



**European Committee
of the Regions**

**Commission for
Citizenship, Governance,
Institutional and External Affairs**

CIVEX

Restoring "lost connections" between the EU and the UK as a consequence of Brexit through local and regional authorities



© European Union, 2021

Partial reproduction is permitted, provided that the source is explicitly mentioned.

More information on the European Union and the Committee of the Regions is available online at <http://www.europa.eu> and <http://www.cor.europa.eu> respectively.

QG-09-21-366-EN-N; ISBN: 978-92-895-1110-0; doi: 10.2863/60143

**This report was written by Machteld Bergstra, Jan Hagemer,
Kateryna Karunska (CASE)**

**It does not represent the official views of the
European Committee of the Regions.**

Contents

- 1 Introduction 1
- 2 Policy areas affected by Brexit 3
- 3 Impact on LRAs 13
- 4 Avenues for re-building cooperation 19
- 5 Conclusions and recommendations..... 29
- References 31
- Annex A: List of experts interviewed 39

List of figures

- Figure 1. Policy areas affected by Brexit 4
- Figure 2. Avenues for re-building cooperation between EU and UK LRAs 21

List of abbreviations

AER	Assembly of European Regions
BAR	Brexit Adjustment Reserve
CASE	Center of Social and Economic Research
CBHD	Cross Border Healthcare Directive
CEMR	Council of European Municipalities and Regions
CPMR	Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions
CoR	Committee of the Regions
EC	European Commission
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
EHIC	European Health Insurance Card
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
EU	European Union
ICBAN	Irish Central Border Area Network
INTA	International Urban Development Association
LRA	Local and Regional Authorities
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
MS	Member States
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
RTA	Resident Twinning Advisor
RQ	Research Question
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
VET	Vocational education and training

Main authors (in alphabetical order): Machteld Bergstra, Jan Hagemeyer, Kateryna Karunska

Quality control: Katarzyna W. Sidło

The authors would like to thank the following interviewees for their time and insights (in alphabetical order):

- Representatives of the Brittany Region services
- Ms. Machtelijm Brummel, Interreg Europe & Interreg North Sea region
- Mr. Shane Campbell, Irish Central Border Area Network
- Mr. Charles H. Collinson, H.M. Government of Gibraltar
- Cllr Alison Evison, COSLA - Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
- Mr. Martin Gillen, Northern Ireland Water and SWELL Programmes
- Dr. Simone Goedings and Ms. Kim de Vries, Netherlands Association of Municipalities
- Representatives of the Hauts-de-France Region: Mission to the EU and Directorate for Europe
- Ms. Gunn Marit Helgesen, Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities
- Prof. Jens Holscher, Bournemouth University Business School
- Mr. Grzegorz Kubalski, Association of Polish Counties
- Ms. Gina McIntyre, Special EU Programmes Body
- Ms. Pamela Mulder, Interreg 2 Seas
- Cllr Michael Murphy, Tipperary County Council and Irish Delegation to the EU Committee of the Regions, member of the European Committee of the Regions
- Ms. Agi Musset, Interreg VA France (Channel) England
- Ms. Lisa O'Kane, Northern Ireland Local Government Association
- Mr. Jean Peyrony and Mr. Raffaele Viaggi, Transfrontier Operational Mission
- Mr. Ximo Puig i Ferrer, Regional Government of Valencia, member of the European Committee of the Regions and member of CoR-UK Contact Group
- Mr. Michiel Rijsberman, Council of the Province of Flevoland, member of the European Committee of the Regions and member of CoR-UK Contact Group
- Mr. Davide Strangis and Ms. Elise Wattrelot, Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions
- Mr. Karl Vanlouwe, Flemish Parliament, member of the European Committee of the Regions and member of CoR-UK Contact Group

as well as other interviewees who preferred to remain anonymous.

1 Introduction

The United Kingdom (UK) left the European Union (EU) on 31 January 2020. However, the terms of the UK's departure from the EU were to a large extent unclear until as late as December 2020, which marked the end of the transition period. While Brexit itself was negotiated at the highest levels of national governments and EU authorities, it also affects local communities and regions. In recognition of that fact, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) launched a UK Contact Group intended to maintain lines of communication between local and regional authorities (LRAs) in EU and UK cities, regions, and devolved administrations. This study aims to provide scientific support to the CoR-UK Contact Group in the assessment of the impact of Brexit on the functioning of LRAs, analysing the lost connections between the UK and the EU at the local and regional level as well as exploring possible avenues and methods of future cooperation between EU and UK LRAs following Brexit.

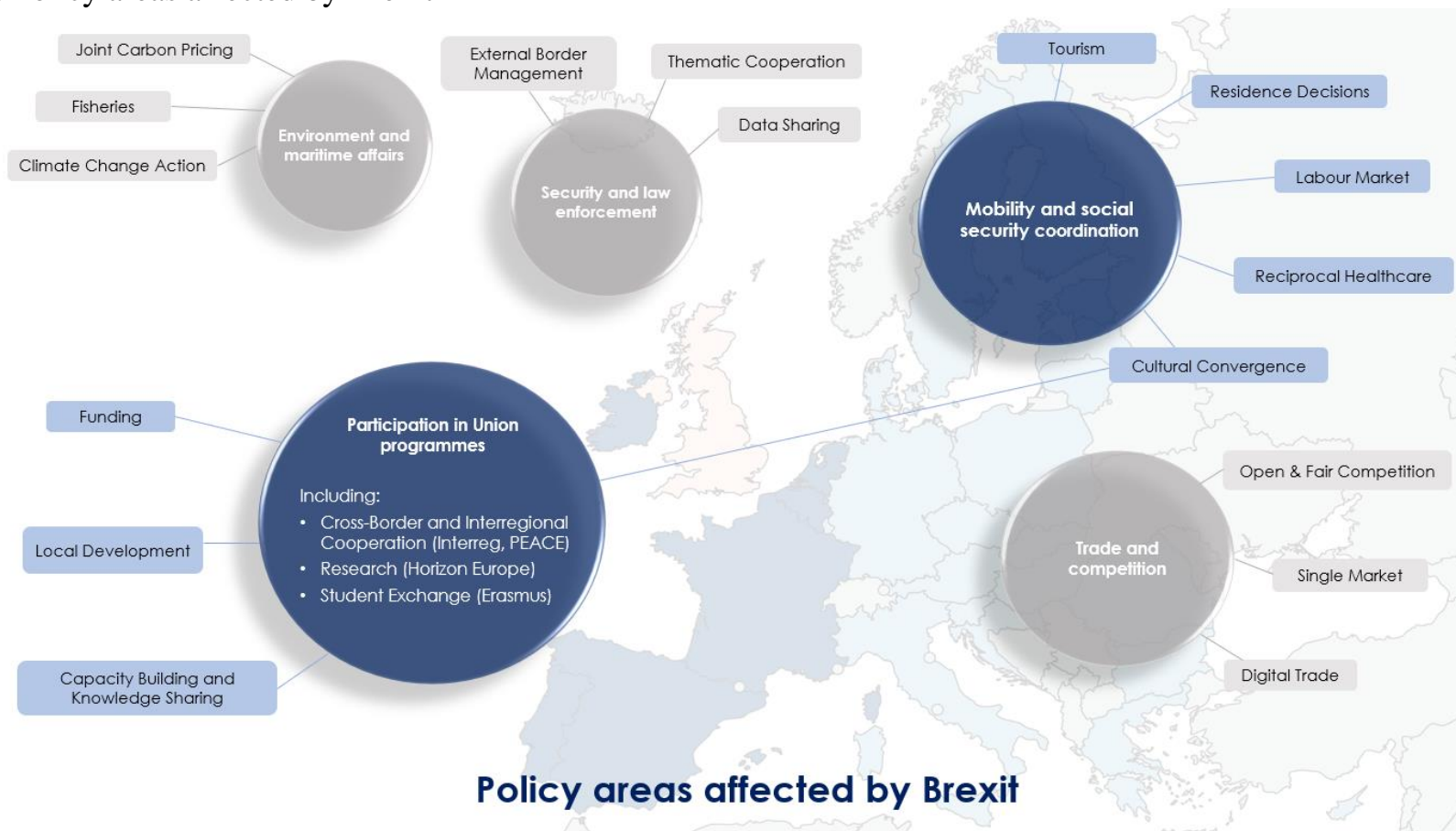
The study analyses the main policy areas affected by Brexit (Section 2) and the related impact on LRAs (Section 3). As Brexit is a largely unprecedented event which unfolded alongside the COVID-19 pandemic, we greatly rely on information gathered through stakeholder interviews, who deserve profound acknowledgments. They include representatives of LRAs and LRA associations located in the EU regions with most ties to the UK as well as selected UK regions, coordinators of cross-border projects, and representatives of academia. To assess possibilities for future cooperation, this study discusses the main drivers and challenges to cooperation imposed by Brexit as well as the key factors for maintaining or restoring further cooperation between EU and UK LRAs (Section 4). It also presents relevant examples of functioning cooperation frameworks and successful bottom-up initiatives that can be used by LRAs to leverage future cooperation opportunities. The last section of the study provides brief conclusions and recommendations.

