

Environmentally Oriented *b-solutions* Cases: Towards the Implementation of the 2019 EU “Green Deal” in Cross-Border Contexts?

Juan M. Trillo-Santamaría

Departamento de Xeografía, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela
juanmanuel.trillo@usc.es

Roberto Vila-Lage

Departamento de Xeografía, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela
roberto.vila.lage@usc.es

Valerià Paül

Departamento de Xeografía, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela
v.paul.carril@usc.gal

Introduction and Contextualisation

The environmental agenda has been presented as one of the flagships of the European Union (EU) policy-making. Indeed, the EU tends to exhibit itself as a global leader in this respect, as openly verbalised over the last few years in the 2019-passed “Green Deal” guiding document and, almost one decade before, also in the widely disseminated “Europe 2020 Strategy” (European Commission, 2010, p. 14; 2019, 20). This makes the environmental portfolio one of the policy areas which attribute identity to the comprehensive EU room to manoeuvre. Therefore, it is pertinent to examine those environmental-

oriented actions developed under the auspices of the *b-solutions* initiative in force since 2018, 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) subsequently to the ground-breaking communication “Boosting Growth and Cohesion in European Border Regions” (European Commission, 2017; AEBR & EC, 2020).

EU border regions constitute a specific arena in environmental terms. First and foremost, because borders are a human convention and the environment and/or nature¹ know no borders, implying that there is an

1 Nature and environment are often understood as synonyms, thus interchanged as they will be here used. However, we agree that both concepts differ in time and space: while *nature* registers a sustained consideration rooted in the classical antiquity, with periods such as Romanticism where humans have been placed as a constitutive part of nature, environment has gained momentum since the 1970s and has ended up being a popular policy folder heterogeneously assumed across the world, where basically human beings are seen as a sort of external agents damaging the environment (Ojeda, 2006).

inherent contradiction between both realities which needs to be constantly addressed. This has led towards planning the setting of cross-border devices, such as transboundary protected areas (TBPAs), particularly widespread in the context of the EU and already enjoying a well-developed body of norms and research (Paül et al. 2017; Trillo-Santamaría & Paül, 2016). Furthermore, the European Commission (2017, p. 2, 7) has acknowledged that Interreg has been widely used for environmental actions and joint measures but has also prevented that, at the same time, barriers do persist in this domain between adjacent member-states. Certainly, EU legislation quite often explicitly requires cooperation between countries in environmental terms and even enforces the same procedures in this field across the EU. However, these procedures are not fully effective in the sense that strong differences in aspects such as waste recycling, incentives to energy transition or natural hazards prevention are deep.

The EU (then, the European Communities) has delivered environmental policies since the early 1970s, canalised by means of the Environmental Action Programmes (EAP), whose first document was adopted in 1973 – the one which is now in force is the eighth, passed in 2022, encompassing the orientations of the “Green Deal” (Council of the European Communities, 1973; McGiffen, 2005; Olcina & Blàzquez, 2019; European Parliament & Council of

the EU, 2022). Along this half a century, environment has been incorporated in the EU treaties as a power of the EU institutions and a wide set of directives has been passed aiming to harmonise environmental issues across member-states. Momentum has been gained since the 1990s with the progressive incorporation of the climate change mitigation as a pivotal sub-field within the environmental umbrella, for instance, with the Kyoto Protocol signature by the EU (Olcina & Blàzquez, 2019). However, McGiffen (2005, p. 120) has argued the EU has had only “*limited successes in the environmental field*” and even labelled as a “*failure*”. Hence, Bonsinetto et al. (2013) and Lois González, Feal Pérez and Paül (2013) evidenced the ambiguous use of sustainability by the EU institutions in their strategic planning, where the green/environmental agenda becomes a subsidiary of economic growth.

