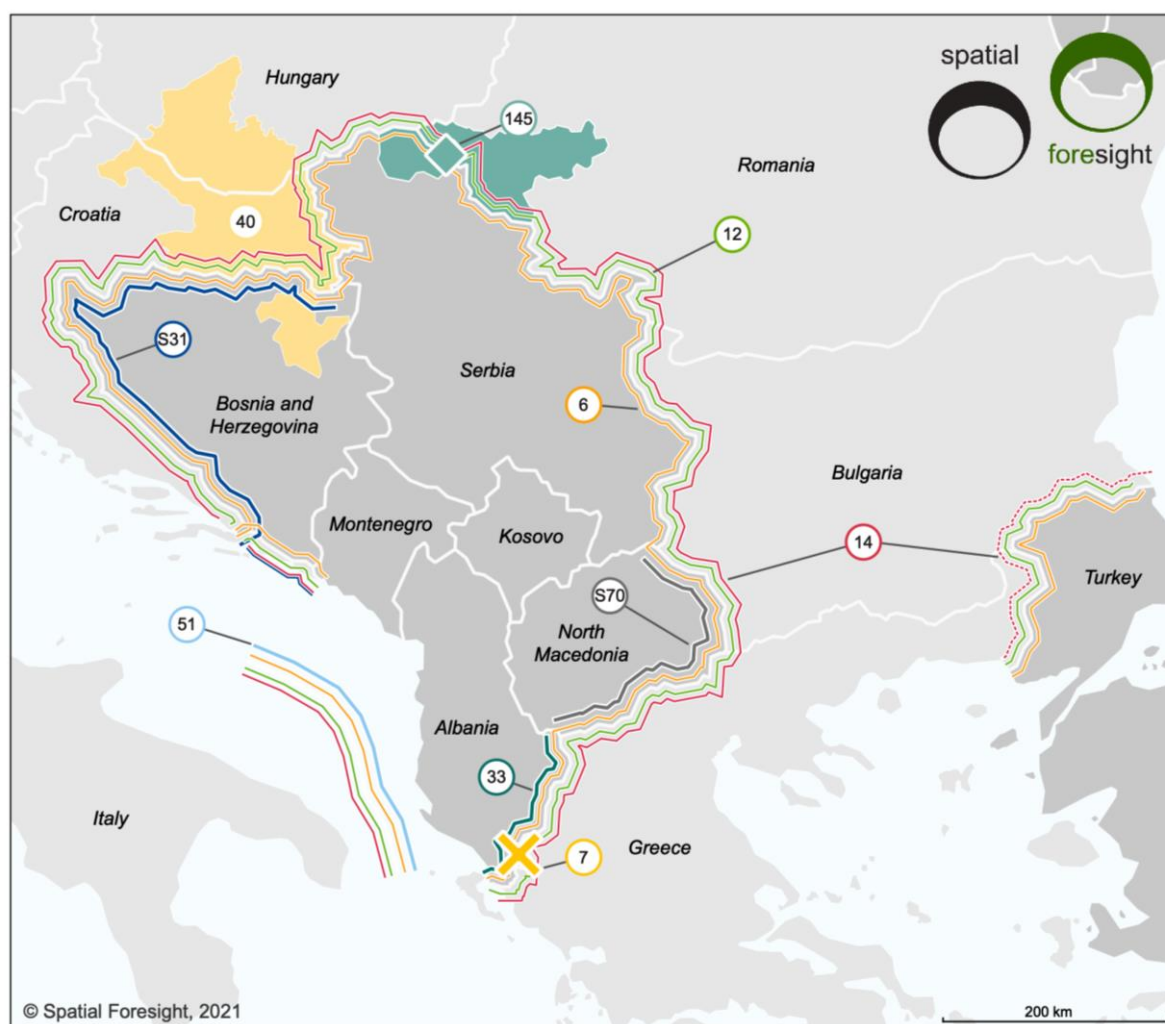
The study builds on an extensive literature analysis, a survey of stakeholders and case studies with a joint analysis of these sources and their triangulation. Annex I details the methodological approach of the study. The core data is consolidated in an inventory of obstacles. Being a database, this inventory is not annexed to the final report or other publications of the study. Any obstacle numbers refer to an identification number in the database which is available upon request as an Excel file at DG Regio. The inventory comprises 222 obstacles for cross-border cooperation in the study area, without claiming to be exhaustive, since any identification of obstacles relies on sufficient information and sources. Ten obstacles have been analysed in case studies. Annex II

¹ Borders between candidate and potential candidate countries in South-East Europe have not been explicitly excluded but are covered either implicitly (e.g. when referring to the Western Balkans more generally) or through coincidental findings.

² Relevant EU Member States are Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Italy and Romania. Candidate and potential countries are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey.

presents the overview of case studies, which are detailed in separate documents. They cover different territories in SEE as depicted in Map 1-1), where colours show the territorial coverage of the case studies.

Map 1-1 Locations and territorial coverage of case studies



Source: Spatial Foresight, 2021

Administrative boundaries: Eurostat GISCO, NUTS 0 (2016)

Location of case study cross-border obstacles between specific EU Member States and Candidate Countries, 2021

- 6** Lacking cross-border harmonisation in health legislation, standards and procedures
- 7:** Smuggling at the Greek-Albanian border
- 12:** Shared climate change challenges in the field of water resources
- 14:** Different regulatory investment frameworks
- S31:** Economic disparities between Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Serbia
- 33:** Bilateral minority dispute between Greece and Albania
- 40:** Recent weakening of the trilateral "Danube-Drava-Sava Euroregion"
- 51:** Weaknesses of the EUSAIR
- S70:** Lack of infrastructure and connections between Greece, North Macedonia and Bulgaria
- 145:** Difficulties for improving cross-border labour mobility between Timis County in Romania and the Serbian Banat region

2. Types of obstacles

In this study, the characterisation of obstacles for cross-border cooperation and integration builds on the concept of a 'multi-dimensional border reality'.³ This assumes that all land borders have simultaneously a political dimension, a geographical and natural dimension, an economic dimension and a socio-cultural dimension. Each dimension creates specific border effects that can prevent or hinder cross-border relations (closure effects) or enable and advance cross-border relations (opening effects). Border obstacles are therefore closure effects based on these four border dimensions, but the 'roots' and scope of obstacles differ because border features differ.

The inventory establishes a taxonomy for the obstacles along these four dimensions, differentiating them by their roots. The inventory includes 222 obstacles but does not claim to be complete since it covers only obstacles that were well documented in the literature or reported in the survey. The complementarity, variety and relevance of obstacles identified in literature and through the survey suggest the inventory mirrors the obstacles for cross-border cooperation in a balanced way.

In addition to the 222 obstacles, both literature analysis and the survey hint at further obstacles that were, however, not included in the inventory for two reasons.

Firstly, some obstacles appear to be cross-cutting and may have different roots to the multi-dimensional border realities. Nevertheless, they are often relevant for cross-border cooperation, too. Typical cross-cutting or horizontal obstacles that may affect future solutions in overcoming cross-border cooperation obstacles are:

- lack of financial resources;
- low GDP or high discontinuities;
- low innovation;
- lagging digitalisation;
- gender inequality.

Secondly, some obstacles noted by survey respondents were not backed by sufficient information to include them in the inventory. Typical examples are:

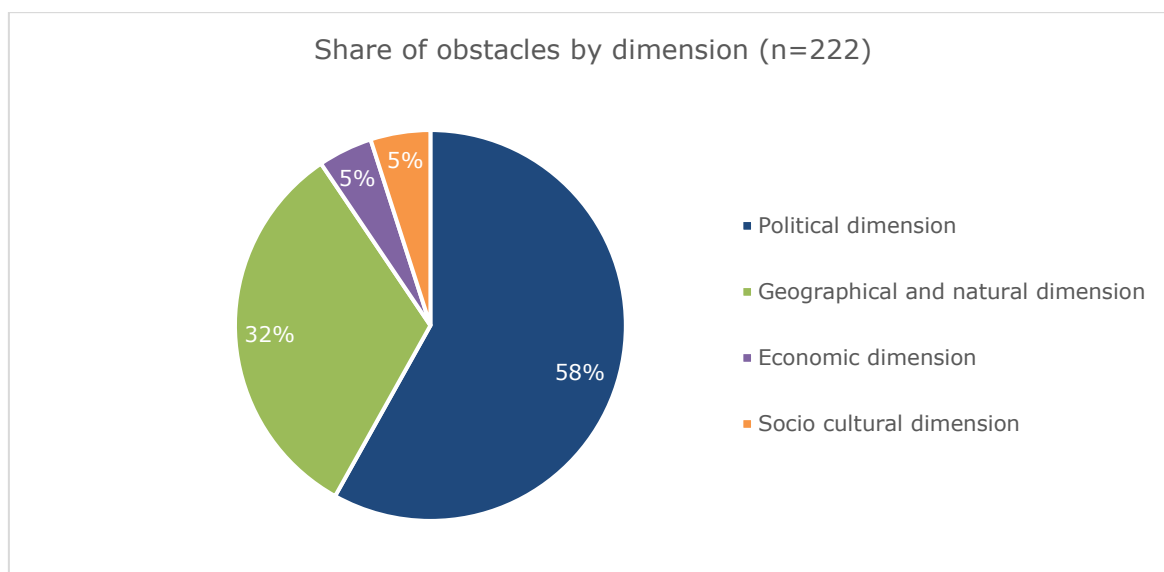
- different national legislation and/or administrative structures between certain SEE borders;
- limitations to cross-border commuting and – more generally – mobility;
- lack of (transport) infrastructure;
- administrative obstacles hampering cross-border transport;
- lack of cooperation on education (schools, recognition of degrees);
- lack of cross-border health care access or investments in health care;
- lack of joint action on environmental issues and climate change action.

Obstacles on similar issues have been included, however, in the inventory and case studies. The other cases may refer to other border areas and thus indicate the wider relevance of many obstacles for the border between an EU Member State and an IPA country. Keeping these findings in mind, the following chapters focus on the obstacles in the inventory and additional insights from case study analyses.

About 90% of the 222 obstacles directly relate to the political or geographical/natural dimension of state borders in SEE (see Figure 2-1), with most related to the political dimension. The few economic and socio-cultural obstacles do not imply they are not relevant to cross-border cooperation. On the contrary, a single obstacle can be very important and create significant impacts, as will be shown in Chapter 4.

³ For a description of the concept and its dimensions see e.g. ESPON (2018, pp. 14–16).

Figure 2-1 Share of obstacles by dimension



Source: Service provider 2021, based on cross-border obstacles inventory

Overall, above findings and observations indicate, that combining obstacle cases from literature review and survey respondents seem to cover all main types of obstacles for cross-border cooperation between EU Member States and candidate countries but their actual number may be even higher than the number of obstacles collected in the inventory.

2.1. Obstacles rooted in the political dimension of SEE borders

The obstacle inventory includes 129 cases (58%) related to the political dimension of SEE borders. These obstacles are due to different legal or administrative barriers hampering cross-border cooperation. The inventory differentiates seven causes. Two refer to the interpretation of borderlines and their official recognition in SEE, two are legal obstacles resulting from national and EU law and the last three relate to administrative and governance conditions. Obstacles from the literature review and the survey are complementary leading to a relatively equal representation of the seven roots in the inventory. There are slightly more obstacles related to weakly developed or different governance systems and administrative structures as well as different national laws and regulations than other obstacles within the political dimension (Figure 2-2).

The case studies highlight additional insights about different roots within the political border dimension. Illustrations below show particularities resulting from the different international status of borders, different national legal frameworks and weak governance systems.

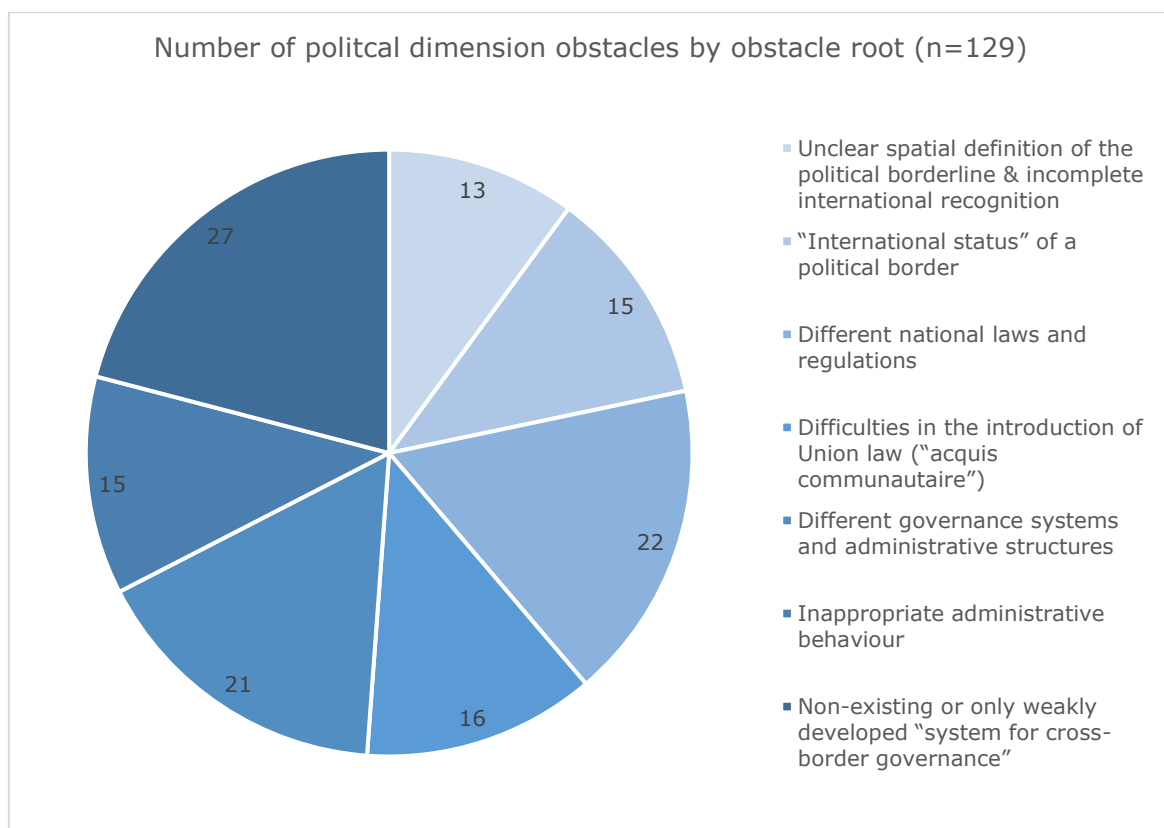
Case study illustrations on roots of obstacles within the political dimension

The case study on **smuggling at the Greek-Albanian** border is an example that illustrates the effects of different international status for borders in the European integration process. The differences in status lead to a need for control at border check points and cooperation. A lack of control and cooperation facilitates smuggling, which is further fed by socio-economic circumstances.

Different national laws and regulations or a lack of harmonisation of the legal framework affects cross-border cooperation in many spheres. This can include cooperation in general or for a specific sector. The case studies on a **lack of cross-border harmonisation of health legislation, standards and procedures in SEE** and on **different regulatory investment frameworks** illustrate this for health care as well as economic cooperation and trade relations, respectively. The example of **transboundary river basin management** further illustrates this, also in view of implementation of the '*acquis communautaire*'.

Finally, obstacles due to administrative and governance systems are illustrated, inter alia, weak governance systems in many SEE cross-border regions. These hamper cooperation between different levels in a wider geographic area as illustrated by the multilateral **Adriatic Ionian Euroregion** as well as smaller geographic areas such as the **Danube-Drava-Sava Euroregion**. Different administrative systems may also affect sector specific cooperation as described in the example of **limited cross-border labour mobility**, resulting from different formal requirements for foreign citizens.

Figure 2-2 Number of political and administrative obstacles by obstacle root



Source: Service provider, 2021, based on cross-border obstacles inventory

2.2. Obstacles rooted in the geographical-natural dimension of SEE borders

The obstacle inventory includes 72 cases (32%) related to the geographic-natural dimension of SEE borders. They have three root causes:

- insufficient transport and border crossing point **infrastructure**;
- **natural barriers** (e.g. mountain ranges, rivers, lakes) that affect accessibility and connectivity of border areas;
- inadequate protection and management of **natural resources** in border areas or other barriers negatively affecting cross-border ecological connectivity.

Most geographical-natural obstacles in SEE (45 cases) are rooted in the lack of cross-border (transport) infrastructure to overcome barriers caused by rivers, mountains, etc. Many are at border crossings between EU Member States and enlargement countries indicating the effects of a lack of efficient infrastructure and equipment at these border crossing points. The case study on the geographical-natural dimension of the border is an example of poor transport infrastructure.

Case study illustration: Lack of infrastructure and connection between North Macedonia and Bulgaria and Greece

The main transport connections between North Macedonia and Bulgaria and North Macedonia and Greece continuously lack quality transport infrastructure, hampering the mobility of goods and people between North Macedonia and the two EU Member States. While many border crossings suffer from inefficient border crossing point infrastructure, the transport links in this case study connect the Orient / East-Med TEN-T core network and require further development to ensure sufficient transport capacity. The source of the problem lies on the natural areas of the border crossings and the lack of, or damaged, road and rail infrastructure affecting economic and tourist operators.

About one third of geographical-natural obstacles in the inventory (24 cases) have their roots in a lack of coordination of natural resources. In most cases this affects the management of protected areas, logging of forests or the conditions of water resources. Root causes of these obstacles can, however, also be linked to a lack of harmonisation in the legal framework. This is illustrated by the case study on limited cross-border cooperation on climate change adaptation for water resources. It shows how different causes may be linked and contribute to a specific cross-border obstacle.

Case study illustration: Shared climate change challenges for water resources lacking sufficient cross-border cooperation on climate change adaptation in SEE

Owing to climatic conditions as well as topography, the Western Balkans is one of the richest in Europe in terms of water resources. Transboundary water resources are an important common asset in SEE. Most countries share one or more transboundary river basins, making this an important area for regional cooperation and effort. Environmental rules and legislation are subject to Chapter 27 of the *acquis communautaire*⁴ and require transposition of EU rules into the national legislation of candidate countries, contributing to harmonised environmental legislation. A lack of such harmonisation affects the ability to develop transboundary and cooperative river

⁴ The *acquis* comprises over 200 major legal acts covering horizontal legislation, water and air quality, waste management, nature protection, industrial pollution control and risk management, chemicals and genetically modified organisms (GMOs), noise and forestry (https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/policy/conditions-membership/chapters-of-the-acquis_en) (accessed on 07 June 2021).

basin management. In particular, applying EU environmental legislation requires efficient and adequate administration at different levels. At the same time, a lack of river basin management is an example of a lack of coordination for natural resources, which could also be induced by a lack of harmonised legislation.

Despite the mountain ranges and river basins in SEE only few obstacles in the inventory are directly and primarily rooted in natural barriers. Some of these refer to several locations in SEE with the same obstacle. Obstacles stemming from natural barriers refer to sometimes to exclaves affecting transport and mobility. Other obstacles due to a lack of transport infrastructure can also be related to mountain ranges or rivers, which make infrastructure investments more complex and expensive. However, in these cases mountains or rivers do not impede transport infrastructure investments.

2.3. Obstacles rooted in the economic and socio-cultural dimensions of SEE borders

The economic dimension refers to cross-border economic relations and how these may be influenced by socio-economic development conditions in neighbouring border regions. Significant socio-economic discontinuities along borders simultaneously represent 'push' and 'pull' factors, which may generate opportunities for cooperation and impediments.

The socio-cultural dimension considers perceptions of inhabitants in neighbouring border regions and how they relate to other groups using specific concepts of collective identification (e.g. nationality, ethnicity, regional/local identity, religion or interculturalism). In view of many significant socio-cultural dividing lines in SEE, this dimension is particularly important to understand cross-border cooperation in the area.

The obstacle inventory includes 21 cases (10%) related to the economic or socio-cultural dimensions of SEE borders. These obstacles stem from pronounced socio-economic **discontinuities**, **mental barriers** and **language barriers**. Mental barriers can be further differentiated:

- 1) barriers hampering effective integration of environmental considerations into **economic and sector policies**;
- 2) different perception of the **sense of belonging** by people in neighbouring border regions;
- 3) different perception, interpretation and collective or group-specific articulation of the **historical legacy and cultural traditions**.

Mental barriers related to different perceptions due to historical legacy and cultural traditions as well as economic discontinuities tend to be the most frequent obstacles in SEE to cross-border cooperation.