2 Policy areas affected by Brexit

Although the Brexit agreement applies to the entire scope of EU-UK cooperation (see Figure 1), its main impact will be on economic and policy cooperation between EU Member States (MS) and the UK due to the UK's departure from the **Single Market**¹. Similarly, no EU-UK joint framework was maintained in the areas of **foreign policy, external security, and defence cooperation** once the Brexit agreement set in.

¹ e.g., free movement of goods, services, and people; integration of financial, audio-visual, and transport services; as well as aviation and energy markets, among others.

Figure 1. Policy areas affected by Brexit



Source: own elaboration based on European Commission (2020), Benson (2020), Lessard-Phillips & Sigona (2019), McKee & McKee (2018), and interviews.

Note 1: “Circles” include policy areas most affected by Brexit and “boxes” specify the main aspects that were affected within each policy area.

Note 2: Items in grey include policy areas where effects are mostly concentrated at the national level, while items in blue include policy areas where Brexit effects are of highest relevance for LRAs and are discussed further in this report.

The primary impact on LRAs is likely to play out through changes in the economic environment of local and regional communities and less seamless cross-border processes. Yet, while the extent of integration between EU and UK LRAs could be affected to a certain degree², established connections are likely to be maintained. Post-Brexit cooperation will thus be driven by decades of successful cooperation, developed partnerships, and established economic, social, and cultural links regardless of available funding. In addition, the preferential arrangements provided by the Brexit agreement, including, in particular, digital trade, **open and fair competition**, public procurement, **climate change and joint carbon pricing regimes**, thematic, **judicial, law enforcement, and social security cooperation** (European Commission, 2020), will create opportunities for new synergies and partnerships between LRAs.

The remainder of this section analyses Brexit-related changes across the policy areas of highest relevance to LRAs.

Cross-border and interregional cooperation

The UK has decided to opt out of the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) framework, including all Interreg programmes³, starting from the next programming period (2021-2027)⁴. ETC programmes currently provide **the main framework for joint actions and policy exchanges** between regional and local actors from the UK with different MS. The aim of ETC programmes is to encourage LRAs and social and economic actors to overcome “border effects” – understood as barriers that reduce interaction between partners on two sides of a border – and to address problems more effectively across borders (Colomb, 2018). For the 2014-2020 programming period, **the UK committed to five cross-border cooperation programmes, six transnational programmes, and four interregional programmes**⁵ with a total budget of up to EUR 10.1 billion⁶. This covers various Interreg programmes and projects in which the UK is a partner, and which do not close until the end of 2023, meaning that up to 2023, the UK is still involved in Interreg activities. The programmes in which the UK participates share a focus on climate change action, the environment and resource efficiency, low carbon technology, research and innovation, and tourism. Under the

² As a result of the discontinuation of the common cooperation frameworks (e.g., regional development and cohesion funds, agriculture and rural development funds, and NextGenerationEU, among others) and a decrease in the funding dedicated to joint cross-border initiatives.

³ Interreg operates on three levels: cross-border (Interreg A), transnational (Interreg B), and interregional (Interreg C) cooperation. For more details see: European Commission. *Interreg: European Territorial Co-Operation*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3qPXxu6>.

⁴ Interreg North Sea Region. *Update on the future of UK programme participation*, 07 July 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3hFQkBR>.

⁵ Interreg. *UK Programmes' contact points*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2Vc0dqe>.

⁶ European Commission. *Interreg: European Territorial Co-Operation*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3qPXxu6>.

Withdrawal Agreement⁷, it is agreed that **all EU projects and programmes under the 2014-2020 planning period will be financed as originally planned.** This means that all beneficiaries, including those from the UK, will continue to participate in the programmes until their closure and will remain eligible for further funding as part of the 2014-2020 period⁸ but will not be eligible to apply for funding under the EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027⁹. **The only exception to the UK withdrawal from ETC Programmes is the PEACE Plus programme¹⁰**, running from 2021-2027, which is a successor to the current PEACE programme and encompasses projects previously conducted under the Interreg VA programme. The UK has committed to providing significant additional funding to the PEACE Plus programme in a bid to signal its commitment to the stability and prosperity of Northern Ireland¹¹.

Movement of people

According to the most recent United Nations (UN) international migration data, more than 1.29 million UK-born people live in the EU-27 (30% of all British citizens living abroad), with 68% of them living in Ireland, Spain, France, and Germany alone. Similarly, migrants from the EU represent about 3.3 million people or 35% of all foreigners that reside in the UK¹².

With EU citizens representing 7.6% of total employment in the UK in 2019 (up from 4.8% in 2010)¹³, the seamless mobility of people is one of the crucial success factors for cross-border cooperation and local development. Yet, it remains challenging to find a balance between the rights of citizens to move, work, study, and reside across the EU and the eagerness of MS to ensure preferential treatment for their citizens (Maas, 2020).

⁷ European Commission. *The EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3AttJbf>.

⁸ Interreg Europe. *Projects with UK partners can continue as planned*, 3 February 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3jPgk7k>.

⁹ European Commission. *Questions and Answers on the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union on 31 January 2020*, 24 January 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3wk2hcB>.

¹⁰ Government of the UK. *UK government announces additional £200 Peace Plus funding*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3ypa1vl>.

¹¹ As of April 2021, the tensions in Northern Ireland following Brexit are high with cases of violent unrest, see e.g., Fox Kara. *What's behind the recent violence in Northern Ireland?* 10 April 2021. CNN. Available at: <https://cnn.it/3wk2AEh>.

¹² UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *International Migrants Stock, 2019*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3jRdL4C>.

¹³ Eurostat. *Population by sex, age, country of birth and labour status, 2019*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2UpM7kK>.

As recent studies (Benson, 2020; Maas, 2020; Lessard-Phillips & Sigona, 2019; Fleming et al., 2018; Miller, 2018) show, Brexit is likely to exacerbate the vulnerability of the EU citizens living in the UK and the British citizens living in the EU alike. With their legal status being changed, people find themselves being **repositioned within local labour markets** and being “*judged as ‘deserving’ or ‘undeserving’ of the privilege of staying put*” (Benson, 2020). Even those who were well-established before Brexit can fall short of the bureaucratic requirements as new provisions are being introduced (Benson, 2020, O’Reilly, 2020). As of June 2021, 6.02 million applications have already been submitted in the UK as part of the EU Settlement Scheme¹⁴, far exceeding the 2019 official estimates of approximately 3.7 million EU citizens in the UK¹⁵. Decisions on about 0.57 million applications are still pending, while some estimated tens of thousands of EU citizens who might not have applied by the deadline¹⁶, including the older and vulnerable populations, are at risk of losing their right to work and access the welfare system¹⁷.

A number of interviewees have also underlined that the **uncertainty that surrounds Brexit outcomes raises concerns on the material, emotional, and cultural aspects of the new cooperation framework**.

At the operational level, **tourism and labour markets** are expected to be most affected by the changes in border crossing procedures following Brexit.

Tourism

With the freedom of movement gone, the value of the UK passport as measured by the Quality of Nationality Index has already dropped out of the top 10 list (Kochenov, 2020). While the Brexit agreement includes special provisions for short-term travel and business visitors, cross-border travel will now **require an international passport instead of the previously accepted national ID cards**¹⁸. Thus, as underlined by a number of interviewees, Brexit will result in a **less seamless travel experience and more restricted temporary residence decisions**, especially for the youth and retired populations (O’Reilly, 2020).

It has to be noted that the impact of Brexit on travel is, however, very difficult to ascertain in light of the COVID-19 pandemic that has also substantially reduced

¹⁴ Government of the UK. *EU Settlement Scheme statistics*. 02 July 2021. Collection. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2Uu2qN7>.

¹⁵ UK Parliament. *Migration Statistics*. 27 April 2021. Research Briefing. Available at: <https://bit.ly/36nCwNL>.

¹⁶ Euronews. *Post-Brexit residency: Many EU citizens face uncertainty as UK deadline arrives*. 30 June 2021. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3jlu9EC>.

¹⁷ Gallardo Christina. *FAQ: Post-Brexit residence deadline for UK and EU citizens*. 21 June 2021. POLITICO. Available at: <https://politi.co/3ymIFWY>.

¹⁸ Government of the UK. *Visiting the UK as an EU, EEA or Swiss citizen*. Guidance. 31 December 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3dNQM6E>.

the number of people travelling worldwide (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2020).

Health tourists and residents with chronic conditions are likely to be affected substantially by the UK leaving the Cross Border Healthcare Directive (CBHD) and the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) scheme, which allowed British citizens to benefit from choice of healthcare across the EU on the same basis as local citizens (McKee & McKee, 2018). Thus, the EHIC-related claims addressed to the UK by other EEA countries in 2015-2016 were over four times the number of reciprocal claims¹⁹. On the UK side, the EHIC will be replaced by the Global Health Insurance Card that will not cover planned treatments²⁰. The absence of the free movement of people would thus mean the lower accessibility of and longer wait-times for health treatments only available in the EU (or UK in the case of EU citizens).