In this context, the “Green Deal” has been summarised in the 8th EAP as devoted to boost economic growth based on a green transition allowing a sustainable, climate-neutral and resource-efficient economy which is able to protect, conserve and enhance the EU natural capital (European Parliament & Council of the EU, 2022, p. 23). This abstract is noticeable given that the environmental dimension is clearly set within the economic agenda. In particular, the “Green Deal” proposes the following set of specific “deeply transformative policies” (European Commission, 2019, p. 4-15), which arguably are more than economic-centred:

1. Achieving climate neutrality by 2050, with targeted reductions of greenhouse gas emissions set for 2030 and proposing a specific EU strategy on adaptation to climate change.
2. Transitioning to clean, affordable and secure energy supply.
3. Mobilising industry for a clean and circular production, with digital technologies being critical enablers in this respect.
4. Constructing new buildings and renovating the old ones with energy performance.
5. Accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility, mainly by multimodality and shifting freight from roads to rails and inland waterways.
6. Designing a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system, ambitioning to significantly reduce the use of inputs such as fertilisers, pesticides and antibiotics.
7. Preserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity.
8. Preventing ground, surface and air pollution.

In any case, the European Parliament and Council of the EU (2022, p. 23) are accurate in the 8th EAP when they indicate that the “Green Deal” has been somewhat overcome by the subsequent “Next Generation EU Recovery Plan” set for emerging from the exceptional circumstances experienced because of the Covid-19 crisis one year after (Council of the EU, 2020).

Interestingly, AEBR and EU (2021a) have delivered a joint report on the obstacles and solutions for border regions in the context of the “Green Deal” derived from the early *b-solutions* cases managed. Regarding the obstacles, they are grouped using seven of the above-mentioned eight sections of the original “Green Deal” (all of them except the first one). In relation to legal solutions, they are identified at different scales: at the European level, at the national and sub-national levels, at the subnational level and with regard to the European Cross-Border Mechanism (ECBM) that was initially proposed in 2018 and that still is pending, whose draft has been recently amended (European Commission, 2018, 2023).

Aim and Methods

This chapter examines 28 *b-solutions* cases classified as environmentally-oriented in the context of the “Green Deal” passed in 2019, echoing the analysis developed jointly by AEBR and EU (2021a). However, this text extends the scope until 2024, incorporating the last waves of *b-solutions*, and discusses the typology proposed by AEBR and EU (2021a). Moreover, AEBR and EU (2021a) systematised 16 cases until 2022, but only ten of them match in terms of the universe of analysis between that report and this text – five are in the former but not in the latter and one is in the latter but not in the former. Importantly, the classification

of the 28 *b-solutions* cases as green/environmental has been developed by the AEBR itself for internal purposes, kindly facilitated for our academic scrutiny.

The research here departs from the analysis of the aforementioned AEBR spreadsheet. In addition, this chapter greatly benefits from the three reports from AEBR & EU (2020, 2021b, 2024) systematising the results of the successive calls of *b-solutions*, although 13 of the cases analysed here are recent and still did not appear in the third compendium. For these 13 cases, the original final reports are analysed, numbering eight; however, five reports have still not been submitted but are considered in these pages for the overall analysis taking into account the scant available information, namely two cases being developed in parallel to one whose report has been already finished – these three advised for the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) Euregio Meuse-Rhine (see below). Furthermore, our sustained research about the River Minho EGTC, with two green/environmental *b-solutions* granted, has also been pivotal for the analysis developed here.

Overall Analysis and Discussion

The AEBR lists 175 *b-solutions* cases in total since 2018. Accordingly, only 16% of the total cases are considered environmental/green. This is a limited participation of this component, while

other constituents seem to be more numerous (see the other chapters in this book). According to Figure 1, this participation has been quite uneven across the six calls delivered since 2018, ranging from the lowest 7% in the first *b-solutions* 2.0 call in 2022-2023 to the noticeable upturn of the last ongoing call (2023-2024), where almost one quarter of the total is devoted to the environmental/green dimension.

Our thematic typology consists of seven types of cases (Figure 2). The most common is waste, recycling and pollution management (n=7), followed by protected areas and biodiversity conservation (n=5). There are two types with four cases each one: energy, on the one hand, and primary industries, on the other. Bikes services and infrastructure and emergencies and natural hazards account for three cases each one, while there are two cases devoted to water management. According to Figure 2, there is no obvious correlation of the calls with the typology, although protected areas and biodiversity seem to be gaining momentum, as it did not appear until the third call (2020-2021) but in the current ongoing call (second *b-solutions* 2.0) equalises the most frequent type, with four cases each type.