Two case studies on the economic and socio-cultural dimensions illustrate typical examples of obstacles to cross-border cooperation in SEE, although the details of the causes and effects differ from case to case. Further insights reveal that cross-border cooperation in some areas of the Western Balkans is still sensitive due to tensions linked to war legacies and different interpretations of recent history. This is perpetuated in younger generations and is an underlying issue for cross-border cooperation in the area.

Case study illustrations on obstacles related to the economic or socio-cultural dimension of borders

Economic discontinuities along many borders in SEE are not only between EU Member States and enlargement countries. They are visible in GDP, GDP per capita, employment and unemployment, wages, poverty etc. The case study on **economic**

disparities between Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia illustrates this through effects on employment and labour market. The variety of adverse economic structures shows this is one example of a root-cause relationship but there are others in relation to skills, capacities, funding opportunities for businesses and infrastructure, innovation, etc.

The case study on the **bilateral dispute on the role and status of the Greek minority in Albania and the Albanian minority in Greece** considers two related obstacles. This is an example of a cross-border cooperation obstacle that is not widely relevant but complements other obstacles in SEE in view of the area's historical legacy and cultural traditions. Most of these obstacles are due to a lack of political willingness for reconciliation and related disputes.

3. Geography of obstacles

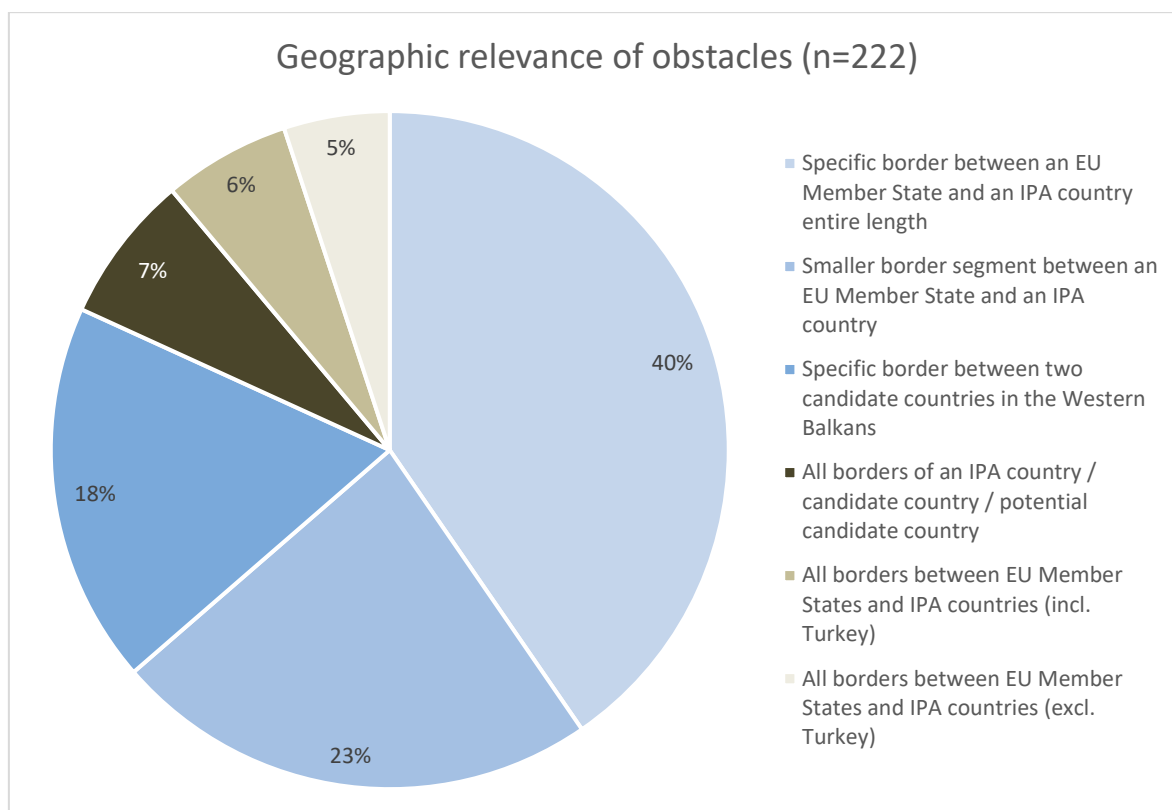
The inventory shows that the geography of obstacles is diverse. Cross-border obstacles may concern the entire length of a border, a smaller segment, or even all border areas between EU and non-EU members, or among candidate countries. More specifically, about 40% of the cross-border obstacles from the literature and the survey concern the entire length of a border between an EU Member State and an IPA country, while 23% concern smaller border segments between an EU Member State and an IPA country (Figure 3-1). Obstacles in specific parts of borders between two candidate countries make up 18% while 7% of such obstacles are along all borders of a (potential) candidate country. Cross-border obstacles along all borders between EU Member States and IPA countries, including Turkey, make up 6%, while excluding Turkey they are 5% of all obstacles.

The varying geographical dimension of obstacles for cross-border cooperation depends also largely on the type of obstacle. However, most obstacles regard specific borders and especially the entire length of a border.

Although the study focuses on cross-border obstacles between EU and IPA countries the analysis has also identified cross-border obstacles between IPA countries as indicated in the figure. These should not be neglected since they may be similar or even induce spillover effects for broader obstacles. Overall, there are 38 obstacles (18%) concerning the border between two candidate countries, i.e. between Montenegro-Albania, Montenegro-Kosovo*,⁵ Montenegro - Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia-Albania and North Macedonia-Kosovo*, Serbia-Kosovo*, Serbia-Montenegro, Serbia-Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia-North Macedonia and Albania-Kosovo*. Most cases are between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and North Macedonia and Albania.

⁵ The designation Kosovo* is without prejudice to positions on status and in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence and used this way throughout the report.

Figure 3-1 The geography of cross-border obstacles as a share of all obstacles



Source: Service provider 2021, based on cross-border obstacles inventory

Four of the ten case studies carried out for the project concern entire lengths of borders. These concern the socio-cultural, political, economic and geographic and natural dimensions. Three case studies concern smaller border segments between an EU Member State and an IPA country, all of which are due to the political dimension and are mostly due to governance and administration issues. The remaining three cases concern all borders between EU Member States and IPA countries, partially including and partially excluding Turkey. All of these have a root cause in the political dimension, especially legal obstacles from different national laws and difficulties in introducing the *acquis communautaire*.

The case studies illustrate the different relevance of the geographic dimension and vary largely in their type within the political dimension. The literature has also shown that **the more specific the border segment focus, the more specific the obstacle**. However, this is not entirely visible in the case studies, as the combination of obstacle type and its root and dimension have shown that even specific borders may reflect larger roots and challenges, as described in the box below.

Case study illustrations on border types and their links to obstacles

The number of obstacles and their effects does not always depict how much a cross-border relationship is affected by its obstacles. This means that some obstacles are more evident and have a deeper cause than others even in a cross-border area with few obstacles. In short, **a few or limited obstacles can significantly affect a territory**.

Some case studies suggest that **specific border segments do not always reflect specific obstacles**. This is particularly relevant for obstacles linked to the political dimension. The case study on **smuggling at the Greek-Albanian border** and the case study on **cross-border mobility difficulties of workers at the Romanian-Serbian border** both review a specific border segment and the political dimension. Although at first sight the obstacles look specific, they are both associated with larger

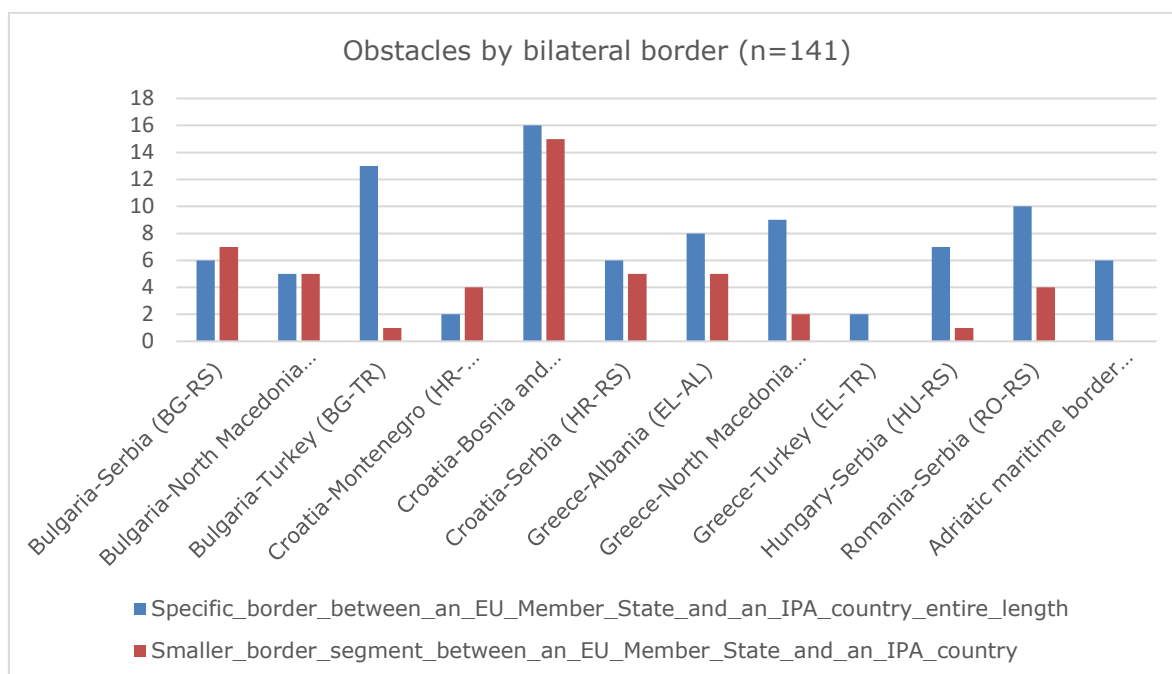
and deeper issues. The smuggling case between Greece and Albania is indirectly linked to bigger socio-economic challenges, such as organised crime and low living standards. However, the obstacle on cross-border mobility between Romania and Serbia is rooted in a lack of adequate bilateral agreements at national level due to adverse administrative structures.

However, the case studies confirm the tentative finding that obstacles at **many SEE borders often represent broader obstacles**. Examples are the case study on **shared climate change challenges** for water resources, which covers the whole border between EU and IPA countries, including Turkey and the case study on **lacking cross-border harmonisation for health legislations and standards**. In both cases the obstacles are broad with solutions that concern larger territories.

3.1. Obstacles by bilateral border

However, without considering obstacles between IPA countries, the dominance of border obstacles between specific EU and IPA countries is even more apparent. These may regard specific parts of most bilateral borders in the analysis or the entire length of a border, as indicated in Figure 3-2 **Figure** . Overall, the number of obstacles for an individual border between an EU Member State and an IPA country is highest between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is followed by Bulgaria-Turkey, Romania-Serbia, Bulgaria-Serbia, Greece-Albania, Croatia-Serbia and Greece-North Macedonia, all with more than ten obstacles. These refer partially to the whole length of the border or a specific border segment, with the majority being along their entire length. Thus, in addition to some widely relevant obstacles, **IPA CBC programmes may also have to touch on obstacles specific to a border area**.

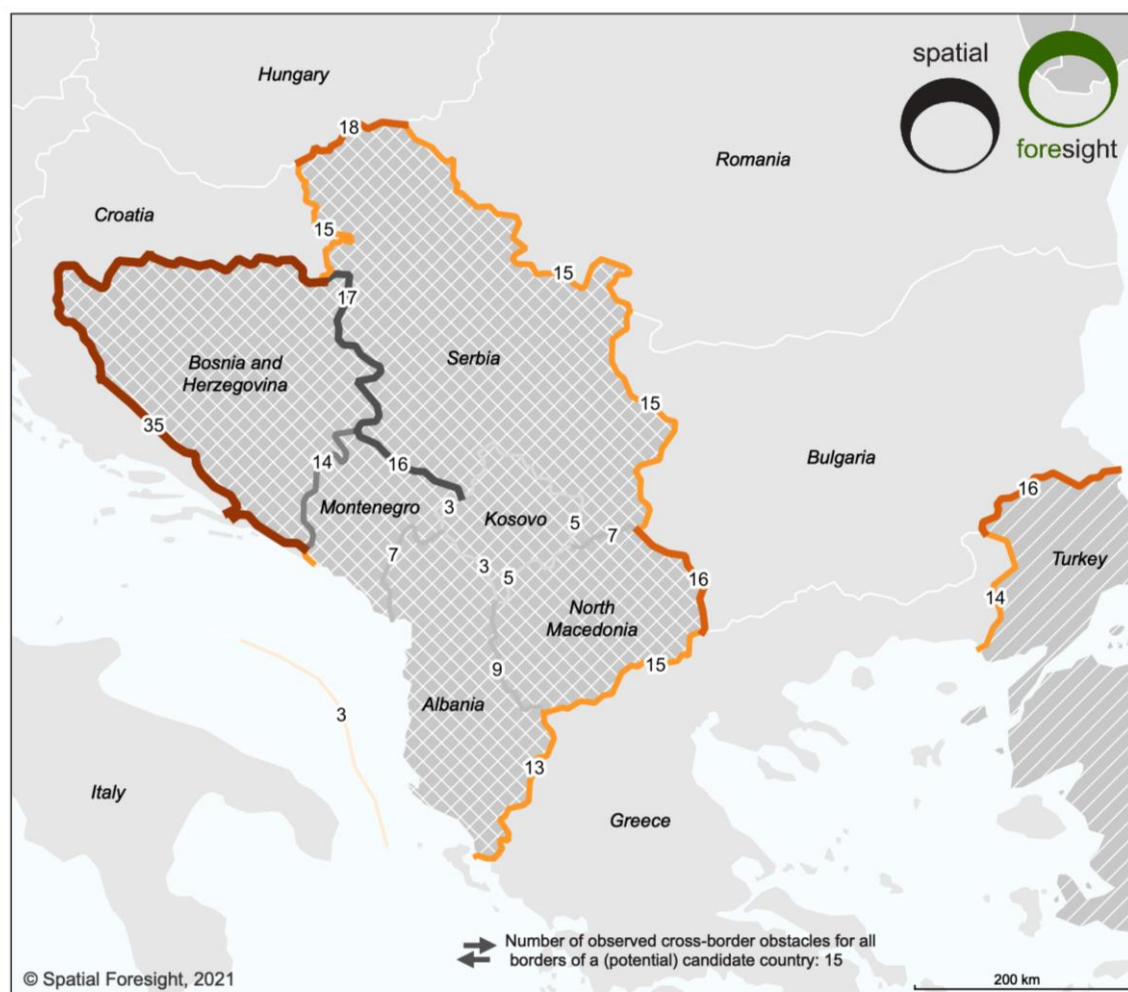
Figure 3-2 Number of geographically specific obstacles by bilateral border area



Source: Service provider 2021, based on cross-border obstacles inventory

Map 3-1 depicts the geographical density of cross-border obstacles between EU and IPA countries, as well as between IPA countries. Unlike Figure 3-2, it includes obstacles of an IPA country with all its neighbouring countries, implying more obstacles for some borders.

Map 3-1 Geographic scope and density of border obstacles between EU Member States and candidate countries



Administrative boundaries: Eurostat GISCO, NUTS 0 (2016)

Source: Spatial Foresight, 2021

Geographic scope of observed cross-border obstacles between specific EU Member States and Candidate and Potential Candidate Countries, 2021*

Number of observed bilateral cross-border obstacles

EU-IPA	IPA-IPA	
		< 5 cross-border obstacles
		5 - 10 cross-border obstacles
		10 - 15 cross-border obstacles
		15 - 20 cross-border obstacles
		> 20 cross-border obstacles

3 Number of observed cross-border obstacles

EU Member State

Candidate Country

Total number of observed cross-border obstacles between EU Member States and all IPA countries

between EU Member States and IPA countries (excl. Turkey): 12

between EU Member States and IPA countries (incl. Turkey): 14

* Please note that the number of border-obstacles shown on the map is impacted by the survey response rate and the level of documentation of cross-border obstacles in the study area.

The main focus of the project are EU-IPA country borders. Obstacle identification for IPA-IPA country borders was coincidental, explaining the low figures for IPA-IPA country borders in the map.

However, the map confirms this diversity of borders and highlights that most obstacles are located in specific parts of bilateral borders between EU and non-EU Member States. However, again specific borders between IPA countries should not be neglected, as the numbers are sometimes considerable, such as between Bosnia and Herzegovina-Serbia, Serbia-Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina-Montenegro. As also shown in the map, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina is the most obstacle-dense area. The least dense area is on the border between Greece and Albania. Nevertheless, the absolute numbers are

not always indicative of the importance of the obstacle and they may not be exhaustive due to limited documentation, so they need to be seen in the wider context of their roots and main source.

3.2. Geography of different types of obstacles

The nature or type of cross-border obstacles also differs per geographical dimension. Most obstacles are either political or geographical and natural and were identified for all geographic dimensions. No cross-border obstacles related to language barriers were found, but there are obstacles from the recognition of linguistic minorities living on the other side of a border. There are few economic and socio-cultural obstacles at the Croatia-Bosnia and Herzegovina border, while the Greece-Albania border has the most cases for socio-cultural obstacles (see (4.1) and (4.2) in Figure 3-3).

Case study illustrations on socio-cultural obstacles

The majority of border specific socio-cultural obstacles are at the Greek-Albanian border, mainly as a result of mental barriers that have developed between the two countries. Although the roots are political, treating minorities and improving their quality of life remains a key social inclusion issue. The Greek-Albanian case study on minority rights highlights, that different perceptions and interpretation of the historic legacy, the cultural traditions, and biases towards people living across borders may have led to mental barriers with a direct effect on the social inclusion of specific groups, as well as on overall political and cultural exchanges between the countries. Effects are linked in particular to biases and negative perceptions, e.g. influencing the perceptions and attitudes of people on either side of the border, thus impacting cooperation across-borders.

Most obstacles at smaller border segments between EU and IPA countries are due to the geographical and natural dimension. They refer most often to nature conservation and transport links. Examples of these are the Croatia – Bosnia and Herzegovina border region around the Neum corridor, nature and biodiversity conservation obstacles between Greece and Albania, insufficient waste management and marine litter between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, untapped potential for external accessibility and intermodal transport in the Bulgaria - Serbia border area, as well as a lack of cooperation for protected area management across the borders between the EU and non-EU countries. Most other obstacles at this geographical level are political, regarding limited cooperation and border disputes, as well as illegal activities like smuggling.

Obstacles between IPA countries are similarly political, mainly regarding border disputes and diplomatic tensions from the recognition of Kosovo* by neighbouring countries to Serbia. Further obstacles regard differences in legislative issues, lack of exchanges and difficulties in the introduction of the EU *acquis*. Socio-cultural obstacles along specific borders between an EU Member State and IPA country mainly regard minorities in one or the other country. Most obstacles along all borders between EU Member States and IPA countries have a political dimension. They refer to topics such as healthcare, migration routes, human trafficking, natural disaster risk management as well as infrastructure barriers.

Finally, a comparison of the two border relations with the most obstacles shows also structural differences. The 31 obstacles identified for Croatia-Bosnia and Herzegovina (Figure 3-2) address thirty sources nearly exclusively due to political or geographical and natural conditions. For Greece-Albania only 13 specific obstacles were identified, rooted in three of the four dimensions (i.e. all except the economic dimension). Four obstacles are socio-cultural, the majority of obstacles in this dimension.