Labour market

The **effects on the labour market** will be mostly felt in the bordering regions where a large number of people have to cross borders daily to go to work. Thus, as reported by some interviewees and the Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) (2017), Brexit forced a number of people and businesses in the bordering regions to **relocate across borders to preserve the benefits of EU membership**.

A number of sectors that rely on migrant workers are also expected to be affected by the post-Brexit border crossing regulations. As mentioned by a number of interviewees, the situation of long-term migrants that already reside in the UK is likely to be unchanged while the inflow of new migrants is expected to be affected due to higher recruitment costs after Brexit. These include, in particular, the UK **construction and social care sectors**, which rely heavily on the EU skilled labour force, as well as the **tourism and agriculture sectors**, which employ the majority of the seasonal workers from outside the UK (Mohamed et al., 2017 and interviews).

¹⁹ UK Parliament. *Health Services: Reciprocal Arrangements. Question for Department of Health. 27 February 2017*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3hm01xj>.

²⁰ In Northern Ireland, the newly introduced Northern Ireland Planned Healthcare Scheme is set to replace the CBHD in the long-term. See more at Ireland's Health Services. *Cross Border Directive: get healthcare abroad*. 08 November 2018. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3yvZwGn>.

Indeed, according to a recent report, the share of EU-based jobseekers in job searches in the UK fell by 36% for all jobs and by 41% for lower-paid jobs between 2019 and May 2021²¹. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has certainly affected labour market dynamics in the UK, with a 14% and a 7% drop in the shares of job searches from the EU and outside the EU, respectively. The share of the latter, however, returned to its 2019 level by May 2021, while the share of EU jobseekers continues to decline²². This is also potentially an important loss for communities that provide temporary and seasonal workforce and rely on remittances from the UK, in particular the New Member States²³.

Research

With about 20% of global research being produced in the EU²⁴ and a third of UK scientific publications being co-authored with EU partners (Adams, 2017), Brexit creates **risks of disrupting well-established research connectivity** by affecting either direct research collaboration or student and staff exchange following the discontinuation of Interreg programmes. The 2016 referendum has thus already resulted in a 4.3 percentage point drop in the share of EU research projects coordinated by UK-based teams (from 16.9% in 2016 to 12.6% in 2017)²⁵.

At the same time, **continued participation in Horizon Europe** could limit the potential disruption of research cooperation between the EU and the UK, the latter being the second largest net contributor to Horizon 2020 (EUR 6.9 billion) and one of the major recipients of the fund (14% of the total funds allocated over 2014-2020) (Brien, 2020). Yet, as about 92% of all grants signed under Horizon 2020 were attributed to EU MS, Brexit could lead to a change in the distribution of funding towards the remaining EU MS and the reduced involvement of UK-based partners²⁶. Although participation is indeed open to non-EU countries, the primary reason for the extension of eligibility criteria is to support the integration of EU candidate countries and the capacity building activities of the European Neighbourhood Policy (Highman, 2019).

²¹ Kennedy Jack and Adrjan Pawel. *International Jobseeker Interest in Britain is Changing After Brexit*. 17 June 2021. Indeed Hiring Lab. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3qNwe3s>.

²² Ibidem.

²³ See for e.g., UK Office for National Statistics. *Migrant labour force within the UK's construction industry: August 2018*. 23 August 2018. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3hkm5bn>.

²⁴ World Bank. World Development Indicators. Scientific and technical journal articles. Latest available data is from 2018. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3hDvv0E>.

²⁵ Matthews, David. *UK-led research with EU funding drops sharply after Brexit vote*. Times Higher Education, 21 December 2017. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2V7yPjL>.

²⁶ Horizon Dashboard. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3hkiGJP>.

Thus, while the current financing for the UK-based Horizon 2020 programmes is prolonged and it appears unlikely that Brexit will lead to the immediate disruption of collaboration, potential legitimacy concerns²⁷ over UK access to EU funds and research grants (Highman, 2019) might reduce cooperation in the long term.

While the most prestigious institutions on both sides could compensate for potential losses by finding alternative cooperation pathways or new research partners, **low and medium ranked institutions would be the most affected by the decrease of available funds, mobility possibilities, and the potential loss of well-established and consistent partnerships** (Highman, 2019 and interviews). On the other hand, some interviewees as well as Seidenschnur et al. (2019) have emphasised a positive outlook on the durability of the established research networks and the mutual importance of continuous cooperation.

Student exchanges (Erasmus)

Following Brexit, the UK will no longer participate in the Erasmus exchange programme²⁸. Participation will, nonetheless, be maintained for Northern Irish students due to funding provided by the Republic of Ireland²⁹.

The discontinuation of the Erasmus programme and the change of the fee status for EU citizens³⁰ will mean that the EU students who want to participate in UK-based programmes (both short and long term) will be subject to the same rules as non-EU nationals, with **higher tuition fees**³¹, visa and residence permit requirements, and **ineligibility for a number of loans and financial assistance mechanisms** (James, 2016 and interviews). This might lead to higher competition between students from the EU (or the UK) and third countries³² for access to the limited number of spots available through non-Erasmus exchange frameworks.

Further, as noted by the interviewees, the newly created UK-based Turing scheme³³ set to replace the Erasmus programme in the UK provides limited exchange and financial support opportunities and is currently restricted to UK students going abroad. The disruption of the well-established framework therefore

²⁷ Against the background of discontinued UK contributions to EU research and development budgets and ever-growing competition between universities and research institutions for the access to funds (Highman, 2019).

²⁸ For details on UK involvement see European Commission (2020). Erasmus+ Annual Report 2019. Available at: <https://bit.ly/36e8jRx>.

²⁹ Cerulus, Laurens. *Ireland to fund Erasmus scheme for Northern Irish students*. POLITICO, 27 December 2020. Available at: <https://politi.co/3hHLPxh>.

³⁰ UK Council for International Student Affairs. *Brexit – fees and Student Support*. 01 April 2021. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2V3UoLi>.

³¹ See, e.g., Balan, Robert S. *UK Tuition Fees for EU/EEA Students in 2021. Changes after Brexit*. Study Portals. 15 December 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3hDDr1R>.

³² e.g., USA, Canada, Australia, Japan, and South Korea.

³³ Government of the UK. *New Turing scheme to support thousands of students to study and work abroad*. Department of Education. Press Release. 26 December 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3wkKB0q>.

risks making the exchange process more demanding for both the participants and the authorities in charge of managing exchange flows, potentially leading to lower volumes of exchange and the **exclusion of less prestigious institutions and participants with disadvantaged backgrounds.**

Some interviewees also underlined the importance of the UK as one of the main anglophone destinations for outgoing students and the role of Erasmus+ programmes in the competitiveness of EU universities and their attractiveness for foreign students (Seidenschnur et al., 2019). Both Seidenschnur et al. (2019) and interviewees, nonetheless, express confidence in the strength of the current connections which would allow maintaining close cooperation and would boost bilateral exchange flows outside the Erasmus+ programme.

3 Impact on LRAs

The Brexit agreement does not directly regulate the cooperation framework for EU and UK LRAs; thus it is unlikely to be significantly affected by Brexit. The changes related to **access to funding** and **eligibility to partake in the dedicated EU cooperation frameworks** could, however, have an indirect impact on the scope and scale of cross-border cooperation projects. Similarly, Brexit ramifications related to the **Single Market, research, education, and welfare systems integration** are expected to have an indirect impact on communities and local economies through, among others, changes in the labour market, tourism, and local business dynamics.

At the same time, LRAs and their cross-border cooperation will not be affected in the areas covered by **foreign policy, external security, and defence cooperation**, which are dealt with at the national level and will benefit from the continuation of the EU-UK joint framework post-Brexit.

Cross-border and interregional cooperation

A shared sentiment among interviewees is that losing the UK as a partner in the Interreg framework reduces the ability of local and regional governments to initiate and maintain cross-border and interregional projects.

The expected effects include:

– **Loss of the main source of funding** for cross-border cooperation. Especially for MS that border the UK, Brexit means a big loss in funding for project partners, including LRAs. Interviewees from France, the Republic of Ireland, and the Netherlands indicated that the UK was a partner in most of their cross-border programmes as well as a major budget contributor (e.g., up to a third of the budget of the Interreg North Sea). The UK's departure also means the end of the UK-France Channel Interreg, Interreg 2 Seas, as well as Interreg Ireland-Wales – all representing a significant loss of funding for the participating LRAs. Interviewees widely highlighted that LRAs will most likely not be able to compensate for the loss of the Interreg funding using regional or local funds. While there is a widespread hope and willingness for cross-border activities to continue, interviewees argued that the scale cannot remain at the current level without additional funding being added from the national or EU level³⁴. It is, however, highly uncertain whether newly set up compensatory funds will be directed towards cross-border cooperation.

³⁴The avenues to maintain and develop stronger relations in the future regardless of the funding available to LRAs are further discussed in Section 4 below.