These results contrast with AEBR & EU (2021a), which classified “preservation of ecosystems and biodiversity” as the first theme of the green/environmental *b-solutions* cases. This variance is not only due to the different universe of study referred above, but also because

AEBR and EU (2021a) amalgamated water management and emergencies within this type. In fact, as earlier said, the importance of the protectionist/conservationist type has escalated in the last call (Figure 2), implying that still in 2021 had not attained the relevance that has been inferred in the overall analysis.

Figure 1. Distribution of *b-solutions* cases (2018-2024)
Source: Own elaboration making use of AEBR internal dataset

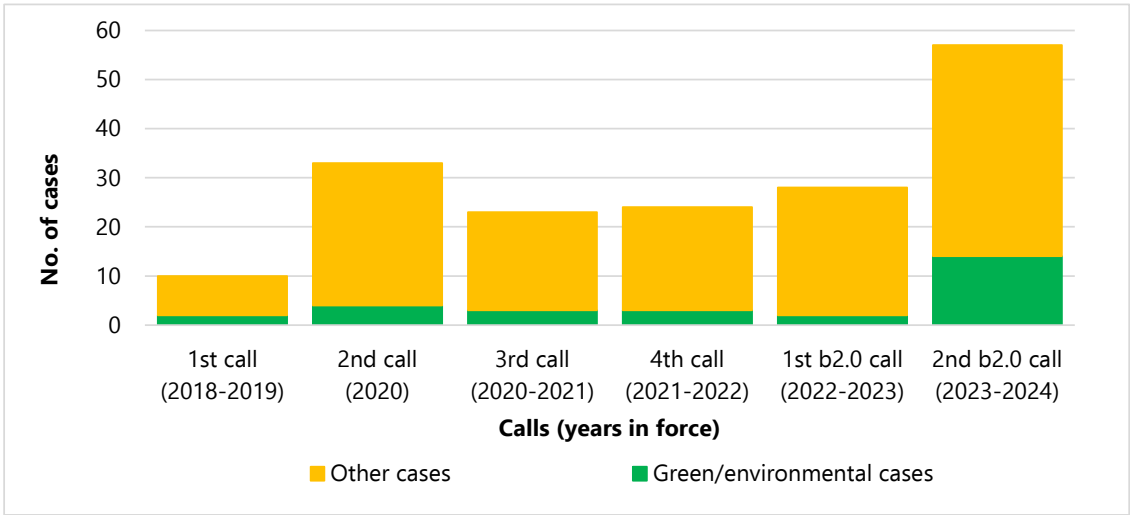
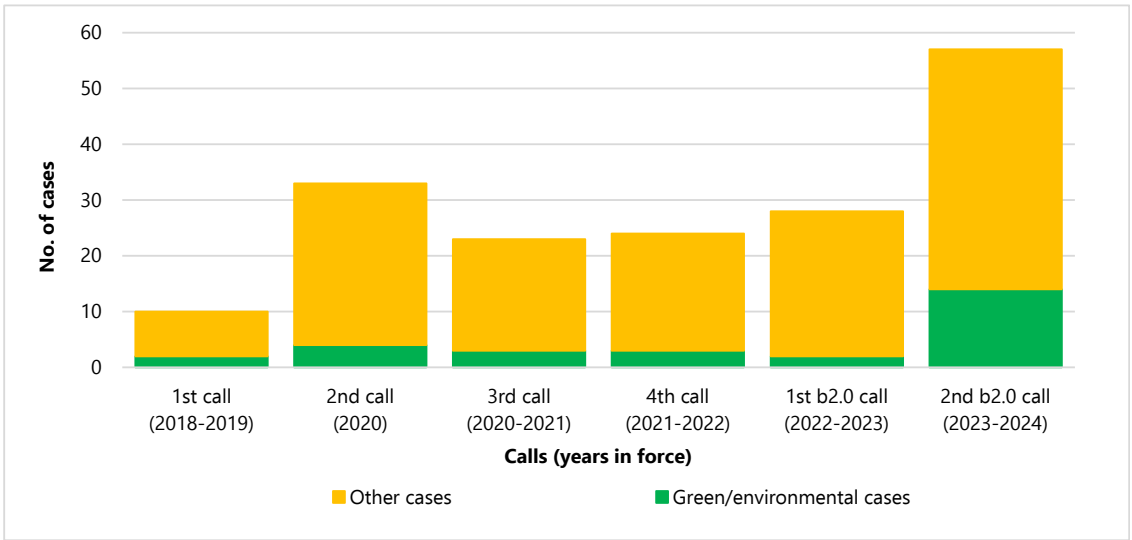