Figure 3-3 Structural differences of border specific obstacles, Croatia-Bosnia and Herzegovina and Greece-Albania

Croatia-Bosnia and Herzegovina (n=31)			
(2.1) non-existing or sub-optimally developed transport infrastructures and transport services (goods and persons) for overcoming the barrier effect of natural obstacles, including insufficiently developed infrastructures at border crossing points;	(1.3) different national laws and regulations applied by two neighbouring countries in different policy fields of relevance for cross-border cooperation (i.e. legal obstacle);	(1.4) difficulties in the introduction of Union law ("acquis communautaire") or in its shaping / application on both sides of a common border;	(2.2) adverse "structural effects" caused by natural barriers (e.g. mountain ranges, rivers, lakes) such as the complete isolation of small parts of a country's national territory*
	(2.3) lacking or inadequate protection and management of natural resources in border close territories and the establishment of new man-made physical barriers reducing cross-border ecological connectivity (e....	(1.2) the "international status" of a political border between two neighbouring countries due to their membership in differe...	(1.1) a still unclear spatial definition of the political...
(1.7) a non-existing or only weakly developed "system for cross-border governance", including the absence of cross-border public services or the existence of factors*		(1.5) different governance systems and administrative structures / powers at the national, regional or local levels in two...	(1.6) inappropriate administrative behaviour, both...
			(4.1) mental barriers resulting from a different perception of th...
Greece-Albania (n=13)			
(1.6) inappropriate administrative behaviour, both in case of vertical administrative interaction within a single country and in case of cross-border administrative interaction between two neighbouring countries or regions (i.e. administrative obstacles);	(4.1) mental barriers resulting from a different perception of the basic sense of belonging by the population of neighbouring border regions*		(4.2) mental barriers resulting from a different perception, interpretation and collective or group-specific articulation of the historical legacy and cultural traditions or religious beliefs in politics*
	(1.1) a still unclear spatial definition of the political borderline between two neighbouring countries and competing territorial claims, but also an...	(1.2) the "international status" of a political border between two neighbouring countries due to their membership in different formats of the European...	(1.5) different governance systems and administrative structures / powers at the national, regional or local levels in two neighbouring countries as well as...
(2.1) non-existing or sub-optimally developed transport infrastructures and transport services (goods and persons) for overcoming the barrier effect of natural obstacles, including insufficiently developed infrastructures at border crossing points;			(2.3) lacking or inadequate protection and management of natural resources in border close territories and the establishment of new man-made physical barriers...

Source: Service provider 2021, based on cross-border obstacles inventory

Last but not least, obstacles of political relevance seem to prevail across SEE, from local to transnational levels and are likely to influence other topics for cooperation. This means that substantial efforts are needed, so obstacles of other dimensions can be more easily eliminated.

4. Effects of obstacles

The obstacles in the inventory were assessed for their relationship between the obstacle-source, the border obstacle(s) and induced adverse effects. Two-thirds of the obstacles have a 'straightforward source-problem-effect relationship', while the remainder have a 'complex source-problem-effect relationship'. This suggests that for two-thirds of the obstacles solutions can be more easily identified and implemented to at least alleviate the adverse effects and wider negative impact they cause. Solutions may nevertheless require several measures and approaches (see Chapter 5).

The case studies helped to further investigate and get in-depth information about the negative direct effects of the obstacles. Furthermore, they highlight how the effects of obstacles do not stop at the direct effects. These can be worsened by other contextual factors or can themselves trigger secondary adverse effects within the cross-border region. In turn, the combination of direct and secondary effects produces wider socio-economic, environmental and socio-cultural impacts on the cross-border area. In other words, an obstacle to cross-border cooperation can often cause a 'domino' (or vicious circle) of direct and indirect effects and impacts with potentially strong long-term repercussions and costs beyond those immediately observable.

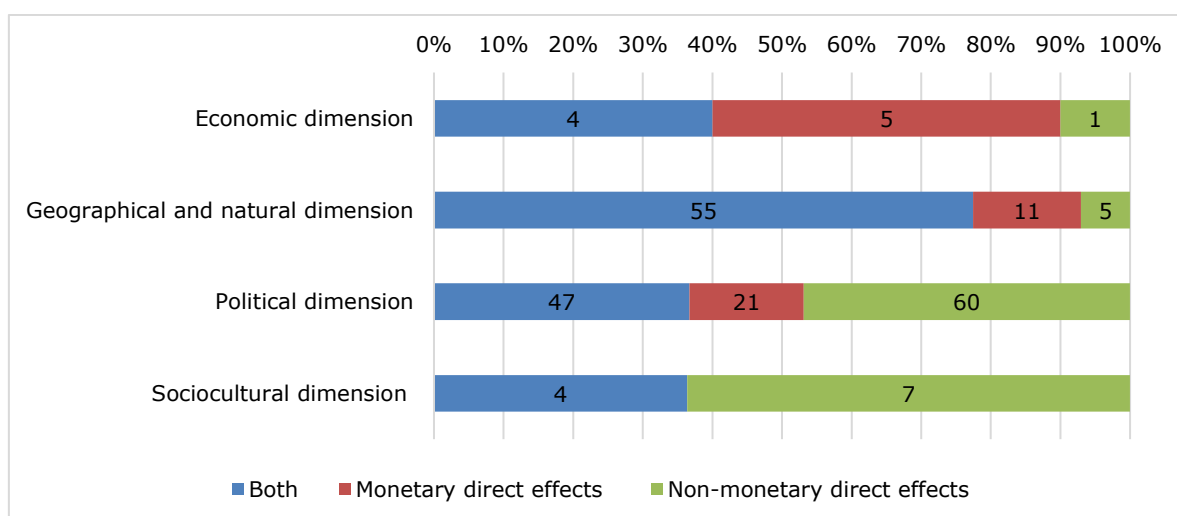
The following paragraphs provide examples.

4.1. Negative direct effects

A border obstacle usually causes a negative direct effect with adverse consequences for all kinds of organisations, groups or individuals with border-crossing activities. These adverse consequences may be monetary and/or non-monetary.

Around half of the obstacles lead to both monetary and non-monetary costs, in particular those in the geographical and natural dimension and in the political dimension, while one third of the obstacles have exclusively non-monetary direct effects.

Figure 4-1 Negative direct effect of obstacles (n=222)



Source: Service provider 2021, based on cross-border obstacles inventory

The information from the survey and case studies show how the direct effects vary according to the policy area.

The most frequently affected policy areas (according to the literature review and survey) highlight that:

- 1) cross-border obstacles affecting economic development generate direct effects mostly in loss of time, additional costs for services and procedures and inconvenient cross-border travel, while those affecting labour market and employment mostly entail restrictions in accessing services and individual income losses;
- 2) for health care, insufficient cross-border cooperation leads to restrictions in accessing services, loss of time and additional costs for services and procedures;
- 3) higher transaction costs for business activities, inconvenient cross-border travel and loss of time are the most frequent direct consequences of obstacles related to transport and mobility;
- 4) obstacles affecting environmental protection and natural resources lead to the ineffective provision or use of public infrastructure, additional costs for services and procedures and individual income losses.

The case studies help to better illustrate these aspects and provide details on the actual effects and concrete examples. In most cases, the obstacles have both monetary and non-monetary direct effects, and these are usually closely linked. Furthermore, these illustrations show that multiple direct effects often occur in parallel, which aggravates the overall relevance of the obstacles and frequently comes with secondary effects as outlined in the next section.

Case study illustrations on the monetary and non-monetary direct effects of obstacles

The **limited cross-border cooperation on climate change adaptation** for transboundary river basins causes direct monetary losses e.g. when floods occur. These events have a strong impact on the affected economies (businesses and people), whereas any potential impact on hydropower can create income losses and affect the energy sector as well as other sectors that depend on this renewable source of energy. At the same time, weak transboundary water cooperation, low political prioritisation, insufficient institutional capacity, weak information exchange and a lack of joint monitoring directly reduce the possibilities of dealing with climate-change induced water challenges at present.

The working hours and transit restrictions at the **Nakovo-Lunga border crossing** between Romania and Serbia have clear monetary effects such as individual income losses, administrative burden for companies or citizens and non-monetary direct effects such as loss of time and inconvenient cross-border travel. For instance, the need to access a more distant border crossing (driving 78 km instead of 38 km each way) increases the costs in fuel consumption and air pollution for companies which use trucks between factories on both sides of the border, and for cross-border workers. At the same time, the increased time spent commuting worsens the quality of life for cross-border workers, who spend up to 12 hours a day away from home because of the additional journey to reach the workplace.

Smuggling at the **Greek-Albanian border** strongly affects the economic sector, in particular businesses which lose from counterfeits of their products. Consumers and their health are also affected. At a broader scale, national economies are impacted as the smuggled products deny tax revenues, which are in turn not available for other investments.

The **lack of coordination of health care systems** across borders creates additional costs for services and procedures, often forcing cross-border patients to seek help in private clinics. This not only increases the costs of services for patients, but also

means that only a limited part of the population can afford better quality treatment across the border, excluding the vast majority.

4.2. Adverse secondary effects

The negative effects of obstacles do not stop at the direct effects outlined above. Adverse secondary effects can emerge if the negative direct effect of an obstacle is aggravated by other contextual factors or obstacles (i.e. 're-enforcement effects') and/or if the obstacle *itself* induces other undesirable developments within the cross-border region (i.e. 'knock-on effects').

Analysis of the 222 cases in the inventory highlighted different secondary effects. In 65% of cases, negative knock-on effects have been identified (secondary effects).

Case study illustrations of secondary adverse effects

Information from the case studies and their cross-analysis provides further insights. For knock-on effects, these can often be interpreted as impacts of the obstacles in the medium-long term and are less easily quantifiable.

Knock-on effects

An **inactive cross-border cooperation structure** (such as a Euroregion existing only on paper) directly affects the effectiveness of cooperation, which in turn prevents joint projects or strategic development initiatives from being planned, agreed on and implemented for the benefit of local people in the border regions.

Weak transboundary water cooperation directly reduces the possibilities to deal with climate-change induced water problems at present and induces further undesirable developments within the cross-border region. Weak transboundary water cooperation tends to increase the magnitude of climate change related risks in the medium and long term:

1. significant economic and livelihood losses;
2. lower productivity and economic losses for agriculture due to rising temperatures;
3. loss of crop yields and livestock due to water scarcity and droughts;
4. displaced population;
5. increased mortality and morbidity;
6. decreased public safety;
7. impaired ecosystem functioning and loss of species.

Transit restrictions at border crossings directly limit economic development in the cross-border area in various respects. This hinders a more integrated economic development strategy which cross-border businesses, workers and the general public would benefit from in the medium term.

The obstacle related to the **governance of macro-regional strategies (MRS) involving non-EU countries** hinders a key underlying objective of MRS, which is to support the European integration of candidate and potential candidate countries participating in the strategy. Accessing a strategic platform on an 'equal footing' is essential for non-EU members as this should be a catalyst for integration. However, if the equal footing principle is not followed by a clear effort to bridge the gap in terms of capacity of non-EU countries to actively participate in the process, there is a risk of seeing the discrepancies with EU Member States increase.

The **low economic development and high unemployment in cross-border rural areas in the Western Balkans**, in particular those further from urban centres, result in very strong emigration and a brain drain towards bigger cities in EU countries. This results in the further depopulation of sparsely populated areas and their marginalisation in socio-economic terms.

Reinforcement effects

Other factors hamper **access to health care across borders** and reinforce the existing obstacle. For instance, crossing the border from an IPA country to a country in the Schengen area (and vice versa) is very time-consuming.

The **restrictive official counting in the 1989 Albanian census** has also affected education policies. With the exception of the officially recognised Greek minority zones, where teaching is in both the Greek and Albanian, in all other areas of Albania lessons are taught only in Albanian.

It should be noted that for 21 obstacles, no secondary effects were found, while for 29 obstacles found in the survey no answer was provided. This hampers the assessment of potential secondary effects of the obstacles collected through the survey. Thus, the number of obstacles without any secondary effects could be even lower.

4.3. The wider negative impact on cross-border regions

The combination of negative direct and adverse secondary effects of an obstacle results in a 'wider negative impact' in the cross-border region.

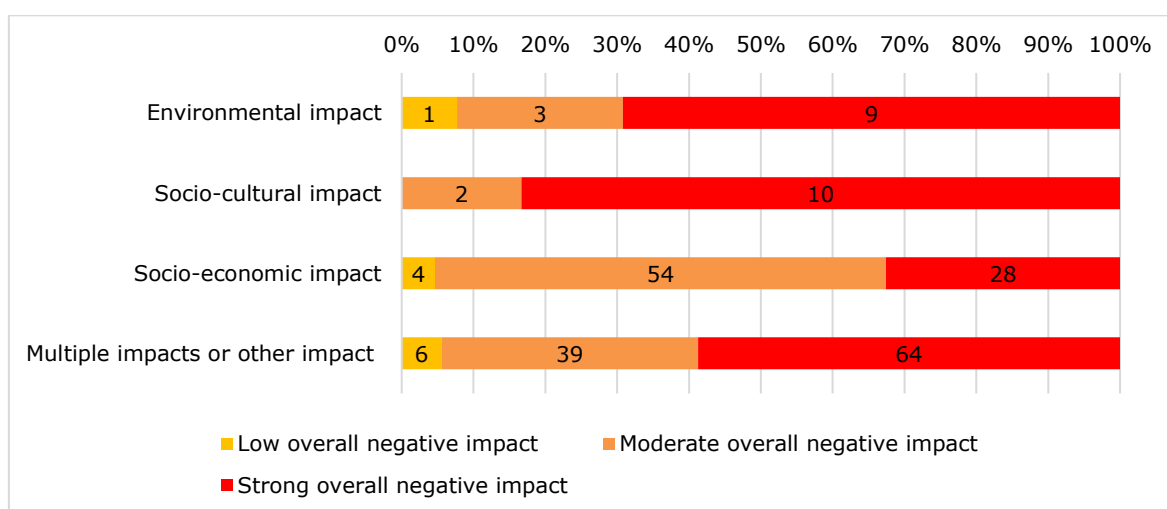
Wider impacts can differ by nature and thematic orientation. For instance, they can:

- hinder socio-economic development in a cross-border region;
- prevent stronger functional integration;
- weaken socio-cultural ties or strengthen existing tensions;
- harm the environment;
- lower the quality of life for citizens in the region.

The wider negative impact can have different levels of magnitude and may concern one or more of the above-mentioned themes.

Analysing all cases in the inventory for the magnitude and thematic orientation of their negative impacts shows the following picture.

Figure 4-2 Thematic orientation and magnitude of wider negative impacts (n=222)



Source: Service provider 2021, based on cross-border obstacles inventory

Half the obstacles have strong negative impacts across all thematic orientations. For socio-cultural impacts, these are strong in all but two cases and there is a similar trend in environmental impacts. Wider socio-economic impacts tend to be mostly moderate.

Looking at the thematic orientation of wider impacts, more than half encompass more than one dimension (e.g. the overall impact is socio-economic, but also socio-cultural, or socio-economic and environmental, or all three).

Some examples from the case studies shed light on how wider impacts can include these different dimensions.

Case study illustration on wider negative impacts in cross-border regions

The **absence of effective cross-border governance** between local/regional actors in neighbouring border regions, such as a Euroregion, may:

- reduce the intensity of all kinds of everyday cross-border exchange relations (socio-economic impact);
- foster negative perceptions and attitudes among people living on either side of a border (socio-cultural impact);
- harm the quality of shared natural resources (i.e. air, water, soil, plants etc.) and reduce the effectiveness of natural disaster management and prevention in a region prone to flood risks (environmental impact).

Weak economic development and low salaries in rural and peripheral cross-border areas and general stagnation of the economy push young educated people to look for better opportunities in bigger urban centres in EU countries. This creates a domino effect through further depopulation, a consequent lack of investment, lower economic dynamism and the difficulty to maintain businesses. In a vicious circle, this leads to further outmigration.

Weak transboundary water cooperation, low political prioritisation, insufficient institutional capacity, weak information exchange and a lack of joint monitoring directly reduce the possibilities to deal with climate change-induced water problems at present, increasing the risks for long-term socio-economic and environmental development with further reinforcing effects.

The lack of harmonisation for the **provision of cross-border health care services** might also accentuate social exclusion of particularly vulnerable groups, especially when treatment can be sought across the border only by accessing private clinics.

4.4. Overview of effects and impacts of cross-border obstacles

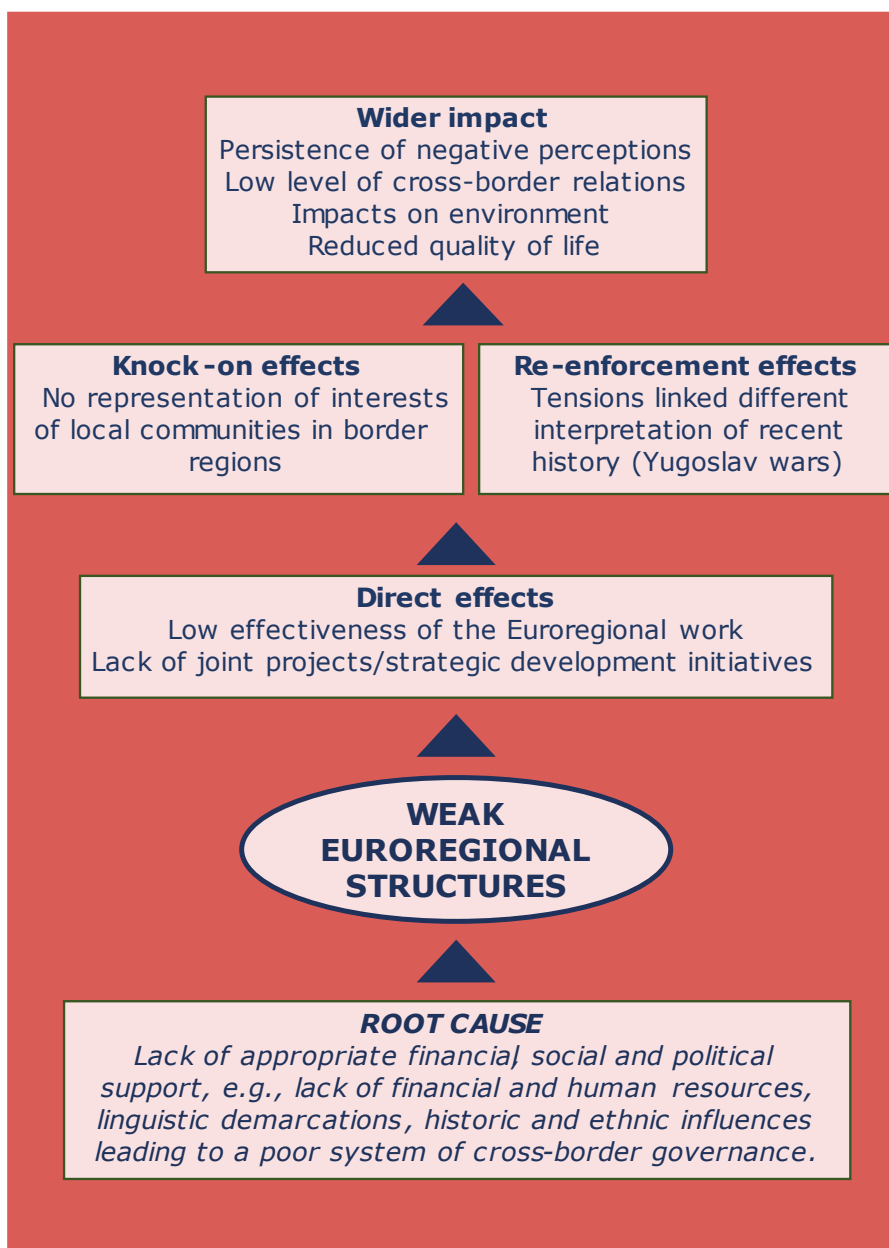
The sub-sections above provide insights on each type of effect of an obstacle, i.e. negative direct effects, adverse secondary effects and wider negative impacts. It is necessary, however, to provide a more comprehensive overview of the causal links between obstacles and their effects to better illustrate the repercussions cross-border obstacles can have in the longer term and on a wider range of policy areas, i.e. beyond what is immediately observable.

The paragraphs and infographics below provide examples based on the inventory and the case studies.

For instance, the weakness of cross-border governance structures (e.g. Euroregions) in many border areas between EU Member States and enlargement countries leads to the obvious consequence of low efficiency and effectiveness of the structure and the inability to jointly develop projects and strategic development initiatives in the cross-border area. As a result, the interests of the local community are not sufficiently represented. If we also consider, as a re-enforcement factor in countries from former Yugoslavia (e.g. Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia), persistent tensions between border communities due to the wars in the 1990s mean the resulting wider impacts can be

strong and encompass many dimensions, such as socio-cultural (weak cross-border relations and negative perceptions) and environmental (lack of coordination on cross-border environmental issues). In the long term, these lead to a reduced quality of life – or to missed opportunities for its improvement.