– At the EU level, the **Brexit Adjustment Reserve (BAR)**³⁵ was established to “*counter unforeseen and adverse consequences in Member States and sectors that are worst affected*”³⁶. The results of the negotiations concluded on 17 June 2021 confirmed the allocation of EUR 5 billion for the BAR³⁷ with EUR 1 billion dedicated to Ireland alone³⁸. A number of interviewees expressed hope that BAR could be used for cross-border cooperation; however, it is not currently mentioned as an explicit objective of the fund³⁹.

– The UK national government has set a **UK Community Renewal Fund**⁴⁰ to replace investments from EU Structural Funds. The UK Community Renewal Fund is designed as a temporary programme finishing in March 2022, to be followed by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (Brien, 2021). Both programmes are, however, dedicated to reducing disparities in the levels of development across UK LRAs without a clear international dimension.

1. Fewer projects were developed for the 2014-2020 planning period. A number of interviewees stated that due to the uncertainty caused by Brexit, a share of Interreg project partners stopped developing projects with the UK, even though UK partners are still eligible for funding available under the MFF 2014-2020. This means that more applications might have been received and more projects could have been implemented if Brexit had not occurred.

2. Losing a platform for finding partners. According to interviewees, the Interreg framework provides a platform that helps match partners in cross-border cooperation projects. International contacts are also encouraged through conferences and meetings. As many cross-border projects spring from personal connections between representatives of LRAs, the loss of such a platform poses a challenge for new initiatives.

³⁵ European Commission. *Proposal Brexit Adjustment Reserve*, 26 December 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3qP1teA>.

³⁶ Ibidem.

³⁷ European Parliament. *Deal reached on EU fund to help regions and businesses adapt to Brexit*. Press Release. 17 June 2021. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3xplk6K>.

³⁸ Government of Ireland. *Minister of State for European Affairs Thomas Byrne welcomes conclusion of the Brexit Adjustment Reserve negotiations and confirmation of over €1bn to Ireland*. Press Release. 17 June 2021. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3hlMypi>.

³⁹ According to the achieved agreement, the BAR will support measures introduced as result of Brexit and dedicated to the support of 1) local communities, businesses, and the self-employed, with a special focus on SMEs; 2) reintegration in the labour market and jobs creation; 3) reintegration of EU citizens who left the UK because of Brexit; and 4) the functioning of certification and licencing schemes as well as borders, customs, fisheries, and phytosanitary and security controls. For more details, see: European Parliament. *Deal reached on EU fund to help regions and businesses adapt to Brexit*. Press Release. 17 June 2021. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3xplk6K>.

⁴⁰ Government of the UK. *UK Communities Renewal Fund: prospectus 2021-22*, updated 24 March 2021. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3wkILwz>.

3. Diverging legislation. With the UK being outside the EU framework, existing cross-border cooperation will be affected through changes in the financial framework, as well as the gradual divergence of the legislation and organisational structures on both sides. This could affect ongoing cooperation projects and limit the possibilities to undertake new cross-border projects in the future. From a practical point of view, this can entail additional red tape and regulatory burdens for the LRAs on both sides.

Movement of people

With the UK no longer participating in the free movement of people, the expected effects on LRAs include the following:

1. Pressure on the local economy, as LRAs on both sides could benefit from the presence of foreign residents (O'Reilly, 2020) in the form of increased commercial activity, buying real-estate, paying local taxes, and regular tourist inflows. The disruption of free movement could, in turn, lead to:

- workforce shortages, particularly in the fields that rely on foreign workforce, i.e., social care, construction, and agriculture (Sandford, 2016), thus pressuring the delivery of needed local services (e.g., affordable housing or care).
- increased bureaucratic burden for the companies operating internationally, workers relying on daily cross-border commutes, and LRAs charged with establishing a supportive ecosystem for local businesses and communities and managing cross-border movements.

2. Increased budgetary and human resources pressure to:

- **support adjustment to the new regulatory framework and management of the border crossing points** with previously estimated daily cross-border flows of around 60,000 passengers and 12,000 trucks in the Channel⁴¹ and 14,000 EU workers in Gibraltar⁴². With more border checks and additional bureaucratic provisions, the average passing time in the Channel is estimated to increase from the pre-Brexit 20 seconds per person to up to a minute, while port authorities also warn about expected “*friction and delays*”. In early 2021, France has already hired an additional 700 border staff and spent about EUR 40 million to adapt to the return of border controls with the UK⁴³. Other examples mentioned in the

⁴¹ *How the Brexit deal will end free movement between UK and EU*. France24, 31 December 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3ypyzEo>.

⁴² Minutes of the second meeting of the CoR-UK Contact Group, 16 November 2020.

⁴³ *How the Brexit deal will end free movement between UK and EU*. France24, 31 December 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3ypyzEo>.

interviews include the establishment of contact points to inform local businesses on post-Brexit changes and advise drivers on new customs forms and regulation, as well as the creation of extra parking lots to accommodate trucks waiting at the border points. The majority of the discussed initiatives have, nonetheless, received **support and guidance from the relevant national authorities.**

– accommodate for the **stay formalisation requirements and residence permit requests** of UK (or EU) citizens. Given the high number of British citizens in some MS, the spike of residence requests following Brexit could overburden the local authorities that manage the process. As argued by Benson (2020), the announcement of the referendum results in 2016 and the uncertainty over Brexit negotiations have already led to an increase in information requests on stay formalisation to French LRAs and long-term residence permit and citizenship applications from the UK citizens residing in France.

Research

UK-based researchers, businesses, and public bodies will remain eligible for bidding within Horizon Europe⁴⁴ – the EU-funded research cooperation and innovation support framework open to third-country participants. It is important also to note that funding of ongoing and “in-flight” projects will also be maintained, based on the UK commitment to funding guarantee⁴⁵.

The primary effects on LRAs are twofold.

1. There is a potential risk of **disruption of close research synergies**. For example, one of the interviewees pointed out that while the preservation of participation in Horizon Europe projects is of great benefit for all partners, there is concern among local authorities that triple helix⁴⁶ research and innovation cooperation will become more difficult after Brexit.

2. EU-based partners (including LRAs) could, however, benefit from **lower competition on bids** and hence potentially have greater access to fund EU-wide research projects. In this light, a number of interviewees highlighted that while access to funding will be maintained for UK partners, EU LRAs expect that cooperation will be jeopardised by additional administrative requirements and steps in the application process as well as the need for greater justifications regarding their choice of partners. They thus expect to prioritise EU-based partners in future projects.

⁴⁴ With about a EUR 77 billion budget for the 2014-2020 period (EC, 2020).

⁴⁵ Government of the UK. *UK Participation in the Horizon 2020 after Brexit*. Guidance. 24 October 2019. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3xyLAvz>.

⁴⁶ i.e., cooperation between academic, industry, and government institutions.

Other implications for LRAs include **divergences of public procurement regulations** in the UK and EU that may introduce friction into the cross-border provision of research services to LRAs by academic units, think tanks, and NGOs.

Student exchanges (Erasmus)

Unlike other areas, the UK's departure from the Erasmus+ programme is unlikely to directly affect LRAs on either side of border. Universities and other participating educational and training institutions that are charged with the management of exchange flows will bear the highest and most immediate costs in terms of the accommodation of newly established and independent exchange schemes and parallel bureaucratic process. While there might be potential for synergies, the initial stage will require additional human and financial resources dedicated to the exploration of the process and adaptation of the local networks to support students participating in the UK-based exchange scheme.

At the same time, LRAs and local civil servants that have previously benefited from **professional and vocational education and training (VET)** exchange programmes as well as Erasmus-coordinated projects that support innovation in education will be directly affected by the disruption of the framework. Given that the newly established Turing scheme is set to prioritise exchange among universities and schools, professionals are at risk of being left behind in the transition process.

As noted in the interviews, the main impact for LRAs will thus be the loss of the **cultural and professional connections** established through years of student and professional exchange. This lack of seamless cultural convergence and exchange of knowledge and best practices would make the eventual re-building of connections in other policy areas even more difficult and burdensome.

4 Avenues for re-building cooperation

Enhancing cooperation and exchange in different areas

We have identified the challenges and drivers for future cross-border cooperation based on academic literature and information obtained through interviews.

Political will is key

In the EU, the enthusiasm and political willingness to participate in cross-border cooperation seems to remain unchanged after Brexit. Interviewees widely emphasise the perceived importance of cross-border cooperation. The question does not seem to be *whether* continued cross-border cooperation is desirable but rather *how* it can be achieved.

In the UK, the picture appears more varied, with different positions noticeable among the UK national government, devolved governments, and LRAs. Scotland (Scottish Government, 2021), Wales⁴⁷, and several LRAs, for example Cornwall County⁴⁸ and the government of Gibraltar⁴⁹, have expressed interest in continued cross-border cooperation with the EU as well as participation in some form of student exchange.

At the national level, the UK government has not expressed a clear indication of willingness to participate in Interreg programmes as a third country or to fund or engage in other forms of cross-border cooperation. No longer tied to the EU cohesion policy, the UK may want to direct its attention to cooperation on a more global scale. An exception is the PEACE Plus Programme⁵⁰ used by the UK to signal its commitment to the stability and prosperity of Northern Ireland.