Figure 2. Typology of green/environmental *b-solutions* cases (2018-2024)
Source: Own elaboration according to the data analysis carried out



In geographical terms, the member-state whose borders have participated more in green/environmental *b-solutions* is Germany (n=9). Except for two cases shared by Bavaria and Austrian counterparts, the other seven are located in the Western borders of Germany with the Benelux and France. If these seven cases are summed up with the other four that are between Belgium, France, Luxembourg and the Netherlands themselves, we obtain that 40% of the total are located in this region. This is not surprising given that, since the 1950s, this macro-region has concentrated the major intensity of European cross-border cooperation with the earliest euresios/euroregions – partially conveyed by means of the *Conférence des régions de l'Europe du Nord-Ouest* (CRENO), dissolved in the late 1990s –, which the European Commission renamed as “Centre Capitals”, “the nerve centre of the Union” (European Commission, 1994, p. 173; Paül et al. 2017). The particular region with more advised green/environmental *b-solutions* is the EGTC Euregio Meuse-Rhine, with three led by the EGTC itself and one by the German-speaking Community of Belgium but mostly matching with the EGTC area.

Another significant border area earmarked for green/environmental *b-solutions* is the Spanish-Portuguese *raya/raia*, with five cases, one also shared with France. Four of them are advising institutions from either Galicia and/or Northern Portugal, two in particular from the River Minho

EGTC. With three initiatives in total, the Hungarian-Croatian has also received specific attention in terms of the green/environmental *b-solutions*, two cases being advised for the Mura Region EGTC.

The remaining border regions advised for green/environmental *b-solutions* are single-case. Globally, Western Europe is dominant *vis-à-vis* Eastern Europe, although the environmental issues in the latter are equally – if not more challenging – than in the former (Bonsinetto et al. 2013; European Commission, 1994; Lois González, Feal Pérez & Paül, 2013; Olcina & Blázquez, 2019). In this sense, what it seems apparently more relevant in terms of participating in green/environmental *b-solutions* is the willingness to reinforce existing cross-border cooperation.

Thematic Analysis and Discussion

Waste, Recycling and Pollution Management (n=7)

Six *b-solutions* cases are directly related to the challenges linked to cross-border transport and/or management of waste and pollution. The other one included in this first type is not specifically cross-border in nature but has to do with the implementation of an Interreg project devoted to the different legislations existing in three member-states with regard to the reuse of recycled wastewater for vineyards, impeding

the implementation of the same management system for these crops in France, Spain and Portugal. However, the seven cases share the departure point of the heterogeneous legislative and normative frameworks existing in each country, despite the overall shared applicable Directives and Regulations produced by the EU on environmental affairs recognised in the documents of each one and in the literature (McGiffen, 2005; Olcina & Blázquez, 2019).

Five cases are about waste transport in specific cross-border regions: general waste between the German town of Münster and the Dutch town of Enschede (and 14 other Dutch municipalities); electronic and electrical waste between Galicia and Northern Portugal, again in the context of an Interreg project; and recyclable plastic waste in the EGTC Euregio Meuse-Rhine (with three specific *b-solutions* cases, one for each binational border: Belgium-Germany, Germany-the Netherlands and the Netherlands-Belgium). A case in point deals with the differences in air pollution vignettes on the vehicles in force in France and Germany, affecting cross-border mobility of the Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau EGTC. Globally, four of these seven projects have been advised for EGTCs.

The tangible solutions proposed for this first type are focused on member-state normative harmonisation in the context of the applicable EU legislation, affecting acts, plans and/or other national and sub-national (in federal states and devolved governments)

legal norms. Also there are references to existing bilateral agreements, such as in the German-Dutch case, where a specific development in the context of the Dutch-German Anholt Treaty signed in 2018 is cited. Moreover, the ECBM is mentioned once as a possible solution for the air pollution vignettes differences in cross-border regions and a further Interreg project is also proposed once for standardising electronic and electrical waste management procedures.