Figure 4-3 'Weak Euroregional structures': link of obstacle to effects and impacts

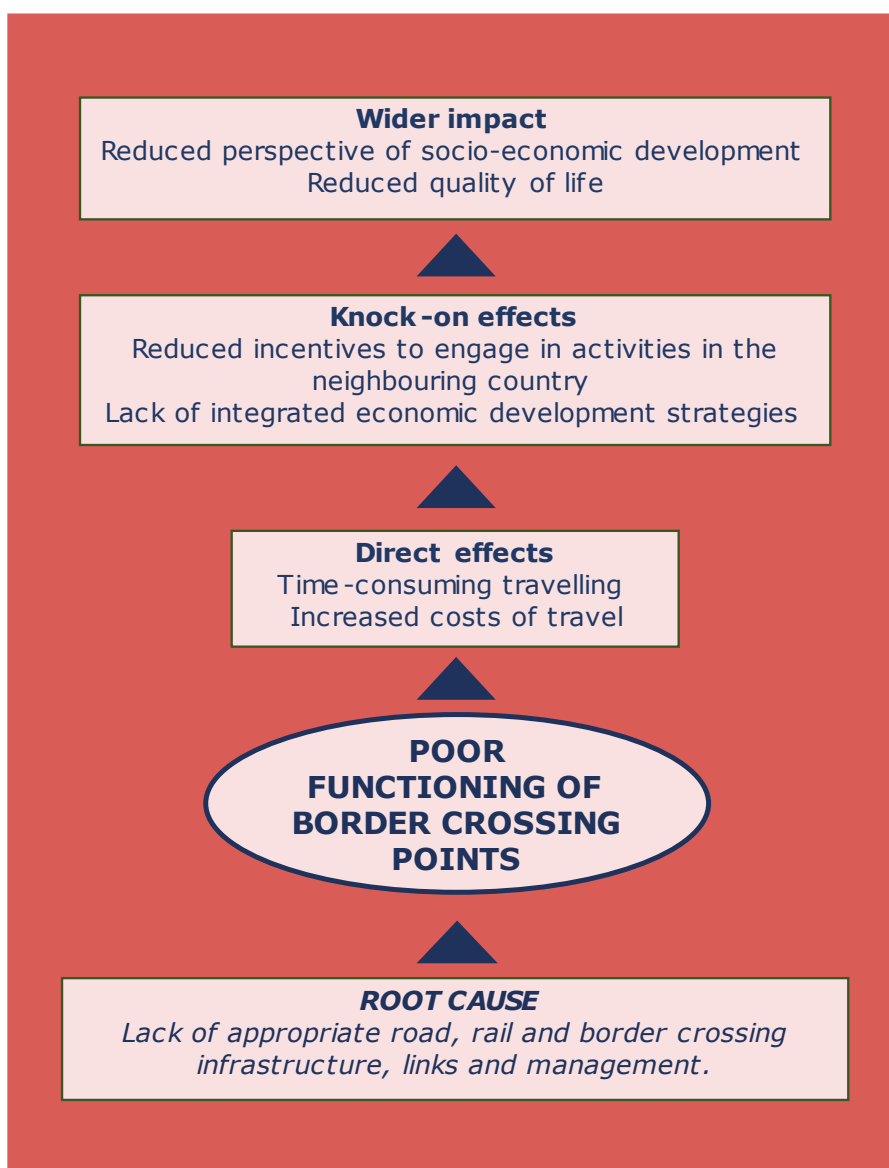


Source: Service provider 2021

Obstacles related to the poor functioning of border crossing points, rooted in the lack of appropriate road, rail and border crossing infrastructure, links and management, have the direct effect of extending travel time to cross the border and can bring about increased costs, e.g. due to the need to take longer routes to farther but better functioning crossing points. The lack of smooth cross-border transit has the indirect (secondary) adverse effect of reducing incentives for the border population and businesses to engage in activities in the neighbouring border region, as well as weakening the opportunities to elaborate integrated cross-border economic

development strategies. In the long term, this reduces sound socio-economic development of the cross-border area and the quality of life for its population.

Figure 4-4 'Poor functioning of 'border crossing points': link of obstacle to effects and impacts

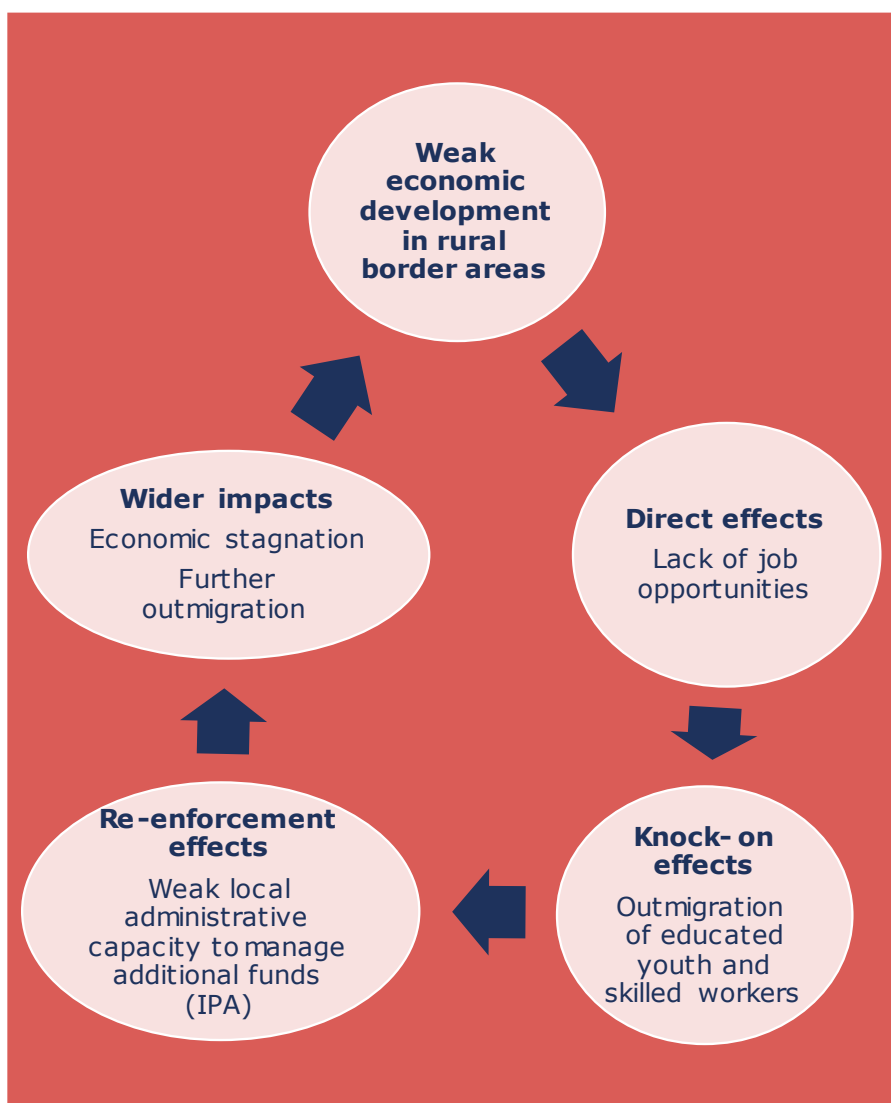


Source: Service provider 2021

As mentioned in the previous section, the links between an obstacle, its direct and indirect effects and wider impacts can also create vicious circles, where the wider impacts further re-enforce and 'feed' the initial obstacle.

For instance, weak economic development in rural and sparsely populated cross-border areas directly affects opportunities to create and maintain employment. The lack of administrative capacity at local level to manage additional funds (such as IPA funds) which could foster economic development and job creation in specific areas, further re-enforces the obstacle. As a result, the population, in particular educated youth and skilled workers, emigrate and seek employment in urban centres within their countries or abroad in EU Member States. As a wider impact, these effects further increase economic decline/stagnation (through lack of investment) and depopulation.

Figure 4-5 'Weak economic development in rural border areas': link of obstacle to effects and impacts



Source: Service provider 2021

5. Policy areas and solutions to mitigate obstacles

Building on the cross-analysis of the previous chapters, this chapter establishes the link towards possible interventions of Interreg IPA programmes in the 2021-2027 programming period. As a note of caution, the analysis shows both the potential for Interreg IPA programmes to mitigate cross-border cooperation obstacles and the limits of these programmes to overcome them. In other words, Interreg IPA programmes are not suitable to addressing all cross-border obstacles. Some obstacles need to be solved through national legislative action or programmes, or large-scale investments generally not feasible under Interreg IPA programmes. However, Interreg IPA programmes can improve negative situations in cross-border areas through 'softer' measures and by involving national representatives may connect to further actions to solve obstacles permanently.

Case study illustration on the link between national policy making and Interreg IPA programme interventions

Cross-border harmonisation of health legislation, standards and procedures in SEE can be only implemented through national actors, such as governments and national health insurance companies. At the same time, improving cross-border access to health care services also requires local action, which can be facilitated by Interreg IPA programmes. These activities aim to increase cooperation taking into account the specific health care situation in a certain border area or Euroregion. This also facilitates raising awareness among national authorities on the importance for cross-border health care access.

To mitigate the **bilateral minority disputes between Albania and Greece**, decisions are subject to national political decision making and diplomatic relations. However, Interreg IPA interventions can support the better inclusion of the Greek minority through PO 4 'A more social Europe' and ISO 1 'A better cooperation governance', to engage the minority groups in exchange and dialogue. Projects and interventions in the tourism sector can offer people more job opportunities and improve their well-being also mitigating living conditions for the minority in the region. Thus, Interreg IPA interventions would not be able to overcome the obstacle itself but could mitigate its effects on people.

To provide the grounds for potential Interreg IPA programmes activities, this chapter first considers the main policy areas, their differences across SEE and the affected stakeholders before closing with a cross-analysis of findings for Interreg IPA programmes.

5.1. Policy areas and interventions fields

Adequate policy responses can be a stepping stone towards mitigating obstacles and finding solutions across borders. Each cross-border obstacle in the inventory has been related to a policy area. Most obstacles relate to transport and sustainable mobility policy, natural resources and environmental protection and civil protection and public security as well as to other policy areas (Figure 5-1). The three policy areas (without 'Other') account for more than half of the obstacles. 14% are subject to 'Other' policy areas. Most obstacles in this group are either relevant for several policy areas and thus concern cross-border cooperation in general (14 obstacles) or are subject to foreign affairs (13 obstacles). Few others refer to the border regime or taxation.

Case studies give further insights into most policy areas for which obstacles have been identified. They also show that while one policy area may prevail, other policy areas may still be relevant to some extent or may be affected indirectly.

Case study illustrations on the relevance of policy areas

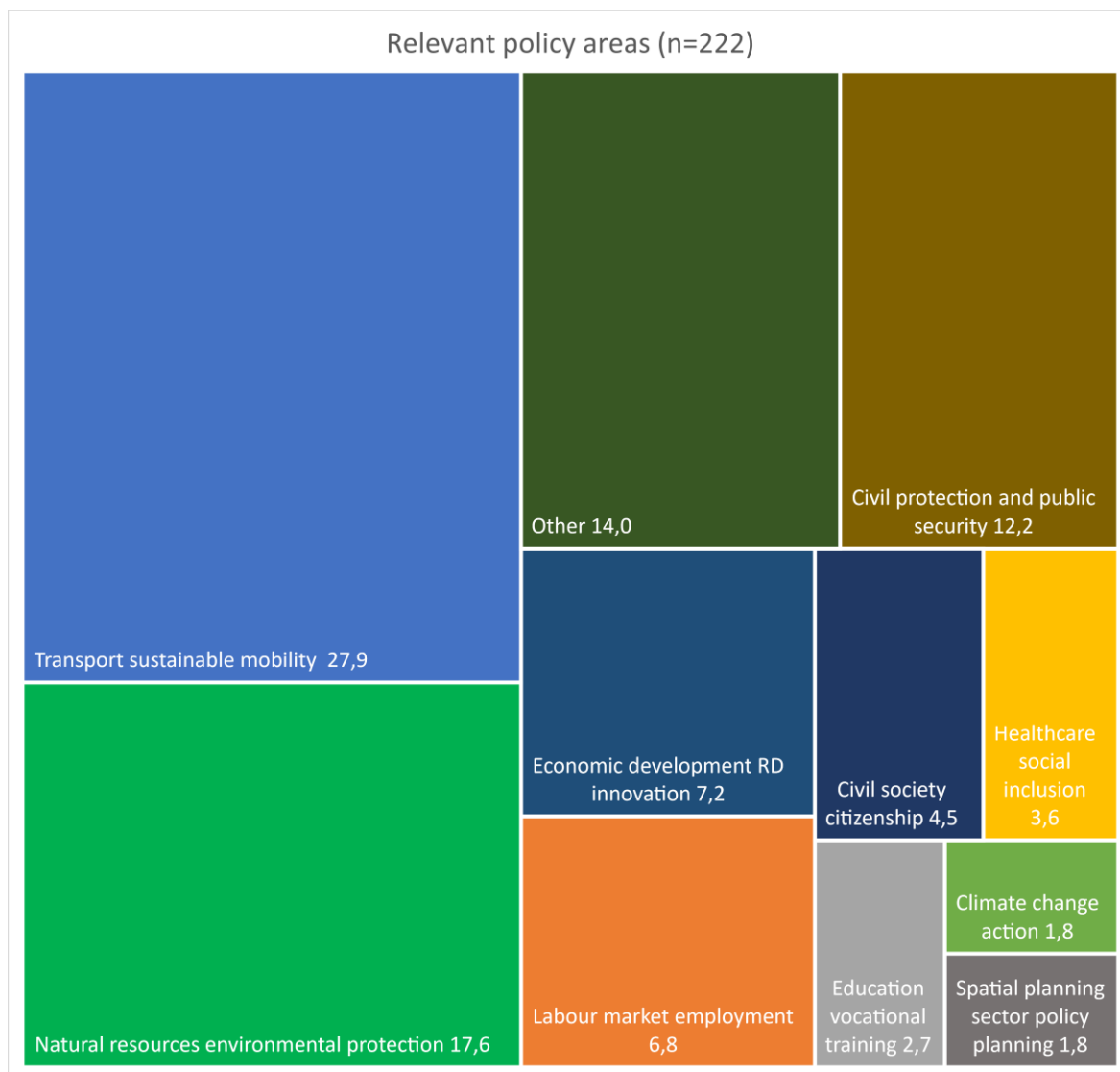
The case study on **different regulatory investment frameworks** is immediately relevant for spatial and sector policy planning. Not least because of the cross-sectoral relevance of spatial planning, economic development, R&D and innovation are highly affected as well as many other policy areas. This mirrors the relation between economic development and national budget spending, which in turn matters for economic investments.

The case study on **shared climate change challenges for water resources** is directly linked to climate change adaptation policy but has a clear environmental policy relevance, too. Climate change challenges water availability, quality and management and leads to higher risks in terms of floods and droughts and bears risks for impaired ecosystem functioning and loss of species. Finally, hydropower from river basins is also directly linked to regional energy policies.

Civil protection and public security policy is a key policy area affected in the case study on **smuggling at the Greek-Albanian border**. However, policies enabling

economic growth, job creation and opportunities, as well as social integration are also relevant to tackle the roots of the obstacle related to citizens' living conditions in the area and thereby contribute to avoiding a redirection of smuggling routes if controls at a certain border crossing become more effective.

Figure 5-1 Policy area share of obstacles

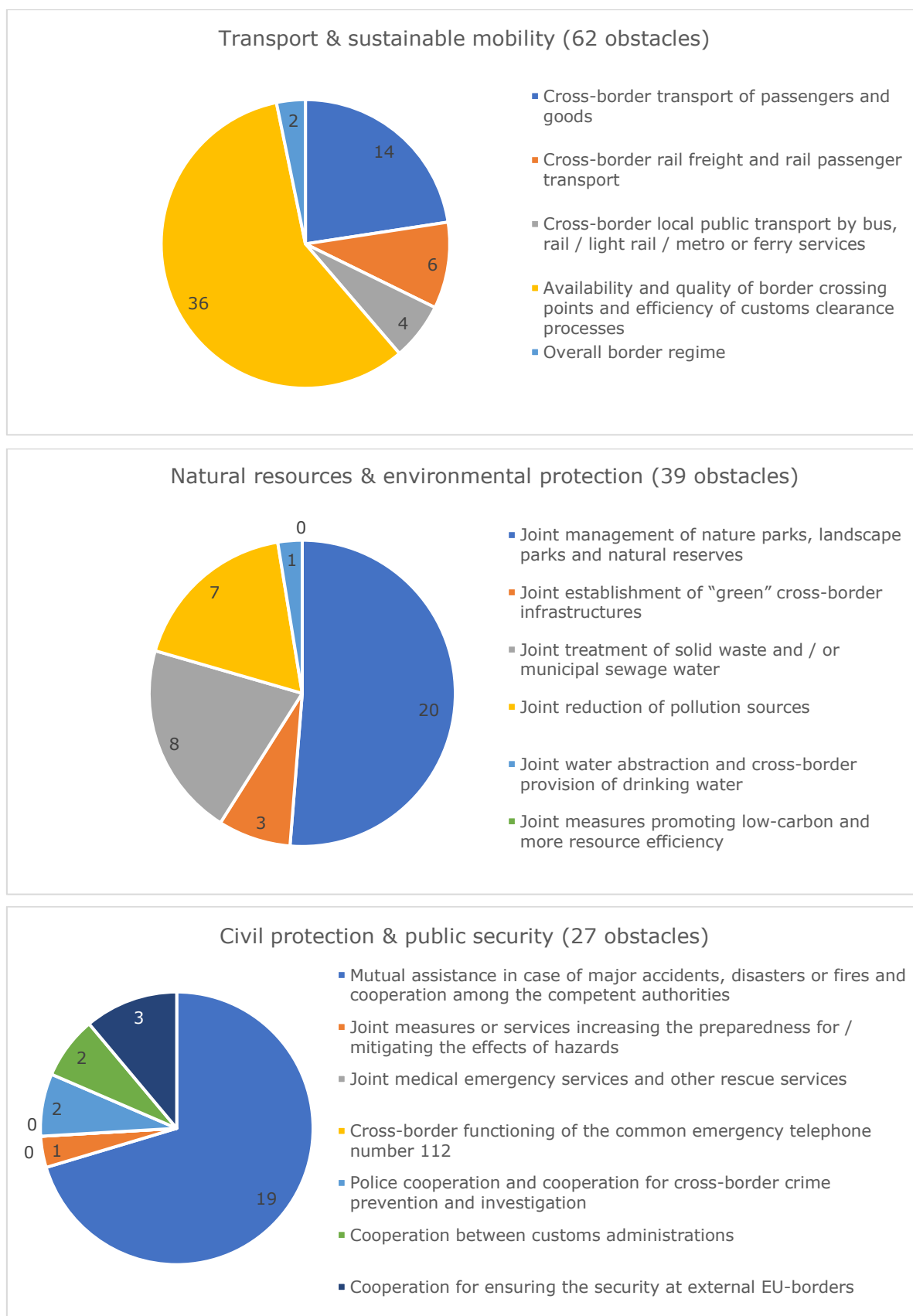


Source: Service provider 2021, based on cross-border obstacles inventory

Further analysis of obstacles in the three most relevant policy areas shows that usually one intervention field is more relevant to overcome obstacles in the respective policy area (**Fehler! Ungültiger Eigenverweis auf Textmarke.**Figure 5-2).

For example, within transport and sustainable mobility the most required intervention is about the availability and quality of border crossing points and customs clearance processes, which focus on obstacles at a specific border crossing or segment. The next most important field of intervention is cross-border transport. Obstacles affecting this are mostly a lack of sufficient transport infrastructure beyond the border crossing. About half the obstacles in the area of natural resources and environmental protection can be addressed through joint nature management measures and are usually relevant for several border areas. Other important fields for joint intervention are the reduction of pollution, waste and wastewater. No obstacle has been identified that may be primarily addressed through low-carbon or resource efficiency interventions.

Figure 5-2 Intervention fields for selected policy areas



Source: Service provider 2021, based on cross-border obstacles inventory

Finally, in civil protection and public security more than two thirds of obstacles require mutual assistance in case of disasters. These obstacles occur at certain bilateral borders, e.g. when addressing a specific management capacity, and at a more general level at

many or all border areas in SEE. Possibly surprisingly, the number of obstacles primarily relevant for cooperation on security at external EU borders is very low, which may be because the few identified cases describe obstacles that are of wider geographic relevance. In addition, police and customs cooperation also address security issues at external borders.

Two case studies with a primary effect for labour market and employment policies show how different roots of obstacles may link to the same policy area notwithstanding different implications for labour market and employment policies.

Case study illustrations for labour market and employment policy

The case study on **obstacles for the cross-border mobility of workers between Timis County in Romania and the Serbian Banat region** highlights different governance systems and administrative structures on both sides of the border. The root cause is the difficulty of reaching a bilateral national agreement regarding the full opening of a specific border crossing that could facilitate cross-border mobility for workers. Such an agreement is a priority at national and local level in Serbia, but only at local (county) level in Romania.

The case study on **economic disparities between Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia** has its roots in the economic dimension of the border. This wider border area is generally characterised by poor economic development. Cross-border labour market access is crucial for workers in these border areas. The lack of companies, their low competitiveness, lack of infrastructure and low application of ICT all negatively affect employers and employees. In particular, educated youth and skilled workers leave the area and look for better opportunities in more developed urban areas in EU countries, leading to brain drain in the cross-border area and the loss of qualified workers.