The need for funding

Securing adequate funding is a major challenge for the implementation of cross-border projects (European Commission, 2017; Colomb, 2018). When government budgets are tight, e.g., during a recession, allocating resources to cross-border cooperation can be seen as low on the list of priorities. As emphasised by a number

⁴⁷ Welsh Government. *New International Learning Exchange programme to make good the loss of Erasmus+*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2UvIR8g>.

⁴⁸ Cornwall Brussels Office. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3ABhaKL>.

⁴⁹ As highlighted in our interview with a representative of the Gibraltar government.

⁵⁰ Government of the UK. *UK government announces additional £200 Peace Plus funding*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3ypa1vl>.

of interviewees, the COVID-19 pandemic has put many LRAs under financial strain, undermining the availability of funding for cross-border projects. With the UK no longer a part of the Interreg framework, funding becomes a key challenge. Funding needs to be safeguarded by sustained political commitment and can be supported by a “business case” in which private actors contribute to the funding (European Commission, 2017). Interviewees note that with a major source of funding disappearing, LRAs will need to clarify more than ever the added value of cross-border projects to attract new sources of funding.

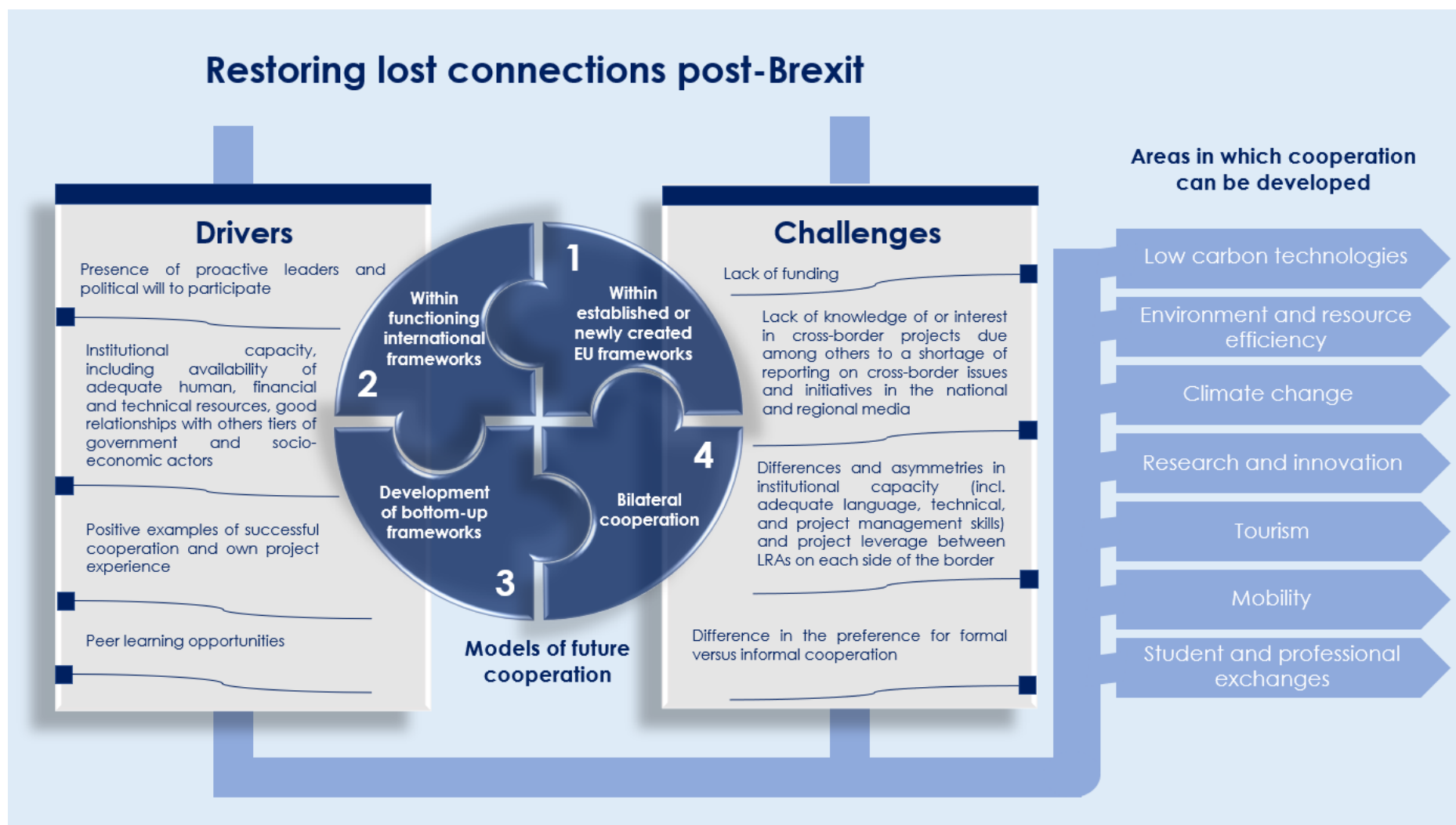
Initiating projects benefits from the autonomy of LRAs

In many instances, cross-border projects are initiated by actors on the local and regional level, who then decide to collectively pursue funding and set up a project (Colomb, 2018 and interviews).

A tradition of autonomy on the local and regional level and a supportive attitude of higher-up authorities to cooperation is seen to foster cross-border relations. Interviewees from France, the Netherlands, Norway, and Poland report that the UK local and regional governments have lower levels of devolvement and authority on the local level than LRAs in their respective countries⁵¹. The responsibilities and the way in which UK local government authorities are organised are seen as very different from continental Europe. This leaves respondents unsure whether LRAs will have the means or the authority to cooperate across borders in the future. With political support for cooperation varying across regions in the UK and the UK national government not yet vocal about the exact way forward, the extent to which UK LRAs have the autonomy to independently initiate new projects remains unclear.

⁵¹ The details of devolvement at different government levels can also be found at European Committee of the Regions. Division of powers. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2TxsUxt>.

Figure 2. Avenues for re-building cooperation between EU and UK LRAs



Source: own elaboration based on O’Keeffe and Creamer (2019), Colomb (2018), EC (2015), LISER (2015), Perkmann (2003), and interviews.

Areas in which cooperation can be developed

When looking for areas in which cooperation can be developed, one can first look at the areas which were focal points of the Interreg 2014-2020 planning period. The various programmes in which the UK took part shared an emphasis on⁵²:

1) **low carbon technologies**; 2) **environment and resource efficiency**; 3) **combating climate change**; 4) **research and innovation**; and 5) **tourism**.

Further cooperation can aim to address at least the abovementioned areas in order to mitigate lost connections. Additionally, cooperation can be developed at the local and regional level in the areas previously dealt with on the EU level, for example:

- **mobility of people**: supporting employment abroad and enabling residence decisions for people to relocate from the UK to the EU and vice versa.
- **student exchanges**: setting up local and regional exchange programmes. Based on the interviews, one can argue that for new cooperation to be valued by both sides, it may need to focus on projects that bring a more direct economic benefit, in addition to a cultural benefit.

Models of future cooperation

Over the years, countries in the north (Scandinavia, the UK, and Ireland) have shown a preference for informal cooperation, whereas in the west (Germany, France, and Benelux) and the south (Spain, Portugal, and Italy), formal cross-border cooperation structures such as the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) have been more often established (European Commission, 2015). This point was also emphasised in the interviews, with respondents from continental Europe pointing at a possible cultural divide, with, for example, French partners prioritising long-term planning and British partners having a more spontaneous approach to cooperation.

Models of future cooperation between EU and UK LRAs include:

⁵² See e.g., Interreg North Sea Region. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3jJBw5>; Interreg Ireland – Wales. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3yyiSel>; Interreg France (Channel Manche) England. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3ypgGFR>; Interreg 2 Seas. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2TGGZsb>.

1. Remaining within the EU frameworks or joining newly created EU frameworks. A number of interviewees mentioned that the best way forward for the UK would be to try to preserve an EU framework or to be attached to some sort of framework (even if it is not established yet). In essence, the UK would need to try to find a way to remain within certain EU frameworks in a way that would be acceptable for both sides. A larger framework does not only provide funding but also creates a way to find partners and join networks, something that is especially important for smaller entities.

Regarding **cross-border cooperation and Interreg programmes**, in particular, the UK could aim to participate as a third country partner, i.e., partners from countries that do not participate directly in the Interreg Europe programme⁵³ and cannot benefit from the European Regional Development Fund⁵⁴. UK LRAs may wish to participate in Interreg programmes as third country organisations. According to interviewees, this option has not been widely discussed. A number of interviewees reported it is rather difficult for non-EU countries to get involved and mentioned that this has never happened in the past Interreg periods. For the UK to participate in existing Interreg programmes, it may additionally be necessary for these programmes to be re-labelled from Interreg A (cross-border) to Interreg B (transnational), given that Interreg A programmes are reserved for areas along an internal EU border.

2. Closer cooperation within the functioning international frameworks. Regardless of the funding available to EU and UK LRAs, both sides can maintain and develop closer relations within the existing multilateral cooperation frameworks. These allow not only to build on the previous cooperation experience but also to explore new partnership opportunities, benefit from project support, and learn from the successful experience of peers within and beyond the EU.