It is true that the “Green Deal” includes some mentions to waste, but refers to the need to reduce it in the context of a necessary transition to a clean and circular economy (European Commission, 2019: 8), which becomes in reality the guiding political principle. In general terms, the emphasis on waste of the *b-solutions* case has to do with the practicalities of waste transport in cross-border contexts because of the heterogeneous legal frameworks side by side and, although there are references to circular economy and waste reduction, they are not the prevalent point. The same is applicable to pollution: the European Commission (2019, p. 14-15) set the need to tend to zero pollution, but the only *b-solution* analysed regarding pollution is about the intransferability of air pollution vignettes. This is not to say that the *b-solutions* analysed in this section do not have a real applicability in green/environmental terms for cross-border areas; as here argued, they have a real impact.

Protected Areas and Biodiversity Conservation (n=5)

The five cases of this type depart from the fact that nature knows no borders, but protection devices designated for nature are bordered (Trillo-Santamaría & Paül, 2016). In all cases there are differences between the protection devices on both sides of the boundary. In three cases centred on river banks (two on the Mura river and one on the Minho river), these differences are apparently less, given that the pan-European Natura 2000 network designated since the Council of the European Communities (1992) is protecting both banks accordingly. However, again, there are noticeable dissimilarities in the application of EU Directives in every member-state, as the literature has already explained with regard to the development of Natura 2000 (Rodríguez-Rodríguez & Paül, 2024). In one case this network is only applicable to one side of the border, given that the other is non-EU: Doubs Natural Park (Switzerland)-Doubs Horloger Regional Natural Park (France), where nevertheless there is a TBPA agreement in force, renewed in 2023, including a cross-border committee. Finally, for the Mura river (with two cases – one more focused on biodiversity and protection devices, and the other related to biodiversity, fishing and tourism) and for the French-Swiss case, transboundary biosphere reserves (TBR) are mentioned, in the former existing and in the latter as a possible solution. However, research

evinces that biosphere reserves are a solution in themselves and, again, that ironically their implementation varies from country to country (Paül, Vila-Lage & Trillo- Santamaría, 2022; Trillo-Santamaría & Paül, 2016).

The solutions invoked for cases of this type include, as already mentioned, TBRs and enforcing the common management of the already in place Natura 2000 network under the applicable EU Directives. Additionally, in all cases except one – because one side of the border is non-EU – the EGTCs are appealed as essential partners, and in fact in these four cases, the EGTCs themselves are the advised entity: Mura River, Minho River and Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai. Other case-specific solutions include the application of the Spanish-Portuguese Valencia Treaty signed in 2002 for managing the Minho River uniqueness. Moreover, the advice developed for the Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai with regard to the Lys islets and stagnant meanders includes a wide range of possible solutions which range from earmarking further Interreg projects managing the area to changing the boundary line between Belgium and France, embracing also the application of the ECBM when passed.

With regard to the “Green Deal”, the five cases analysed in this section are highly correlated with its section “Preserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity” (European Commission, 2019, p. 13-14). This

means that the *b-solutions* formulated are relevant practical developments for cross-border areas in this specific domain.

Energy (n=4)

The four cases of this type are very similar, three of them being located in cross-border areas of two municipalities: Hermagor (Austria) and Pontebba (Italy); Ralingen (Germany) and Rosport-Mompach (Luxembourg); and Vreden (Germany) and Winterswijk (the Netherlands). The fourth is wider, consisting of the Euregio Via Salina (Austria and Germany). In all of them, there are initiatives with regard to renewable and/or citizens' communities' energy production that have been designed or potentially might be cross-border. However, although the EU has set legislation with regard to energy production and distribution establishing the possibility of cross-border "Renewable Energy Communities" (RECs) and "Citizen Energy Communities" (CECs) (European Parliament & Council of the EU, 2018, 2019), there are challenges to their practical implementation and operability given that national/sub-national legislation is not always consistent in this respect.

The solutions proposed for this section are related to the RECs and/or the CECs by means of procedures such as: revising the EU legislation, signing bilateral agreements, creating cross-border coordination structures,

enhancing the transposition of EU Directives into member-states legislations, changing the countries legal frameworks and developing further specific Interreg projects in this respect. Importantly, as stated in the German-Luxembourgish case, an EGTC cannot be used for the purposes of developing a CEC given that an EGTC excludes the participation of individual citizens and allows the participation of private actors only under certain conditions. This fact leads towards the need to make use of devices set in the EU Regulations on economy, such as European Economic Interest Groupings (EEIGs) and European Cooperative Societies (SCEs) (Council of the European Communities, 1985; Council of the EU, 2003).

