



Main Office	AGEG c/o EUREGIO	Enscheder Str. 362	D-48599 Gronau (Germany)
Projects' Office	AEBR c/o BISDN	Körnerstraße 7	D-10785 Berlin (Germany)
AEBR Antenna in the EU	Office of Extremadura in Brussels	25 Rue Wiertz	B-1047 Brussels (Belgium)
AEBR Info Centre in the Balkans	Institute for International and CBC	Terazije 14/14	11000 Belgrade (Serbia)
AEBR Info Centre in Ukraine	Univ. Simon Kuznets (KhNUE)	pr. Lenina, 9a	61001 Kharkiv (Ukraine)



Call for expressions of interest – Experts in cross-border legal and administrative obstacles in the framework of the *b-solutions* 3.0:

Solving Border Obstacles to Facilitate Cooperation

(Grant Agreement 2023CE160AT234)

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1. Contracting authority

The contracting authority for this call for expressions of interest is the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) - Enscheder Strasse, 362, 48599 Gronau (Germany).

The European Commission and AEBR have signed the Grant Agreement 2023CE160AT234 for the implementation of the project *b-solutions 3.0: Solving Border Obstacles to Facilitate Cooperation*. The present call for expressions of interest is managed in the framework of the *b-solutions 3.0* initiative.

AEBR represents border and cross-border regions, acting as a fundamental platform to promote and advise local, regional, national and European policymakers on cross-border cooperation related issues.

AEBR's objectives include:

- Highlighting border and cross-border regions' role in the political landscape;
- Representing border and cross-border regions' common interests;
- Enhancing cooperation between border regions throughout Europe;
- Promoting exchanges of experience, information and solutions to common obstacles.

AEBR's dedicated email address for the purpose of this call for expressions of interest: b-solutions@aebr.eu.

2. Background information and definitions

b-solutions 3.0: Solving Border Obstacles to Facilitate Cooperation extends the [b-solutions](#) and the *b-solutions 2.0: Solving Cross-Border Obstacles* actions, which form an initiative to tackle legal and administrative obstacles hindering cross-border cooperation along EU internal borders. It is promoted by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) and managed by the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR). The project stems from the Communication [Boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions](#) (COM(2017) 534 final), adopted by the European Commission on 20 September 2017, and builds on the report [EU Border Regions: Living labs of European integration](#) (COM(2021) 393 final) published on 14 July 2021.

Within the framework of the first two phases of the *b-solutions* initiative between 2017 and September 2024, 165 cases were selected: 10 pilot actions for testing tailor-made solutions to obstacles hindering cross-border cooperation were implemented, and 155 advice cases, examples of border obstacles, were identified and received advice from legal experts¹.

b-solutions 3.0: Solving Border Obstacles to Facilitate Cooperation aims at:

- Identifying and providing advice to a maximum of 60 cases of cross-border obstacles of a legal and/or administrative nature (objective 1);
- Further elaborating and nudging towards implementation 20 cases of cross-border obstacles of a legal and/or administrative nature, selected among those which already received advice (objective 2); and

¹ Detailed information on each pilot action and advice case can be found in the publications released in conclusion of the previous phases of the *b-solutions* initiative implementation [here](#).

- Selecting 10 proposals through a dedicated call to develop specific solutions addressing concrete legal and administrative obstacles via pilot actions (objective 3);
- Supporting the capacity building of the target group to implement solutions;
- Promoting sustainable methods of resolving obstacles, raising awareness of needs of citizens and stakeholders in border regions, and showing evidence of the potential of the proposed regulation to facilitate cross-border solutions;
- Consolidating knowledge on solutions and promoting the learning from best practices; and
- Publishing content raising awareness of common obstacles hindering cross-border cooperation, and of potential solutions.

In the framework of *b-solutions 3.0*, AEBR launched a call for proposals to select further cases of cross-border obstacles of a legal and/or administrative nature. AEBR expects to collect a maximum of 60 cases from the call for new *b-solutions'* cases (objective 1).

Additionally, AEBR will select 20 cases among the advice cases selected previously to further elaborate and nudge towards implementation cases of cross-border obstacles of a legal and/or administrative nature (objective 2).