Established **international LRA networks** such as Eurocities and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)⁵⁵ have already supported and facilitated cooperation across borders on topics such as social, economic, and territorial cohesion⁵⁶ and green transformation⁵⁷.

⁵³ Interreg Europe. *Frequently Asked Questions*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3dL8hoo>.

⁵⁴ European Commission. *European Regional Development Fund*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3dL8s32>.

⁵⁵ Council of European Municipalities and Regions. More information available at: <https://bit.ly/3yyjVLj>.

⁵⁶ e.g., Council of European Municipalities and Regions. *Cohesion policy*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3hOk9W>. Eurocities. *Cities call for new EU pact for just and sustainable recovery*. 6 May 2021. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3hCbtDW>.

⁵⁷ e.g., Eurocities. *Putting people first in the green energy transition*. 13 November 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3xky6U0>.

Other examples of similar networks that remain open to EU and UK LRAs regardless of the impact of Brexit include the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities⁵⁸, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)⁵⁹, Covenant of Mayors⁶⁰, International Urban Development Association (INTA)⁶¹, Metropolis⁶², the Assembly of European Regions (AER)⁶³, Energy Cities⁶⁴, as well as the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR)⁶⁵, in which Wales and the Scottish Highland Region, Aberdeen Shire, Aberdeen City, Fife, Southend-on-Sea continue to be members.

Further, LRAs can gain from greater involvement in **multilateral cooperation fora**, like the UN Climate Change Conference⁶⁶ and the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity⁶⁷, which can lead to the development of closer connections along the lines of the agreed strategic priorities.

3. Development of bottom-up frameworks. LRAs can work together on a bilateral and multilateral level, forming strategic partnerships with other LRAs to tackle common issues across borders. Such cooperation is frequently formalised using a Memorandum of Understanding. This form of cooperation can take the shape of the technical exchange of information and negotiations, aiming to support international connectivity. A number of interviewees stressed that it would be preferable for LRAs to have a common framework for partnerships with the UK, either at the national or EU level. Examples of successfully established cooperation frameworks among LRAs – including ICBAN⁶⁸ and the Straits Committee⁶⁹ – can be used to re-build stronger connections across borders.

– Established in 1995, **ICBAN** aims to facilitate cross border partnerships of local authorities and their cooperation on regional development and common socio-economic challenges in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The initiative provides a framework for closer cooperation, reciprocal capacity building, and the joint implementation of cross-border projects in the region.

⁵⁸ Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. More information available at: <https://bit.ly/3xoekXz>.

⁵⁹ United Cities and Local Governments. More information available at: <https://bit.ly/3dNG5Ba>.

⁶⁰ Covenant of Mayors. More information available at: <https://bit.ly/3hjYPKD>.

⁶¹ International Urban Development Association. More information available at: <https://bit.ly/36iBVx8>.

⁶² Metropolis. More information available at: <https://bit.ly/3ymQaga>.

⁶³ Assembly of European Regions. More information available at: <https://bit.ly/3hm4dx3>.

⁶⁴ Energy Cities. More information available at: <https://bit.ly/3qPuczP>.

⁶⁵ Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions. More information available at: <https://bit.ly/3jRm7t0>.

⁶⁶ forthcoming COP 26 in Glasgow, Scotland (October-November 2021). More information available at: <https://bit.ly/3xlrZPl>.

⁶⁷ forthcoming UN Biodiversity Conference (COP 15) in Kunming, China (October 2021). More information at: <https://bit.ly/3yvKERw>.

⁶⁸ Irish Central Border Area Network. More information available at: <https://bit.ly/36gLOGC>.

⁶⁹ Provincie Zeeland. *Straits Committee: samenwerkingsverband Europese kustprovincies*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3xgwquB>.

Thus, the established connections will likely be maintained and strengthened after Brexit following the joint approval of “The Framework of Regional Priorities”⁷⁰ for 2021-2027 by the member LRAs. While specific to the context of the Irish region, the initiative can be used as a best-practice example of the successful establishment and formalisation of a bottom-up cooperation framework that provides a mutually beneficial, forward looking, and strategic response to local and regional challenges.

– The **Straits Committee** was launched between coastal regions that surround the Strait of Dover following an initiative by the Department of Pas-de-Calais. The Straits Committee currently includes Hauts-de-France Region, the French departments of Pas-de-Calais and Nord (France), Kent County (UK), the provinces of Zeeland (Netherlands), and East- and West-Flanders (Belgium). The committee was set up to ensure continued collaboration as the UK and EU move towards a new relationship. The partners demonstrated their commitment by signing a Memorandum of Understanding for the Creation of the Straits Committee. The committee will set up working groups in three specific areas: tourism, a knowledge network connecting the universities of the Straits area with the other local stakeholders, and cross-border initiatives for young people, including mobility, internships, and exchanges of experience⁷¹. The committee will set up a network of contact points in each partner authority to facilitate participation in cross-border projects in the Straits area. Work is also being done to develop a small project support initiative, with each partner region contributing funding for setting up smaller projects. The latter is still being negotiated.

4. Bilateral cooperation. This is the most immediate and widely practised form of cooperation. In the absence of EU-wide frameworks and despite the outcome of the Brexit negotiations, LRAs on both sides are free to maintain and develop bilateral connections. The main challenges and weaknesses of this approach as discussed throughout the interviews is the cost of establishing long-term and mutually beneficial cooperation. This includes the administrative costs of finding and maintaining contacts with a multitude of individual partner LRAs, time needed to develop a common approach and establish viable modes of cooperation, as well as the potential greater need for funding for individual projects. Therefore, **LRAs twinning** and dedicated frameworks⁷² that facilitate

⁷⁰ ICBAN. *Framework of regional priorities*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3wj7S2U>.

⁷¹ Provincie Zeeland. *Straits Committee: Launch conference and future perspectives*. 05 February 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3jOEcbo>.

⁷² Including, for e.g., 1) twinning mechanism as part of Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) and European Neighbourhood Policy. For more details see: European Commission. *Twinning*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3xrBigI>; European Commission. *Twinning*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3xrBigI>; European Commission. *Overview – Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3AAuPC3>; and European Commission. *European Neighbourhood Policy*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3qTQeS3>; and 2) twinning associations. For more details see: UK Office for National Statistics. *Twinning towns and sister cities, Great Britain and Europe*: September 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3jOitjK>.

peer learning and the development of bilateral links can be used to support the transition. As confirmed during the interviews, twinning is yet another potential format for future cooperation which deserves renewed attention after Brexit despite being little used over the past 20 years. It is important, however, to consider that twinning has been widely seen as a form of development aid in recent decades, which makes it less attractive for future EU-UK cooperation.

Examples of efforts to maintain cooperation

1. As an example of the role that a national government can play, one can look at **the Irish government, which is trying to support a Shared Island approach**⁷³ to joint challenges with Northern Ireland, for example when it comes to environmental or health risks. The Irish Government has a Shared Island Unit, aimed at working with the Northern Ireland Executive and the British Government to address strategic challenges, further develop the all-island economy, foster North/South cooperation, enhance dialogue, and support a comprehensive programme of research.
2. Like many regional authorities throughout the EU, the **region of Brittany, France, has been supporting** local businesses to prepare for and deal with Brexit and to continue doing business with the UK⁷⁴.
3. **Wales has launched a new international learning exchange programme for 2022-2026 to compensate for the loss of Erasmus+**⁷⁵. Funded by the Welsh government, the scheme will allow learners and staff, both from Wales and those who come to study or work in Wales, to continue to take part in international exchanges in ways similar to Erasmus+, in Europe and beyond. This will support the establishment of new partnerships and the continuation of those developed under Erasmus+. The new programme will also fill in the gaps left by the Turing Programme, specifically in the aspects related to long-term funding, the retention of two-way exchanges, and the inclusion of youth work.
4. **Scottish Government allocated GBP 3 million**⁷⁶ to support research cooperation between Scotland and the EU through Saltire Research Awards grant.

⁷³ Government of Ireland. Shared Island Unit. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3jTFlyp>.

⁷⁴ Bretagne Commerce International. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3xn5JnV>.

⁷⁵ Welsh Government. *New International Learning Exchange programme to make good the loss of Erasmus+*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2UvIR8g>.

⁷⁶ Scottish Government. *Strengthening links with Europe*. 08 June 2021. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2UwVe3o>.

5. The Government of Gibraltar, in our interview with a representative, has expressed an intention to **continue participation in Interreg programmes**⁷⁷ aiming to allocate funding from the local government.

⁷⁷ Gibraltar has been a partner in two Interreg programmes - the Interreg Mediterranean and the South West Europe Programmes. See Gibraltar EU Programmes Secretariat. *European Territorial Cooperation*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3hknH57>.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

This study shows that Brexit indeed endangers the many links between the UK and the EU that have been gradually built up over the long period of the UK presence in the EU. The impact on EU MS is likely to be highly uneven with the most severe effects expected in the neighbouring countries, including France, the Netherlands, and Belgium, as well as Ireland, which receives special attention in line with the Northern Ireland Protocol.