These four *b-solutions* cases are in line with the "Green Deal" agenda on energy (European Commission, 2019, p. 6), but they are modest in comparison with the broad goals set in the 2019 document. More ambitious solutions are required in cross-border contexts to contribute towards supplying clean, affordable and secure energy for the EU. In fact, energy has always had a central place in the hierarchy of EU concerns, as elucidated by McGiffen (2005, p. 157).

Agriculture, Livestock and Timber Industries (n=4)

This type comprises two *b-solutions* cases focused on sustainable agricultural management by means of developing alternative food networks applied to distribution, that is, enhancing short

supply changes (Paül & Haslam McKenzie, 2013). They are devoted to two specific cross-border areas with their respective EGTCs: Linieland van Waas en Hulst between Belgium and the Netherlands and Pannon between Hungary, Croatia and Slovenia. For the former, there is still no available information, but for the latter, the listed obstacles include administrative complications such as tax differences and several non-harmonised procedures, plus a lack of cross-border information and the difficulties associated with language barriers. Bilateral cooperation between the relevant levels of government is the main envisaged solution.

In this type there are also other two *b-solutions* cases that differ from the agricultural ones and are also very different between themselves. On the one hand, one about timber construction between the Southern-most border region of Norway and Sweden. On the other, another one about vegetable and animal byproducts using them as fertilisers in the Zugspitzregion in Southern Bavaria, bordering with Tyrol. The former might be considered part of the prevalent waste type, but the focus on agriculture is strong. Again, the problems listed for these two projects are the administrative differences between member-states. While the solution in the German-Austrian case focuses on the need to impel the EU in this domain, in the Norwegian-Swedish counterpart some solutions are envisaged in the framework of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The “Green Deal” agenda includes a specific section on designing a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system (European Commission, 2019, p. 11-12) which is consistent with the orientation of the first two cases mentioned in this section, translating to cross-border areas the needs present everywhere in Europe. The other two *b-solutions* are, respectively, more in line with the policies sections on constructing new buildings and the move towards a circular economy (European Commission, 2019, p. 7-10).

Emergencies and Natural Hazards (n=3)

Two of the emergencies considered in this type are specifically wildfires and the third one is more generic, about natural hazards happening in an Alpine environment (e.g. avalanches and floods). The latter is advised for the EGTC Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino, while the two former are for the Regional Government of Extremadura, bordering with Portugal, and an ongoing Interreg project between Croatia and Italy. There is no available information for the latter, but the other two show that there are general obstacles in this domain (the lack of cross-border management in natural hazards), while, in other border areas that have made progress in this respect, technical challenges such as the lack of mutual recognition of operator certificates and the required skills requirements for the involved stakeholders persist. The solutions consist of harmonisation between the involved countries, by making use of

bilateral protocols already existing (between Portugal and Spain, the one signed in 1992 in Évora and amended in 2018 in Valladolid) or new ones (between Tyrol and South Tyrol) applied to this particular topic. The ECBM is also mentioned as a forthcoming solution in the Portuguese-Spanish case, while in the trans-Tyrol case the EGTC reinforcement.

Natural hazards and emergencies are not verbalised in the “Green Deal” by the European Commission (2019). However, it is obvious that climate change, which is present in this document as the first policy area (European Commission, 2019, p. 4-5), is implying the increasing affectation of natural hazards (Olcina & Blázquez, 2019). In this book, the *b-solutions* contribution to cross-border emergencies management is examined in another chapter.

Bike Services and Infrastructure (n=3)

In the three *b-solutions* cases under this type, electric bicycles (e-bikes) in cross-border areas by means of common sharing operators are already functioning, or there are plans to do so: four German-speaking municipalities of Belgium plus Aachen (Germany) and possibly Vaals (the Netherlands), Gorizia-Nova Gorica (Italy-Slovenia) and six municipalities in the Galician-Portuguese river Minho border. In the latter two cases the e-bikes systems have been implemented, including the appropriate infrastructure, by means of the respective involved EGTCs

(EGTC GO and River Minho EGTC), but the first one is also covered since 2019 by the EGTC Euregio Meuse-Rhine – however, the advised entity for *b-solutions* purposes was the Belgian German-speaking Community. Be that as it may, in the three cases obstacles are observed to these developments because of regulatory and administrative differences between the involved countries, including accident insurances, taxation and potential revenues. The identified solutions enhance the roles of the EGTCs in this respect and comprise common EU taxation and administrative procedures set by means of relevant EU legislation.