Selected cases under both objectives 1 and 2 will receive legal advice on the obstacle subject of the application from experts with sound knowledge of legal and cross-border cooperation matters.

Thematic fields covered by the *b-solutions 3.0* initiative and by the present call for expressions of interest include:

- 1) Institutional cooperation across national borders
- 2) Cross-border public services
- 3) Cross-border labour markets and education
- 4) Border Regions for the European Green Deal

These areas should be considered in a perspective of cross-border cooperation, namely taking into consideration the dynamics of interaction across national borders.

More information on the exact meaning of the thematic areas can be read [here](#).

Definitions

Cross-border cooperation, in the context of the *b-solutions* initiative, is to be understood as cooperation between actors in regions lying directly on the national borders or adjacent to them.

3. Objectives of the call for expressions of interest

The objective of this call for expressions of interest is to set up a list of experts with sound knowledge of cross-border cooperation practices, competences in analysing legal texts and consultancy skills – preferably with a legal background.

Selected experts may then be contracted to provide support to one or various aspects of AEBR's delivery of the *b-solutions* initiative, which may include the following tasks:

- 1) Provide help in defining the identified obstacles in a clear and systematic way, and propose possible solutions to them by outlining the legal framework from which to proceed, fulfilling objective 1; and/or
- 2) Provide support to implement previously identified solutions for selected cases by e.g. proposing legal modifications, drafting proposals of bilateral agreements or legislative and administrative amendments, and showcasing the proposals in workshops, fulfilling objective 2.

For each task assigned, the selected expert and the contracting authority sign a specific service contract.

More on the application procedure and the required documents to apply as a legal expert can be found in sections 10 and 11 of the present call for expressions of interest.

4. Tasks of the experts

Experts might be contracted for objective 1 and/or for objective 2, with specific tasks related to each objective.

Tasks under objective 1

To achieve objective 1, experts contracted under the present call for expressions of interest are expected to provide legal advice during the period they are contracted for, referred to as advice period. In particular, the experts' task is to identify the obstacle(s), making clear reference to the legal provisions that are causing it (them), and propose possible solutions. To do so, experts are contracted to perform the following tasks:

- a) Attend a kick-off meeting with the case representative to discuss in detail the organisation of the work, including the field visit;
- b) Communicate directly with the case representative and relevant stakeholders to conduct research and interviews, including during the field visit;
- c) Carry out a field visit to the premises of the case representative and/or of relevant stakeholders, which must take place within three months from the beginning of the contract;
- d) Prepare a final report, written in English and following the *b-solutions* report template, which describes the legal and administrative obstacle(s) and underpins conclusions of their work relating to options for resolving the identified obstacle(s) in a clear and systematic way and with reference to the legal provisions that are causing the obstacle(s). The report will include:
 - i) An executive summary;
 - ii) A description of the obstacle with indication of the legal/administrative provisions causing the obstacle (understanding and assessment of the obstacle);
 - iii) A roadmap towards possible solutions, including
 - iv) An indication of the entities to be involved in the possible solution, and
 - v) A full list of all laws/executive acts relevant to the case with the correct citation both in original language and in English;

- vi) If applicable, other relevant aspects of the case;
 - vii) If applicable, references and appendices.
- e) Before the end of the advice period, share the draft report with the case representative to collect and integrate their feedback;
- f) By the end of the advice period, submit the final report for approval to AEBR at b-solutions@aebr.eu;
- h) If necessary, immediately clarify questions and revise the report to eliminate ambiguities or implement suggestions by AEBR and share the final report with AEBR, even if this is to be done after the advice period envisaged for the implementation.

The template for the report will be assigned by AEBR to contracted experts.

The final report must be written in English, unless otherwise agreed with AEBR, and must be sent to AEBR as well as the representative of the advised case by the end of the advice period.

The tasks are to be performed in 8.5 days in a period of three months. The starting date of the advice period depends on the experts' availability.

Experts are expected to visit the representatives of the assigned cases and meet relevant stakeholders. Travel costs, accommodation and a daily allowance are included in the remuneration of the contracted expert.