As far as LRAs are concerned, the most important aspect of the EU-UK relations includes the discontinuation of UK participation in EU programmes, which creates the risk of disrupting cross-border cooperation and reducing the scope of student and professional exchange. The restrictions on the mobility of people may also have a negative effect which has, nonetheless, been difficult to separate from the changes induced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

From a technical point of view, Brexit shifts the relations between the EU and UK to a format comparable to that in place in other non-EU countries in Western Europe – i.e., in Switzerland and Norway. These countries participate in various EU programmes as a full member or a partner country⁷⁸, which, however, entails financial contributions from national budgets. Our interviewees have quite unequivocally expressed concerns on the availability of and willingness to allocate comparable levels of funding by the UK for further cross-border projects. Moreover, the prevailing expectation is that the UK is going to take part in projects that create economic value-added, limiting the scope for other, less tangible, cooperation goals. Therefore, the possibility that the **UK joins the Interreg programme as a third country** is rather limited. Aside from the programmes where the participation of the UK is preserved (i.e., Horizon), Brexit narrows cooperation prospects between LRAs to smaller scale initiatives.

However, the great value of the EU-driven programmes, apart from the funding, is its **coordinating and motivating role** as well as its support in **matching cooperation partners**. With the success of the bottom-up initiatives being contingent upon well-established personal connections, further coordination efforts are needed on both sides to ensure continuation of the cooperation.

This report has looked at various possibilities for cooperation outside the EU framework and identified the following.

⁷⁸ Government of Norway. *Participation in programmes and agencies*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3qNzRXn>.

- **Bottom-up initiatives of bilateral and multilateral cooperation:** these may be based on previous cooperation links, personal connections, or a particular topic. One example of such an initiative is the Straits Committee, which looks at possibilities of continued cooperation in the territories along the Dover Strait.
- In these initiatives, it is key to find partners with **common interests and problems**, where cooperation is likely to benefit all sides. This will also help to mobilise funding for such initiatives and streamline coordination and lobbying efforts at the national and international levels.
- Decentralised **student exchange initiatives** can be a way forward to partially alleviate the effects of the UK leaving the Erasmus programme. LRAs can facilitate and coordinate bilateral and multilateral agreements between academic units to support small scale exchange between universities.
- **Twin cities and twinning projects** are specifically meant to support cooperation on common issues and peer learning between LRAs. Apart from the value-added from the projects themselves, they can help build up and maintain a network of contacts, which may serve as basis for other forms of cooperation.
- **Shifting focus on intra-EU relations:** while the UK is certainly an important partner to many EU MS due to its proximity and existing connections, some cooperation links are bound to gradually disappear. However, cooperation in many areas does not require immediate geographical proximity. Thus, EU countries previously active in the expiring Interreg Channel can, for example, choose to participate in the Interreg North Sea Region programme, which also addresses some of the maritime and coastal issues.

Moreover, **political will** at all levels of government on both sides is the key to maintaining any form of cooperation. Hence, LRAs and LRA associations need to make national authorities aware of the need for continued cooperation and the concrete losses caused by its discontinuation in order to find funding and institutional support. This is true in particular for the LRAs in the UK. Last but not least, the role of the Committee of the Regions and other LRA organisations is to underline the importance of ongoing cooperation with the UK to EU decision makers in order to accommodate the post-Brexit reality in the EU cooperation framework.

References

Adams, J. (2017). *International research collaboration after the UK leaves the European Union*. Universities UK. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2Vjz9W6>.

Assembly of European Regions. More information available at: <https://bit.ly/3hm4dx3>.

Balan, R. S. (2020). *UK Tuition Fees for EU/EEA Students in 2021. Changes after Brexit*. Study Portals. 15 December 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3hDDr1R>.

Benson, M. (2020). Brexit and the Classed Politics of Bordering: The British in France and European Belongings. *Sociology*, 54(3): 501-517.

Bretagne Commerce International. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3xn5JnV>.

Brien, P. (2020). *EU funding in the UK*. House of Commons Library. Briefing Paper. No. 7847. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3hL1dcy>.

Brien, P. (2021). *EU structural funding: Will the UK Community Renewal Fund bridge the gap?* House of Commons Library. Insight. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3rnGWOx>.

Cerulus, L. (2020). *Ireland to fund Erasmus scheme for Northern Irish students*. POLITICO, 27 December 2020. Available at: <https://politi.co/3hHLPxh>.

Colomb, C. (2018). A European Perspective on Anglo-Scottish Cross-border Cooperation: Lessons from EU-funded Territorial Cooperation Programs. *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 33(1): 103-122.

Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions. More information available at: <https://bit.ly/3jRm7t0>.

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. More information available at: <https://bit.ly/3xoekXz>.

COP 26. More information available at: <https://bit.ly/3xlrZPl>.

Cornwall Brussels Office. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3ABhaKL>.

Council of European Municipalities and Regions. More information available at: <https://bit.ly/3yyjVLj>.

Council of European Municipalities and Regions. *Cohesion policy*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3hlOk9W>.

Covenant of Mayors. More information available at: <https://bit.ly/3hjYPKD>

Energy Cities. More information available at: <https://bit.ly/3qPuczP>.

Eurocities. (2021). *Cities call for new EU pact for just and sustainable recovery*. 6 May 2021. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3hCbtDW>.

Eurocities. (2020). *Putting people first in the green energy transition*. 13 November 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3xky6U0>.

Euronews. (2021). *Post-Brexit residency: Many EU citizens face uncertainty as UK deadline arrives*. 30 June 2021. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3jlu9EC>.

European Commission. *European Neighbourhood Policy*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3qTQeS3>.

European Commission. *European Regional Development Fund*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3dL8s32>.

European Commission. *Interreg: European Territorial Co-Operation*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3qPXxu6>.

European Commission. *Overview – Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3AAuPC3>.

European Commission. *Proposal Brexit Adjustment Reserve*, 26 December 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3qP1teA>.

European Commission. *Questions and Answers on the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union on 31 January 2020*, 24 January 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3wk2hcB>.

European Commission. *The EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3AttJbf>.

European Commission. *Twinning*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3xrBigI>.

European Commission (2015). *Territorial Cooperation in Europe. A Historical Perspective*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3jUuqUV>.

European Commission (2017). *Cross-border cooperation in Maritime Spatial Planning*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3hSEZ8C>.

European Commission (2020). *Erasmus+ Annual Report 2019*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/36e8jRx>.

European Commission. (2020). *EU-UK Relations. A new relationship, with big changes*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3hONtxg>.

European Committee of the Regions. *Division of powers*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2TxSUxt>.

European Parliament (2020). Briefing: Three critical issues in EU-UK relations. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2UxuxLq>.

European Parliament (2021). *Deal reached on EU fund to help regions and businesses adapt to Brexit*. Press Release. 17 June 2021. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3xplk6K>.

Eurostat (2019). *Population by sex, age, country of birth and labour status, 2019*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2UpM7kK>.

Fleming, M. et al. (2018). *Brexit and Polonia. Challenges facing the Polish Community during the process of Britain leaving the European Union*. PUNO PRESS. The Polish University Abroad.

Fox, K. (2021). *What's behind the recent violence in Northern Ireland?* CNN. 10 April 2021. Available at: <https://cnn.it/3wk2AEh>.

Gallardo, C. (2021). *FAQ: Post-Brexit residence deadline for UK and EU citizens*. 21 June 2021. POLITICO. Available at: <https://politi.co/3ymIFWy>.

Gibraltar EU Programmes Secretariat. *European Territorial Cooperation*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3hknH57>.

Government of Ireland. *Minister of State for European Affairs Thomas Byrne welcomes conclusion of the Brexit Adjustment Reserve negotiations and confirmation of over €1bn to Ireland*. Press Release. 17 June 2021. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3hlMypi>.

Government of Ireland. *Shared Island Unit*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3jTFlyp>.

Government of Norway. *Participation in programmes and agencies*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3qNzRXn>.

Government of the UK. *EU Settlement Scheme statistics*. Collection. 02 July 2021. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2Uu2qN7>.

Government of the UK. *New Turing scheme to support thousands of students to study and work abroad*. Department of Education. Press Release. 26 December 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3wkKB0q>.

Government of the UK. *UK Communities Renewal Fund: prospectus 2021-22*, updated 24 March 2021. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3wkILwz>.

Government of the UK. *UK government announces additional £200 Peace Plus funding*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3ypa1vl>.

Government of the UK. *UK Participation in the Horizon 2020 after Brexit*. Guidance. 24 October 2019. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3xyLAvz>.

Government of the UK. *Visiting the UK as an EU, EEA or Swiss citizen*. Guidance. 31 December 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3dNQM6E>.

Highman, L. (2019). Future EU-UK research and higher education cooperation at risk: what is at stake? *Tertiary Education and Management*, 25: 45-52.

Horizon Dashboard. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3hkiGJP>.

How the Brexit deal will end free movement between UK and EU. France24, 31 December 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3ypyzeo>.

ICBAN (2017) Ireland's Health Services. Cross Border Directive: get healthcare abroad. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2UzawnH>.

