

EU regulation: border regions are to be strengthened



Background - the European single market

A special feature of the EU is its single market. Within the EU, there are no border controls and people, goods, services and money can move freely. We therefore do not have to show our passport when we drive to France and do not have to pay any customs duties when we order products online delivered from other EU countries.

The challenge

Although there are no border controls in Europe, there are of course still borders between states. Regions that lie on borders within the EU, so-called **internal border regions**, make up around 40% of the total EU territory. Consequently, around 30% of the population lives in these regions. Despite the fact that free movement across borders has already removed a major barrier, **there are still challenges in these regions due to the fact that national borders run through them.**

Although the EU is trying to reduce differences between the regions, each country still has its own laws, authorities, and rules. To give an **example**: If a bridge is to be built over the river Neisse in the Germany-Poland-Czech Republic border region, three building permits - one from each country - are required for the same bridge. Very different conditions have to be met in order to obtain these permits. In addition, all three countries have different requirements for the professional qualifications of the engineers constructing the bridge. **This means a huge bureaucratic burden for all projects planned in border regions and it is precisely what the EU now wants to change.**

A NEW REGULATION

The new regulation outlines how European border regions can be strengthened. The Commission's proposal: The member states set up a **cross-border coordination body**. Its task is to be the point of contact for interested parties (e.g. the company commissioned to build a bridge). They can submit a request to the coordination office, which will check the request for obstacles. After checking, the authorities can **provide precise information on how to proceed**. The coordination body also **mediates between national authorities**. As soon as a cross-border obstacle is identified and no other instrument - such as a bilateral agreement between the countries concerned - is available to the neighbors, they can apply a new voluntary procedure that removes administrative and legal obstacles. All cross-border coordination bodies should also form a network in which they can share their experiences.

THE AIM

The EU Commission expects this innovation to **create jobs and increase the GDP**. A study found that removing just 20% of barriers would increase regional GDP by 2% and could create over 1 million jobs.