Bikes are not verbalised in the “Green Deal”, although the section on sustainable and smart mobility is logically consistent with e-bike systems (European Commission, 2019, p. 10-11). In this book, the *b-solutions* contribution to cross-border mobility is examined in another chapter. In addition, our research in the River Minho EGTC suggests that e-bikes have been implemented more for leisure and tourism than for a modal shift from private vehicles.

Water Management (n=2)

The two *b-solutions* dealing specifically with water are different in nature: while a Latvian-Lithuanian one is related to the need to develop further groundwater data harmonisation, a Belgian-French one is devoted to solving problems regarding water governance in a cross-border TBPA which has

achieved the status of an EGTC (Scarpe-Escaut). The specific solutions for the former are proposed under the so-called “Water Framework Directive” (European Parliament & Council of the EU, 2000), with the identification of further Interreg projects that could enhance cross-border cooperation: for the continuation of the cooperation in monitoring the water resources in the Latvian-Lithuanian case and for encouraging mutual learning, exchanges and visits in the Belgian-French case. The latter also includes the need to develop bilateral water management plans and the ways by which the EGTC can be implicated in this respect.

Water is only mentioned in the “Green Deal” by the European Commission (2019) with regard to pollution and waterborne transport. These topics are not the foci of the two *b-solutions* examined in this section, which seem to be more directly related to the cross-border particularities of the “Water Framework Directive” implementation and many other EU environmental developments according to Olcina and Blàzquez (2019).

Conclusions

As argued in the previous pages devoted to the thematic analysis and discussion of the 28 revised *b-solutions* cases, they contribute in many respects to some practical achievements of the “Green Deal” expounded by the European Commission (2019) in cross-border

contexts. Above and beyond, however, they represent a real contribution to the environmental agenda of the EU as a whole by seeking for a set of practical solutions in cross-border regions in this portfolio, including aspects such as sustainable mobility, waste management and/or water management. More than strictly focusing on the “Green Deal”, the 28 cases at stake here are in line with the longstanding EU concern and commitment with the environment as illustrated by McGiffen (2005) and Olcina and Blàzquez (2019).

In this sense, arguably the “Green Deal” might land on in cross-border areas with deeper investigations on topics such as effective greenhouse gas emission reductions, implementing low-carbon infrastructure, producing clean energy, guaranteeing environmentally-friendly food systems and/or restoring ecosystems; all these contents are sought by the European Commission (2019), but have been barely explored by the *b-solutions* developed in the last years. In this sense, AEBR and EC (2021a) omitted climate ambition, the first transformative policy of the European Commission (2019, p. 4-5), a gap that needs urgently to be filled in.

Therefore, there is still a long way to go, taking into account that, quite possibly, the “Green Deal” is not more than one of the waves of the mid-term evolution of the environmental policies of the EU led by the EAPs (McGiffen, 2005; Olcina & Blàzquez, 2019; European Parliament & Council of the EU, 2022), implying that

it is more pertinent an engagement to the latter than to the former. Despite widespread criticisms (Bonsinetto et al. 2013; Lois González, Feal Pérez & Paül, 2013; McGiffen, 2005), the EU environmental/green portfolio shows an enviable capacity to percolate all the decision-making instances, inclusive of *b-solutions* as this text has evinced.

Interestingly, the analysis undertaken in these pages shows constant connections between the green/environmental *b-solutions* developed, on the one hand, and the already set cross-border structures/initiatives, on the other, both globally –e.g. TBPA's and TBRs – and at the EU level –e.g. Interreg and EGTCs (Paül et al. 2017; Trillo-Santamaría & Paül, 2016). These structures/initiatives seem to be the primary inductors of the *b-solutions* examined here, rather than environmental/green aspirations. In this sense, it can be argued that *b-solutions* reinforce the pre-existing procedures by seeking specific cross-border tools for surpassing the specific obstacles identified, going beyond the previous instances and, at the same time, interacting with them.

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