Complementing these findings, other case studies illustrated the link between labour and employment policies and education and training in the region. These are policy areas and fields of intervention in which Interreg IPA programmes may offer 'soft' support even if national policies have to take additional action to eliminate the obstacles.

Case study illustrations of labour market, skills and capacity needs in SEE

The solution to the **lack of cross-border harmonisation of health legislation, standards and procedures in SEE** not only requires investments in health care systems but in related human capital through training, capacity and institution building.

Climate change related issues in the Western Balkan (WB) region require particular knowledge and human resources (Vuković Ana, 2018). Not least a lack of coordinated planning and implementation of integrated regional strategies in general or for **transboundary river basin management** illustrates this. Overcoming these obstacles requires more intense exchanges of knowledge and expertise at regional level by strengthening regional intra- and inter- disciplinary communication.

Considering labour market and education policy areas jointly and with their indirect affectedness makes them among the most important policy areas affected by cross-border cooperation obstacles (Figure 5-1). As identified in a recent study by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on SEE, skills issues exist across SEE hampering economic development (UNCTAD, 2017) and thus they also affect cross-border cooperation. This is closely linked to capacity issues seen in many obstacles. As labour and employment policy differs greatly between SEE countries, this further strengthens the need for cross-border cooperation to overcome various cooperation obstacles.

Overall, analyses illustrate how there are obstacles to cross-border cooperation in SEE in all policy areas, implying that comprehensive measures will be needed to overcome these obstacles in the medium- to long-term. Interreg IPA programmes can thus contribute through all POs to this process as outlined below.

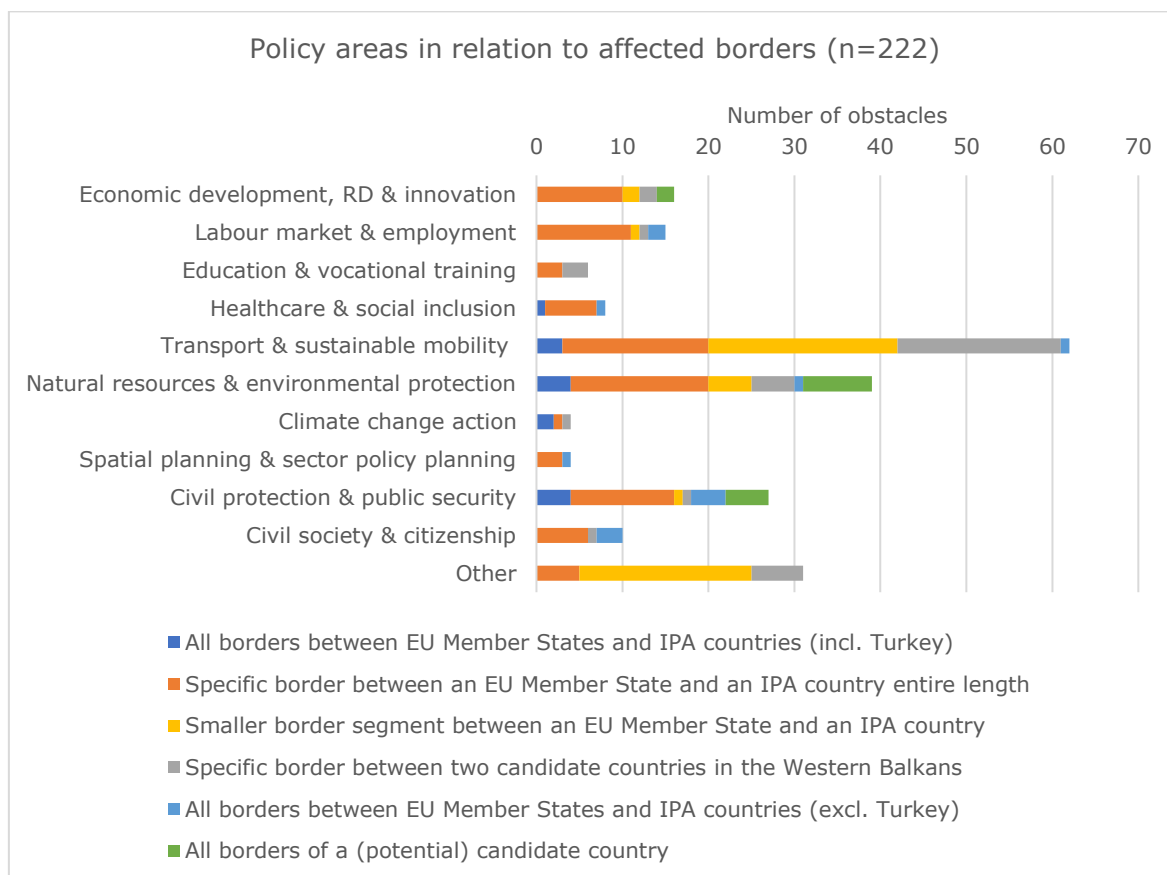
5.2. Policy areas in relation to geographic relevance and types of obstacles

Further analyses on the relation between affected policy areas, geographic relevance of obstacles and their roots allows for further insights into potential orientations of Interreg IPA programmes to mitigate obstacles. Some policy areas may be widely relevant whereas others may be primarily relevant for very local and specific obstacles. Figure 5-3 sheds light on this geographic relevance.

All policy areas are relevant for obstacles at a specific border, be it the full length or a segment of the border. Some policy areas are affected by obstacles with wider geographic relevance and by very local obstacles. This combination of local obstacles and those with a wider geographic relevance indicates a **need for targeted IPA programmes**.

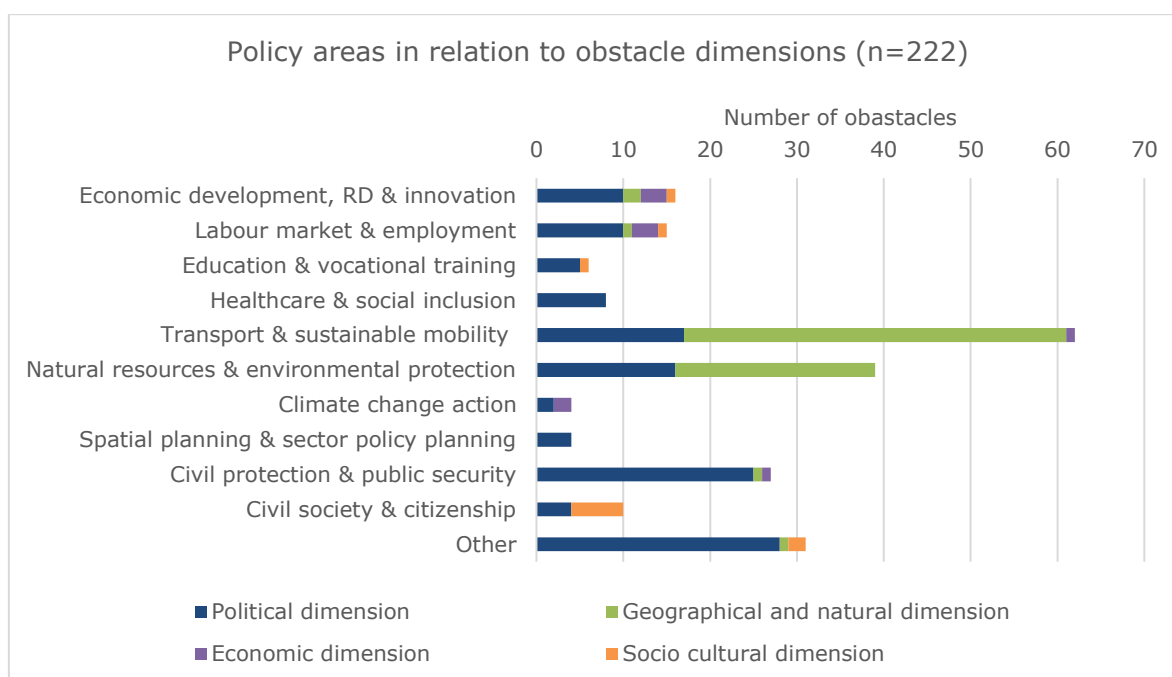
Obstacles that are relevant for all or most borders in SEE are linked especially to transport and mobility, natural resources and environmental protection, civil protection and public security as well as climate change action. These policy areas may thus require not only cross-border coordination but **coordination beyond bilateral programmes in a transnational context**.

Figure 5-3 Policy areas of obstacles related to geographic dimension



Source: Service provider 2021, based on cross-border obstacles inventory

Figure 5-4 Policy areas in relation to obstacle dimensions



Source: Service provider 2021, based on cross-border obstacles inventory

The predominance of obstacles due to political as well as geographical and natural dimensions is mirrored in most policy areas. However, they are not evenly distributed as indicated in Figure 5-4. Nevertheless, the analysis shows that all policy areas face obstacles rooted in the political dimension, whether legal and/or administrative.

5.3. Stakeholders and solution approaches

Stakeholders are affected by obstacles for cross-border cooperation in two ways:

- Obstacles affect the well-being of citizens in border areas or the efficient delivery of services, competitiveness of businesses, effective functioning of administration, quality of transboundary eco-systems, etc. In other words, this is about the effects and impacts on overall living conditions in border areas as outlined in Chapter 4 with regard to direct and secondary effects and wider impacts of obstacles. By focusing on the implications for citizens and stakeholders the following takes an actor-centred perspective adding to the thematic perspective of Chapter 4.
- Various stakeholders are also affected in the approach to mitigating or solving obstacles. Most approaches require multilevel governance, implying not only new cooperation but capacity and readiness for new methods and tools and often the combination of different approaches.

5.3.1. Impacts on stakeholders

How obstacles affect citizens and economic players in border regions can be best illustrated by using case study analyses. The box below illustrates how differently **citizens in the border areas are affected by different obstacles**. Some of these affect all citizens, while others have direct effects only for certain groups. Nevertheless, all of them can be related to border area citizen well-being. Similarly, economic players and administrations in the border regions are affected. Effects for them are even more multi-dimensional since they are often also stakeholders required to implement

solutions to overcome obstacles to cross-border cooperation. In addition, effects on these stakeholders differ greatly and are specific for each obstacle or group of obstacles.

Case study illustrations on the affectedness of border area citizens due to obstacles:

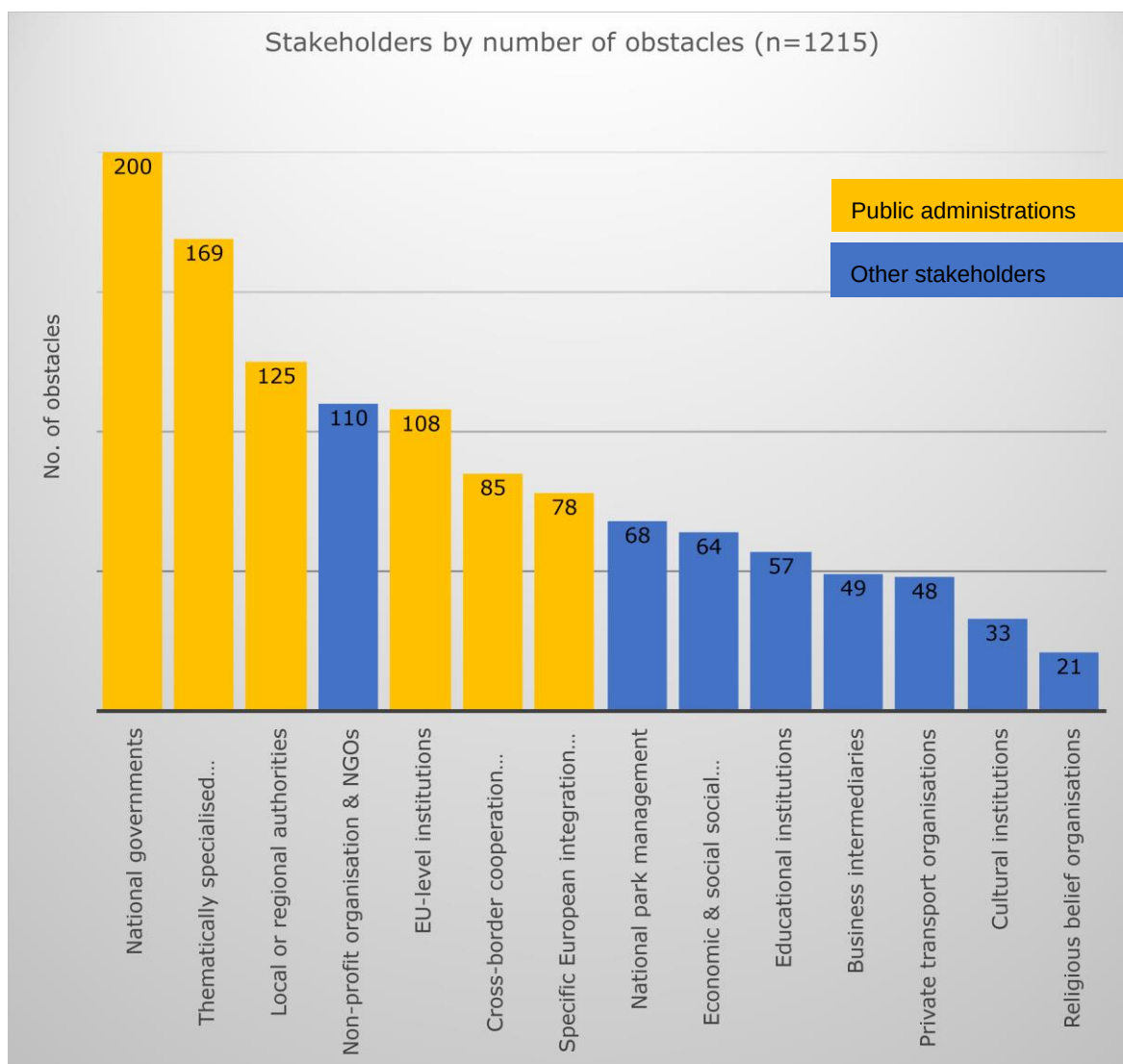
- A lack of cross-border health care access negatively affects the **health of citizens** lacking adequate alternative health care services.
- Economic disparities in border areas affect local citizens in terms of **jobs and income**, especially if commuting across borders is restricted or otherwise limited (e.g. due to a lack of adequate job alternatives in the cross-border area).
- Limited accessibility of a border crossing point affects cross-border **commuters** in terms of travel time and costs and limits the cross-border mobility of other citizens.
- The minority dispute between Albania and Greece affects the Greek **minority** negatively in terms of **citizen rights, education and property rights**.
- The lack of transboundary river basin management in support of climate change adaptation can have **multiple effects on the local population**, including income and job losses and displacement due to flood events.

Case study illustrations on the affectedness of other stakeholders for other direct and secondary effects (see Chapter 4):

- **Health care service providers** may face **lower cost-efficiency** depending on their capacity.
- A **governance weakness of EUSAIR** affects the **capacity** of the public stakeholders in IPA countries to **contribute to change**. As this is driven by a lack of their own capacities, they are **trapped in a vicious circle**.
- **Smuggling at the Greek-Albanian** border affects **local authorities** since they have to take additional **security** actions for local citizens while at the same time smuggling implies **forgone tax revenues** limiting public financial resources.
- Due to a lack of cross-border governance structures **local communities** (e.g. municipalities) are **not effectively represented** at higher levels of government with respect to their border specificities.

Any solution aiming to at least mitigate or possibly resolve obstacles needs to involve **stakeholders with adequate responsibilities and capacities**. Thus generally, the more approaches needed to mitigate an obstacle, the more stakeholders may become involved, though not necessarily all are required during the whole process. The analysis differentiates governance from EU to local level and thematic stakeholders from the public and private sectors, with a total of 14 groups of stakeholders. On average, about five to six types of stakeholders per obstacle are relevant or even required to implement solutions. National governments are by far the most important (Figure 5-5) and may be needed in most cases if obstacles are to be completely removed e.g. through legislative action or interstate agreements. Specific thematic agencies supporting national governments are often needed in the same context. Other levels of government are often required for mitigation measures but also to support national action through local implementation or even to induce action by national authorities. In this context, local and regional authorities and cross-border cooperation structures are crucial. Theme-specific stakeholders are needed especially for obstacles or effects related to them. For instance, national park management or environmental protection authorities are typically required for cross-thematic obstacles that affect environmental concerns as well as obstacles directly related to environmental protection and climate change.

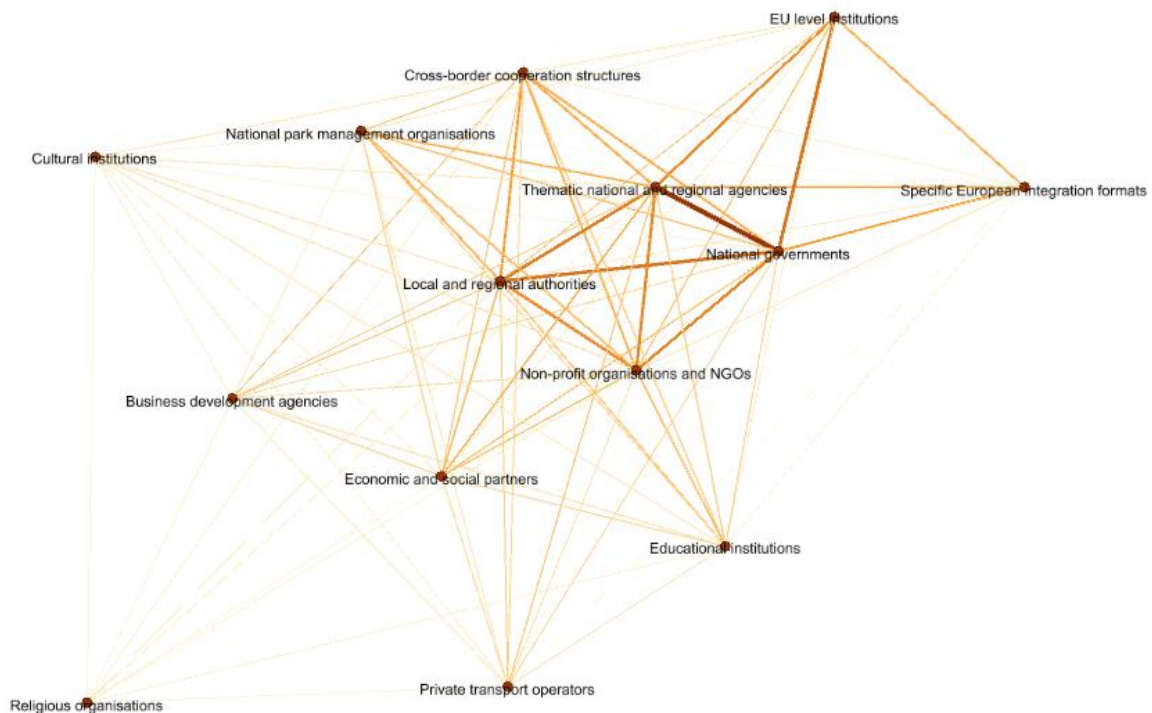
Figure 5-5 Stakeholders required by number of obstacles (222 obstacles)



Source: Service provider 2021, based on cross-border obstacles inventory

National governments may be the most central player to overcome obstacles to cross-border cooperation in SEE and need to collaborate with many other stakeholders – even if this is facilitated by local and regional authorities or cross-border cooperation structures. Apart from national governments and their administrations, specific thematic agencies and local and regional authorities are at the centre of many networks needed to overcome obstacles (Figure 5-6).