Tasks under objective 2

To achieve objective 2, experts contracted under the present call for expressions of interest are expected to perform the following tasks:

- a) Draft an implementation plan providing input and proposing legal modifications, proposals of bilateral agreements, etc. on the particular case;
- b) If deemed necessary, present the implementation plan in a workshop or roundtable.

The tasks are to be performed in 9 days, and the specific period will be defined in the corresponding service contract. The starting date of the advice period depends on the experts' availability.

5. Time and place of delivery of the tasks

Under objective 1, a maximum of 8.5 working days within an advice period of three months is foreseen to perform the tasks. The tasks are expected to be carried out, at least partially, at the premises of the institution submitting the assigned case and/or of relevant stakeholders.

Experts should coordinate with the contact person at the assigned case(s) to schedule their field visits.

The advice period should take place within the implementation period of the *b-solutions* 3.0 initiative between October 2024 and June 2026.

The final report must be compiled by the expert within the advice period, which is a maximum of three months after the service contract between the expert and AEBR is signed. The exact deadline for the report submission will be defined in the service contract.

Under objective 2, experts will coordinate with AEBR to arrange the details of their engagement, for a maximum of 9 days per case, as required and as determined by AEBR and on a case by case basis.

The implementation period for this specific task is between October 2024 to June 2026. The exact dates of delivery will be mentioned in the contract’s specifications.

6. Conditions of remuneration and reimbursement

Remuneration under objective 1

Experts contracted for objective 1 shall be remunerated with a maximum amount of € 7,870 (+ VAT if applicable), plus the reimbursement of travel costs, which will be transferred after approval of the report.

The amount includes:

- a) Advice’s fee of € 800.00 + VAT (if applicable)² per working day, for a maximum of 8.5 days, applied in reason of the profile of the expert and in accordance with AEBR’s practice for the expert’s specific competence in evaluating the case assigned and drafting individual evaluation report;
- b) Travel costs based on actual costs, reimbursed upon submission of relevant supporting documents. Transports allowed are second and first-class rail travel, economy class air travel, private car³;
- c) Accommodation allowance of €109 + VAT (if applicable) per night, for a maximum of 5 nights; and
- d) Daily allowance (per diem) of € 75 + VAT (if applicable) per day, for a maximum of 7 days in case of two distinct visits, 6 days in case of a single visit, to cover meals, local transports (bus, tram, metro, taxi, etc), as well as travel and accident insurance.

A single final payment after delivery and approval of the report by AEBR will be made.

The total amount is calculated on the basis of the actual number of days spent at the premises of the institution that submitted the advice case assigned or relevant stakeholders and of the actual travel costs.

Experts contracted in the framework of objective 1 will be remunerated as follows:

Item	Maximum number of units	Unit value (net)	Maximum total value
Daily expert fee	8.5	€ 800	€ 6,800
Accommodation	5	€ 109	€ 545

² To understand in which cases VAT is applicable, information can be found in the FAQ’s section “Remuneration and invoicing” accessible here: <https://www.b-solutionsproject.com/faq>.

³ The journey will be reimbursed at the rate of € 0.30 per km, plus tools if needed. Experts are liable for their own insurance.

Per diem	6 or 7	€ 75	€ 525
TOTAL (net)			€ 7,870
TOTAL (with VAT⁴)			€ 9,365.30
Travel cost	Reimbursement of real costs		

In case of doubts concerning the invoiceable amounts, detailed information can be found here: <https://www.b-solutionsproject.com/faq>.

Remuneration under objective 2

Experts contracted for objective 2 shall be remunerated with a maximum amount of € 9,636.00, which will be paid after approval of the initiative document.

The amount of € 9,636.00 includes:

- a) Advice's fee of € 800.00 + VAT⁵ (if applicable) per working day, for a maximum of 9 days. The number of days of engagement will be discussed by AEBR and the expert in advance and regulated in the contract;
- b) Travel cost based on actual costs, reimbursed upon submission of relevant supporting documents. Transports allowed are second and first-class rail travel, economy class air travel, private car⁶;
- c) Accommodation allowance of € 109 per night + VAT (if applicable), for a maximum of 2 nights to cover accommodation; and
- d) Daily allowance (per diem) of € 75 per day + VAT (if applicable), for a maximum of 3 days to cover meals, local transports (bus, tram, metro, taxi, etc), as well as travel and accident insurance.