ICBAN. *Framework of regional priorities*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3wj7S2U/>.

International Urban Development Association. More information available at: <https://bit.ly/36iBVx8>.

Interreg. *United Kingdom Programmes' contact points*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2Vc0dqe>.

Interreg 2 Seas. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2TGGZsb>.

Interreg Europe. *Frequently Asked Questions*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3dL8hoo>.

Interreg Europe. *Projects with UK partners can continue as planned*, 3 February 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3jPgk7k>.

Interreg France (Channel Manche) England. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3yppGFR>.

Interreg Ireland – Wales. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3yyiSel>.

Interreg North Sea Region. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3jJIBw5>.

Interreg North Sea Region. *Update on the future of UK programme participation*, 07 July 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3hFQkbR>.

Ireland's Health Services. *Cross Border Directive: get healthcare abroad*. 08 November 2018. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3yvZwGn>.

Irish Central Border Area Network. More information available at: <https://bit.ly/36gL0GC>.

James, C. (2016) Brexit: What now for Study Mobility between the UK and the EU? *Pécs Journal of International and European Law*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2V5CurO>.

Kennedy, J. and Adrjan, P. (2021). *International Jobseeker Interest in Britain is Changing After Brexit*. 17 June 2021. Indeed Hiring Lab. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3qNwe3s>.

Kochenov, D. (2020) Citizenship of the European Union and Brexit, in Kochenov, D. and Lindeboom, J. (eds.), *Kälin and Kochenov's Quality of Nationality Index*, Oxford: Hart Publishing. Available at: <https://bit.ly/36iWRnH>.

Lessard-Phillips, L. and Sigona, N. (2019). *UK-born children of EU nationals in the UK: historical, national and local perspectives*. Eurochildren Research Brief Series, No. 5.

LISER (2015). *Opportunities of cross-border cooperation between small and medium cities in Europe*. Luxembourg Institute for Socio-Economic Research. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3dSrKna>.

Maas, W. (2020). European citizenship and free movement after Brexit, in Greer, S. and Liabele, J. (eds.). *The European Union after Brexit*. Manchester University Press.

Matthews, D. (2017). *UK-led research with EU funding drops sharply after Brexit vote*. Times Higher Education, 21 December 2017. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2V7yPjL>.

McKee, D., and McKee, M. (2018). What might Brexit mean for British tourists travelling to the rest of Europe? *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh*, 48(2). Available at: <https://bit.ly/3qUwHAV>.

Metropolis. More information available at: <https://bit.ly/3ymQaga>.

Miller, R. G. (2018). (Un)settling home during the Brexit process. *Population Space and Place* 25.

Minutes of the second meeting of the CoR-UK Contact Group, 16 November 2020

Mohamed, M., Pärn, E. A., and Edwards, D. J. (2017). Brexit: Measuring the Impact upon Skilled Labour in the UK Construction Industry. *International Journal of Building Pathology and Adaptation*, 35(3), pp. 264-279. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2TMP92q>.

O’Keeffe, B., and Creamer, C. (2019). Models of Cross-Border Collaboration in a Post-Brexit Landscape – Insights from External EU Borders. *Irish Geography*, 52(2): 153-173.

O’Reilly, K. (2020). *Brexit and the British in Spain*. BrExpats project. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3jTtYGq>.

Perkmann, M. (2003). Cross-Border Regions in Europe: Significance and Drivers of Regional Cross-Border Co-Operation. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 10(2): 153-171.

Provincie Zeeland. *Straits Committee: Launch conference and future perspectives*. 05 February 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3jOEcho>.

Provincie Zeeland. *Straits Committee: samenwerkingsverband Europese kustprovincies*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3xgwquB>.

Sandford, M. (2016). *Brexit and local government*. Briefing paper Number 07664. House of Commons. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3wkpLhK>.

Scottish Government (2021). *Steadfastly European, Scotland's past, present and future*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3kDGFpc>.

Seidenschur, T. et al. (2019). *Hope, beliefs, and concerns: Narratives in German and Portuguese universities regarding Brexit*. *Higher Education*, 79, pp. 867–884.

UK Council for International Student Affairs. *Brexit – fees and Student Support*. 01 April 2021. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2V3UoLi>.

UK Parliament. *Health Services: Reciprocal Arrangements. Question for Department of Health*. 27 February 2017. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3hm01xj>.

UK Parliament. *Migration Statistics*. 27 April 2021. Research Briefing. Available at: <https://bit.ly/36nCwNL>.

UK Office for National Statistics. *Migrant labour force within the UK's construction industry: August 2018*. 23 August 2018. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3hkm5bn>.

UK Office for National Statistics. *Dataset Twinned towns and sister cities*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3dQmNen>.

UK Office for National Statistics. *Twinned towns and sister cities, Great Britain and Europe: September 2020*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3jOitjK>.

United Cities and Local Governments. *More information available at*: <https://bit.ly/3dNG5Ba>.

UN Biodiversity Conference (COP 15). *More information at*: <https://bit.ly/3yvKErw>.

UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2019). *International Migrants Stock, 2019*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3jRdL4C>.

UNWTO (2020). *Policy Brief: Covid-19 and Transforming Tourism*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3xrf1iZ>.

Welsh Government. *New International Learning Exchange programme to make good the loss of Erasmus+*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2UvlR8g>.

World Bank (2018). *World Development Indicators. Scientific and technical journal articles*. Latest available data is from 2018. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3hDvv0E>.

Annex A: List of experts interviewed

The list below shows experts selected for consultations (subject to interviewee approval before submission of the final version of the report).

No	Country/region	Name	Function	Date of interview
1	France	Agi Musset	Contact point Interreg FR-UK France	10 March 2021
2	Northern Ireland, Ireland, Scotland	Gina McIntyre	Chief Executive Officer, Special EU Programmes Body	22 March 2021
3	Netherlands	Pamela Mulder	Contact point Interreg 2 Seas Netherlands	10 March 2021
4	Gibraltar	Charles Collinson	Director of European Programmes and EU Programmes Facilitator; EU programmes funding agency Gibraltar	13 April 2021
5	United Kingdom	Kevin Bentley	EU Exit Force, Local Government Association	12 March 2021
6	Poland	Grzegorz Kubalski	Deputy Director of the Office, Association of Polish Counties	23 March 2021
7	France	Amandine Sossa and Romain Wascat	Head of cross-border cooperation mission and policy advisor, Région Hauts-de-France; Policy officer to the EU for Horizon 2020, Région Hauts-de-France	21 April 2021
8	Northern Ireland	Lisa O'Kane	Local Government Association for Northern Ireland	23 March 2021
9	Netherlands	Kim de Vries	Policy advisor, Association of Dutch Municipalities	9 April 2021
10	France	Jean Peyrony	Director, Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière	3 March 2021
11	France	Sébastien Crom, Fanny Gasc, Aude Körfer, Claire Le Tertre	Regional Delegation of Brittany and Permanent Delegation of Brittany in Brussels	16 March 2021
12	Netherlands	Machtelijnn Brummel	Interreg Europe point of contact for Netherlands	11 March 2021
13	Ireland	Keith Thornbury	Contact point Interreg VA BREATH project, Dundalk University of Technology	26 March 2021
14	Northern Ireland	Martin Gillen	Contact point Interreg VA SWELL project, Northern-Ireland Water	24 March 2021
15	United Kingdom	Jens Holscher	Bournemouth University	7 April 2021
16	Ireland/Northern Ireland	Shane Campbell	Chief Executive Officer, Irish Central Border Area Network	1 April 2021
17	Europe	Davide Strangis and Elise Wattrelot	Executive Director, Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions; Executive Secretary of the Atlantic Arc Commission	9 April 2021
18	Norway	Gunn Marit Helgesen	Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities	11 March 2021
19	Scotland	Alison Evison	President COSLA	22 July 2021
CoR members				

20	Netherlands	Michiel Rijsberman	Member of Flevoland provincial council, member of CoR-UK Contact Group	12 March 2021
21	Ireland	Michael Murphy	Member of Tipperary County Council (IER) and head of CoR's Irish delegation	2 April 2021
22	Spain	Ximo Puig i Ferrer	President of the Valencia region, member of CoR-UK Contact Group	8 April 2021 (in writing)
23	Belgium	Karl Vanlouwe	Member of the Flemish Parliament, member of CoR-UK Contact Group	11 March 2021

EN

ISBN 978-92-895-1110-0
doi:10.2863/60143

QG-09-21-366-EN-N



**European Committee
of the Regions**

Created in 1994, the European Committee of the Regions is the EU's political assembly of 329 regional and local representatives such as regional presidents or city-mayors from all 27 Member States, representing over 446 million Europeans.

Rue Belliard/Belliardstraat 101 | 1040 Bruxelles/Brussel | BELGIQUE/BELGIË | Tel. +32 22822211
www.cor.europa.eu | [@EU_CoR](https://twitter.com/EU_CoR) | [/european.committee.of.the.regions](https://www.facebook.com/european.committee.of.the.regions)
[/european-committee-of-the-regions](https://www.linkedin.com/company/european-committee-of-the-regions)