Figure 5-6 Network structures of stakeholders to implement solutions (222 obstacles)



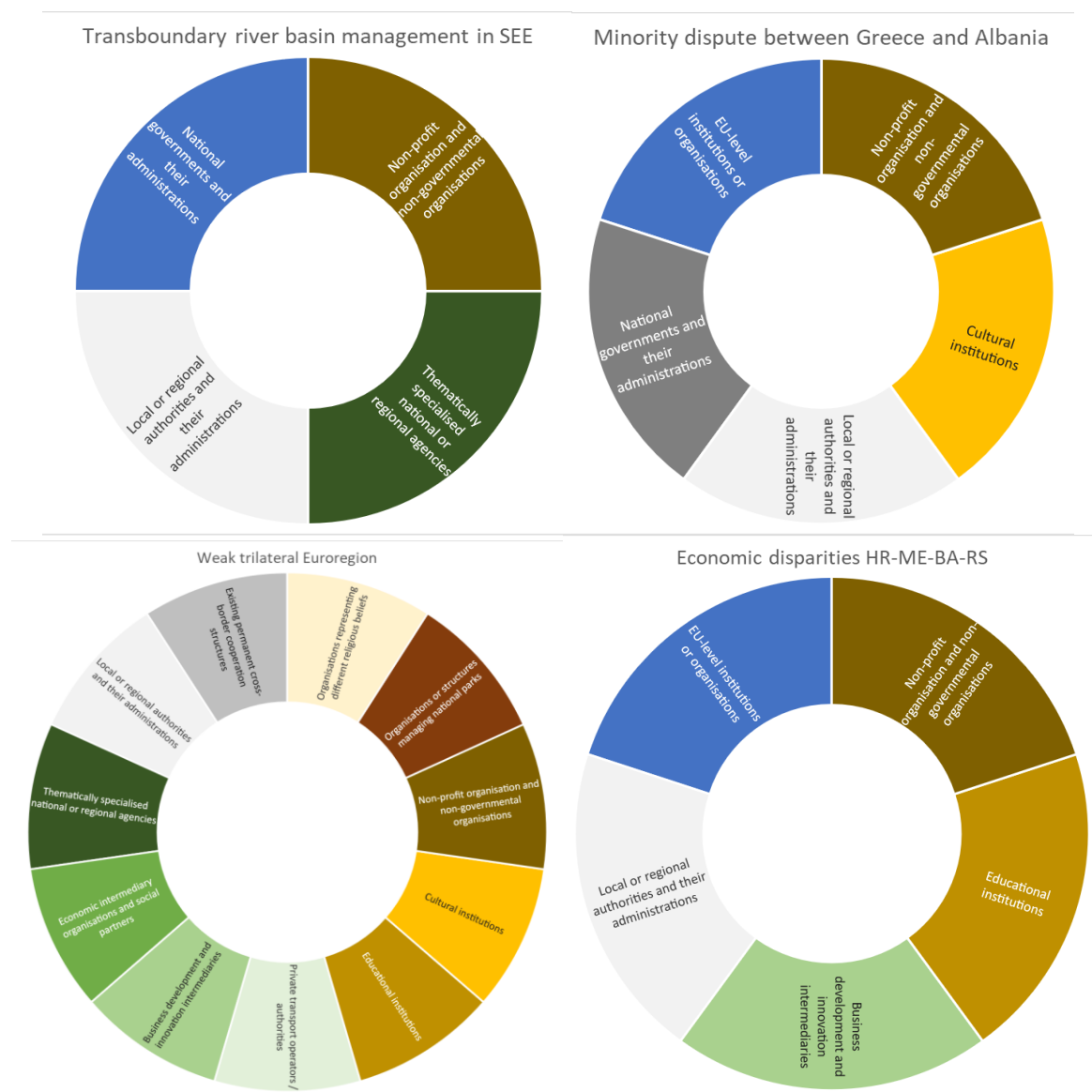
Source: Service provider 2021, based on cross-border obstacles inventory

Case study analyses further illustrate this variety of **stakeholders needed to overcome and solve obstacles**. Figure 5-7 illustrates the differences in required stakeholder involvement with four examples. In these, the number and type of stakeholders differ. This refers to the different administrative levels as well as to stakeholders other than public administration and policy makers. In addition to local and/or regional stakeholders (light grey in Figure 5-7) often the national (dark grey) or the EU level (blue) may also be required, though not necessarily involving all levels of administration.

These findings illustrate the limitations faced by Interreg IPA programmes to solve obstacles. While they can contribute and may provide essential support to mitigating or solving cross-border obstacles, national measures are also often required. This is the case if legislative action or interstate agreements are essential for the problem-solving approaches. Cross-border institutions are listed only in a few cases as being essential. However, if well established, experience in the EU shows that these institutions (e.g. Euroregions) can facilitate multi-level governance in support of cross-border issues. Nevertheless, most cross-border structures in SEE are not functioning well and thus are not an effective 'problem-solving-level' in their current status (CESCI, 2016).

Regarding other stakeholders, the variety to be involved in overcoming an obstacle depends on the thematic specificity of the obstacle. As a rule of thumb, **the broader the thematic relevance, the more specific public, semi-public or private actors need to be included**. For most obstacles, however, action from four to six types of stakeholders tends to be sufficient. These may require joint and cooperative action or simply imply that stakeholders have taken action individually targeting a specific obstacle.

Figure 5-7 Case study examples illustrating different combinations of stakeholders required to solve cross-border cooperation obstacles



Source: Service provider 2021, based on cross-border obstacles inventory

5.3.2. Solutions overcoming obstacles

The analysis differentiated ten types of approach. These contribute to the ten measures of the EC Communication on EU border regions (European Commission, 2017) to different extents and illustrate potential actions by stakeholders in EU Member States and IPA countries. Some approaches may contribute to different actions outlined in the EC Communication. Measures five to eight related to specific policy fields may be addressed through several approaches. Depending on the root cause of the obstacle, they may even require further measures (such as infrastructure investments) not considered here.

Table 5-1 Links between the ten measures of the EC Communication (COM(2017) 534 final) and solution approaches

EC Communication measures	Analytical solution approaches
1. Deepening cooperation & exchanges	– More regular cross-border exchanges – Stronger cross-border coordination of policies
2. Improving the legislative process	– EU legislative action – National legislative action – Conclusion of an interstate agreement
3. Enabling cross-border administration	– Joint elaboration of a cross-border territorial development plan – New cooperation structures
4. Providing reliable and understandable information and assistance	– Building a joint knowledge base – Pragmatic 'bridging' of shared problems – Joint elaboration of a cross-border territorial development plan
5. Supporting cross-border employment	<i>Many of the approaches listed above (previous cells)</i>
6. Promoting border multilingualism	
7. Facilitating cross-border accessibility	
8. Promoting greater pooling of health care facilities	
9. Considering the legal and financial framework for cross-border cooperation	– New cooperation structures – New cross-border public services
10. Building evidence of cross-border interaction to inform decision-making	– Building a joint knowledge base

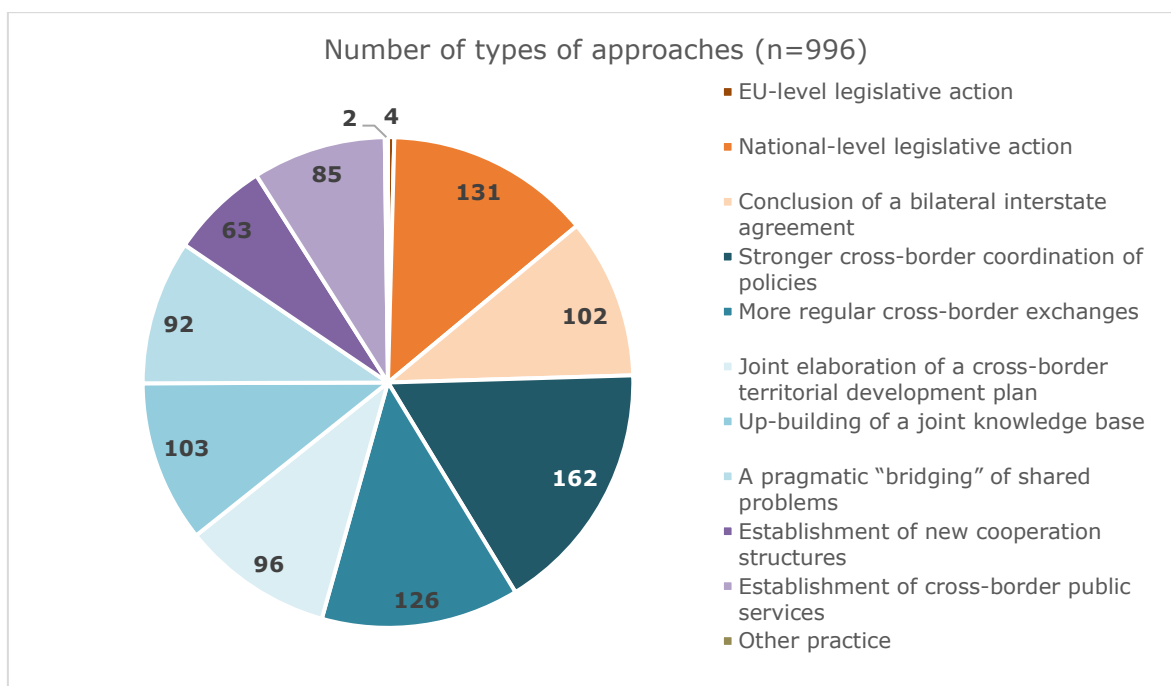
Source: Service provider 2021 and European Commission (2017)

Analysis of the obstacles shows that, apart from EU legislative action and practices that could not be assigned to any type ('Other'), all types of approaches are similarly relevant (Figure 5-8). Solutions requiring legislation or agreements account for about a quarter of all approaches. More than half of the approaches are governance ('soft') approaches (bluish colours). Establishing new cross-border cooperation structures and cross-border public services account for about 15% of approaches.

For **about 90% of obstacles regional/local governance approaches may be sufficient to solving obstacles or can mitigate them and/or facilitate further steps** towards more sustainable solutions, e.g. through interstate agreements or new cooperation structures. Obstacles related to national disputes on borders and pending agreements may not significantly benefit from additional 'soft' measures but can be solved solely through formal actions. Local and regional stakeholders in SEE⁶ also indicated the importance of national legislative actions and agreements to overcome legal and administrative obstacles without referring to other solution approaches, which may still be relevant.

⁶ Answers from a survey in Spring 2021.

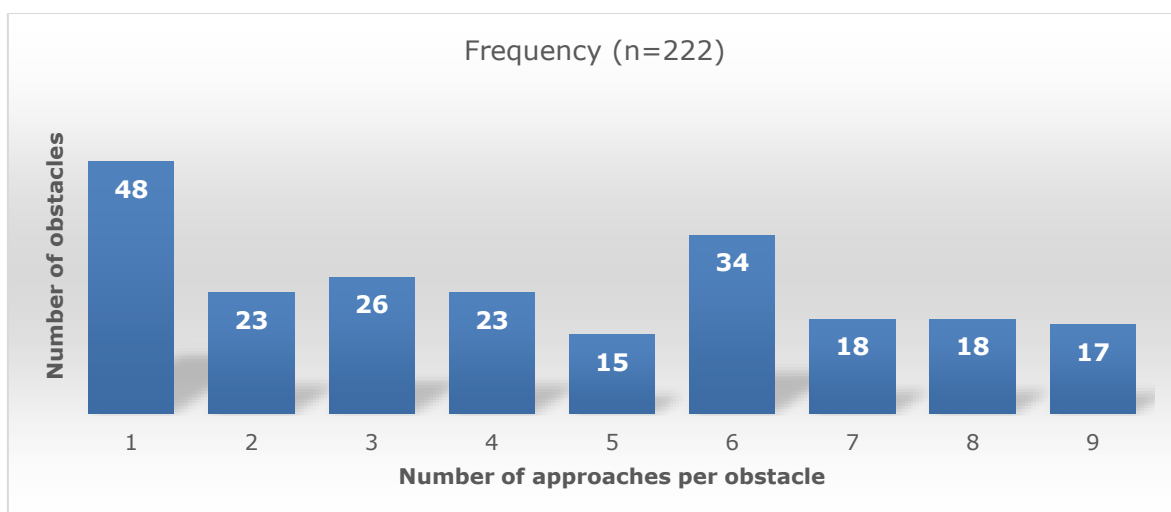
Figure 5-8 Approaches to solving obstacles (222 obstacles)



Source: Service provider 2021, based on cross-border obstacles inventory

This analysis hints at the **need to combine multiple approaches to solving obstacles**. Nearly 80% of obstacles require more than one approach and half of these or about 40% of obstacles require the combination of six to nine different types of approach for mitigation (Figure 5-9).

Figure 5-9 Number of solution approaches per obstacle



Source: Service provider 2021, based on cross-border obstacles inventory

These complexities of potential solutions can be further illustrated by the case studies. Their analysis supports:

- the earlier finding that Interreg IPA programmes cannot solve all obstacles, nor can national intervention alone usually solve them;
- the number and complexity of approaches varies highly between obstacles; and

- the degree of complexity of an obstacle root-cause may influence the diversity of approaches needed but this is not always decisive.

Case study illustrations on the variety of approaches to solving an obstacle

The **lack of harmonised cross-border health care** frameworks is an example of a complex source-effect relationship that needs many complementary approaches to overcome the obstacles. Among them are:

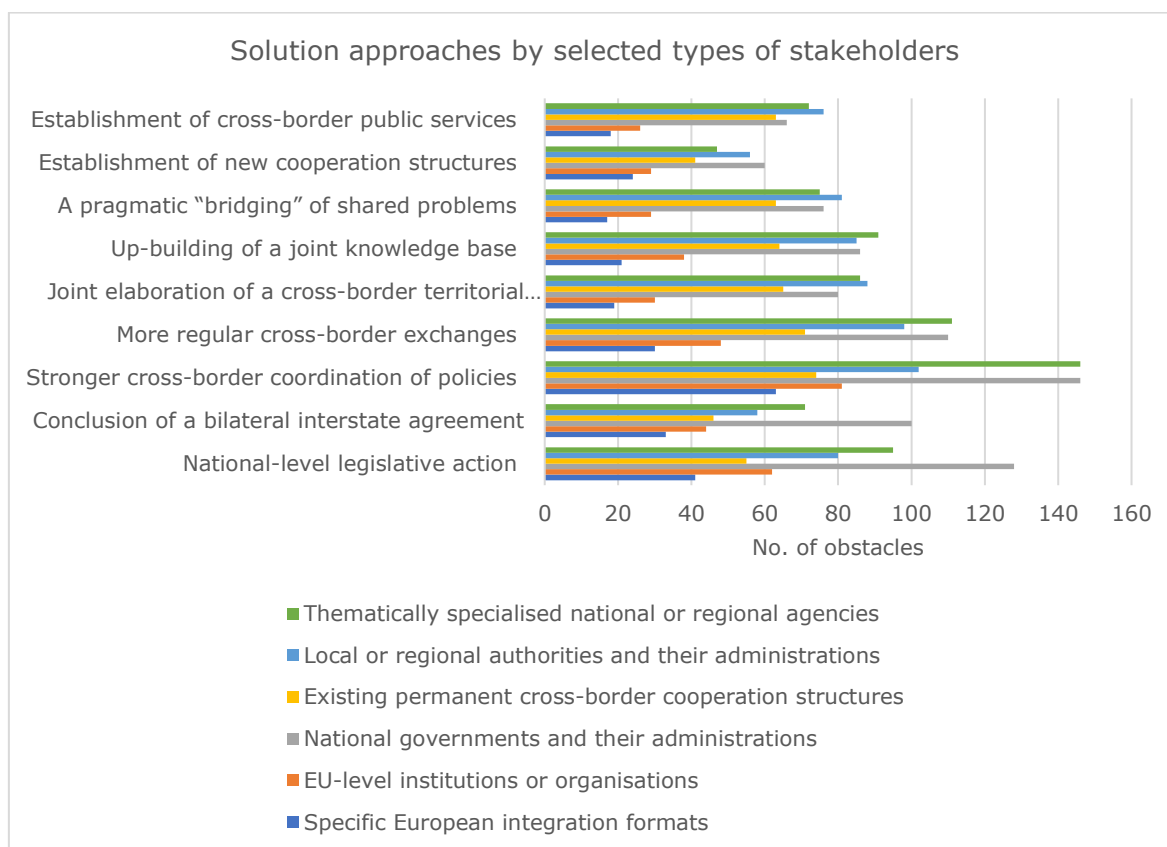
- legislative actions and bilateral agreements facilitating the formal access of citizens to health care services across the border; and
- a variety of 'softer' measures such as better cross-border policy coordination, regular exchanges, joint knowledge bases, new cooperation structures, pragmatic approaches to solving challenges on the ground as well as service provision across the border.

Overcoming a **lack of transport infrastructure** to connect major transport routes requires only a few approaches to cross-border cooperation that should complement infrastructure investments. These may focus on transport policy coordination in support of timely implementation of planned investments, which can also be fostered through regular cross-border exchanges and a joint development plan.

Finally, combining the findings from the analysis of stakeholders and solutions shows that the two most relevant groups of stakeholders, i.e. national authorities and specialised thematic agencies, are among the most frequently needed stakeholders for all approaches (Figure 5-10). Thus, national authorities should be frequently involved also when designing and implementing 'soft' measures, which may mirror to some extent the often centralised decision-making structures in SEE compared to the very limited responsibilities and more limited capacities at lower levels of government. In other cases, their inclusion may be seen as the link between 'soft' and formal measures.

The role of local and regional authorities is, however, not to be neglected and among the most important for all 'soft' measures. For national legislative actions and interstate agreements they may have a role in representing and transposing border region perspectives and needs into national actions. The potential relevance of very different stakeholders from local to EU level across the variety of approaches highlights that any action towards mitigating and solving obstacles should consider the broader picture by connecting different approaches and keeping the objective of removing an obstacle in mind.

Figure 5-10 Relevance of selected types of stakeholders for solutions to solve obstacles (222 obstacles)



Source: Service provider 2021, based on cross-border obstacles inventory

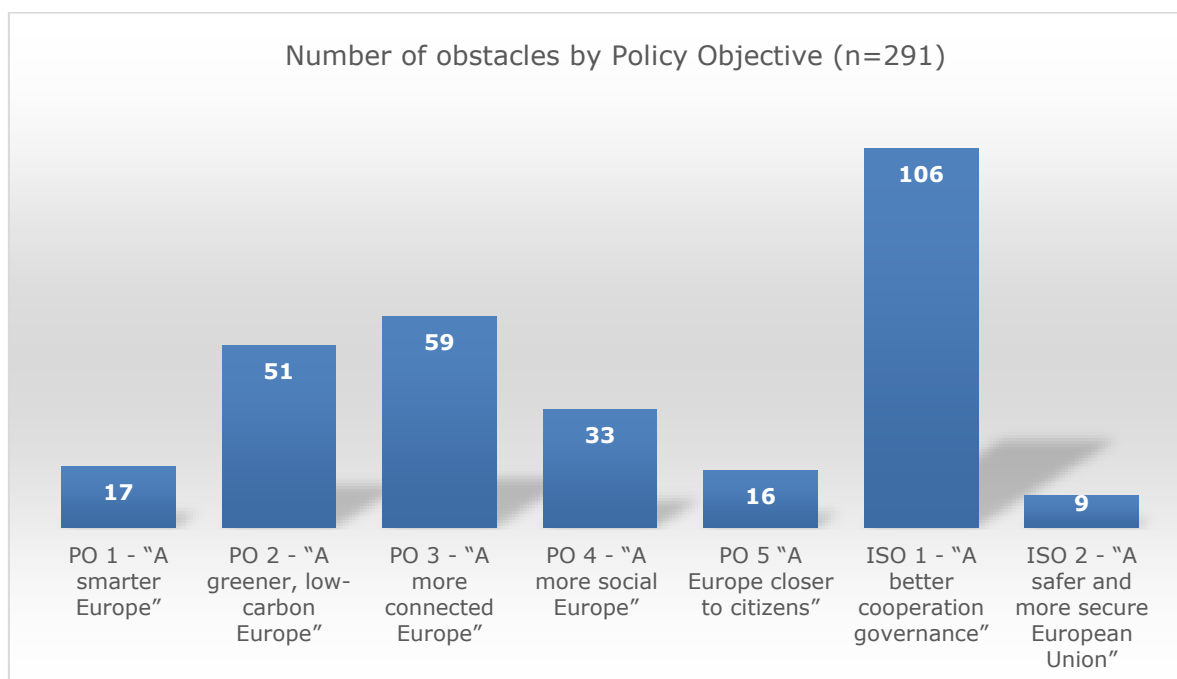
5.4. Findings for future Interreg IPA programmes

The above analyses provide insights from different angles allowing for conclusions on the potential thematic focus of 2021-2027 Interreg IPA programmes suitable to address obstacles to cross-border cooperation. The following gives general tendencies rather than insights to individual Interreg IPA programmes although illustrations from case studies may be linked to a certain Interreg IPA programme.⁷

In the inventory of obstacles, 291 POs have been identified as access points to address the 222 obstacles (Figure 5-11). In some cases, actions under different POs may be necessary, whereas in other cases, POs may be alternative access points to address an obstacle. ISO 1 'A better cooperation governance' is by far the most relevant PO and may be useful to address nearly every other obstacle. Other important POs are PO 2 'A greener, low-carbon Europe' and PO 3 'A more connected Europe'. The outstanding frequency of ISO 1 is because this objective may be frequently combined with other POs to contribute to solving obstacles for cross-border cooperation and it mirrors the lack of capacity identified in several case studies.