Under specific circumstances, AEBR may assess the need for more experts to be involved in a resolution of a case. This need will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. If the need is confirmed and more experts are contracted for one case, AEBR will activate reimbursement for travel costs, accommodation and daily allowances for each personal participating as expert.

A single final payment after submission and approval of the implementation plan by AEBR will be made.

Experts contracted in the framework of objective 2 will be remunerated as follows:

⁴ 19% is the VAT rate in Germany, where AEBR is based. As AEBR is the recipient of the services by the expert, VAT is liable in Germany if the expert is not based in Germany due to the reverse charge procedure, at the applicable rate in Germany. Therefore, if reverse charge applies, the VAT rate applicable to the service is 19%. Experts who are not liable for VAT (Non-VAT Registered Professionals) shall invoice the net amount since they do not charge VAT.

⁵ To understand in which cases VAT is applicable, information can be found in the FAQ's section "Remuneration and invoicing" accessible here: <https://www.b-solutionsproject.com/faq>.

⁶ The journey will be reimbursed at the rate of € 0.30 per km, plus tools if needed. Experts are liable for their own insurance.

Item	Maximum number of units	Unit value (net)	Maximum total value
Daily expert fee	9	€ 800	€ 7,200
Accommodation	2	€ 109	€ 218
Per diem	3	€ 75	€ 225
TOTAL (net)			€ 7,643
TOTAL (with VAT⁷)			€ 9,095,17
Travel cost	Reimbursement of real costs		

In case of doubts concerning the invoiceable amounts, detailed information can be found here: <https://www.b-solutionsproject.com/faq>.

7. Eligibility criteria relating to technical and professional capacity

Criterion 1: Relevant professional experience in the field of legal and administrative matters, with specific and proven knowledge of cross-border issues in one or more of the thematic fields listed in section 2;

- Threshold⁸: 3 years or more;
- Supporting evidence⁹: CV of the expert in accordance with the prerequisites laid down in section 11;

Criterion 2: Ability to draft and communicate in English or one of the other working languages of the European Commission (French or German)¹⁰;

- Threshold: C1 level of English or one of the other working languages of the European Commission (French or German);
- Supporting evidence: CV of the expert, in accordance with the prerequisites laid down in section 11, or a copy of language certificates, if available.

⁷ See footnote number 2.

⁸ Work experience in both the private and public sector will be taken into consideration, as well as a relevant Ph.D. A master's degree cannot be considered as professional experience. The length of professional experience is determined relative to the month when the application is received.

⁹ Documents submitted as supporting evidence are subject to checks, audits and evaluations by the European Commission or by authorised auditors as part of the documentation of the project.

¹⁰ Please notice that the report is expected to be written in English, unless agreed differently with the contracting authority.

8. Awarding criteria relating to technical and professional capacity

Criterion 1: relevant experience in the field of legal consultation;

Criterion 2: relevant experience in the field of cross-border cooperation (see definition on page 3);

Criterion 3: advisory experience in the field of cross-border cooperation (see definition on page 3) and/or regional development with specific regards to analysing obstacles, including multi-level governance processes;

Criterion 4: knowledge of a specific territory and of the languages spoken therein;

Criterion 5: relevant experience in the field of one or more of the thematic areas listed at point 2.

Criteria will be evaluated on the basis of the online application form and the CV provided by the experts.

For every criterion, a score on a scale from 0 to 5 will be assigned, where 0 indicates a completely insufficient relevance of the expert's previous experiences and 5 an excellent one.

To be included in the list of experts, the assessment of the 5 criteria listed above should lead to an overall score of at least 12,5 points, namely 50% of the total 25 cumulative points.