⁷ More programme specific conclusions have been elaborated for Member State specific 'Issues Papers' outlined in separate documents (see Annex I, Section 7.3).

Figure 5-11 Policy objectives relevant for tackling cross-border cooperation obstacles



Source: Service provider 2021, based on cross-border obstacles inventory

Case study illustration on the combination of ISO 1 with other POs

Any obstacle requiring better public administration capacity and/or means to cooperate across borders may be mitigated, inter alia, through actions under ISO 1. For example, the obstacles to cooperation on **climate change adaptation** through transboundary river basin management clearly lacks cooperation between national administrations in SEE. Thus, ISO 1 is a means to enhance and support this cooperation. At the same time, transboundary river basin management may also benefit at local and regional level from actions under PO 2 'A greener, low-carbon Europe' through which implementation of transboundary strategies could be financed.

The example of a **lack of transport infrastructure connections** at TEN-T corridors between North Macedonia and Bulgaria and Greece shows there are also obstacles that may be addressed through thematic policy interventions, i.e. in this case under PO 3 'A more connected Europe'.

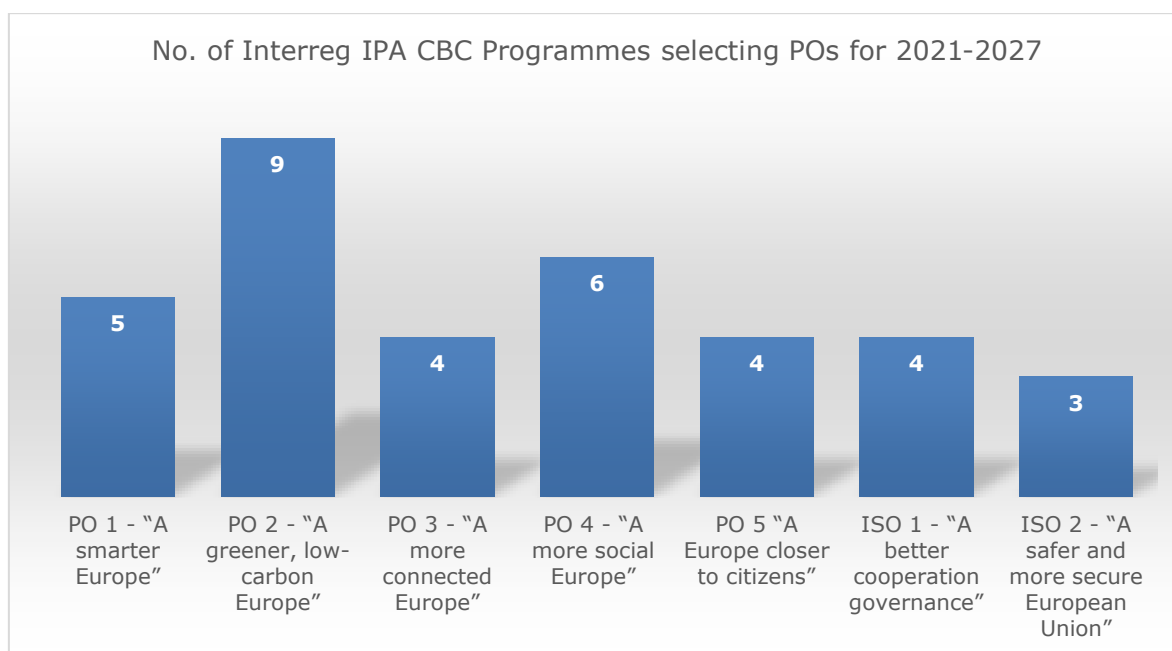
The case studies highlight that ISO 1 may provide different and very targeted support to border areas in SEE. In most cases it is about **capacity building and establishing cooperation routines**, etc. but one case study also highlighted the need for **trust building measures** explicitly, where people-to-people actions may be relevant. Since the obstacle is not limited to this case study but seen more widely in SEE, these actions may be of wider relevance.

Case study illustration from the Danube-Drava-Sava Euroregion on the need for trust building measures

Following Croatia's EU accession, cooperation in the Danube-Drava-Sava Euroregion with members from Hungary, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina has weakened and basically disappeared after 2010. Apart from differences and weaknesses in the governance structures, there is a persistent lack of trust and mental barriers hindering cooperation between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Solutions that would help to overcome the obstacle should address the root cause through the encouragement of grassroot initiatives and new forms of informal cooperation across borders, concentrating the efforts on networking at local level and on younger generations.

These findings raise the question of how far Interreg IPA 2021-2027 programmes plan a priority axis on ISO 1. According to tentative information, only four of the ten Interreg IPA programmes plan to implement an ISO 1 priority (Figure 5-12). This does not seem to mirror the need for ISO 1 related measures to mitigate obstacles to cross-border cooperation. The identification of insufficient cross-border cooperation structures for several borders in these countries and the relevance of ISO 1 for obstacles across policy areas (Figure 5-13) further support this finding. Overall, this may limit the programmes' ability to improve conditions in view of governance related obstacles. The other two POs important to solving obstacles are considered to different extents by these programmes. PO 2 may be implemented in all but one programme often including SOs on climate change challenges and environmental protection, both of are suitable to tackle numerous obstacles in these policy areas (Figure 5-13). Transport and sustainable mobility obstacles may be mostly addressed through PO 3, which seems to be selected by only four Interreg IPA programmes, notwithstanding the geographically wide relevance of the related obstacles. Tentative information on PO and ISO selection suggests that four of the ten programmes do not plan to implement PO 3 or ISO 1, which may hamper efforts to address transport and mobility-related obstacles.

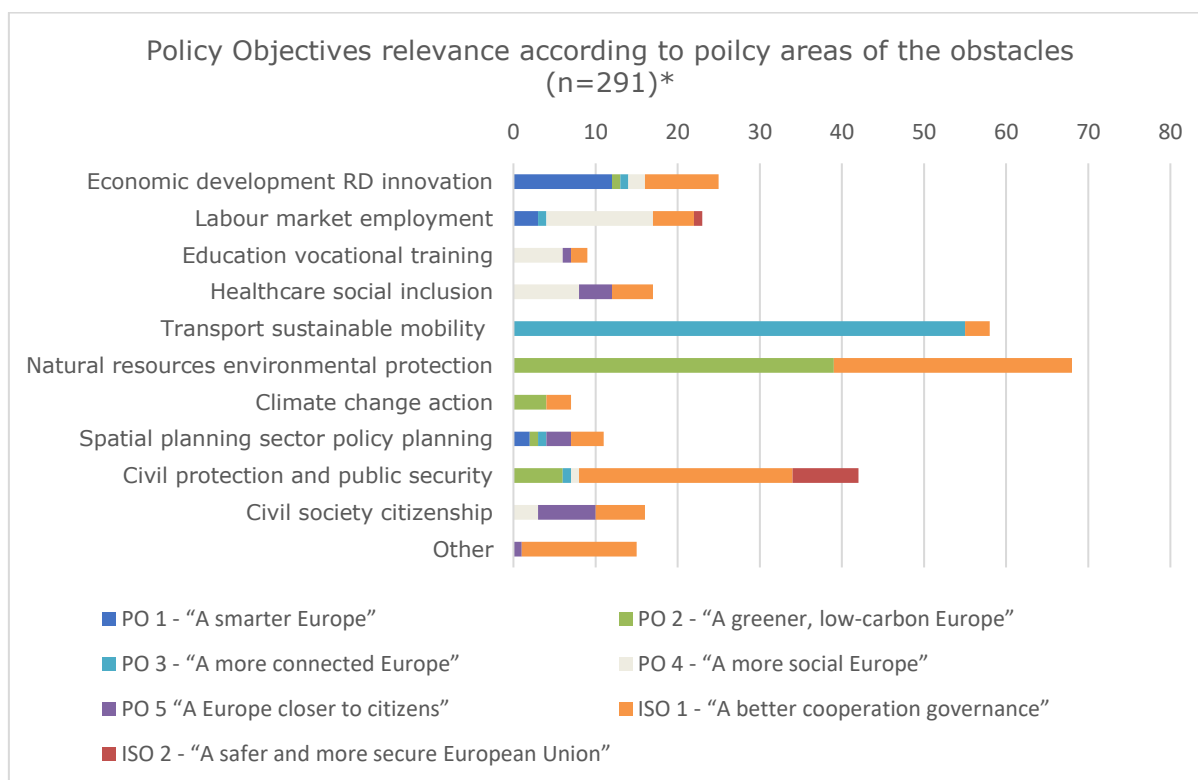
Figure 5-12 Tentative selection of POs and ISOs of Interreg IPA programmes 2021-2027 (10 programmes)



Source: Service provider 2021, based on tentative DG Regio information

For some policy areas the analysis indicates that different POs may be necessary depending on the roots of an obstacle. Examples are obstacles to economic development, R&D and innovation, labour market and employment, spatial and sector policy planning and to civil protection and public security (Figure 5-13).

Figure 5-13 Potential ESIF Policy Objectives by policy area of obstacles (222 obstacles)



* n refers to the number of POs identified for the 222 obstacles

Source: Service provider 2021, based on cross-border obstacles inventory

Inventory and case study analyses suggest for **most Interreg IPA programmes to concentrate on ISO 1, PO 2 and PO 3**. In addition, socio-cultural obstacles, e.g. related to PO 4, may be addressed through **PO 5 'A Europe closer to citizens'**. However, for most obstacles where PO1, PO4 or PO5 have been identified as useful to providing solutions, there are also access points in ISO 1, PO 2, or PO 3 that could address most obstacles. Obstacles where ISO 2 could be an adequate access point refer mostly to illegal activities across borders (see e.g. the case study on smuggling). Depending on the approach, these could be considered as safety issue or as a matter for better cooperation governance. The second perspective means they could be addressed under ISO 1.

The role of local and regional governance and the potential thematic coverage of POs and ISOs support the potential role of Interreg IPA programmes in addressing obstacles to cross-border cooperation. Differences in approaches to solve a cross-border cooperation obstacle and their relation to potential programme priorities are also visible in the case studies. These illustrate obstacles that need to combine formal and 'soft' measures, focusing on legal initiatives and those that rely entirely on 'softer' approaches under different POs and ISOs.

Case study illustrations on the role of legal and 'soft' approaches and different POs in the 2021-2027 programming period

The **bilateral dispute on minorities between Greece and Albania** shows the importance of legal action by the countries involved. Without this action, regional mitigation measures will have very limited impact. However, social measures and integrated local development (PO 4 and PO 5) may facilitate first steps towards legal action.

In contrast to this example, cooperation hampered by the incomplete peace and **trust building process in the border areas** between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina can be revived through 'soft' initiatives at local level rather than legislative action. This includes, in particular, ISO 1 measures.

Addressing **climate change challenges for water resources** is an example where 'soft' and legal measures are equally required. These challenges frequently need bi- or trilateral national agreements, which should be elaborated and implemented through 'soft' measures ranging from a better knowledge base, with cross-border coordination and exchange to joint planning. Most of these measures could be addressed under PO 2 but may also benefit from ISO 1, when focusing more generally on cooperation and governance structures.

6. Conclusions and policy pointers

Borders are still very important in the region, both between IPA countries and EU Member States and among IPA countries. This gives rise to additional conclusions complementing the thematic focus of Interreg IPA 2021-2027 programmes. The following offers findings for other design and implementation aspects of Interreg IPA programmes and general policy pointers. All conclusions focus on **obstacles to cross-border cooperation and integration** rather than on general development obstacles or cross-border cooperation interests. Based on the findings in **case studies, 'issues papers' and this report, border areas are encouraged to work on these obstacles**.

The EC Communication on boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions (European Commission, 2017) has listed **ten measures** that are considered crucial to addressing the challenges and particularities of border regions. The analysis shows that these challenges and particularities are also relevant for border regions between EU Member States and IPA countries. Particularities challenging cross-border cooperation and integration may be even stronger and be more varied at these borders. Thus, these border regions may also benefit from all the measures proposed in the EC Communication. Actions to alleviate or solve obstacles to cross-border cooperation in the area are numerous and may require even further actions and possibly a different focus compared to internal EU border obstacles.

This links to the finding that borders between EU Member States and IPA countries are **'hard' borders** in many respects as they separate different systems. This not only regards travel times at border crossing points as the borders separate people and communities mentally. In consequence, cross-border cooperation in SEE is still a sensitive matter at least in some border areas due to enduring tensions linked to war legacies and different interpretations of recent history. To make matters worse, along some borders this is often perpetuated to post-war generations through the educational system. The path towards improved cross-border cooperation can therefore not ignore these underlying issues, which ask for open dialogue among institutions at all levels and among local communities as well as concrete trust building activities that differ to that

envisaged under the first EC Communication measure 'Deepening cooperation and exchanges'.

This links to another type of measure not suggested in the EC Communication due to its focus on internal EU borders: the need for **capacity building in border areas and for cross-border cooperation**. Interreg Specific Objective ISO 1 'Better Interreg governance' can address corresponding obstacles, even if not listed as a measure in the EC Communication. This has been recently acknowledged in refocusing actions, including 'Resilience through deeper institutional cooperation' (European Commission, 2021). For Interreg IPA programmes the needs to be addressed differ, however, from those addressed by Interreg programmes when it comes to the development of cross-border cooperation structures. SEE border regions need stronger cross-border cooperation structures to enable many cooperation processes and initiate measures to tackle border specific challenges on behalf of their members. In this context, increasing the **engagement of key actors in candidate and potential candidate countries** in Interreg IPA programmes is central. The analyses illustrates the frequent need for improving capacity to benefit from and implement Interreg IPA measures and projects. But there is also a need to raise awareness about the opportunity of Interreg IPA programmes. Small municipalities and other small key actors, not least due to their restricted resources in terms of finance, staff and technical expertise and their peripheral location, lack knowledge of these funding opportunities while facing a lack of alternative sources of funding.

Apart from this lack of alternative funding sources, many potential beneficiaries also face a **lack of financial resources for pre- and co-financing Interreg IPA actions**. This is a cross-cutting obstacle to cross-border cooperation along all borders between EU and IPA countries. This hampers the participation of many local stakeholders in these programmes. In turn, this impacts the intensity of cooperation and the range of initiatives that could be taken to alleviate or solve obstacles across borders. Although the relevance of this issue varies depending on the type of beneficiary and the country/region concerned, tackling obstacles to cross-border cooperation would benefit from a wider availability of co-financing. This can be alleviated by national interventions, e.g. through national schemes that ensure co-financing and/or interim funding up to a ceiling for Interreg IPA participation.⁸ Such schemes could also help to mitigate differences in co-financing resources between EU Member States and neighbouring candidate and potential candidate countries.

Some measures in the EC Communication suggest a **thematic focus** on employment, multilingualism, accessibility and health care. For SEE border regions additional cooperation themes need considerable effort. This especially concerns actions supporting cross-border environmental protection and climate change action as well as support to cross-border civil protection and disaster management. For these additional themes many obstacles were identified with wider effects on development in these border regions. The recent EC Communication on the progress of border region actions also acknowledges some of these themes when suggesting a refocus towards 'Border regions for the European Green Deal' (European Commission, 2021, p. 5).

The EU can and must play a crucial role in these areas through the enlargement process and cross-border cooperation programmes in the region (Interreg IPA) since they are a powerful stimulus for action at local and regional level. These and other EU support in SEE should be seen in the wider policy context of the region. A lack of **trust and mental barriers** may not always be visible at first glance as the main cause of border obstacles. However, they are additional and reinforcing reasons hampering cross-border cooperation, as mentioned above in relation to war legacies. Other external influences in the region e.g. Chinese investments in infrastructure (Academy for Spatial Research

⁸ For instance, Italy has installed a revolving fund to implement national policies that provides co-financing for local and regional authorities wishing to participate in Interreg projects. For more information see <https://www.agenziacoazione.gov.it/lacoazione/le-politiche-di-coesione-in-italia-2014-2020/the-actors/igrue/?lang=en> and https://www.rgs.mef.gov.it/VERSIONE-I/attivita_istituzionali/monitoraggio/rapporti_finanziari_ue/i_decreti_di_cofinanziamento/

and Planning - ARL, 2019, p. 5) and the multi-dimensional involvement of Turkey in the Western Balkans (Vračić, 2016, pp. 5–6) matter as well. A watchful eye should be kept on these external influences to avoid developments that could hamper the EU accession prospects of SEE countries. To overcome these barriers to European integration, mitigation of cross-border cooperation obstacles supported by the EU is imperative.

This raises questions of how to enhance the integration of SEE countries in view of prospective EU enlargement. Past enlargement experience may be useful to illustrate how important it is to implement the *acquis communautaire* prior to EU accession. At the same time, lengthy processes – especially in view of other external influences – may negatively affect the motivation of SEE governments to focus on achieving the *acquis communautaire*. **Preferential conditions for candidate countries where these pre-requisites are fulfilled as well as more intensive (financial) support** may counter-balance other external influences and help overcome cross-border cooperation obstacles. Additional financial support for Interreg IPA and especially IPA countries should also be envisaged to avoid an increasing gap of resources for regional and territorial development between EU Member States and enlargement countries in SEE. However, this should come with better and more targeted **visibility of the benefits of EU resources**. Not least the COVID-19 pandemic, which interrupted transport routes and value chains, provides further arguments in favour of closer cooperation with neighbouring countries in SEE.

The analysis highlights potential thematic foci of Interreg IPA 2021-2027 programmes. However, obstacles refer to all policies and themes targeted by the objectives of the Common Provision Regulation for 2021-2027 and even go beyond this, as illustrated by obstacles that require attention from foreign affairs. Notwithstanding the individual focus of specific Interreg IPA programmes future interventions should be more about **actions to mitigate obstacles for cross-border cooperation** rather than encouraging cooperation more generally. One way forward may be to focus on related SOs (across POs) that could support one obstacle mitigation measure with another (e.g. ISO 1 together with an SO of one of the thematic POs).

To achieve visible effects, defining realistic milestones and stepwise approaches towards a defined goal are central. EU internal experience shows that solving obstacles to cross-border cooperation and integration most often **needs time, realistic objectives and the acceptance of stakeholders and citizens**. Often several steps need to be taken before overcoming the obstacle. These steps are important to tailor cooperation towards solutions. Examples of such preparatory steps are:

- creating an adequate knowledge base through needs assessments, monitoring etc.;
- specifying the needs for cooperation on a particular obstacle and its benefits for the affected population, including citizen dialogue across the regions;
- identifying initiators and important stakeholders to address the obstacle;
- working on the legal framework to get further support from higher administrative levels on local challenges (see e.g. Hermannek, 2015).

Interreg IPA programmes can contribute throughout these processes. Most programmes involve two neighbouring countries. However, not all obstacles can be tackled bilaterally by these programmes:

- 1) Bilateral programmes do not sufficiently consider **functional areas**. In some cases, trilateral programmes would be better for functional economic or environmental areas. Alternatively, territorial flexibility in bilateral programmes could be promoted to involve stakeholders from outside the programme area including from neighbouring countries, when beneficial to a project and justified by functional links.
- 2) Interreg IPA cannot solve all obstacles. They are not sufficient in volume or competences. To alleviate obstacles to cross-border cooperation, sound coordination with national IPA programmes and other policy action is often also

required. Interreg IPA is **one important piece in the puzzle** rather than the only means when addressing obstacles to cross-border cooperation and integration.

Last but not least, interviews hinted at a potential lack of **awareness outside Interreg IPA programme territories**. Project partners in other parts of the countries (in both, IPA countries and their neighbouring EU Member States) can be a game changer when offering new capacity for the benefit of border areas. At least partially, there seems to be either a lack of awareness among stakeholders or restrictions imposed by programmes that hamper the participation of key players outside the programme area. Given that the new Interreg regulation (EU Regulation 2021/1059) does not impose such restrictions, Interreg IPA 2021-2027 programmes may avoid unnecessary limitations and misunderstandings regarding the potential involvement of stakeholders outside the programme area if their involvement can benefit border areas.

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- Open Regional Fund for South-East Europe – Implementation of Biodiversity Agreements (2019)
- Biodiversity Task Force. Technical and advisory body of the Regional Working Group on Environment of South-East Europe.
- Recommendation paper on enhancing the Biodiversity Information management and reporting in South-East Europe.
- Why biodiversity and ecosystem services matter to socioeconomic growth in South-East Europe: the current state of knowledge, lessons learned and ways forward.
- Case Study: Advocating ESAV in Bosut Forests area - integrating biodiversity and ecosystem services in natural resource uses and management.
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- Second edition of the NALAS Statistical Brief: Local Government Finance Indicators in South-East Europe (26.10.2020).
- NALAS Survey: South-East Europe Local Governments in Post COVID-19 Socio-Economic Recovery (15.09.2020).
- Practical Guide: Establishing and Running a Training Centre (05.08.2020).
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- Towards creating e-environment in justice - common standards on promoting quality of judicial training and regional cross-border cooperation in SEE. Study, (25 September 2019).
- Balkan Barometer 2020 - Public Opinion. Analytical report. (April 2020).
- Balkan Barometer 2020 - Business Opinion. Analytical report (April 2020).
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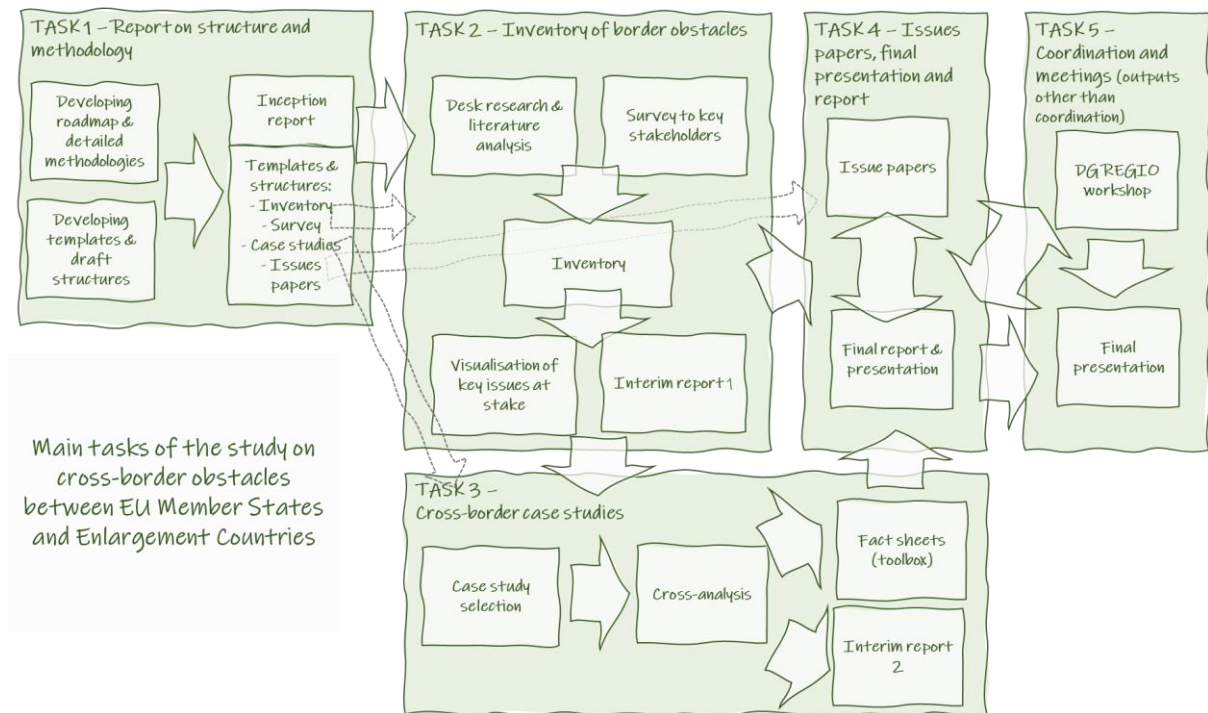
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7. Annex I – Methodological approach

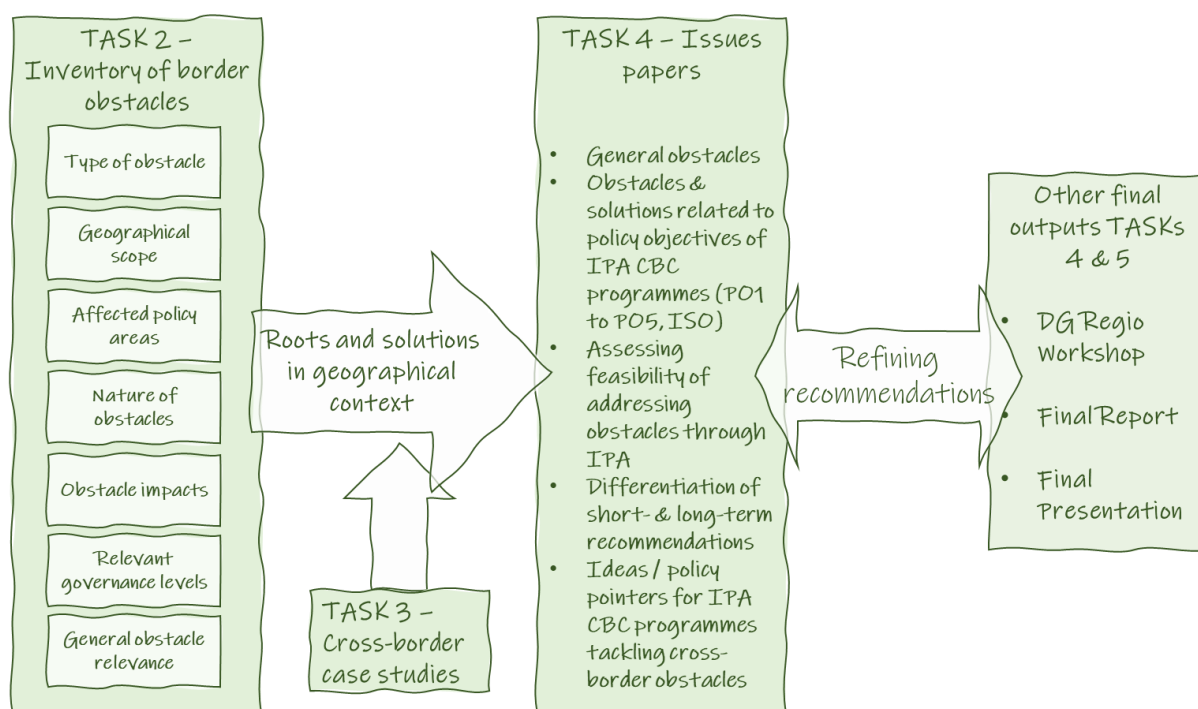
The following two figures detail the approach and roadmap of the study in terms of (a) links between the study tasks and (b) the relation between obstacles and recommendations for Interreg IPA programmes.

Figure 7-1 Links between study tasks



The study was conducted along five tasks as detailed in Figure 7-1. This shows that task 1 developed the methodological basis for all following tasks. At the core of the study are tasks 2, 3 and 4, which present different perspectives of the analysis. Figure 7-2 adds an additional content perspective to the roadmap. It shows the type of information used to develop recommendations for Interreg IPA programmes to reduce identified obstacles. This considers past experience of these programmes, insights from the inventory and the case studies in view of the causes and solutions for obstacles in the corresponding geographical context (i.e. related to specific Member States and border relations). While the final report generalises the study findings and identifies the most relevant obstacles across the countries, the issues papers aim for focused and practical recommendations and proposals.

Figure 7-2 Relation between obstacle inventory and recommendations



7.1. Inventory of obstacles

The inventory of obstacles is the central database of the study and has three levels:

- The first level of the Excel database consists of 7 'main themes', which address and further specify the analytical elements mentioned in the technical specifications for this study.
- The second level consists of 19 'sub-themes', each of which addresses specific aspects mentioned in the titles of the seven main themes. For nearly all sub-themes, dropdown menus with pre-defined 'assessment topics' enable filtering within the inventory. For a limited number of sub-themes, however, fields for comments allow short but specific descriptions of each obstacle.
- The third level consists of the individual obstacles (i.e. database entries), each of which is described under the main themes / sub-themes by either selecting the pre-elaborated assessment topics from the dropdown menus or, where required, by short texts in the comments fields. Each obstacle is identified by a short title and an ID number. Obstacles with ID numbers starting with 'S' were collected through a survey (see further below).

The inventory has been set up in an Excel file that arranges the main themes and sub-themes as well as the related dropdown menus with assessment topics or the fields for comments horizontally as described below.

Table 7-1 Thematic set-up of the inventory

Main Theme	Sub-themes	Dropdown menus and fields for comments
(1) The basic type and main source of an obstacle	(1.1) The relevant border dimension (1.2) The dimension-specific main source causing the obstacle	Two dropdown menus (for 1.1 and 1.2)
(2) Geographical scope and exact	(2.1) Geographical scope (2.2) Bilateral border in South-East Europe	Two dropdown menus (for 2.1 and 2.2) and one field for comments (for 2.3)

border location of an obstacle	(2.3) Precise description of the obstacle's border location	
(3) Policy affected by an obstacle and potential IPA-interventions	(3.1) General policy areas (3.2) Related cross-border intervention fields (3.3) Relevant POs and ISOs of future IPA-programmes	Three dropdown menus (for 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3)
(4) The obstacle source in the local/regional, national or international context	(4.1) The obstacle(s) at a particular border (4.2) Border-specific obstacle sources in the national or regional/local context (4.3) Characteristics of the overall 'source-problem-effect relationship'	Two fields for comments (for 4.1 and 4.2) and one dropdown menu (for 4.3)
(5) The effect and wider impact of an obstacle within the cross-border region	(5.1) The negative direct effect(s) (5.2) Possible other negative secondary effects (5.3) The wider negative impact	Four dropdown menus (for 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3) and two fields for comments (for 5.1 and 5.2)
(6) Approaches to overcoming or alleviating the negative direct effect of an obstacle	(6.1) The required and competent levels of government (6.2) Other relevant public, semi-public, private actors and civil society stakeholders (6.3) Problem solving approaches for eliminating or alleviating the negative direct effects of border obstacles	Three multiple choice dropdown menus (for 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3).
(7) The wider relevance of an obstacle for other SEE borders	(7.1) The level of relevance of an obstacle (7.2) Similar obstacles cases at other SEE borders	One dropdown menu (for 7.1) and one field for comments (for 7.2)

At the end of the horizontal analytical aspects in the Excel file, a column 'information source' was added, with the exact source(s) of information on an obstacle.

Obstacles were identified by reviewing literature and documents as well as through a survey of national, regional and local stakeholder organisations in the study area potentially with information on existing border obstacles. Two columns at the beginning of the horizontal order identify the obstacles, namely 'ID' number and 'Short name of the obstacle'. All IDs starting with 'S' were collected through the survey.

Literature and document review

During the inception phase and analysis, general and specific sources with potential information on border obstacles in different fields were gathered. They are included in the list of references above. These sources are scientific works or thematic studies from applied science and reports or policy documents focusing on SEE countries that are the focus of this study. These documents were screened by the experts to find information on potential border obstacles that could be used to elaborate obstacle cases for the inventory.

Information collection via survey

A survey of stakeholders working on border integration, cross-border cooperation and border projects complemented the literature review. This collected primary data on a) border obstacles and specificities of the borders with IPA countries, and b) potential case studies and good practice examples. This approach helped identify obstacles that

were not or not well covered by literature. Thus, the survey provided additional insights complementing the obstacle database and inventory.

7.2. Case studies

Case study analysis aims to offer additional insights that cannot be offered by general analysis covering a large number of cases, i.e. border obstacles. To maximise the benefit of the case studies, their selection had to be well founded and a comparative approach implemented that allowed for cross-analysis. The following paragraphs detail the steps to implement the cross-border case studies.

Determining the case study sample

The data sources to detect potential cases for case studies were:

- literature and reports and analyses of border obstacles at EU level and at EU external borders;
- local, regional, national and EU stakeholders (contacted through the survey under Task 2);
- European experts for border obstacles (AEBR, AER, b-solutions network, etc.);
- Interreg IPA programme documents, programme evaluations and socio-economic analyses.

Following the development of the inventory of obstacles under Task 2, a proposal with a list of potential case studies was presented to DG REGIO for validation or further selection. Case studies should fulfil several objectives, which were the selection criteria:

- 1) The border obstacles should have a significant impact on the border area(s).
- 2) The sample should cover different obstacle types.
- 3) Each case should be related to at least one of the five POs and the two Interreg Specific Objectives outlined for the 2021-2027 programming period and to a respective Interreg IPA Programme. If possible, case studies should cover more than one of the five POs or the two ISOs.
- 4) Different types of territories were to be considered, e.g. border cities, transboundary river basins, larger cross-border regions sharing the same obstacle and possibly be relevant for other EU border regions or for similar territories in neighbouring enlargement countries.
- 5) The cases should cover different border regions to achieve a balanced geographical coverage for the six Member States and across the ten Interreg IPA programmes.
- 6) Whenever possible, case studies should also include good practices or 'solutions' which address the border obstacles and could be used more widely.

There are ten case studies, allowing for a detailed analysis of each and the elaboration of concrete conclusions and recommendations.

Factsheets

Each case study consists of a short report and a factsheet. The latter identifies the main features with the information collected for the inventory and more in-depth details of the case, also in the form of an infographic. The content-related structure follows the inventory structure. These factsheets facilitate the use of the case studies as part of the toolbox for stakeholders and organisations responsible for Interreg IPA programmes, as well as project planning and implementation.

7.3. Issues papers

Separate issues papers files complement the final report. To develop recommendations for Member States, a border and country specific analysis was conducted. Since some

Member States implement Interreg IPA programmes with more than one enlargement country the recommendations differentiate between these programmes and borders. The horizontal organisation of themes together with the identification of relevant regions and borders allows obstacles and solutions to be grouped by Member States and borders. This way, the most significant obstacles and policy areas per cross-border area were identified to focus conclusions and recommendations by Member State and programme, including tentative information on 2021-2027 programme priorities.

Issues papers target all levels of government and legislation in the Member State and may also be of interest for the enlargement countries. Above all, these papers inform Member State (and enlargement country) authorities and give advice for planning and implementation of their Interreg IPA programmes in view of their post-2020 orientation. Future programmes are expected to address border obstacles and tap into potential to facilitate cooperation and socio-economic development in these external border areas. By doing so, functional cross-border relations shall be established and/or enhanced. Due to the timing of the study, issues papers have been drafted when Interreg IPA programmes made a tentative selection of POs and SOs. Thus, recommendations above all address issues that may be feasible to implement in view of the tentative programme outline. Recommendations address different time horizons.

7.4. Infographics

Visualisation of findings is increasingly important to support memorability. To support communication of the study findings, infographics describing different findings are provided as separate files:

- each case study is summarised in an infographic style;
- infographics on a selection of typical obstacles to cross-border cooperation
 - roots, impacts and policy options for cross-border obstacles due to *weak Euroregions*;
 - roots, impacts and policy options for cross-border obstacles due to *weak transport links*;
 - roots, impacts and policy options for cross-border obstacles related to *environmental protection*;
- Finding the best policy mix for IPA 2021-2027 programmes.

8. Annex II – Overview of case studies

The following table presents the list of case studies on cross-border obstacles between EU Member States and candidate countries identified in the inventory from the literature review and survey responses.

The selection of case studies was based on criteria outlined in the Report on structure and methodology, i.e.:

- 1) The border obstacles should have a significant impact on the border area(s).
- 2) The sample should cover different obstacle types.
- 3) Each case should be related to at least one of the five Policy Objectives (POs) and the two Interreg Specific Objectives (ISOs) outlined for the 2021-2027 programming period and to a respective Interreg IPA Programme. If possible, case studies should cover more than one of the five POs or the two ISOs.
- 4) Different types of territories were to be considered, e.g. border cities, transboundary river basins, larger cross-border regions sharing the same obstacle and possibly be relevant for other EU border regions or for similar territories in neighbouring enlargement countries.
- 5) The cases should cover different border regions to achieve a balanced geographical coverage for the six Member States and across the ten Interreg IPA programmes.
- 6) Whenever possible, case studies should also include good practices or 'solutions' which address the border obstacles and could be used more widely.

In addition to these criteria, priority was given to:

- For obstacles emerging from the literature review, a solid basis of material (i.e. documents, strategies etc.), which facilitates assessment of interesting cases.
- For obstacles emerging from the survey, the detail of information and availability of respondents to be contacted in the future.

10 case studies were conducted⁹.

⁹ Two of the proposed case studies were replaced due to insufficient information and the unavailability of interviewees.

Inventory ID	Case study	Type of border obstacle & root causes	Geographic scope	Impact on policy	Related POs/ISOs	Good practices/solutions (Yes/No)
145 S 32	Difficulties for improving cross-border labour mobility between Timis County in Romania and the Serbian Banat region	Type 1 – Political - 1.5 different governance systems and administrative structures / powers at the national, regional or local levels in two neighbouring countries as well as incompatible administrative procedures on both sides of a border (i.e. administrative obstacles).	Smaller border segment between an EU Member State and an IPA country (Timis County RO – Banat County RS, Nakovo-Lunga border crossing)	Labour market, employment	PO 4, ISO 2	No
6	Lacking cross-border harmonisation of health legislations, standards and procedures in SEE	Type 1 - Political – 1.3 different national laws and regulations applied by two neighbouring countries in different policy fields of relevance for cross-border cooperation (i.e. legal obstacle)	All borders (relevant for border areas but also at transnational level in SEE)	Healthcare, long-term care and social inclusion	PO 4, PO 5	No
51	Weaknesses of the multilateral Adriatic Ionian Macroregion	Type 1 Political - 1.7 A non-existing or weakly developed 'system for cross-border governance', including the absence of cross-border public services or the existence of factors hampering sound implementation of IPA programmes (i.e. legal and / or administrative obstacles).	Specific border between an EU Member State and an IPA country (entire length) All borders between EU and IPA countries in the EUSAIR area	Other	ISO1	No
40	Recent weakening of the trilateral 'Danube-Drava-	Type 1 Political - 1.7 A non-existing or weakly developed 'system for cross-border	Smaller border segment between EU Member State and an	Other	ISO1	No

Inventory ID	Case study	Type of border obstacle & root causes	Geographic scope	Impact on policy	Related POs/ISOs	Good practices/solutions (Yes/No)
	Sava Euroregion' (Bosnia and Herzegovina-Croatia-Hungary)	governance', including the absence of cross-border public services or the existence of factors hampering sound implementation of IPA programmes (i.e. legal and / or administrative obstacles).	IPA country (HU-HR-BA)			
S31	Economic disparities BA-HR-RS-ME	Type 3 – Economic - 3.1 Adverse 'structural effects' caused by the existence of pronounced socio-economic discontinuities along a given border	Specific border between an EU Member State and an IPA country (entire length)	Economic development, R&D and innovation, labour market	PO1, PO4	No
12	Shared climate change challenges in the field of water resources, but only limited cross-border cooperation on climate change adaptation	Type 2 – Geographical and natural - 2.3 Lacking or inadequate protection and management of natural resources in border territories and the establishment of new man-made physical barriers reducing cross-border ecological connectivity (e.g. fence building at borders, new roads).	All borders between EU Member States and IPA countries (incl. Turkey)	Climate change action	PO 2, ISO 1	Yes
S 70	Lack of infrastructure and connection EL-MK-BG	Type 2 Geographical and natural dimensions - 2.1 non-existing or sub-optimally developed transport infrastructure and transport services (goods and persons) to overcome the barrier of natural obstacles, including insufficiently developed infrastructure at border crossing points;	Specific border between an EU Member State and an IPA country (entire length) EL-MK-BG	Transport and sustainable mobility	PO 3	No

Inventory ID	Case study	Type of border obstacle & root causes	Geographic scope	Impact on policy	Related POs/ISOs	Good practices/solutions (Yes/No)
8	<i>Smuggling at the Greek-Albanian border</i>	Type 1 Political - 1.2 The 'international status' of a political border between neighbouring countries due to their membership in different formats of the European integration process.	Smaller border segment between an EU Member State and an IPA country (EL-AL, Kakavia crossing)	Civil protection and public security	ISO 2	Yes
33-34	<i>Bilateral dispute on the role and status of the Greek minority in Albania and the Albanian minority in Greece</i>	Type 4 Socio-cultural - 4.2 Mental barriers resulting from a different perception, interpretation and collective or group-specific articulation of the historical legacy and cultural traditions or religious beliefs in politics, science or by the population of neighbouring border regions	Specific border between an EU Member State and an IPA country (entire length) EL-AL	Civil society and citizenship - Joint measures stimulating cross-border social integration of specific target groups threatened by poverty, exclusion or discrimination	PO 4, PO 5	No
14	<i>Different regulatory investment frameworks</i>	Type 1 - Political – 1.3 different national laws and regulations applied by neighbouring countries in different policy fields of relevance for cross-border cooperation (i.e. legal obstacle)	(Potentially) all EU borders between and IPA countries	Spatial planning – sector policy planning	Cross-cutting (PO 1, 2, 3)	No

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