9. Exclusion criteria

Experts shall be excluded from participation if:

- a) they are bankrupt or being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;
- b) they or persons having powers of representation, decision making or control over them have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgment of a competent authority of a Member State which has the force of res judicata;
- c) they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means;
- d) they are not in compliance with their obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are established or with those of the country of the contracting authority or those of the country where the contract is to be performed;
- e) they or persons having powers of representation, decision making or control over them have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of res judicata for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation, money laundering or any other illegal activity, where such an illegal activity is detrimental to the Union's financial interests;
- f) they are subject to an administrative penalty for being guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required by the contracting authority as a condition of participation in a procurement procedure or failing to supply information, or being declared to be in serious breach of their obligation under a contract covered by the budget;

- g) they have a conflict of interest in connection with the contract; a conflict of interest could arise in particular as a result of economic interests, political or national affinities, family or emotional ties or any other relevant connection or shared interest.

Experts shall provide a declaration of honour stating that they are not in any of the situations of exclusion listed above. In case of doubt, applicants may be requested to provide supporting evidence of non-exclusion.

10. Application procedure

Expressions of interest should be submitted via an online form, accessible here: <https://www.b-solutionsproject.com/experts-apply>

Deadline: 31 May 2026.

It should be noted that the cases are assigned on a rolling basis. Applicants are therefore encouraged to submit expressions of interest in the earliest phase of the application period.

As a general rule, this call is open to natural and legal persons specialised in the matters covered by the subject of the present document.

Legal persons can indicate a maximum of seven experts each and provide the information and documents required for each appointed natural person.

AEBR will draw up a list of experts who meet the criteria set out under sections 7 and 8. The list will be updated constantly until the closing of the present call for expressions of interest.

Please note that by being included in the list, AEBR does not commit itself to concluding a contract with the respective expert.

Based on the information collected with the present call and included in the list, AEBR will assign tasks to the experts depending on the skills, experience, knowledge and languages necessary and in accordance with the principles of non-discrimination, equal treatment and absence of conflict of interests.

The list resulting from this notice will be used exclusively for the execution of the tasks described under section 4 of the present call and for the thematic fields listed therein.

11. Supporting documents

Interested parties should provide their full contact details and indicate the specific thematic fields they have expert knowledge on. Thematic fields are listed in section 2.

The following files or documents must be submitted:

- a) Standard application form to be submitted in English via the online form accessible [here](#);
- b) Complete and up to date curriculum vitae in English to be submitted in PDF format. The CV must include a clear reference to the applicant's language skills, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages¹¹;

¹¹ <https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/resources/european-language-levels-cefr>

- c) Declaration of honour on exclusion criteria and awarding criteria as indicated in sections 9, signed and dated, to be submitted in PDF format¹².

If wished, document(s) providing evidence of the professional experience in the field of legal matter and/or cross-border cooperation as indicated at point 8 may be uploaded, in PDF format, to the application form.

The application form and instructions on submitting applications are available at: <https://www.b-solutionsproject.com/experts-apply>

Please note that, in case of selection, a legal entity form¹³ and a financial identification form¹⁴, completed and signed, must also be submitted before signing an eventual service contract.

AEBR reserves the right to request additional or updated information or documents and to review its assessment of the application file on their basis.

12. Protection of personal data

Any personal data (name, address, CV) received by AEBR in the context of this call for expressions of interest will be processed pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation).

Personal data will be retained and guarded for a period of 10 years following the closure of the call for expressions of interest.

Unless indicated otherwise, replies to this call for expressions of interest and any personal data requested are required for evaluation purposes, following the procedure indicated above under section 10, and will be processed solely for these purposes by AEBR and by the European Commission's Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) as promoter of the *b-solutions* initiative.

Details concerning the processing of personal data are available in the privacy statement available at: <https://www.b-solutionsproject.com/experts-apply>

13. Ex-post transparency

AEBR will keep an audit trail of the applications received and will retain the CV and further documentation attached to the application of applicants, unless specifically requested to delete the information.

A list of experts' names who have concluded a contract following the present call for expressions of interest may be published on the website of the initiative, on the online platform "Border Focal Point Network" which is used to disseminate information on the *b-solutions* initiative, and on the outputs of the project (compendium and other publications).

14. Date of dispatch of notice

10 March 2025.

¹² Template available at <https://www.b-solutionsproject.com/experts-apply>.

¹³ Available here: https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/legal-entities_en.

¹⁴ Available here: https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/financial-identification_en.